



FAMILY GUIDE

FRANCE



Where to play, what to see, where to stay



EYEWITNESS TRAVEL

FAMILY GUIDE

FRANCE





A scenic view of a French village with terraced vineyards and a church with a tall spire. The image shows a dirt path leading through a lush green vineyard towards a cluster of houses with red-tiled roofs. In the background, a church with a prominent, tall, pointed spire is visible. The overall atmosphere is peaceful and picturesque.

EYEWITNESS TRAVEL

FAMILY GUIDE

FRANCE





Penguin
Random
House

MANAGING EDITOR Aruna Ghose

SENIOR EDITORIAL MANAGER
Savitha Kumar

SENIOR DESIGN MANAGER
Priyanka Thakur

EDITORS Shreya Sarkar, Bidisha
Srivastava, Priya Rajendran, Ashwin
Ahmad

PROJECT DESIGNER Amisha Gupta

DESIGNER Meghna Baruah

PICTURE RESEARCH MANAGER
Tāiyaba Khatoon

PICTURE RESEARCH Sumita Khatwani

SENIOR DTP DESIGNER
Azeem Siddiqui

DTP DESIGNER Rakesh Pal

SENIOR CARTOGRAPHIC MANAGER
Uma Bhattacharya

CARTOGRAPHER Schchida Nand
Pradhan

MAIN CONTRIBUTORS Dana Facaros,
Leonie Glass, Antony Mason, Mike
Pedley, Ally Thompson, Rosie
Whitehouse

PHOTOGRAPHY Alex Havret, Kathryn
Tomasetti, James Tye

CARTOONS Roland Ungoed-Thomas

ADDITIONAL ILLUSTRATIONS
Arun Pottirayil, Stephen Conlin, John
Lawrence, Maltings Partnership, John
Woodcock

DESIGN CONCEPT Keith Hagan at [www.
greenwich-design.co.uk](http://www.greenwich-design.co.uk)

Printed and bound in China

First published in the United States in 2012
by Dorling Kindersley Publishing, Inc.,
345 Hudson Street, New York 10014.
A Penguin Random House Company
15 16 17 18 10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

Reprinted with revisions 2014, 2016

Copyright 2012, 2016 © Dorling
Kindersley Limited, London

All rights reserved. No part of this publication
may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval
system, or transmitted in any form or by any
means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying,
recording or otherwise, without the prior
written permission of the copyright owner.

A CIP catalogue record is available from the
Library of Congress.

ISBN 978-1-4654-4057-0



MIX
Paper from
responsible sources
FSC™ C018179

Contents

How to Use this Guide	6	Where to Stay in Champagne	66
The Best of France	10	Le Nord and Picardy	67
France through the Year	14	Nausicaá, Boulogne- sur-Mer	68
Getting to France	18	Parc Astérix	74
Getting around France	22	Where to Stay in Le Nord and Picardy	78
Practical Information	24		
Where to Stay	28		
Where to Eat	30		
Shopping in France	32		
Entertainment in France	34		
The History of France	36		

NORTHEAST FRANCE

<i>The Best of Northeast France</i>	44	PARIS AND ÎLE DE FRANCE	80
Regional Map	46	<i>The Best of Paris and Île de France</i>	82
Regional Airports	48	Regional and Paris Map	84
Alsace and Lorraine	49	Getting to Paris	86
The Battlefield of Verdun	50	Paris	87
Colmar	54	Notre-Dame	90
Where to Stay in Alsace and Lorraine	58	Musée du Louvre	98
Champagne	59	Eiffel Tower	104
Reims Cathedral	60	Musée d'Orsay	110
Château Fort de Sedan	64	Sacré-Coeur	116
		Where to Stay in Paris	120
		Île de France	123
		Château de Versailles	124
		Disneyland® Paris	130
		Where to Stay in Île de France	134



The Eiffel Tower soaring above
Champ-de-Mars, Paris

WESTERN FRANCE

<i>The Best of Western France</i>	138
Regional Map	140
Regional Airports	142
Normandy	143
Rouen	144
The D-Day Beaches	148
Mont-St-Michel	152
Where to Stay in Normandy	156



View over the town and bay of St-Tropez, Côte d'Azur

Brittany	157	Chamonix	224	THE PYRENEES	301
Rennes	158	Briançon	228	Bayonne	302
Océanopolis, Brest	162	Gorges de l'Ardèche	232	Pic du Midi de Bigorre	306
Standing Stones of Carnac	166	Where to Stay in the Rhône Valley and French Alps	236	Grotte de Niaux	310
Where to Stay in Brittany	170	The Massif Central	239	Where to Stay in the Pyrenees	314
The Loire Valley	173	Aven Armand	240	THE SOUTH OF FRANCE	316
Les Machines de l'Île, Nantes	174	Le Puy-en-Velay	244	<i>The Best of South of France</i>	318
Tours	180	Château de Murol	248	Regional Map	320
Château Royal de Blois	184	Where to Stay in the Massif Central	252	Regional Airports	322
Chartres Cathedral	188	SOUTHWEST FRANCE	254	Languedoc- Roussillon	323
Where to Stay in the Loire Valley	190	<i>The Best of Southwest France</i>	256	Carcassonne	324
CENTRAL FRANCE AND THE ALPS	192	Regional Map	258	Canal du Midi	330
<i>The Best of Central France and the Alps</i>	194	Regional Airports	260	Pont du Gard	334
Regional Map	196	Périgord, Quercy and Gascony	261	Where to Stay in Languedoc-Roussillon	338
Regional Airports	198	Lascaux II	262	Provence and the Côte d'Azur	341
Burgundy and Franche-Comté	199	Rocamadour	268	Palais des Papes, Avignon	342
Dijon	200	Albi	274	Fontaine-de-Vaucluse	346
Vézelay	204	Where to Stay in Périgord, Quercy and Gascony	278	Marseille	350
Cluny	208	Poitou and Aquitaine	281	St-Tropez	354
Parc Régional Naturel du Haut-Jura	212	Futuroscope	282	Nice	358
Where to Stay in Burgundy and Franche-Comté	216	La Rochelle	286	Where to Stay in Provence and the Côte d'Azur	362
The Rhône Valley and French Alps	219	Angoulême	290	Corsica	365
Lyon	220	Bordeaux	294	Golfe de Porto	366
		Where to Stay in Poitou and Aquitaine	298	Bonifacio	370
				Where to Stay in Corsica	374
				France Maps	380
				Paris Street Maps	396
				Index	414
				Acknowledgments	422
				Phrase Book	424

How to Use this Guide

This guide is designed to help families to get the most from a visit to France, providing expert recommendations for sightseeing with kids along with detailed practical information. The opening section contains an introduction to France and its highlights, as well as information on how to plan a family holiday (including how to get there, getting around, health, money and communications), a guide to family-friendly festivals and a historical overview.

The main sightseeing section is divided into areas, each consisting of two or three regional chapters. A "best of" feature is followed by the key sights and other attractions to visit in each region, as well as options for where to stay, eat, drink and play and have more fun. At the back of the book are detailed maps of France and Paris, as well as a language section listing essential words and phrases for family travel.



INTRODUCING THE AREA

Each area chapter is opened by a double-page spread setting the area in context, with a brief introduction, locator map and a selection of area highlights.

Locator map locates the region.

Brief highlights give a flavour of what to see in the area.

THE BEST OF...

A planner to show at a glance the best things for families to see and do in the area, with themed suggestions ranging from seasonal visits to short stays, cultural holidays and the great outdoors.

Agencies box lists the region's best accommodation agencies.



WHERE TO STAY

Our expert authors have compiled a wide range of recommendations for places to stay with families, from hotels and B&Bs that welcome children to farmstays, self-catering and camping.

Easy-to-use symbols show the key family-friendly features of places to stay.

Price Guide box gives details of the price categories for a family of four.

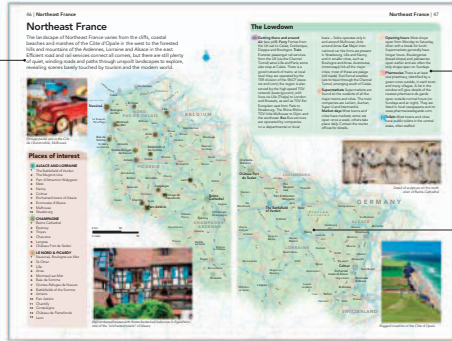


SIGHTSEEING IN FRANCE

Each area chapter is divided into 3-4 smaller regions, all of which are shown on the map at the start of the chapter. These feature a number of "hub" destinations (see below): practical and enjoyable plans for a half-day or day's visit, giving adults and children a real

insight into the destination, balanced with chances to let off steam, "take cover" options for rainy days, suggestions for where to eat, drink and shop with kids, ideas for where to continue sightseeing, and all the practicalities, including transport.

Introductory text describes the key characteristics and geography of the area, and gives information on the transport infrastructure.



The Lowdown gives all the practical information you need to visit the area.

The map shows the regions covered and all the hubs, colour-coded by area.

The "hub" destinations pick out the best places to visit in each region, using lively and informative text to engage and entertain both adults and children.

Key Sights uses illustrated artworks to show the most interesting features of each destination, highlighting elements likely to appeal to children.



Kids' Corner is featured on all sightseeing pages (see below).

Letting off steam suggests a place to take children to play freely following a cultural visit.

Find out more gives suggestions for downloads, games, apps or films to excite children about a place and help them to learn more about it.

The Lowdown provides comprehensive practical information, including transport, opening times, costs, activities, age range suitability and how long to allow for a visit.

Eat and drink lists recommendations for family-friendly places to eat and drink, from picnic options and snacks to proper meals and gourmet dining.

Next stop... suggests other places to visit, either near the key destination, thematically linked to it, or a complete change of pace for the rest of the day.

Further sights around each hub destination are described on the following pages. Each sight or destination is selected to appeal to both adults and children.

Town or sight gives details of the places of interest to visit, with an emphasis on the aspects most likely to attract children, incorporating quirky stories and unusual facts.



Kids' Corner is designed to involve children with the destination, with things to look out for, games to play, cartoons and fun facts. Answers to quizzes are at the bottom of the panel.

The Lowdown provides the usual comprehensive practical and transport information for each sight.



The richly sculpted interior of the spectacular Gothic Cathédrale Notre Dame de Chartres





Introducing
FRANCE



The Best of France

France's remarkable diversity ensures that every member of the family will be entertained. Breathtaking mountains, spectacular caves, meandering rivers and scenic national parks lie alongside grand castles, medieval villages and sun-kissed beach resorts. Art and culture abound in and around the beautiful cities, as Roman glories compete with Renaissance charms and an impressive collection of galleries and museums. The food is pretty good, too!

Kids' favourites

Some places have a special wow factor for kids, and candy wonderlands such as the **Musée des Bonbons** in Uzès (see p335), and the **Atelier du Chocolat**, a chocolate factory in Bayonne (see p302), score high on the list. Kids will also love the imaginative inventions and fun-filled rides at

Les Machines de l'Île in Nantes (see pp174–5), or exploring, on a more modest scale, one man's crazy mechanical creations at the **Univers du Poète Ferrailleur** in Lizio (see p167).

One of the best spots for dinosaur-loving kids is **Dinosauria** in Espéraza (see p326), and the discovery of fossilized dinosaur eggs inspired the life-sized models of the giant lizards at the **Musée Parc des Dinosauriens** in Mèze (see p333).

Pay homage to Jules Verne's *Journey to the Centre of the Earth* in the fantastic stalactite chambers of the **Cité de la Préhistoire** (see p232) and the **Aven Armand** (see pp240–41). The **Gouffre de Padirac** (see p270) and **Les Grottes de Médoules** in Bagnères (see p307) can be explored on unforgettable boat rides.

France offers many train rides, and three of the most exciting are **Le Petit Train Jaune** (see p329) year-round into the Pyrenees, the steam train to the **Ecomusée de la Grande Lande** in 19th-century Marquèze (see p297) and the **Train du Montanvers** from Chamonix (see p224) up to France's largest glacier, the Mer de Glace.

Left Fascinating stalactites and stalagmites at Aven Armand
Below The little red Train du Montanvers, Chamonix





Magnificent façade of the immense Renaissance Château de Chambord, in the Loire Valley

Culture vultures

A treasure chest of art and architecture, France boasts splendid samples from every era. Start in the Dordogne with **Lascaux II** (see pp262–3), a replica of the cave famous for its palaeolithic paintings. The **Standing Stones of Carnac** (see pp166–7) in Brittany form the world's greatest collection of Neolithic monuments. At **Filitosa** (see p372), in Corsica, the standing stones have haunting faces.

Among Roman masterpieces, the **Pont du Gard** (see pp334–5) aqueduct, the **Maison Carrée** and **Les Arènes** in Nîmes (see p336), as well as the **Théâtre Antique** in Orange (see p345) are truly exceptional. For France's most striking medieval citadel, head to **Carcassonne** (see pp324–5). The cliffside church of **Rocamadour** (see pp268–9) and the spectacular island abbey of **Mont-St-Michel** (see pp152–3) never fail to amaze visitors. The massive **Palais des Papes** in Avignon (see pp342–3) is a superb example of Gothic architecture, as is the **Cathédrale Ste-Cécile** of Albi (see p274).

Experience the splendour of the French Renaissance in the Loire Valley at the **Château de Chambord** (see p185) and the **Château Royal de Blois** (see pp184–5). In the 17th and 18th centuries, much of France's budget went into glorifying **Versailles** (see pp124–7).

The Impressionists and Post-Impressionists of the 19th century star in Paris's **Musée d'Orsay** (see pp108–9), and in the museums of **Rouen** (see pp144–5) and **St-Tropez** (see pp354–5). The towns along the Côte d'Azur are filled with 20th-century art. See some of the best collections in **Nice** (see pp358–9) and in the **Fondation Maeght** in St-Paul-de-Vence (see p359).

The great indoors

Travelling in the late autumn or winter, there is still plenty to see indoors, particularly in France's numerous museums. Many of these also appeal to children, such as the **Musée de la Tapisserie** in Bayeux (see p149), home to the Bayeux Tapestry – that great comic strip version of the Norman Conquest. Watch the magic unfold at the **Maison de la Magie Robert-Houdin** in Blois (see p185), or explore outer space at the **Cité de l'Espace** in Toulouse (see p276). At St-Nazaire's **Escal'Atlantique** (see p176), the simulated voyage aboard legendary ocean liners is memorable. Honfleur's **Maisons Satie** (see p147), devoted to the composer Erik Satie, is quirky and fun.

Animals are always child pleasers, and some of them live indoors too. France's exceptional array of child-friendly aquariums includes **Mare Nostrum** in Montpellier (see p333), **Nausicaä** in Boulogne-sur-Mer (see pp68–9), the **Aquarium** in La Rochelle (see p286) and Brest's **Océanopolis** (see pp162–3).

The interactive Biospace Mission exhibit in the informative Cité de l'Espace, Toulouse



The great outdoors

France's spectacular mountain ranges attract families throughout the year, as much for their beauty as for the mountain sports. Head to the French Alps for a thrilling ride up a cable car to the **Aiguille du Midi** (see p224), under Mont Blanc (see p224), Western Europe's highest peak. For a relaxed excursion, explore the **Parc National de la Vanoise** (see p230) and its many lakes or the picture-perfect **Lac d'Annecy** (see p227).

If visiting the Pyrenees, take the cableway up to the **Pic du Midi de Bigorre** (see pp306–7) for a splendid view, or admire the waterfalls at the **Parc National des Pyrénées** (see p308). The natural marvels of the Massif Central include the majestic **Gorges du Tarn** (see p242) and extinct volcanoes in the lush **Parc Naturel Régional des Volcans d'Auvergne** (see p250).

Burgundy's **Parc Naturel Régional du Morvan** (see pp206–7) has a special idyllic quality, while Alsace's **Route du Vin** (see p56) passes through the region's prettiest villages. The world-famous landscapes of Provence include the olive groves of the Alpilles, painted by Van Gogh, and equally delightful are the lazy charms of Languedoc's **Canal du Midi** (see pp330–31).

Best cities

While Paris steals the limelight, France has a wealth of great cities, many of which can easily be the focus of a family holiday. Basking on a long beach, **Nice** is crammed full of arty museums and fun activities all year round. **Marseille** (see pp350–51), with its stunning coast, is within easy distance of Cézanne's Aix-en-Provence.

Lyon (see pp220–21) offers plenty of culture and entertainment for kids, and day-trip options.



Above Paddling in the river below the Pont du Gard
Below Cafés in the Place des Terreaux, Lyon

The Atlantic seaports of **La Rochelle** (see pp286–7), **Bordeaux** (see pp294–5) and the Basque port of **Bayonne** (see pp302–3) are great for families, and have easy access to beaches. Among the best smaller cities are the capital of Burgundy wine, **Beaune** (see p202), and **Nîmes** (see p336), the “Rome of France”. Exceptional monuments abound in **Strasbourg** (see p57), with its cathedral and the European Parliament, in wealthy medieval **Bourges** (see pp186–7), and in **Dijon** (see pp200–1). **Rouen** (see pp144–5) charms with its medieval timbered houses and Monet's cathedral. There is also a fine clutch of historic towns in the Loire Valley, such as **Tours** (see pp180–81), **Chinon** (see p182), **Le Mans** (see p179) and **Saumur** (see p178).

Letting off steam

Kids adore running through mazes, and will have quite a few to choose from in France, including the beechwood maze in **Château de Villandry** (see p181), the one at **Artmazia** near Rouen (see pp144–5) and the maze at the **Château de Vendeuvre** (see p151). Solve the enigma of the Templars at the **Château d'Usson** in Pons (see p293). At Niaux's **Parc de la Préhistoire** (see p311), kids can polish their Stone Age skills.

Kayaking and canoeing on the country's many rivers is another family pleaser. Some beautiful waterways include the Sorgue, near **Fontaine-de-Vaucluse** (see pp346–7), and the Tarn through its winding gorge. Families can paddle on the Cher, right under the **Château de Chenonceau**



(see p183), while on the Gardon, they can easily glide under the **Pont du Gard** (see pp334–5). Punting is fun on the emerald canals of **Marais Poitevin** (see p285), as is white-water rafting on the long-winding Aude (see p326). From the age of 7, kids can learn how to surf near **Bayonne** (see p303), sand-yacht at **St-Jean-de-Monts** (see p177) or rock climb in Corsica.

Theme and animal parks

While there is no doubt that **Disneyland® Paris** (see pp130–33) is by far the largest theme park in France, there are several others. **Parc Astérix** (see pp74–5) has attractions based on the two popular Gaulish heroes of French comic-strip fame, and the **Parc d'Attraction Walygator** (see p52) has some of the scariest rides. **Marineland** in Antibes (see p360) is a Wild West theme park with a water park and dolphin shows. For something different, head to **Vallon du Villaret** (see p243), a non-commercial theme park set in the forest, designed by artists.

Futuroscope (see pp282–3) offers the ultimate high-tech experience, taking visitors into the future; even into the fourth dimension. The **Grand Parc Puy de Fou** (see p177) has no rides at all, but rather offers total immersion into different historical periods; families can even spend the night in a Dark Age village on stilts in a lake. **Terra Botanica** in Angers (see p179) is the first botanical theme park in the world.

Among the best zoos and animal parks in the country are the **Parc de la Coccinelle** near Bordeaux (see p295), especially designed for

kids aged under 12, with a petting zoo as well as rides, and **Le Récré des Trois Curés** in Brest (see p163), complete with a huge water park.

By the sea

There is something for all tastes along France's coastline. The fashionable resorts of **St-Tropez** (see pp354–5) and **Deauville** (see p147), the walled old port of **St-Malo** (see p161), Corsica's breathtaking **Réserve Naturelle de Scandola** (see p366) and the giant **Dune de Pyla** (see p295) overlooking the Bassin d'Arcachon are only some of the most enjoyable places around the country's shores. Explore the stunning granite coast of cliffs, beaches and fishing ports in Brittany; or soak in the sun on the sandy beaches at **Le Grau de Roi** in the Camargue (see p345).

Families can remember World War II at the **D-Day Beaches** (see pp148–9) in Normandy. The **Île Ste-Marguerite**, just off Cannes (see p360), is where the Man in the Iron Mask was imprisoned.



Right A show in progress at the Grand Parc Puy de Fou
Below The natural arch at the pebble beach in Étretat, Normandy



France through the Year

The beauty and appeal of France is evident throughout the year. While the pleasant days of spring bring with them a myriad of flowers and pavement cafés, summer is chock-a-block with fêtes, festivals and parades, such as the one on Bastille Day. Autumn slips in with golden leaves, open-air fairs and skies filled with colour at the world's largest kite festival, and winter glitters in lit-up cities with midnight feasts, carnivals and snow holidays in the Alps.

Spring

One of the most beautiful seasons in France, with comfortable and mild temperatures, spring is just perfect for exploring the country. A riot of colours fills its many gardens and parks, and the markets overflow with fresh and juicy cherries, strawberries and asparagus in late May. March is usually the last month to find good travel bargains and packages to France, before the main tourist period gets underway. By April, the fine weather is ideal for touring, hiking and horse-riding; pack an umbrella to protect against April showers.

MARCH

This is often the best month for skiing, with longer days, sunshine and good snow. In late March or early April, the **Carnaval de Marseille** (see p350) is held in the city's Vieux Port area, featuring

a traditional parade with singing, dancing, colourful floats and tasty food and drink, while the huge **Carnaval de Nantes** (see p175) includes floats and bands, and a special children's carnival.

APRIL

The country opens its arms wide for the first big wave of visitors arriving during the Easter holidays as the ski season ends. Tables and chairs re-appear on the terraces of cafés and restaurants, as the shops fill with Easter chocolates. Arles puts together the big **Feria Pascale** (see p345) for Easter; while families may want to skip the actual bull fighting, they can take pleasure in good music and food, and the lively atmosphere on the streets.

Towards the end of the month, Orléans (see p187) celebrates **Les Fêtes Jeanne d'Arc** in honour of

one of France's patron saints, Joan of Arc. Military parades, historical re-enactments, medieval markets and concerts are just some of the festivities that ensure a well-spent day.

MAY

Many French families take extended breaks during this month, thanks to three national holidays. Hardy souls brave their first annual dips on the beaches of the Côte d'Azur, Languedoc-Roussillon and Corsica. Others make a beeline for one of the most prestigious and anticipated events in May: the **International Grand Prix de Monaco** (see p360). This grand affair shares the limelight with the glamorous **Festival de Cannes** (see p361). Head over for an afternoon to see the movie stars if staying nearby. Children may also like the colourful costumes, drums and processions of the **Fête de la**

Below left A match in progress at the Roland Garros tennis tournament, the French Open, Paris
Below right Annual procession celebrating Les Fêtes Jeanne d'Arc in Orléans



Bravade in St-Tropez (see p354). **Jazz Sous Les Pommiers**, the jazz festival in Coutances, will delight music lovers. In Paris, May sees the beginning of the **Roland Garros** tennis tournament.

Summer

This is the busiest season in France, especially for families. Days tend to be hot, but are rarely unbearably so. Water parks and beaches are perfect for cooling off; the temperatures in the evenings are ideal for staying out late. June offers a slight calm before the great summer rush, and relative bargains for flights and hotel rooms can still be had before prices shoot up. By July and August, reservations are a must for accommodation and restaurants. Popular sights get busy, so make online bookings whenever possible to avoid long queues.

In August, many offices, shops and restaurants are shut as most of the country goes on holiday. The national holiday on 15 August, when people start their vacations, is a bad day to be on the road because traffic on the main *autoroutes* is backed up for miles. This month brings afternoon and evening thunderstorms, which can take the thermometer down a few degrees, although this is a bit of a bore for campers.

JUNE

Much singing, dancing and street celebrations are in evidence at one of Nîmes' (see p336) most important festivals, **Feria de Pentecôte**.

The commemorations on the D-Day Beaches of Normandy (see p148) are worth catching, and the sports car race, **24 Heures du Mans** (see p179), is thrilling to say the least. On 21 June, the **Fête de la Musique** features musical events in the streets across the country; **Les Feux de la St-Jean** marks the summer solstice with bonfires, especially in the Pyrenees, such as in Montségur (see p312).

JULY

The month of July is marked with hundreds of festivals and village fêtes, culminating on the 14th with La Fête Nationale or **Bastille Day**. Festivities include dances, often on the night of the 13th, and enormous firework displays in Paris and other cities. News of the **Tour de France** fills the airwaves. Go watch if the race is passing nearby; although the cyclists whiz by in a blur, kids love the freebies tossed into the crowd by the parade that precedes the racers.

The **Festival d'Avignon** (see p342), with its many street events, is great fun, as is the musical and cultural **Festival de Cornouaille** in Quimper (see p169). July and

August see many family events in castles, gardens and châteaux. The superb night-time show, **Cinésécnie**, plays at the Grand Parc Puy du Fou (see p177), and is on a spectacular scale, with stunning fireworks. Kids enjoy the jousting show, **Chevaliers de la Foi**, in Carcassonne (see p324). Step into the **Centre de l'Imaginaire Arthurien**, King Arthur's legendary world in Brocéliande (see p160), or marvel at the theatrical creativity of **A la Cour du Roy François**, at the Château d'Amboise (see p186), as hundreds of actors present a grand Renaissance spectacle, with fireworks.

AUGUST

One of the liveliest family-friendly events, **Mimos** is a mime festival held in Périgueux (see p265). Sète (see p333) is the setting for a rousing water-jousting tournament. Celtic music, tradition and games are celebrated at the **Festival Interceltique** in Lorient and at **Les Celtiques de Guérande** (see p176). The traditional **Festival de Force Basque** at St-Palais, near Grottes d'Isturitz et Oxocelhaya, involves ancient Basque contests of strength, such as boulder-carrying races and mass tugs-of-war. In Dax (see p297), families may also enjoy bloodless bullfights (*courses landaises*).

Below left Jordan-Ford Formula 1 driver Giancarlo Fisichella speeding past the spectators during the International Grand Prix de Monaco **Below right** Tour de France cyclists racing through St-Jean-de-Maurienne



Autumn

As schools reopen and the locals return to work, autumn combines rich colours in the countryside with thinner crowds at the most popular sights. In many ways, September is the ideal month to visit France. The weather is generally warm and clear, perfect for exploring outdoors.

In October, plane fares and hotel prices tumble, but rain gear and umbrellas may be needed. Still, the reds and golds of the woods and vineyards, and the soft river mists, add a lovely dimension to the countryside and mountains.

November marks the real end of the holiday season. Seasonal sights begin to close. The weather now is generally cold and wet. Restaurant owners, shopkeepers and everyone who has been working full tilt since spring take a break before gearing up for Christmas.

SEPTEMBER

Sunny days make this an excellent month for taking a ride on **Le Petit Train Jaune** (see p327) or **Le Petit Train d'Artouste** (see p305) to the top of the Pyrenees, or visiting Monet's gardens in Giverny (see p146), with their autumn blooms. In Marseille (see p350), all eyes are raised to the skies for the **Fête du Vent**, a kite-flying festival. In

even-numbered years, Dieppe (see p146) raises the bar with the **Festival International de Cerf-Volants**, the world's biggest kite-flying festival.

Take a trip to the Renaissance era with Le Puy-en-Velay's (see p244) **Roi de l'Oiseau**, a fair with open-air feasts, fireworks and acrobats. The **Deauville American Film Festival** (see p147) is a glittering event.

The third weekend of September offers a special bonus, as it brings the **Journées du Patrimoine**, a heritage weekend all across the nation, when historic monuments usually closed to the public are opened to visitors.

OCTOBER

This is a great time to visit Paris and the sights that get jam packed in summer such as Pont du Gard (see pp334–5), Lascaux II (see pp262–3), Mont-St-Michel (see pp152–3) and Carcassonne (see pp324–5), or cities such as Dijon (see pp200–1) in the lovely Burgundy countryside. It is a great time to take the kids to Rouen (see pp144–5), with Monet's cathedral and the **Foire St-Romain**, the biggest funfair in France.

NOVEMBER

Some attractions remain open until 11 November, the last public holiday before Christmas, commemorating the end of World War I – an

evocative time to visit Verdun (see pp50–51), the Somme (see p72) or other battlefields, memorials and cemeteries. Grown-ups may enjoy trying the new wines and autumn cuisine – mushrooms, game, truffles, foie gras – although kids are generally less than impressed.

Winter

Home to some of Europe's highest mountains, France is a gold mine for winter sports. The resorts in the Alps, the Vosges, the Massif Central and the Pyrenees are filled to capacity. The ski season begins just before Christmas, and extends to April. French schools close for two weeks to allow families to hit the slopes; these breaks are nationally staggered into three groups, from February to early March, to keep everyone from crowding in on holiday spots at the same time. Christmas is a season of great revelry as the streets are alive with festivities, overflowing markets, carnivals, concerts and exhibitions. Some city squares are flooded and frozen for ice-skating parties.

DECEMBER

France becomes a glittering world as cities are adorned with gorgeous Christmas lights and decorations.

Below left Beginners gearing up for a skiing lesson at a ski resort in the Pyrenees **Below centre** Le Petit Train d'Artouste chugging along a hairpin bend, on its way up to the Lac d'Artouste in the Pyrenees



The display on the Champs-Élysées in Paris is justifiably famous, and the **Fête de la Lumière** held in Lyon (see p220), is a dazzling spectacle.

Richly stocked Christmas markets offer handicrafts, cakes, and other goodies – the market in Strasbourg (see p57) is one of the largest. The 200-year-old **Foire aux Santons** in Marseille is a great place to buy Provençal Christmas crib figures.

The traditional feast of Christmas, the **Réveillon de Noël** is celebrated on an elaborate scale on Christmas Eve, with many restaurants preparing and serving special meals.

JANUARY

New Year's Eve festivities in France are known as the **Réveillon de St-Sylvestre** and are accompanied by lavish midnight feasts, plenty of champagne and fireworks. The area around the Eiffel Tower is abuzz with activity, as restaurants put on special parties with music and dancing.

The end of the holiday season is marked on 6 January by Epiphany or **La Fête des Rois**. To celebrate, people buy a flat flaky pastry (*galette des Rois*) filled with almond paste (*frangipane*). Whoever gets the object hidden inside gets to wear a royal crown which comes with the cake. At the end of the first week of the month, the semi-annual January

sales begin, offering bargains galore. The **Festival International de la Bande Dessinée** (see p291) draws comic-book fans to Angoulême, while the **Festival International du Cirque de Monte-Carlo in Monaco** (see p360) is a breathtaking showcase for circus skills.

FEBRUARY

Among winter festivals, the curious, medieval carnival-like **Los Fécos** (see p325) in Limoux is one that might most appeal to families. Held

only on weekends, from January to March, it has teams of masked dancers, music and confetti battles. The largest post-Christmas gala is Carnival, usually in February but sometimes earlier. Many towns and villages have their own parades and parties for kids in costumes. The most splendid are in Dunkerque, north of Lille (see p70) and the **Carnaval de Nice** (see p359), the largest in France, with huge flower-decked floats in ten days of celebrations before Mardi Gras.

The Lowdown

Public holidays

New Year's Day (1 Jan)
Easter Sunday & Monday (Mar/Apr)
Labour Day (1 May)
VE Day (8 May)
Ascension Day (6th Thu after Easter)
Pentecost (2nd Mon after Ascension)
Bastille Day (14 Jul)
Assumption Day (15 Aug)
All Saints' Day (1 Nov)
Remembrance Day (11 Nov)
Christmas Day (25 Dec)

Spring

Festival de Cannes www.festival-cannes.fr
Les Fêtes Jeanne d'Arc www.fetesjeannedarc.fr
International Grand Prix de Monaco www.monaco-grand-prix.com
Roland Garros www.rolandgarros.com

Summer

24 Heures du Mans www.lemans.org
Le Festival d'Avignon www.festival-avignon.com
Festival de Force Basque www.saint-palais-tourisme.com/tourisme/force-basque
Tour de France www.letour.fr

Autumn

Deauville American Film Festival www.festival-deauville.com
Festival International de Cerf-Volants www.dieppe-cerf-volant.org

Winter

Festival International de la Bande Dessinée www.bdangouleme.com
Festival International du Cirque de Monte-Carlo www.montecarlofestival.mc
Fête de la Lumière www.fetedeslumieres.lyon.fr

Below right Participants decked up in lavish costumes at the sumptuous parade and festivities celebrating the **Carnaval de Nice**, the biggest carnival in France



Getting to France

With excellent air, rail, sea and road connections, getting to France is easy. There are several economical and convenient options, many of which are child friendly as well. However, finding them can require some research, as new connections are opening up all the time to new hubs across the country. Direct flights are available to many places, but families wishing to get to the heart of the country should consider the scenic routes by rail, sea or car.

Arriving by Air

While those coming to France from within Europe have many different transport choices, families travelling from the Americas, Australasia, Africa and Asia will have to fly. Fortunately, there are several options to choose from, including **Air France**, the national airline, with flights from many destinations across the world.

Other main carriers offering frequent flights from major European cities include **British Airways**, **Iberia**, **Lufthansa**, **KLM** and **Alitalia**. These airlines serve the two main airports of Paris – Roissy Charles-de-Gaulle and Orly – and sometimes larger regional airports such as Nice, Toulouse, Bordeaux, Lyon or Marseille. Several budget airlines, including **easyJet**, **Flybe**, **Jet2** and **Ryanair** also serve some of these airports, as well as many of the country's smaller airports. These

airports are mainly linked to the UK, Ireland, Germany, Belgium, the Netherlands and Scandinavia.

Families flying in from the United States can pick from the many direct flights offered by major airlines, such as **American**, **United** and **Delta**. These fly in to Paris (Charles-de-Gaulle), with frequent connections from nearly 20 cities, including New York, San Francisco, Washington DC, Los Angeles and Chicago. In summer, Delta also offers direct flights from New York to Nice.

Those travelling from Canada can get excellent connections from Montreal and Toronto on **Air Canada**, **United** and **Air France**.

If the Paris area is not your final destination, look into flights to regional French airports by way of other European hubs – London, Frankfurt, Munich and Amsterdam are the primary ones. This can help

save time and money. Also check flights by the Canadian charter, **Air Transat**. These fly regularly from Montreal to Bordeaux, Lyon, Nice, Marseille, Nantes and Toulouse.

There are no direct flights from Australia or New Zealand. However, **Qantas** has many connections with one or more stops, usually in Hong Kong, Dubai, Singapore, Frankfurt or London. Be aware that these usually take close to 24 hours.

Complete information on regional airports and getting from the airport to the nearest town is provided in each regional chapter within this guide.

Arriving by Sea

France is served by several car ferry and catamaran companies sailing from the UK and Ireland, and for families, they can be the most

Below left Arrivals board displaying flight information in Terminal 2 at Charles-de-Gaulle International Airport, Paris
Below right A Brittany Ferries ferry crossing the Channel between England and France



economical, practical and also comfortable way of travelling. Ferry terminals and ferries have cafés, snack bars, restaurants and shops; many have video games or play rooms for kids as well.

While most ferries sail during the day, others sail overnight, allowing passengers to rest in their cabins before arriving at their destination.

The most popular cross-Channel ferry route is between Dover and Calais, which takes around 1 hour 15 minutes. **P&O Ferries**, **LD Lines**, **My Ferry Link** and **DFDS Seaways** frequently sail this route every day. P&O also has an overnight service from Hull to Zeebrugge in Belgium, a short drive from France. **DFDS Seaways'** ferries sail between Dover and Dunkerque, which is a longer crossing than Calais (2 hours) but often cheaper. **Brittany Ferries** offer many options: from Portsmouth to Caen (6 hours or overnight), to Cherbourg on a fast-craft service (3 hours) and to St-Malo (overnight). Ferries also depart from Plymouth to Roscoff (6 hours or overnight); those travelling late in the year can try the mid-November to mid-March ferry services from Plymouth to St-Malo (overnight). Ferries also sail from Poole to Cherbourg (2½ or 4½ hours) and from Cork in Ireland to Roscoff (once a week, 14 hours).

Irish Ferries run overnight from Rosslare in Ireland to Cherbourg and Roscoff, with several sailings each week (more frequently in summer).

The ferries of LD Lines sail from Newhaven to Dieppe and from Portsmouth to Le Havre in just a few hours. A service also runs from Gijón in Spain to St-Nazaire.

Condor Ferries sail from Poole to St-Malo (6 hours). They also offer year-round links from Weymouth to St-Malo, via the islands of Guernsey and Jersey. **Corsica Ferries** link Corsica to Italy, travelling from Savona to Bastia (6 hours), Île Rousse (6 hours) and Calvi (6 hours), as well as from Livorno to Bastia (4 hours).

TAKING PRIVATE VEHICLES

All ferries have vehicle-carrying facilities. If you want to really explore the French countryside at your leisure, taking your own car is the best option, and need not be expensive. Fares are now generally per vehicle.

For a fast alternative, check out **EuroTunnel's** rail service, Le Shuttle. Traversing the 52-km (31-mile) long Channel Tunnel, the shuttle allows motorists to drive aboard specially constructed trains and travel from Folkestone in the UK to Calais in France. The high-vehicle carriages can accommodate camper vans, cars, roof racks with bikes and mini-buses.

The terminals on either end have cash dispensers (*bureaux de change*), food outlets, shops, baby-changing facilities and toilets. The Folkestone terminal has an outdoor playground and picnic tables. One ticket covers the car and up to nine passengers. The trip takes only 35 minutes; there are four departures an hour in peak season. Book in advance and, if possible, journey in off-peak times to get the most competitive rates.

Arriving by Rail

One of the best ways for families to travel to France from Europe is via train. You get to see more of France before arriving at your destination and kids have a good time.

The high-speed train service, **Eurostar**, links England to France. The journey starts off from London St-Pancras and reaches Paris in just 2 hours and 15 minutes. Some Eurostar trains to Paris stop in Calais and Lille and many run directly to Disneyland® Paris, as well as from London to Brussels via Lille. With Eurostar, it is easy to get to any part of France, by changing on to the TGV French high-speed rail network. Trains run frequently and year round, except on Christmas Day. In winter, direct Eurostar "ski trains" run from London to the French Alps.

Below left Signs indicating lanes for cars, coaches, motorbikes and other traffic at the entrance to the Channel Tunnel
Below right A high-speed Eurostar train swishing through the French countryside en route to Paris



HIGH-SPEED LINKS FROM EUROPE

There are several other international rail services with high-speed links to France and its national rail network, **Société Nationale des Chemins de Fer (SNCF)**. This excellent network operates high-speed TGVs (*Trains à Grand Vitesse*), which connect Paris and other main French cities to Luxembourg, Brussels, Strasbourg, Berlin, Munich, Geneva, Zürich and Basel, among others. Many TGVs run in conjunction with other European services, such as **DB Bahn**, **ICE** and **TGV Lyria**. Trains run from Paris to Brussels, Amsterdam, Cologne and several other German cities on the **Thalys** network. **Elipsos** trains link Barcelona and Madrid to Paris; while **Artesia** trains link Rome, Milan and Florence to Paris and Lyon. To find out more about these services and their routes, check the **TGV Europe**, **Railteam** and **Rail Europe** websites.

The SNCF and TGV services also act as tour operators, offering great discounts on hotels, ski packages, flights and rental cars and bikes.

FARES AND RAIL PASSES

Families travelling with children can take advantage of the many special discounts and deals offered by rail services. Eurostar fares are cheapest if bought up to 120 days in advance. They are easy to book on Eurostar's

website; but be aware that the very cheapest fares are non-refundable and non-changeable in case of any change in plans.

SNCF fares are based on periods: blue (Monday 10am to Friday 3pm); white (Monday 5–10am, and Friday and Sunday 3–8pm); and red (Friday night, Saturday, Sunday morning and night and holidays); most discounts are offered only in the blue period. TGV tickets come with a compulsory reservation charge; those travelling in peak hours pay an added rate.

TGV Europe is a good website to check for discounts. Couples get a 25% discount on return tickets on TGVs and other trains as long as their journey starts in a blue period (*Découverte à Deux*); the same 25% reduction applies to a group of up to four people travelling with a child under 12 (*Découverte Enfant Plus*), to under 26s (*Découverte 12–25*) and over 60s (*Découverte Senior*).

Also look into **InterRail** passes, valid for 3–8 days of unlimited travel within a month; children (ages 4–11) get a 50% discount. These passes are only for European residents. Non-Europeans are eligible for a similar **Eurail** pass. There are many options on offer, as well as several discount deals on travel and hotels. For more details on these services, check the Rail Europe website.

By Car

European visitors coming to France with kids and all the equipment they require may well find it cheaper and easier to drive their own motorhome or car. Motorways (*autoroutes*) in France are perfectly integrated into the European system. Vehicles can be transported across on ferries and trains as well (see p19). Information on general rules, speed limits, toll fares and petrol is on pp22–3.

WHAT TO TAKE

Car insurance is a legal requirement in France; drivers must carry their vehicle's insurance policy, along with the original registration document, a European Accident Statement and a full driving licence (drivers not from Canada, the USA, the EU or EEA should bring an international driving licence). If you are not the registered owner, carry a letter from the owner giving you permission to drive the car. It is compulsory to carry passports or national ID cards too.

By law, the vehicle must carry within it a red warning triangle and a reflective waistcoat for any person who may step out of the car at the scene of an accident (this has to be kept in the car, not the boot). Snow chains are essential in the mountains during winter and are even a legal obligation on some roads.

Below left The Gare du Nord, one of Paris's several international train stations
Below right Regional maps useful for driving to and around France



CAR HIRE

All major international car-hire firms are present in France. It is generally cheaper to book and pay for the car before arrival and absolutely vital in the summer, when cars are in short supply, especially in Corsica. When buying air tickets to France, look for fly/drive deals. The SNCF also offers train/drive packages, with pick-up points in all major train stations. See the Rail Europe website for details.

To hire a car, drivers have to be at least 21, and have held a full licence for over a year. Be prepared to pay supplementary charges for a child seat, Sat-Nav (GPS), snow chains or automatic transmission. **Motorhome Hire France** and **Avis Caraway** hire out motorhomes and RVs.

MAPS AND PLANNING

Even if the car has Sat-Nav, it is a good idea to carry a road atlas or maps for the area being visited. These are available at petrol stations or at any newsstand: **ViaMichelin** is an excellent route planner.

Sunday can be the best day to drive, since large trucks are banned from 10pm on Saturdays and days prior to public holidays, as well as Sundays and public holidays from midnight–10pm year round. Try to avoid the massive traffic congestion around major French holidays.

Drivers wishing to avoid Paris should stick to the outer motorways, rather than trying the confusing routes

closer to the city. Check the **Bison Futé** website for traffic forecasts and live information in English.

The Lowdown**Arriving by Air**

Air Canada www.aircanada.ca
Air France www.airfrance.com
Air Transat www.airtransat.com
Alitalia www.alitalia.com
American Airlines www.aa.com
British Airways www.britishairways.com
Delta www.delta.com
easyJet www.easyjet.com
Flybe www.flybe.com
Iberia www.iberia.com
Jet2 www.jet2.com
KLM www.klm.com
Lufthansa www.lufthansa.com
Qantas www.qantas.com.au
Ryanair www.ryanair.com
United www.united.com

Arriving by Sea

Brittany Ferries www.brittany-ferries.co.uk
Condor Ferries www.condorferries.co.uk
Corsica Ferries www.corsica-ferries.fr
DFDS Seaways www.dfdsseaways.co.uk
LD Lines www.ldlines.co.uk
P&O Ferries www.poferries.eu
My Ferry Link www.myferrylink.com

Arriving by Rail

DB Bahn & ICE www.bahn.com
Elipsos www.elipsos.com
Eurail www.eurail.com
European Rail www.europeanrail.com

Eurostar www.eurostar.com
EuroTunnel www.eurotunnel.com
Rail Europe www.rail europe.com
Railteam www.railteam.co.uk
SNCF www.sncf.com/en_EN
TGV Europe www.tgv-europe.com
TGV Lyria www.tgv-lyria.com
Thalys www.thalys.com

By Car

Auto Europe www.autoeurope.com
Autoroutes www.autoroutes.fr
Avis www.avis.com
Avis Caraway www.aviscaraway.com
Bison Futé www.bison-fute.equipement.gouv.fr
Budget www.budget.com
Carrentals www.carrentals.co.uk
easyCar www.easycar.com
Europcar www.europcar.com
France Car Hire www.france-car-hire-rental.com
Hertz www.hertz.com
Motorhome Hire France www.motorhome-hire-france.com
National/Citer www.citer.fr
Travel Supermarket www.travelsupermarket.com
TT Car Hire www.ttcar.com/uk
ViaMichelin www.viamichelin.com

Below left A mountain road leading through the Pyrenees, one of France's many scenic routes
Below right A local car-hire station in Corsica



Getting around France

France's comprehensive and efficient national rail network is great for inter-city travel, and offers convenient connections even to remote corners. Trains are often a better and more economical option than domestic flights, but there is still a good choice of flights linking many cities. Those travelling in their own vehicles will enjoy driving through the country, with plenty of rest areas catering to families along the way. Local public transport varies from superb to sketchy.

Domestic Flights

Many domestic flights run to one of Paris's two main airports – Orly and Roissy Charles-de-Gaulle. These include the shuttle (*navette*) flights departing every hour, or even every 15 minutes, from Paris-Orly west to Bordeaux, Marseille, Toulouse and Nice. Direct flights also connect many cities to the nation's 45 airports (listed on the regional airport pages in this guide). Air France and its subsidiaries, such as **Air Corsica**, provide most connections, but many regional airlines – **Twin Jet**, **Chalair Aviation**, **Pan Europeenne** and **Hop!** – also fly some routes.

By Train

France's high-speed TGVs provide access to most of the nation from their Paris hub. The trains head out in four directions from the capital's

stations: the Gare du Nord to Lille and points north, the Gare de l'Est for Alsace and Champagne in the east, the Gare Montparnasse for Brittany, the west and southwestern France, and the Gare de Lyon serves Burgundy and the southeast.

The TGV Rhine-Rhône links the northeast with the southeast. There are many non-TGVs or regular trains that not only run the same routes, but also service smaller towns and villages. The fares are cheaper, and unlike the TGVs, reservations are not required, except for overnight trips. Travelling through the night on sleeper trains, with their bunks (*couchettes*), is an easy way to save on hotel bills. First class has four berths per compartment and second class has six berths per compartment.

The national rail network **SNCF** has a very useful online service for booking tickets. Before boarding,

ensure all the tickets are validated in a *composteur*, a yellow machine at the station; or be subject to a fine. SNCF's AutoTrain service allows motorists to transport their cars from Paris to many points, including Lyon, Toulouse, Bordeaux, Biarritz, Brive, Avignon and Nice. Motorail also offer similar services from cities in the Netherlands and Germany. Check the SNCF website for details of all these services.

By Car

Roads in France are well maintained and usually well signposted. Most motorways (*autoroutes*) are toll roads (*péage*), charging an average €0.07 per kilometre for cars and more for caravans, motorhomes and RVs. Motorways can be expensive over long distances, but the N (*Nationale*) and D (*Départementale*) roads offer a

Below left Trains leaving Gare St-Lazare in Paris, an inter-city station and the oldest in France
Below right Bus negotiating a narrow and winding road in Corsica



low-traffic alternative. The headlights of right-hand drive cars must be adjusted for left-hand driving, or be fitted with deflectors (available at all ports and ferries). Kids aged 10 and below are not allowed to sit in the front seat. A special rear-facing baby seat is allowed as long as the airbag is disabled. The speed limit on motorways is 130 km/h (80 mph), but is reduced to 110 km/h (70 mph) on rainy days, or 50 km/h (30 mph) in case of fog or snow. On N and D roads, the limit is 90 km/h (55 mph), regardless of the road's width. After passing a white sign with a town's name, the limit is 50 km/h (30 mph). Speeding fines start at €68, going up to €4,500 for a failed breathalyzer test. Non-French drivers may have to pay any fine in cash on the spot.

It is always cheaper to buy petrol at supermarkets. Many have 24-hour machines that accept credit cards. Full-service areas, with cafés, petrol stations and toilets are set up every 40 km (25 miles) on the motorways; unmanned rest areas are located every 10–20 km (6–10 miles). In case of a breakdown or accident, walk to the orange SOS phone boxes every 2 km (1 mile). For serious accidents, dial 15 or 18 for an ambulance.

City centres, with their traffic and one-way systems, can be frustrating; follow the handy *Toutes Directions*

signs to get out of any town. Car parks in most towns (many underground) cost €3–5 an hour.

By Bicycle

While the French have great respect for cyclists, bike lanes are a relatively new concept. It is best to avoid the busier roads; check out suggestions and maps on bike-oriented websites.

The SNCF generally carries bicycles for free on regional trains. In some cities, they operate the **Train+Velo** service and arrange for a rental bike on arrival at the station. For extra child seats, use a private company; local tourist offices can supply names.

Buses and Coaches

Rural bus services fan out from the main towns into the countryside, serving most villages. But beware: quality and frequency of the service varies from one area (*département*) to another. Routes usually begin at rail stations. Check local tourist offices for information on the services.

Eurolines run a number of coaches connecting France's main cities; these are often cheaper than travelling by train. Local buses are mostly for schools or weekly markets, so routes run once or twice a day.

Within Cities and Towns

In the cities, most of the important sites are close enough to visit on foot. For those that are not, taxis are convenient and quite cheap, but ensure that the meter has been turned on. Taxis can be hailed on the street, or found in city centres. Radio taxis can also be booked.

Public transport is often excellent. Most large cities have Métros, and some, such as Strasbourg and Bordeaux, have high-tech tramlines. The same tickets usually work for trams, buses and Métros. Discount passes differ with each city.

The Lowdown

Domestic Flights

Air Corsica www.aircorsica.com

Chalair Aviation www.chalair.eu

Hop! www.hop.fr

Pan Européenne www.paneuropeenne.com

Twin Jet www.twinjet.fr

By Train

SNCF www.sncf.com/en_EN

By Bicycle

Bikely www.bikely.com

Bikemap www.bikemap.net

Train+Velo www.velo.sncf.com

By Bus

Eurolines www.eurolines.com

Below left Cycling along the picturesque banks of Lac d'Annecy, in the Alps
Below right Taxis queuing up outside the Gare du Nord, Paris



Practical Information

With a little bit of planning, a family trip to France can be a very comfortable experience. Make sure passports and insurance policies are up-to-date, and photocopy them. Consider the best options for carrying and changing money; travel currency cards are a good bet. While the country is mostly safe, apply the usual precautions. Health and emergency services are excellent, and tourist offices in every town provide comprehensive information.

Passports and Visas

There are no visa restrictions for EU nationals visiting France, and there are no limits on the length of the trip either, but passports or national ID cards still have to be carried. Those with Canadian, US, Australian and New Zealand citizenship also do not need visas if they plan to stay for less than three months; their passports must be valid till three months after the end of their trip. A visa will be required for stays longer than three months. Visitors from other countries need a tourist visa, and can apply for it at their local French consulate.

Insurance

It is absolutely essential to get travel insurance, and especially when travelling with family. A good one will top up medical expenses, and insure against cancellations or lost

property. Before purchasing a policy, however, make sure you are not already covered by your bank account or credit card.

European citizens are eligible for the same healthcare as the French if they possess a **European Health Insurance Card (EHIC)**. This covers 70 per cent of the costs of visits to doctors and dentists, 80 per cent of hospital costs, and from 15 to 100 per cent of prescription drug costs. Although treatment fees have to be paid for at the time, they can be reclaimed later from the local Caisse Primaire d'Assurance Maladie (CPAM) office. A refund confirmation will be sent to your home address. EHIC cards can easily be obtained online; every member of the family should have their own.

People from other countries must check their insurance policies to see if they are properly covered.

Health

There is a hospital in every major town and city. Head to the *urgences* in the nearest hospital if faced with an emergency; call **SAMU** (Service d'Aide Médicale Urgence) for an ambulance, or **Sapeurs Pompiers** (the fire brigade), who are generally faster, and trained in first aid. This is especially relevant in rural areas, as the fire station is usually closer than the nearest hospital. Most doctors speak at least a little English.

Pharmacies can be recognized by the green neon crosses outside their windows. They are open Monday to Saturday 8:30am–7:30pm, and often on Sunday mornings as well. Many close for lunch, although in large towns, they stay open all day. At least one area pharmacy always remains open when others close; check for details of the nearest in pharmacy windows or call 32 37.

Below left At the beach next to Nausicaâ in Boulogne-sur-Mer on a hot summer day, a great place for outdoor fun

Below right The distinctive green neon sign of a pharmacy



While no vaccinations are needed to enter France, bring any medications required by family members.

Summer can be very hot, so carry hats, water, and sunblock. In July and August, harvest mites (*aoûtats*) can be a real nuisance in rural areas. If bitten, wash the area with soap and warm water; ask at the pharmacy for *Aspivenin*, *Ascabiol* or *Tiq'Aouta* to relieve the itch. For other insect bites and stings, apply mosquito cream (*crème apaisante après-moustiques*). Ticks can be a problem in forests; use fine-tipped tweezers to pull a tick out gently, without rotating it. Grip the head and not the body, then disinfect. Pharmacies and vets sell a special tool for removing ticks.

Babysitting

Except in expensive hotels, some resorts and camp sites aimed at families, babysitting services (*garde enfant*) can be hard to find in France, especially if you need an English-speaking sitter at a short notice. Contact your hotel or the tourist office, in advance, to arrange for one.

Personal Safety

France is a safe country for visitors, but it is advisable to follow the same precautions as you would at home.

Be careful when carrying valuables such as phones, cameras, and wallets; and avoid isolated areas and major city suburban areas after dark.

Victims of a crime should report it at the nearest police station (*gendarmerie*). Jot down the numbers of credit cards, and keep photocopies of all passports in case they are lost and stolen. Misplaced or lost property may turn up at the local town hall (*mairie*); check there first. French law requires adults to carry an ID at all times. Police are allowed to stop anyone without any specific reason and ask to see it.

In an emergency, make sure you can give an address before calling the police. You will have to make a statement called a *procès verbal*. Do take a certified copy of this for insurance purposes. For what to do in case of a car accident see p23.

Money

Like many European nations, France also uses the euro (€); each euro is divided into 100 *centimes* or cents.

Most banks are open Monday to Friday or Tuesday to Saturday 8:30am–noon and 1:30–4:30pm. Many will not exchange bank notes, so obtain cash from an ATM (*Distributeur Automatique de Billets*), or exchange money at a

bureau de change in Paris or another major city. Exchanges can also be found at central post offices in major cities. Visitors are allowed to bring up to €10,000 in cash into France without having to make a declaration.

ATMs are widespread in airports, train stations, cities, nearly all towns and supermarkets. **MasterCard** and **Visa** are the most widely accepted cards; **American Express** and **Diners Club** can incur extra charges. French credit and debit cards are smart cards with a microchip (*puce*), which requires that you enter a PIN for each transaction. Cards that do not have a chip can be used in French ATMs, and in hotels, shops and other businesses where someone can swipe the magnetic strip. However, they cannot be used at automated petrol stations, *autoroute* toll booths and train-station ticket machines. An alternative is to have a travel currency card (also known as a cash passport), which you charge up in advance with a set amount of currency from your bank account at home. It can then be used at ATMs, hotels and shops like an ordinary card. Many international companies sell currency cards.

Be sure to report lost or stolen cards immediately, so that they can be blocked by the bank. Inform the police as well. Bring at least two cards and keep one in a safe place.

Below left Police on bicycles at a pony-riding event for children in a French park
Below right Sign of the Banque de France, France's central bank



Communications

Mobile phone coverage improves every year, but there is a possibility of hitting a black spot in very rural areas, the mountains or in gorges. European phones work normally in France; US tri-band cellphones with GSM will also work. Since roaming charges can be high, check the rates with your own service provider before using the phone. If you have a smart phone, make sure automatic data roaming is turned off, so that you only connect to the Internet when you want to. Be sure to keep an eye on older kids with their own phones! If expecting to make frequent calls while visiting France, it is worthwhile carrying an unlocked phone. It can then accept a SIM card from one of the country's three main providers – Orange, Bouygues or SFR. Any of these cards can easily be purchased online before leaving for France; a French mobile number, starting with 06, will be provided for use. Another option is to pick up a pre-paid SIM card on arrival.

As most French people now have mobiles, public telephones are not very common. However, they can still be found at airports and in train stations. Most accept phonecards (*télécartes*), available at newsstands, tobacconists (*tabacs*) and the post office; many also take credit cards.

It is getting increasingly rare to find a telephone booth that accepts coins. A push button on the phones offers instructions in English. Internet access is widely available, mainly in cafés in larger towns; most offer free Wi-Fi. Many hotels and B&Bs provide free Wi-Fi access too; most cottage rentals (*gîtes*), on the other hand, still do not provide any. Camp sites may have a Wi-Fi zone or computer access that guests can use near the reception. Using a video call service such as Skype is, by far, the cheapest way to phone home.

There is a wide variety of British and international English-language newspapers and magazines on offer at newsstands; they may be a day late in some of the more remote districts. Many hotels and *gîtes* are equipped with satellite TV that will pick up CNN, EuroNews, and the BBC. Kids may find it amusing to watch their favourite cartoons dubbed in French.

Opening Hours

Generally, shops in France are open 9am–7pm, closing for 2–3 hours for lunch. In big cities, however, shops and many supermarkets stay open without a break. In many parts of the country, shops are open on Sunday mornings, but are usually shut on Monday. The timings for

major museums and sights may vary, and should be checked before visiting. They are mostly open 9am–5pm, often during lunch too, and stay open late one evening in a week as well. Their closing days are usually Monday or Tuesday and on public holidays.

Visitor Information

Every city, town and most villages have either an Office de Tourisme or a Syndicat d'Initiative that offers local information for visitors. Most such offices have websites as well. The French government's official tourist office website, **FranceGuide**, is in English, and is another good place to get information.

Disabled Facilities

Each year, France improves wheelchair access to holiday areas, including beaches and ski slopes. Sites such as historical châteaux and medieval villages, however, usually have limited accessibility. Most modern hotels and B&Bs have at least one room that is especially equipped for wheelchair users. Restaurants are usually on the ground floor and easily accessible, and nearly all have disabled toilets (although cafés rarely do).

Below left Tourist office with a variety of travel information on display
Below right A bright yellow French post box



Public Conveniences

There are pay toilets in automatic cubicles in many town squares. Car parks and markets have public toilets too, but they may not be very clean. Airports, shopping malls, large train stations and *autoroute* rest areas usually have baby changing tables.

Time

France is 1 hour ahead of Greenwich Mean Time (GMT) as it uses Central European Time (CET). It goes on daylight saving time from the last Sunday in March to the last Sunday in October. Times are usually given according to the 24-hour clock.

Electricity

French electricity is run on 220 volts, so a transformer may be needed for non-European electrical equipment. Also, since the plugs have two round prongs, an adaptor will be required.

What to Pack

Apart from prescription medicines, French shops will have everything visitors may have forgotten to pack. Baby monitors are handy for young ones; easy-to-carry water bottles, baby wipes and basic medical and sewing kits are essential too.

Etiquette and Attitudes

The French are very polite, and it is customary, especially in rural areas, to greet everyone in a shop, café, or even public transport with a pleasant “Bonjour Messieurs/Mesdames” on entering the premises, and wishing goodbye (*au revoir*) when leaving. Always remember, and teach kids, to say thank you (*merci*). Be sure to

shake hands when introduced to someone; women and children can offer air kisses (*les bises*).

The French are very fond of kids and greet them warmly, but expect them to be both well behaved and respectful. Since they do not put up with much nonsense or bad manners from their own offspring, they rather frown on parents who do.

The Lowdown

Emergency Numbers

All Services 112
Police 17
SAMU (ambulance) 15
Sapeurs Pompiers (fire brigade) 18

Embassies

Australian Embassy 01 40 59 33 00;
www.france.embassy.gov.au/par/home.html
 Australian Consular Emergency Service 00 61 2 6261 3305
British Embassy 01 44 51 31 00;
<http://www.ukinfrance.fco.gov.uk>
 UK Citizens 24-hour Consular Assistance 00 44 20 70 08 1500
Irish Embassy 01 44 17 67 00;
www.embassyofireland.fr
New Zealand Embassy 01 45 01 43 43; www.nzembassy.com/france
US Embassy 01 43 12 22 22;
<http://france.usembassy.gov/>
 American Citizens Services Crisis Management 1-888-407-4747

Health Insurance

EHIC www.ehic.org.uk

Currency Cards

Travelex www.travelex.com
Travel Currency Cards www.cashpassport.com

Lost or Stolen Cards

American Express 00 1 905 474 0870, for outside US 336-393-1111
Diner's Club 0 820 820 143
MasterCard 08 00 90 13 87
VISA 08 00 90 11 79

Dialling Codes

To call a French number from abroad, omit the first 0. The prefix when calling from the UK is 00 33; from the US 011 33; from Australia, Ireland and New Zealand 00 11 33

To call out of France, dial 00 and then the country code: UK 44; Canada and US 1; Australia 61; Ireland 353; New Zealand 64

Directory Inquiries in France 118 218 or www.pagesjaunes.fr

Visitor Information

FranceGuide www.franceguide.fr

Below left Shoppers at the swanky *Carrousel du Louvre*, an underground shopping mall in Paris
Below right Wheelchair accessibility on *Train vapeur de Cevennes*



Where to Stay

From luxury villas with private pools to quaint bed and breakfasts, and from comfortable self-contained homes to cheap and cheerful camp sites, France offers a variety of inviting accommodation for families, suited to all budgets. Plan ahead as far as possible, especially if travelling during July and August, when popular hotels and resorts fill up fast. Early birds will not only have the most choice, but can often get great deals on rooms, and travel fares.

Hotels

French hotels are rated from one to five stars, based on the amenities and facilities being offered – more stars equal higher rates. Since nearly all hotels now have websites, it is a good idea to do some research and choose according to personal needs.

French hotels increasingly offer rooms designed for an entire family. Some have inter-connecting rooms, bunk beds, or a mezzanine, while others even have three or four beds in a room. Infant cots are available as well, often for a small fee; enquire when booking. Among the country's many chain hotels, one of the most family-friendly is **All Seasons**; they offer great family deals too. **Logis Hotels**, a network of family-run inns in villages and towns across France, are comfortable and usually of a reliable standard. Most also have decent restaurants.

A family of four can expect to spend about €70–150 per day if staying in a one- to three-star hotel; a four- or five-star hotel will easily cost around €200 and more. Breakfast is usually extra and can be slightly expensive, although kids may get a discount. However, some hotels provide *gîte d'étape* deals for travelling families, which include a set dinner and breakfast. Many hotel-booking websites offer discounts too, so it is worth checking them out as well.

Bed and Breakfast

Known as *chambres d'hôtes* in France, bed and breakfasts (B&Bs) are often the most atmospheric places to stay. Most are set in town houses, *châteaux*, or farms; not all are suitable for families as some are home to fragile antiques or designer furnishings. That said, many, such as

the B&Bs on farms, have a suite or cottage rental (*gîte*) furnished with young children in mind. A family of four will need to budget between €70–150 per day for a stay.

One of the best features of a B&B is their owners. Most of them are great sources of local knowledge; some will pick up guests at train stations and airports and prepare home-cooked meals (*table d'hôtes*) on request, with special dishes for kids. The national self-catering networks, **Gîtes de France** and **Clévacances** provide detailed lists of B&Bs around the country.

Self-Catering

Available in many guises, from rural farmhouses to apartment hotels to villas, self-catering *gîtes* can be an economical and convenient option when travelling with kids. Among

Below left The turreted *Château de la Motte*, a B&B near Poitiers **Below centre** Family at a camp site on *L'Île Rousse*, Corsica **Below right** Family room with a separate child's bed in *Hôtel de l'Océan*, Biarritz



their advantages are a kitchen and, usually, laundry facilities. Many places also come with highchairs, toys, games and kids' DVDs. Check if linen is included, and read the fine print on deposits for breakages.

Most ski packages in France offer self-catering apartments and chalets suitable for families. Early-bird deals can include lift passes and discounts. A luxury villa can be expensive, but often have several rooms, allowing two or three families to share. The downside of self-catering homes is that many require at least a week's stay. Thousands of units are listed on Gîtes de France and Clévancances.

Holiday Villages

Holiday villages (*villages vacances* or *résidences clubs*) combine some of the best features of hotels, gîtes and camp sites. These resorts offer self-catering houses or apartments, along with on-site restaurants and cafés. The rooms are cleaned and linen provided; there are pools, kids' clubs and crèches as well.

Camping

One of the most popular ways of visiting France, camping is also the most affordable. There are thousands of sites to choose from,

ranging from a basic municipal site to five-star luxury parks. Many rent out tents (already erected), chalets, bungalows, mobile homes or even tree houses.

Families looking for a low-cost option can carry a tent, a camping-gas burner, sleeping bags, and air mattresses, and stay in municipal or local camp grounds, or on farms. At the higher end are four- or five-star camp sites. With facilities that include air-conditioned houses with kitchens, evening entertainment and water parks, these are self-contained resorts in themselves. Holiday packages for such sites often offer discounts on flights and Channel crossings.

The **Fédération Française de Camping et de Caravaning (FFCC)** publishes the names of their 11,000 members, certified to meet certain standards, on their website. It may be worth it to get an international camping card (*carnet*); some camp sites offer a discount of up to 20% for cardholders. Only members of a national camping association can purchase the card. Those with their own tent or motor home should budget about €30–40 a night for a pitch and electricity. The most basic self-catering chalet for four starts at about €400 a week in the summer. Be aware that camp sites can be noisy at night.

House Swapping

This may be a good option for an affordable holiday. Online agencies charge a small fee to list your house. All offer the chance to browse available listings in France to see what is on offer before paying.

The Lowdown

Hotels

All Seasons www.all-seasons-hotels.com

Logis Hotels www.logishotels.com

Bed and Breakfast

Clévancances www.clevancances.com

Gîtes de France www.gites-de-france.com

Self-Catering

French Connections www.frenchconnections.co.uk

Home Away Holiday Rentals www.holiday-rentals.co.uk

Pure France www.purefrance.com

Apartment Hotels

Appart City www.appartcity.com

Citadines www.citadines.com

Holiday Villages

M Vacances www.mvacances.com

Odalys www.odalys-vacances.com

Camping

FFCC www.ffcc.fr, listings on www.campingfrance.com

House Swapping

HomeExchange www.homeexchange.com

Below Palm trees and pines surrounding a swimming pool at an upmarket self-catering villa in St-Tropez
Below right Entrance to one of the many Citadines apartment hotels in Paris



Where to Eat

Renowned internationally, and justly so, French cuisine offers a flavourful experience for every taste. Families travelling with children can choose from a huge range of family-friendly places, from gourmet restaurants to quick and easy snack bars, cheerful bistros or pleasant roadside cafés. Even the fussiest kids will enjoy the many sweet delights on offer. Remember to try the classic specialities from each region; ask locally for suggestions.

Restaurant Basics

The French keep fairly strict dining hours: lunch is served from noon–1:30pm and dinner from around 7:30–9pm. In some cases, especially in the countryside, those arriving after 1pm may not be served. Once you have sat down and ordered, you can eat unhurriedly and stay as long as you like, but you need to plan on arriving at a restaurant within these times. It is a good idea to reserve a table, especially at more popular or upmarket places, and definitely at weekends. Most restaurants close at least one day a week, and finding a place to eat on a Sunday night or Monday can be difficult.

In French restaurants, the full menu is called *carte*, which is always expensive, whereas a *menu* is a set, fixed-price lunch or dinner with a more limited choice of two, three or four courses; a *formule* is similar, but

usually suggests a cheaper, simpler menu that is often available only for weekday lunches. Simpler restaurants also often have a dish of the day (*plat du jour*) chalked up on a blackboard (*ardoise*) for lunch. Many simpler restaurants and brasseries also offer mixed salads (*salades composées*).

Most French restaurants have an excellent wine list (*carte des vins*). A bottle of water can also be ordered with the meal: *gazeuse* is sparkling, and *plat* is flat. Asking for tap water (*carafe d'eau*) is also acceptable; it is safe and served free. Service and tax are included in the bill (*l'addition*), but if the service has been good, it is customary to leave a little extra tip.

Regional Specialities

One of the great joys of travelling in France is discovering the dishes and cuisine special to each region. Kids

are sure to enjoy the journey too, especially in the northeast, which is the land of custard tarts (*tarte à gros bords*) and waffles. Alsace and Lorraine is famous for its *choucroute garni* (sauerkraut with sausage) and *pain d'épices* (gingerbread). In the west, try the *pâtés* and *tarte tatins* (apple pies) of the Loire Valley, or the *galettes* (savoury buckwheat pancakes) and shellfish in Brittany.

In Lyon, be sure to have its potato and cheese-based dishes *tartiflette* and *raclette*; while in Burgundy, try the *boeuf bourguignon* (beef stew). A classic dish in the Massif Central is *aligot* – melted Tomme cheese with mashed potatoes. In the southwest, expect to find *cassoulet* (a stew of beans and pork or duck) and plenty of succulent melons and fruit. The south produces olive oil, fresh herbs and vegetables that are so essential to its cooking, along with plenty of

Below left Ten tiers of tempting macarons in a pâtisserie window

Below centre Street cafés on the Cours Saleya, one of Nice's most popular attractions



lamb and fish. It is also the land of good pasta dishes – Nice is famous for its ravioli.

Eating out with Kids

Most restaurants in France welcome children, but few will have highchairs, so consider taking a portable one for very young kids. French kids are well behaved and are treated as adults in restaurants; running about is not appreciated. Make sure kids do not disturb the other patrons.

An economical children's menu (*menu enfant*) – two or three courses in kid-sized portions, often specified for “under 10s” – is often on offer. Classic entries include *steak haché* (burger without the bun), chicken or ham with *frites* (chips) or spaghetti bolognese and ice cream. Or ask for a *portion enfant*, a scaled-down version of food on the regular menu. Since French dinner hours may be too late for young kids, brasseries that serve meals all day are always a good bet for an earlier meal. In summer, evening picnics are an option.

Cafés, bistros or restaurants with outdoor seating tend to be ideal for families, offering some distractions for squirmy children. The menus are always posted outside, so check that there is something for everyone in the family before sitting. There is no dearth of fast-food chains such as

McDonalds, Buffalo Grill and the French hamburger outlet Quick, while bakeries, *sandwicheries* and kebab stands offer a range of kid-friendly food (pizza slices, pies and quiches). Present in all towns, cafés offer hot chocolate, fruit juices (*jus de fruit*) and *sirops* (fruit-flavoured syrups mixed with water) to choose from.

Shopping for Food

French markets (*marchés*) are a feast for the senses and fun to visit. Cities have at least one covered market (*halle*); most are open daily except on Mondays. Towns and villages will have one or more weekly outdoor market days and often farmers' markets selling organic produce (*bio*). See also page 32.

Supermarkets (*supermarchés* or *hypermarchés*) sell all types of foods and drinks, but the French treasure their traditional shops too, especially bakeries (*boulangeries*), which bake breads and *croissants*, and pastry shops (*pâtisseries*). Meats can be bought from a butcher shop (*boucherie*). Supermarkets usually also have a type of delicatessen (*traiteur*) that sells prepared meat and seafood dishes, as well as salads. Smaller villages have a family-run grocer (*épicerie*) or a convenience store, such as Vidal, Proxi or Casino.

Below left Farm-fresh strawberries (*fraises*) for sale at a local market stall

Below right Using long-stemmed forks to dip bread into cheese fondue



KIDS' CORNER

Taste bud feast

If you have watched the cartoon *Ratatouille*, you already know that French food is the best in the world. Even if there is something you do not like at home, always remember, in France they often cook it differently. Try a little bite of everything – you never know, you may change your mind!

French dishes that get the thumbs up from many kids:

Tartiflette a baked dish with potatoes, cheese and ham



Croque monsieur

a grilled ham and cheese

open sandwich

Confit de

carnard golden crispy

duck leg, usually served with sautéed potatoes

Quiche Lorraine an egg, ham and cheese tart

Cordon bleu boneless chicken breast baked with ham and cheese inside

Raclette boiled potatoes, ham and *saucisson* (thick, dry cured sausage) drowned in melted cheese. Everyone around the table mixes together their own combination.

Fondue this can be a main course or a dessert – food (bread, beef, or strawberries) on sticks, fried in oil or dipped in something warm (usually melted cheese in France).



Crêpes thin pancakes filled with cheese, ham, chocolate, or just sugar and lemon – the possibilities are endless!

Glace ice cream (*cornet*: cone; *coupe*: cup)

WISHING AND EATING

In Provence, it is traditional to serve 13 desserts at Christmas. Some are very simple (fruit or nuts), but it is customary to have a taste of each one and then make a wish.

Shopping in France

Going shopping in France tantalizes the senses. From chocolates to perfumes, speciality foods and wines to fashionable clothing, “Made in France” signifies quality. Leisurely shopping can be a challenge with children, but even they will enjoy exploring the fresh and varied goods on offer at the colourful outdoor markets. Check out the flea markets for a special memento that is distinctly French.

Opening Hours

The big chain stores usually remain open all day, but most other shops in France, especially those outside big cities, still take a break for lunch. Shops open sometime between 8 and 10am, close at noon or 12:30pm for lunch, and reopen from around 2–3pm until 6–7pm (some later in summer). Most shops, except supermarkets, are closed on Mondays. Some supermarkets and shops do open on Sunday morning, however.

Food and Wine

Almost everything is available in the *supermarchés* and *hypermarchés* such as Carrefour, Leclerc, Auchan, Intermarché and others. Some of the world's best breads and pastries can easily be bought from the local *boulangerie* or *pâtisserie*; select

from a wide range of cheese at the local *fromagerie*. Chocolate lovers should try out the many artisan chocolatiers who make their own creations. Speciality shops provide gift baskets or packaging for those who want to carry food items home. Besides these, look out for farms selling fresh produce directly – olive oil in Provence, *pâtés* and *foie gras* in southwest France.

But the best source for food and a must-try experience is the weekly market, whether it is on a city street or in a central village square. Most big towns have a permanent covered market *halle*, which is usually open six days a week. An outdoor market opens around it one or more days a week and is regarded as a social event. Look out for special farmers' markets (*marchés paysans*) in the summer; these are often held on Sunday mornings. Wine touring is

very popular among those who visit France's many wine regions. Pick up bottles at rates often lower than in the shops. At smaller vineyards, guests are welcome to sample a glass and have a chat, but châteaux in Bordeaux and Burgundy mostly require prior notice for a visit.

Other Markets

Once a month or so, a local market may expand into a big affair, selling clothes, pots and pans, cowbells or even tractors. Permanent speciality markets, such as bird and flower markets, can be found on the Île de la Cité in Paris. Christmas markets in Strasbourg and Alsace continue an old tradition, with cakes, chocolates and Christmas decorations.

Find an odd memorable souvenir at an antique market or at a flea market (*marché aux puces*). Probably

Below left Selection of fruit liqueurs displayed for sale **Below centre** The famous Galeries Lafayette department store in Paris **Below right** Colourful toys and souvenirs on a street in Conques



the best permanent flea market is the **Marché aux Puces de St Ouen** on the edge of Paris. Porte de Vanves and Porte de Montreuil, two other flea markets, are worth a visit too.

You may see posters advertising **vide greniers** (a kind of attic sale). These can be great fun for kids; the most astonishing things can come out of an old French attic, including an amazing array of toys.

Clothes and Accessories

The French love their department stores, and in Paris, they have some of the world's most famous: Le Bon Marché is the oldest and currently the most fashionable. Printemps and Galeries Lafayette have branches all around France.

The capital city's fashion enclaves include the famous designer shops of Rue du Faubourg St-Honoré and Avenue Montaigne. Many trendy places are appearing in the stylish Marais as well. In provincial towns, the best shopping is in the small and independent boutiques, especially and expensively on the Côte d'Azur, in Cannes and St-Tropez. Everyday items can be purchased at the many national chains and supermarkets such as Auchan, Monoprix, Géant Casino and Carrefour. For these, look out for signs to a *Centre Commercial*.

Factory Outlets

There are several factory outlets (*magasins d'usines*) in France that often specialize in discounts on a specific company's items: Le Creuset pots at Fresnoy-le-Grand, silks at the Atelier de Soie in Lyon, Mephisto shoes in Sarrebourg or even Royal Limoges china in Limoges.

The outlet centres (*centres de marques*) feature discount boutiques of designer brands, mostly clothing, shoes, sportswear and houseware. Most of these outlets are in the suburbs of Paris – La Vallée Village, close to Disneyland, is popular. Troyes is the main centre with

McArthur Glen, Marques Avenue and **Marques City**, while **Marques Villages** is in Roppenheim, Alsace.

Books, Music, Art and Crafts

It is fairly easy to find at least a small selection of books (these are mostly bestsellers) in English in bookstores or newsstands. The **FNAC** chain has branches in many cities and is ideal for browsing and picking up books, music and electronics.

Artists, woodcarvers, glassmakers and craftsmen of all kinds congregate in summer, selling their creations from their studios or at local markets.

Check online national directories and at the tourist offices for details.

Sales Tax and Refunds

Non-European Union residents can claim back 12 per cent of the 19.6 per cent TVA (sales tax) as long as they spend over €175 in a single day in a single participating shop; there will be a "Tax Free" sign. Ask for a tax refund cheque (*bordereau de détaxe*) to present at customs.

The Lowdown

Markets

Marché aux Puces de St Ouen
www.marcheauxpuces-saintouen.com
Vides Greniers
www.vide-greniers.org

Factory Outlets

Marques Avenue www.marquesavenue.com
Marques City www.marquescity.fr
Marques Village
www.thestyleoutlets.com
McArthur Glen www.mcarthurglen.fr

Books and Music

FNAC www.fnac.com

National Directories

Shopping centres www.centres-commerciaux.com

Wines and farm products
www.marches-producteurs.com

Below left Glittery window displays at a Louis Vuitton store in Paris

Below right Stalls selling a variety of knick-knacks at the annual Braderie de Lille, Europe's biggest annual flea market



Entertainment in France

France has plenty to see and do, and goes out of its way to entertain both visitors and locals. Besides the many festivals, there are high-energy music and dance concerts and impressive theatrical shows. Spectacular sound and light productions set in châteaux transcend language difficulties and have huge family appeal, as do the lively puppet shows. There is no dearth of sporting events and activities either. Visit the local tourist office to see what's on.

Music and Dance

From Easter to September, the calendar is packed with outdoor music and dance events, including the nationwide street music festival, **Fête de la Musique** in June. Folk festivals are popular with kids: notably the lively song and dance concerts at the **Festival Interceltique** in Lorient (see p15) and the **Basque Folklore Festival** in Bayonne (see p302). The **Festival International de Folklore d'Issoire**, featuring musicians from around the world, takes place in Issoire, near Puy-le-Dôme, and Lourdes (see p308).

Theatre and Film

Although language may prove a barrier to theatrical productions in France, even kids are sure to enjoy the street performances during the **Festival d'Avignon** (see p342).

Look out for summer spectacles such as **A La Cour du Roy François**, a Renaissance-era inspired show at the fine Château d'Amboise (see p186); **Cinésécénie**, the torch-lit historical pageant at Grand Parc Puy du Fou (see p177); and **Promenade Nocturnes**, a charming sound and light show at the Château de Chenonceau (see p183).

Films are highly appreciated in France. Family films are often shown during the school holidays. It is rare to find movies in English or in another foreign language outside the bigger cities; look out for films designated VO (*Version Originale*).

Circuses

France has a proud circus tradition, and at least once or twice a year, little travelling circuses visit villages. For larger events, head to Monaco

(see p360) in January or February for the energetic **Festival International du Cirque de Monte-Carlo**; or witness a colourful affair at the **Festival International du Cirque de Bayeux** in March. Kids will love the clowns and the incredible acrobatics at the **Cirque d'Hiver Bouglione's** winter performances in Paris.

Puppet Shows

The classic and much-loved French marionette, Guignol, is brought to life at the **Théâtre de la Maison de Guignol** in Lyon (see p221) in the form of exceptional performances by the Compagnie des Zonzons. Regular marionette performances also take place in Paris at many venues on Wednesday, Saturday and Sunday afternoons; check local listings or the tourist office for details. If visiting Charleville-Mézières

Below left Illuminations at the Château de Versailles during the annual Fête de la Musique
Below right Children watching a puppet show in the Jardins des Champs-Élysées, Paris



(see p65) in September, be sure to check out the Institut International de la Marionnette for their international puppet event, the **Festival Mondial des Théâtres de Marionnettes**.

Sports

In the south and west, especially, rugby occupies many weekends from autumn to spring, from inter-village matches to league and international competitions. Football, though, is the most popular sport across France; find out about upcoming matches on the **Ligue 1** website, and book tickets through **FnacSpectacles**. Known as **Roland Garros** in France, the French Open tennis tournament (see p17) in Paris is a huge event in May–June. The **Fédération Française du Surf** organizes many surfing events around the French coasts.

Village Fêtes

These take place throughout the summer and can be a lot of fun for the whole family, especially children. In small villages, the annual fête usually lasts two or three days; in larger ones, festivities can go on for an entire week. There are often rides, games, food stands and some competitions – races or *pétanque* matches. There will also be at least

one communal dinner, so remember to book in advance for it. The meal is followed by live music – anything from accordions to rock ‘n’ roll – and dancing and a fireworks display.

Family Activity Holidays

There are many ways to see France a bit differently when travelling as a family. **Roulottes de Campagne** lists firms, all over the country, that offer leisurely vacations in horse-pulled wooden caravans or *roulottes*. Check **Anes et Randonnées** for the names of nearly 80 farms that provide short or week-long treks on donkeys through scenic routes. **Un Lit au Pré** provides options for authentic farm holidays, a short distance from Paris; **Ski Famille** specializes in arranging family skiing holidays; or tour the waterways of France on barges and houseboats with **Le Boat**.

Travel and Learn French allows families to combine French lessons with their holiday in Fréjus (see p357) on the Côte d’Azur. Fun-filled weeks of family adventures are on offer by **Activities Abroad**; enjoy white-water rafting and kayaking in the Ardèche (see pp232–3) in the Alps. Details of sports that are available on many of France’s rivers are given in the regional chapters. Learn to sail at the Landes with **Rockley Watersports**.

The Lowdown

Music and Dance

Basque Folklore Festival
www.fetes.bayonne.fr

Circuses

Cirque d’Hiver Bougione
www.cirquedhiver.com

Festival International du Cirque de Bayeux www.festivalcirquebayeux.fr

Puppet Shows

Festival Mondial des Théâtres de Marionnettes www.festival-marionnette.com

Puppet Shows in Paris www.paris.com/fr/enfant/marionnettes.html

Sports

Fédération Française Surf
www.surfingfrance.com

FnacSpectacles
www.fnacspectacles.com

French Football League
www.ligue1.com

Family Activity Holidays

Activities Abroad www.activitiesabroad.com

Anes et Randonnées <http://preproden.ane-et-rando.com>

Le Boat www.leboat.com

Rockley Watersports www.rockleywatersports.com

Roulottes de Campagne www.roulottes-de-campagne.com

Ski Famille www.skifamille.com

Travel and Learn French www.travelandlearnfrench.com

Un Lit au Pré www.unlitaupre.fr

Below left Street performers in front of the Palais des Papes during the Festival d’Avignon
Below right Kayaking on the Ardèche near the Pont d’Arc, Gorges de l’Ardèche



The History of France

The one theme that marks France's past is the nation's resilience – a tireless ability to bounce back from disasters. From being the most powerful country in Europe to fighting for survival and then rebuilding to attain its former glory, France has seen her fair share of ups and downs. But along with the wars and the revolutions also emerged ideals of chivalry, Gothic cathedrals, the metric system, the *Declaration of the Rights of Man*, pasteurization and modern art.

Prehistory to 121 BC

Humans have occupied France since around 2 million BC. Cro-Magnon Man is credited with the creation of great art at Chauvet (see pp232–3) and other Palaeolithic-era painted caves in southwest France. By 5000 BC, France was at the centre of the Neolithic civilization; Brittany saw the erection of the famous stones of Carnac (see pp166–7).

The onset of the Bronze and Iron Ages around 1,500 BC brought in the Celts, or Gauls, who spread across the country in different tribes.

Roman Gaul

In 121 BC, the Romans took Marseilles, a Greek maritime colony, and pushed inland from there. Their



Early cave art depicting a group of wild horses and cattle, Chauvet

new province is called Provence even today. The rest of Gaul fell to Julius Caesar, in a brilliantly-led six-year campaign (58–51 BC). Under the Romans, new cities, including Lugdunum (Lyon) and Lutetia (Paris), emerged, and imposing temples, forums and amphitheatres were built.

Christianity arrived in Gaul in the 3rd century. Under the Emperor Constantine, in 313, it became the principal religion of the Empire. At the same time, the Roman Empire was beginning its decline; its armies could no longer protect Gaul from barbarian invasions.

The Dark Ages

In 406, Germanic tribes crossed the Rhine frontier; the Visigoths settled in Tolosa (Toulouse) and the Burgundians founded Burgundy. The Franks set up base in the Seine river valley, now the Île de France. Politics and power became local affairs, although the Franks proved to be the most powerful: Clovis (482–511) conquered much of Gaul, Charles Martel stopped the Arab



The Gaulish chieftain Vercingetorix's surrender to Julius Caesar

invasion in 732, and Charlemagne (768–814) seized most of Western Europe and was crowned Holy Roman Emperor by the pope. By 843, the empire was divided between Charlemagne's grandsons. A period of invasions followed, notably from the powerful Vikings, who founded a state on the Channel – Normandy.

Medieval France

At the turn of the millennium, the first indications of an economic and cultural explosion could already be seen in Europe, with the Frankish

Timeline

Cave paintings at Lascaux

15,000 BC

Germanic tribes overrun the Rhine frontier

AD 406

Charlemagne is crowned Holy Roman Emperor

496

800

First Crusade declared at Clermont-Ferrand

987

1095

Caesar defeats the Gauls at Alesia in a brilliant campaign

Clovis, king of the Franks, converts to Christianity

Hugh Capet founds the Capetian dynasty, which will reign until 1328

Kingdom at its heart. Hugh Capet's dynasty, established in 987, saw his descendants increase their royal domain bit by bit. In 1095, Pope Urban II declared the first of many crusades to the Holy Land, in all of which France played a leading role. In the 12th and 13th centuries, the Franks' capital, Paris, emerged as Europe's art and intellectual centre. Gothic architecture began to take the shape of grand cathedrals.

Meanwhile, England's conquest by the Duke of Normandy in 1066 tied the two nations in war for years. In 1152, Henry II of Normandy wed Eleanor of Aquitaine and gained a mighty French duchy. The ensuing war between the kings of France and Henry II ended 60 years later, with victory for the French king, Philip II Augustus, who doubled the size of his realm.

The kingdom of France, however, signified only the north, the duchies of the south differing politically and culturally. But in 1209, the pope and Philip II Augustus led the Albigensian Crusade against the south, using the growing heresy of the Cathars there as a pretext, and absorbed the lands of the south into France's realm.

End of the Middle Ages

By the 14th century, France was the most powerful country in Europe, but turmoil was about to strike. Edward III, king of England, laid claim to the French throne in 1337, and invaded in force, signalling the start of the Hundred Years' War.

In 1347, France was devastated by the Black Death; millions died. Yet, the war continued. After victory at Agincourt in 1415, the English took Paris; they felt they had won. But the arrival of Joan of Arc in 1429 inspired the French to rise up. By 1453, they had recaptured all the English possessions, except Calais. France's recovery was quick, and by the 1490s, they were at war again, this time in Italy. It was during this time that the artistic influence of the Italian Renaissance spread to the country. But more troubles were on the way. The Protestant Reformation divided the French, as many became Huguenots, or converts to the reformed faith of John Calvin. The nation was wrecked by the Wars of Religion which broke out in 1562, leading to many atrocities, including the six-day St Bartholomew's Day massacre of Protestants in Paris. Finally, Henri IV fought his way to the throne and ended the war by decreeing religious tolerance with the Edict of Nantes in 1598.



Joan of Arc leading her men against the English during the Hundred Years' War

Hundred Years' War starts, taking a toll on France for the next 116 years

St Bartholomew's Day massacre of thousands of Protestants

1209

1337

1431

1572

1598

Philip II Augustus and the pope decree the Albigensian Crusade

Joan of Arc burnt at the stake in Rouen

Henry IV decrees Edict of Nantes, granting religious tolerance

FACTS & FIGURES

The rooster emblem

Callus, in Latin, can mean either a Gaul or a chicken. In the Middle Ages, the enemies of the country joked that the French were as proud and feisty as roosters. Instead of being insulted, the French made the *coq* a national emblem – you will often see them carved on top of war memorials.



Politics vs cheese

President Charles de Gaulle gave the best explanation for French politics: "How can anyone govern a country that makes 246 different kinds of cheese?" In fact, there may be more than a thousand!

Riding the bus

In 1662, mathematician and philosopher Blaise Pascal gave Paris the world's first city bus – a horse-drawn carriage. It was a big success, until common people were banned from using it.



The "humane" guillotine

The "national razor" or the guillotine of the Revolution was actually meant as a more humane means of execution. It was still being used as late as 1977.

More perfume please

The French nobility during the reign of Louis XIV believed that washing was bad for them. So they never did! They just piled on more perfume and powder.



Name that pig

In France, it is against the law to name your pig Napoleon.

What did you say?

In 1880, only a quarter of the French spoke French as their native language.

The Grand Siècle and Age of Enlightenment

After the assassination of Henri IV in 1610, four kings named Louis followed. The first, Louis XIII, ascended the throne very young. He was guided by Cardinal Richelieu, a powerful minister who transformed France into an absolute monarchy.

The 17th century is called France's Grand Siècle (Great Century). It reached its peak under King Louis XIV (1634–1715). He built the spectacular palace at Versailles (see pp 124–7). French music and Baroque architecture thrived. At the same time, the King's endless wars nearly bankrupted France, while his misrule caused famines and revolts in the countryside. He also revoked the Edict of Nantes, leading to an exodus of Protestants from France.

In Louis XV's reign (1715–74), 18th-century France entered an Age of Enlightenment. Philosophers such as Voltaire and Rousseau put forth



Louis XIV and his entourage stroll through the gardens of Versailles

ideas of equality and the inalienable rights of man – principles that went against the aristocratic order. But the nobility and church resisted change. Louis XVI ascended the throne in 1774 and attempted to pass some half-hearted reforms, but it was too late.

The French Revolution

Spurred by economic ills and ideas of equality, the French Revolution began when the king convened the Estates-General, the French parliament, in 1789. Tired of being disregarded, the Third Estate (commoners) broke away from the main body and declared itself a National Assembly of the People. They then swore to give France a constitution. With growing support, mobs gathered in Paris; on 14 July, they stormed the Bastille, seizing the royal fortress and its cache of arms.

The revolutionaries forced the monarchy to give France a proper constitution, but some wanted more change. In 1792, the First Republic was established and, in 1793, the royal family were executed by the newly invented guillotine. A Reign of Terror followed, marked by the massacre of thousands of people thought to be enemies of the Revolution. The resulting chaos set the scene for the rise of Napoleon Bonaparte.

Two Napoleons

Napoleon, as France's leading general and strategist, went on to conquer and control much of



Napoleon and his officers watch the burning of Moscow in 1812

Western Europe and even Egypt in the name of the Revolution. At the start of the 19th century, he took over France as First Consul. In 1804, he declared himself Emperor, and extended his empire. He carried out the reforms attempted by the revolutionaries, improving roads and education, establishing the metric system of measurement and freedom of religion. His reform of taxation and civil law, the Napoleonic Code, is still in use today.

Napoleon's empire was constantly at war with other European countries. For years he seemed invincible, but in 1812 he invaded Russia. He captured Moscow, but was unable to defeat the Russian armies. In 1814, Napoleon was deposed and exiled to Elba, but escaped to seize power yet again before his reign finally ended at the Battle of Waterloo in 1815.

After Napoleon, the Bourbon monarchs were restored under Louis XVIII, but France's turbulent politics led to another revolution in July

Timeline

Reign of Louis XIV
marks a golden age of art and culture

Reign of Terror
begins; thousands executed by guillotine

July Revolution
brings Louis-Philippe to the throne

Prussia invades France; the Third Republic is formed

1643–1715

1789

1793

1815

1830

1848

1870–71

French Revolution sparks off in Paris

Napoleon faces his final defeat at the Battle of Waterloo

Second Republic soon becomes the Second Empire under Napoleon III

1830. This resulted in a constitutional monarchy under King Louis-Phillipe. France began to modernize, but Parisians, in particular, were still dissatisfied, and in 1848 yet another revolution led to a Second Republic. It elected Napoleon's nephew as its president. He soon proclaimed himself Emperor Napoleon III. His "Second Empire" was marked by the remaking and modernization of Paris. In the war of 1870, Prussia and other German states overran northern France and besieged Paris. The armistice terms left Parisians humiliated. Riots led to the creation of the Paris Commune, which was brutally crushed by the French Army.

The Third Republic

France finally found political stability under the Third Republic. The new regime passed long-needed reforms in education and social welfare, but political agitation still rocked the Republic. This period is also referred to as the *belle époque* (Beautiful Era), known for its Art Nouveau style and technological advancements.

Around 1.7 million Frenchmen and women died during World War I, and large parts of the country were devastated. The exhausted nation was slow to recover. The avant-garde 1920s saw the arrival of Art Deco, experimental writers, Surrealism and jazz. The grim 1930s were a time of depression and the threat of war. France was invaded once again in 1940. Northern France fell under a bitter Nazi occupation; the south,

left alone for a while under the Vichy regime, was occupied in 1942. A strong resistance network aided the liberation, and Free French troops entered Paris in August 1944.

France Since 1945

The nation struggled to regain its bearings under an unstable Fourth Republic of squabbling politicians and short-lived governments. More trouble came in the form of colonial liberation movements; France lost both Vietnam and Algeria after years of fighting. In 1958, General Charles de Gaulle was established President, and constituted the Fifth Republic.

Angry with social restrictions and an inflexible state, students and workers came together in 1968 in a revolt that demanded political and economic change. De Gaulle restored order once more. Since then, France has become a more open society.

Today, France is a prosperous and egalitarian society. Its innovative technologies have caught the world's imagination. With a rich cultural heritage, the country attracts nearly 80 million foreign visitors a year.



Allied troops on the Champs-Élysées in August 1944

HEROES & VILLAINS



Julius Caesar If he had really met Asterix and Obelix, he would have probably had their heads chopped off or sold them into slavery.

Philip II Augustus The first to call himself "King of France". He built the nation, defeated all its enemies and doubled the size of the kingdom.

Joan of Arc A simple girl who put on armour and rode into battle with thousands of soldiers to drive the English out of France.



Henri IV Popularly known as "Our Good King Henry", he made his people stop quarrelling over religion and wanted each family to have a chicken for the pot each Sunday.

Voltaire Devoted his pen and his life to the cause of liberty. He was thrown in jail more than once. He got his revenge by showing the French how to laugh at themselves.

Maximilien Robespierre Thought he was the purest, most virtuous man in France – he sent 40,000 people who disagreed to the guillotine!

Napoleon Bonaparte The story of this young, dashing general makes for an exciting chapter in history. But 1,800,000 Frenchmen died for his ambitions and dreams of glory.



Charles de Gaulle A brilliant general who picked up a tired and defeated nation and gave it back its courage. Later, he came out of retirement to save it again as the president of the country.

World War I devastates Eastern France

Fifth Republic is established by President de Gaulle

1874

1914–17

1940–44

1958

2012

First exhibition of the Impressionists: beginning of modern art

Nazi Germany occupies France

Presidential elections

*Enjoying the Mediterranean sun
at Calanque de Marseilleveyre,
near Marseille*



Exploring **FRANCE**





Northeast France

Northeast France is a huge area: almost 650 km (400 miles) separate Boulogne on the coast from Mulhouse in Alsace, yet these regions tend to get overlooked by people who are on their way to somewhere else. The regions boast the rugged shores and beaches of the Côte d'Opale, magnificent cathedrals and castles, big open landscapes, a host of world-class museums and two great theme parks.



Highlights

Nausicaá, Boulogne-sur-Mer

Patrolling sharks, performing sea lions and glittering tropical fish are the highlight of this giant aquarium, which offers superb holiday fun (see pp68–9).

Parc Astérix

The comic-book characters from Ancient Gaul come to life in one of the top theme-park attractions of France (see pp74–5).

Château Fort de Sedan

Explore the largest medieval castle in Europe, with massive walls honeycombed by spiral stairs, arrow slits and vaulted halls (see pp64–5).

Reims Cathedral

Spot angels at this medieval masterpiece that is lit up by its stained glass, like a magic lantern made of stone (see pp60–61).

Colmar

Straight out of a fairy-tale picture book, this gem of a town has half-timbered houses lining crooked streets (see pp54–5).

Verdun

This symbol of French resolve in World War I is vividly recalled by its battlefield site, museums, cemeteries and eerie bone vault (see pp50–51).

Left The west façade of the magnificent Gothic Cathédrale Notre-Dame, Reims
Above left A steam engine on display at the Cité du Train, Europe's biggest railway museum, in Mulhouse

The Best of Northeast France

World War I battlefields such as Verdun and the Somme stand out across Northeast France, and their memorials and monuments are among the most fascinating and moving sights. But this part of France has many brighter sides too – such as the natural wonder of the Baie de Somme, superb Gothic cathedrals at Reims and Amiens, and the splendid Château de Chantilly. There is something for everyone to enjoy here.



Memorable museums

This region offers plenty of child-friendly museums; kids who do not have an inclination for art museums are in luck. **Mulhouse** (see pp56–7) has two wonderful, world-class museums, so large that they call them “cities”: the Cité du Train and the Cité de l’Automobile. Nearby, the **Ecomusée d’Alsace** (see p56) at Ungersheim is a whole museum village. At **Troyes** (see p62), there is the unusual Musée de l’Outil et de la Pensée Ouvrière. In **Chantilly** (see p76), the Musée Vivant du Cheval features a collection of horses and riding displays. **Nausicaá** (see pp68–9) in Boulogne is effectively a museum of sealife.

Be sure not to miss the excellent art museums at **Reims** (see pp60–61), **Amiens** (see p73) and **Chantilly**, while **Strasbourg** (see p57) and **Troyes** each have a Musée d’Art Moderne that stretches back to the late 19th century. At **Colmar** (see pp54–5), the Musée d’Unterlinden has something for everyone, from Matthias Grünewald’s splendidly gruesome Isenheim altarpiece to crossbows and jelly moulds.

The great outdoors

The Northeast boasts immense and dramatic expanses of protected landscape, such as the **Parc Naturel Régional de la Montagne de Reims** (see p61). The magnificent old hunting forests – the **Forêt de Chantilly** (see p76), **Forêt de St-Gobain** (see p77) and **Forêt de Compiègne** (see p77) – cast an enchanting spell. There are plenty of information centres and marked walks to help visitors explore them.

The **Côte d’Opale** (see p69) is the name given to the English Channel coastline of the Northeast. There are cliff-top walks with views right over the Channel and excellent beaches for swimming and watersports, such as at **Le Crotoy** (see p72). Visit the marshlands of the

Above Vineyards in the Parc Naturel Régional de la Montagne de Reims **Left** The Isenheim altarpiece in the Musée d’Unterlinden



Left The fairy-tale *Château de Pierrefonds* **Right** Goat shed at the *Ecomusée d'Alsace*, Ungersheim

Parc du Marquenterre (see p72), a famous bird sanctuary, or take a boat trip to see the seals in the **Baie de Somme** (see p72).

Hop on to a river cruise along the Meuse at **Verdun** (see p51), or on branches of the Somme river that lead through the “floating gardens” of the Hortillonnages at **Amiens**. Near **Langres** (see p63), ride a pedalo on the Lac de la Liez – one of the region’s many artificial lakes.

Fortresses and châteaux

For the biggest and mightiest medieval castle, go to the **Château Fort de Sedan** (see pp64–5) and witness the evolution of castle architecture. The brilliance of Louis XIV’s military architect, Vauban, is in evidence here and especially at his masterpiece, the star-shaped garrison town of **Neuf-Brisach** (see p55). Head for the wonderful fortified hilltop towns at **Langres**, **Laon** (see p77), **Montreuil-sur-Mer** (see p71) and **Boulogne-sur-Mer** (see p69). See superb châteaux, notably the

Château de Compiègne (see p76), the **Château de Chantilly** (see p76) and the fantastic 19th-century **Château de Pierrefonds** (see p77).

Memories of World Wars

The most potent symbol of World War I, **The Battlefield of Verdun** (see pp50–51), is marked by a scarred landscape, a museum and the Ossuaire de Douaumont. The **Battlefields of the Somme** (see pp72–3) evoke similar memories, with numerous battle-torn sites around Albert.

Memories of World War I go underground at the Carrière Wellington in **Arras** (see pp70–71), part of the intriguing honeycomb of centuries-old tunnels beneath the city.

This region also became a battle zone in World War II. **The Maginot Line** (see p52) was an extraordinary chain of forts built in vain by the French to defend their border with Germany. La Coupole, the German V2 rocket-launching site, looms near **St-Omer** (see p70).

Below Poppies in full bloom across the battlefields of the Somme



Northeast France

The landscape of Northeast France varies from the cliffs, coastal beaches and marshes of the Côte d'Opale in the west to the forested hills and mountains of the Ardennes, Lorraine and Alsace in the east. Efficient road and rail services connect all corners, but there are still plenty of quiet, winding roads and paths through unspoiled landscapes to explore, revealing scenes barely touched by tourism and the modern world.



Vintage pedal cars in the Cité de l'Automobile, Mulhouse



Places of interest

ALSACE AND LORRAINE

- 1 The Battlefield of Verdun
- 2 The Maginot Line
- 3 Parc d'Attraction Walygator
- 4 Metz
- 5 Nancy
- 6 Colmar
- 7 Enchanted towns of Alsace
- 8 Ecomusée d'Alsace
- 9 Mulhouse
- 10 Strasbourg

CHAMPAGNE

- 1 Reims Cathedral
- 2 Épernay
- 3 Troyes
- 4 Chaource
- 5 Langres
- 6 Château Fort de Sedan

LE NORD & PICARDY

- 1 Nausicaá, Boulogne-sur-Mer
- 2 St-Omer
- 3 Lille
- 4 Arras
- 5 Montreuil-sur-Mer
- 6 Baie de Somme
- 7 Grottes-Refuges de Naours
- 8 Battlefields of the Somme
- 9 Amiens
- 10 Parc Astérix
- 11 Chantilly
- 12 Compiègne
- 13 Château de Pierrefonds
- 14 Laon



Half-timbered houses with flower-bedecked balconies in Eguisheim, one of the "enchanted towns" of Alsace

The Lowdown



Getting there and around

Air (see p48). **Ferry** Ferries from the UK sail to Calais, Dunkerque, Dieppe and Boulogne. **Train** Eurostar passenger rail services from the UK (via the Channel Tunnel) serve Lille and Paris; some also stop at Calais. There is a good network of trains: at local level they are operated by the TER division of the SNCF (www.ter-sncf.com); the region is also served by the high-speed TGV network (www.tgv.com), with lines via Lille (Thalys) to London and Brussels, as well as TGV Est Européen east from Paris to Strasbourg. **Bus** Bus services are operated by various companies on a departmental or local basis – Soléa operates only in and around Mulhouse; Artis

around Arras. **Car** Major international car hire firms are present in the larger cities, such as Strasbourg, Lille and Nancy, and in many smaller ones, such as Boulogne and Arras. **Autoroutes** (motorways) link all the major cities; most of these are *péage* (toll roads). EuroTunnel enables cars to travel through the Channel Tunnel, emerging south of Calais.



Supermarkets Large, modern and well-stocked supermarkets are found on the outskirts of all the major towns and cities. The main companies are Leclerc, Auchan, Super U and Intermarché. **Market days** Most towns and cities have markets; some are open once a week, others take place daily. Contact the tourist offices for details.



Opening hours Most shops open from Monday to Saturday, often with a break for lunch. Supermarkets generally have longer hours. *Boulangeries* (bread shops) and *pâtisseries* open earlier and are often the only shops open on Sundays.



Pharmacies There is at least one pharmacy, identified by a green cross outside, in each town and many villages. A list in the window will give details of the nearest *pharmacie de garde* open outside normal hours (on Sundays and at night). They are listed in local newspapers and on www.pharmaciesdegarde.com.



Toilets Most towns and cities have public toilets in the central areas, often staffed.



Detail of sculpture on the north door of Reims Cathedral



Rugged coastline of the Côte d'Opale

Northeast France Regional Airports

Most international air travellers to Northeast France will fly to Paris (see p86), although Ryanair goes to Paris Beauvais in Picardy. Distances across the region are substantial, justifying two major regional airports close to the eastern border with Germany, at Strasbourg and Mulhouse. All airports offer more or less the full range of services.

Metz-Nancy-Lorraine

Lying 15 km (9 miles) south of Metz and 35 km (22 miles) north of Nancy, this airport operates direct flights to and from 20 French airports including Lyon, Marseille, Nice, Toulouse and Corsica, and serves passengers from further afield travelling via those destinations. The main carrier is Air France.

Shuttle buses take passengers to the rail stations of Metz and Nancy (€5). Several major car hire companies have offices at the airport. There is a bar/cafe/tertia and also a self-service restaurant. Hotels can be found at Metz, Nancy and closer at hand at Pont-à-Mousson.

Mulhouse (Basel-Freiburg EuroAirport)

This airport is in French territory, 25 km (15 miles) southeast of Mulhouse, but is the main airport for Basel in Switzerland and Freiburg in Germany. It serves many European destinations, including London City, Stanstead, Heathrow, Gatwick, Manchester and Edinburgh. The airport is used by Air France, British Airways, Swiss International Airlines, KLM, Ryanair and easyJet. There are no train services from the airport. For links to Mulhouse, take the navette (shuttle service) to St Louis (€5) and then a train; for Strasbourg, there are shuttle buses. Most major car hire firms have offices at the airport. Hotels are available at Mulhouse and in towns just by the airport.



Duty-free shop at the Basel-Mulhouse-Freiburg EuroAirport



Planes on the airfield of Aéroport International de Strasbourg

Strasbourg

The Aéroport International de Strasbourg, located just to the southwest of the city, has links to 22 destinations within France, in continental Europe, around the Mediterranean and to Stansted in the UK. Carriers include Air France, Iberia and Brussels Airlines. A train shuttle service (€4), with four departures an hour, takes just 9 minutes to reach the Gare de Strasbourg in the city centre, with onward links across the region. Most major car hire firms have offices at the airport. Alternatively, UK travellers can reach Strasbourg by flying via Ryanair from London to Baden-Baden, just over the German border. A linked shuttle bus brings passengers into Strasbourg from there.

Lille

Located just to the south of Lille, this airport serves mainly flights from within France, continental Europe and the Mediterranean, but not currently the UK. Airlines include Air France, Ryanair and Air Maroc. A navette (€7.50) takes 20 minutes to transport travellers into the centre of the city, from where there are rail links to places across the region. The main car hire firms are present. There is a snack bar and a restaurant with views

over the runways and there are plenty of hotels nearby and in Lille.

Le Touquet

L'Aéroport Le Touquet Côte d'Opale is a small airport virtually in Le Touquet, serving private flights and scheduled flights from the UK, operated only at weekends by LyddAir. Transport links are provided by bus, taxi (€8.50), car hire, and bicycles. There is a restaurant at the airport and hotels at Le Touquet.

Paris Beauvais

This is Ryanair's main Paris airport, located 80 km (50 miles) north of Paris and conveniently positioned for Chantilly, Parc Astérix and Amiens. Shuttle buses run to Paris and there is a separate navette to Disneyland, via Paris-Charles-de Gaulle airport. There are also bus links to Beauvais town, from which there are train links to Paris Gare du Nord and Amiens. Most major car hire firms have offices at the airport.

There is a restaurant in the airport, a pizzeria in the departure lounge and shops, including a mini-supermarket. The airport website lists details of hotels in Beauvais that are linked to the airport by a shuttle service.

The Lowdown

Baden-Baden 07229 66 20 00; www.baden-airpark.de

Lille 08 91 67 32 10; www.lille.aeroport.fr

Metz-Nancy-Lorraine 03 87 56 70 00; www.metz-nancy-lorraine.aeroport.fr

Mulhouse (Basel-Mulhouse-Freiburg EuroAirport) 03 89 90 31 11; www.euroairport.com

Paris Beauvais 08 92 68 20 66; www.aeroportbeauvais.com

Strasbourg 03 88 64 67 67; www.strasbourg.aeroport.fr

Le Touquet 03 21 05 03 99; www.aeroport-letouquet.com

Alsace and Lorraine

Hills, mountains and forests have shaped the character and history of this border region, which has swapped rulers and allegiances over the centuries, often through war. Picturesque half-timbered villages and town centres distinguish Alsace, including that of cosmopolitan Strasbourg. Lorraine remains rural outside of the dynamic fizz of Nancy and Metz.

Below Strollers on the Grand Rue in the old town of Colmar



① The Battlefield of Verdun

The town that became a symbol of World War I

Much of World War I was fought along the Western Front, a line of trenches and defences that snaked down through Belgium and eastern France. On 21 February 1916, the Germans launched a ferocious artillery bombardment near the old fortress town of Verdun. But the French were determined to hold the town. Over the next 300 days, more than 300,000 soldiers died and a further 400,000 were wounded. Today a series of monuments both outside and inside Verdun evoke the desperate battle.



Miniatures in Le Mémorial de Verdun

Key Sights

① **Fort de Douaumont** Built in 1885, this fort, reinforced by a roof of concrete and sand, fell to the Germans, but was later recaptured by the French.



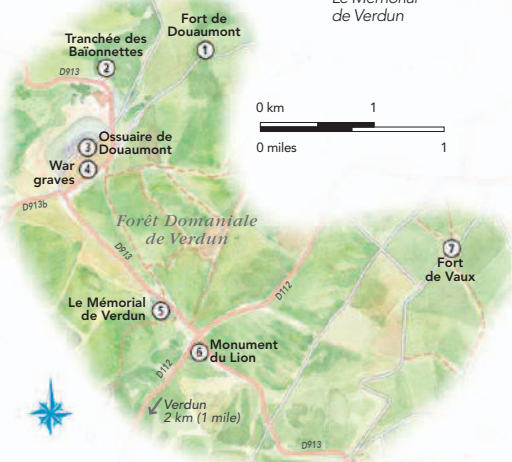
② **Tranchée des Baïonnettes** A monument was built over a trench buried by a shell explosion, killing 57 French soldiers, leaving their bayonets sticking out of the ground. No bayonets are visible now.

⑤ **Le Mémorial de Verdun** In Fleury-devant-Douaumont, one of nine villages that were wiped out in the conflict, this museum displays artifacts and other reminders of the battle.

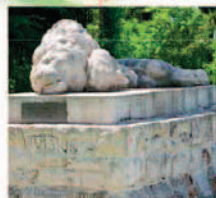
③ **Ossuaire de Douaumont** The bones of 130,000 unidentified French and German soldiers lie in the vault of this monument, completed in 1932. Its tower, rising to 46 m (151 ft), offers panoramic views over the battlefield from the top.



④ **War graves** Neat rows of crosses outside the Ossuaire mark the graves of 15,000 identified French soldiers, each bearing a name.



⑥ **Monument du Lion** This poignant sculpture of a wounded lion marks the southernmost point of the German advance.



⑦ **Fort de Vaux** This was the second fort to be lost by the French. The troops were forced to surrender on 7 June, having run out of essential supplies.

The Lowdown

Map reference 5 D4
Address 55000 (Meuse).
 Ossuaire de Douaumont: 55100 Fleury-Devant-Douaumont; www.verdun-tourisme.com.
 Tranchée des Baïonnettes, Fort de Douaumont & Fort de Vaux: www.en.verdun-tourisme.com.
 Le Mémorial de Verdun: 1 Ave du Corps Européen, 55100 Fleury-Devant-Douaumont; 03 29 84 35 34; www.memorial-de-verdun.fr

Train from Nancy, Metz & Châlons-en-Champagne; TGV from Paris or Strasbourg to the TGV Meuse station, then shuttle

bus to Verdun. In summer, there is a hop-on-hop-off tour bus that covers the main battlefield sights. It leaves from the tourist office in Verdun.

i Visitor information Pl de la Nation, 55106 Verdun; 03 29 84 14 18; www.verdun-tourisme.com

🕒 Open Ossuaire de Douaumont: daily (Feb: school hols only); closed Jan. Le Mémorial de Verdun: year round; closed first three weeks of Jan. Forts: check tourist website for details.

€ Prices Ossuaire de Douaumont: free; tower and 20-min film in

English & other languages €14–24; under 8s free. Le Mémorial de Verdun: €18–30; under 8s free. Forts: €12–24; under 8s free

👤 Skipping the queue Buy the Battlefield Museum Pass that allows access to the main battlefield sights – Ossuaire de Douaumont, Le Mémorial de Verdun, Fort de Douaumont and Fort de Vaux. Contact the tourist office for details.

🌿 Guided tours The tour bus offers tours in English, French, German & Dutch; tickets valid for 24 hours

👤 Age range 6 plus



Boats on the Meuse river through the town of Verdun

Letting off steam

Run about in the immense **Forêt Domaniale de Verdun** around the battlefield. In July and August, head down to the Meuse river and hire a canoe (www.meusecanoe.com) for excursions by the hour or a half-day. Schedules available at tourist office.

Eat and drink

Picnic: under €20; Snacks: €20–45; Real meal: €45–90; Family treat: over €90 (based on a family of four)

PICNIC Pause Picnic (5 Rue de la Grange, 55100 Verdun; 03 29 84 35 76) sells salads, quiches, ready-made sandwiches and also savoury tarts to take away. There are plenty of quiet woodland places with tables to picnic near the battlefield.

SNACKS L'Abri Des Pèlerins (Pl Monseigneur Ginisty, 55100 Douaumont; 03 29 85 50 58) is a bar-café-restaurant close to the Ossuaire de Douaumont. It offers simple brasserie food, plus pancakes and ice cream.



Allow A day



Café Les Pèlerins is the only café in the battlefield area.



Toilets At the Ossuaire de Douaumont.



Festival Des Flammes à la Lumière, 300 French and German volunteers perform a *son-et-lumière* re-enactment of the events of the battle (Jun & Jul)

Good family value?

An important historic place to visit, but the ticket prices mount up to a considerable sum.

REAL MEAL Pom'Samba

(7 Ave Garibaldi, 55100 Verdun; 03 29 83 49 34) focuses on potatoes cooked in all forms, and accompanied by meat, fish or vegetables.

FAMILY TREAT Le Clapier

(34, Rue des Gros-Degrés 55100; 03 29 86 20 14; closed Sat & Sun) serves unpretentious traditional food in an intimate setting. It also specialises in local wines. It's popular with the locals so book ahead.

Shopping

The main hub of Verdun runs along the north side of the river, with shops in the Rue Mazel and its arteries. Go to the splendid **Maison Braquier** (50 Rue du Fort de Vaux, 55100; 03 29 84 30 00; www.dragees-braquier.com) for the famous *dragées* (sugared almonds) and other confectionery.

Find out more

DIGITAL Look up "Verdun: Symbol of Suffering" in the BBC's section on World War I: tinyurl.com/ae2v.

Next stop...

VERDUN In the surprisingly pretty historic town of Verdun itself, visit the **Citadelle Souterraine** (Ave du 5eme RAP, 55100; 03 29 83 44 28) housed in a massive fortress dating originally from the 17th century. Tour a huge network of tunnels in self-guided vehicles stopping at scenes that recall the experiences of French recruits at Verdun in World War I.

The "Voie Sacrée" (Sacred Way) to the southwest of Verdun was the road along which millions of French troops and supplies reached the battlefield.

KIDS' CORNER

Discover...

- 1 How many steps are there in the tower of the Ossuaire du Douaumont?
- 2 Who were "Les Poilus" or "The Hairy Ones"?
- 3 Where is the body of the unknown soldier whose body was selected and taken from Verdun in 1920?
- 4 How many shots were fired when the Germans first captured Fort de Douaumont?
- 5 What kind of sweet or candy is Verdun famous for?



Answers at the bottom of the page.

A FRIGHTFUL SIGHT

At the Ossuaire de Douaumont, go to the ground-level windows on the long outside wall to the right of the ticket office to see piles of human bones and skulls. These are a tiny proportion of the 130,000 skeletons inside.



Sweetness and light

Dragées (sugared almonds) are said to have been invented in Verdun in 1220. A merchant was trying to find a way to preserve almonds, so he dipped them in a mixture of sugar and honey. They became a popular treat after the 17th century and have earned a special place in French life. Sugared almonds are given



away as presents at christenings, on the occasion of a child's first Communion and at weddings.

Answers: 1 204. **2** It was the nickname for French soldiers of World War I, an affectionate term that dated back to Napoleonic times when brave soldiers did not have time to shave. **3** Under the Arc de Triomphe in Paris. **4** None. The French defenders were caught by surprise. **5** *Dragées* (sugared almonds).

② The Maginot Line

A giant disappointment

To prevent the Germans from ever mounting a surprise attack again after World War I, in 1930 the French began building a chain of forts along their border with Germany. Named after André Maginot (1877–1932), the minister of war at the time, it was equipped with up-to-date armaments: pop-up gun turrets and lookout posts, with concrete bunkers and tunnels underground. But on 10 May 1940, Germany did invade France through neutral Luxembourg, north of the Maginot Line, skirting around it. A month later they attacked the line from the French side – most forts did not fall but surrendered nine days after the Second Armistice at Compiègne of 22 June 1940. Several of the forts are open to the public. **Fermont, Hackenberg, Simserhof** and **Four à Chauz** are the most striking, full of historic artifacts, with restored machinery, workshops and accommodation: all except the Four à Chauz have little trains scuttling through tunnels.



A train chugging through a tunnel of one of the forts of the Maginot Line



Whirling around on one of the thrilling rides at Parc d'Attraction Walygator

Letting off steam

The forts are located in rural or wooded areas, so there is plenty of space to romp about in.

③ Parc d'Attraction Walygator

Thrills in a top theme park

The biggest theme park in this part of France, Walygator has 40 rides to suit all ages: from gentle trains and roundabouts to heart-in-mouth roller coasters, including the wooden “Anaconda”, splash rides and the “Terror House” ride, restricted to kids 14 plus. A schedule of shows – puppets, circus, high-diving – makes for a superb outing.

Located 4 km (3 miles) north, the privately owned **Zoo d'Amnéville**, has some 2,000 animals of 350 species, many in large open-air pens

The Lowdown

- 📍 **Map reference** 6 E4
Address 57000 (Moselle), Voie Romaine, 57280 Maizières-les-Metz; 03 87 30 70 07; www.walygatorparc.com. Zoo d'Amnéville: 1 Rue du Tigre, 57360 Amnéville; 03 87 70 25 60; www.zoo-amneville.com
- 🚗 **Train** from Metz Ville
- 📍 **Visitor information** 2 Pl d'Armes, 57007 Metz; 03 87 55 53 76; tourisme.mairie-metz.fr
- 🕒 **Open** Jul–Aug: daily (until 10pm Sat); Apr–May & Sep–Oct: Sat–Sun and school hols; Jun: Fri–Sun. Zoo d'Amnéville: daily
- 🍴 **Eat and drink** **Picnic Croco'Crep** (on site) is a little crêperie that serves pancakes, sandwiches, hot dogs and ice creams. **Snacks Croco'Grill** (on site) is a table-service restaurant with a full menu. It specializes in Mexican food and grilled meat. The terrace overlooks the central lake.

set in a vast forested area. It runs shows, featuring birds of prey, seal lions and polar bear feeding time.

Take cover

If it rains, visit the Terror House, the nearby Musée de la Moto et du Vélo or the Amnéville indoor ski slope (www.snowhall-amneville.fr).

④ Metz

City of bridges

Metz is an enchanting city at the confluence of the Seille and Moselle rivers, with canals and islands and 20 bridges, including the castle-like Porte des Allemands. The pedestrianized centre of the Vieille Ville makes the city a pleasure to wander about, especially beneath its night-time illuminations. Pop into the Cathédrale St-Étienne, one of the finest Gothic cathedrals in the country, to admire the stained glass. A scary dragon



One of the 20 bridges spanning the river in Metz

The Lowdown

- 📍 **Map reference** 5 D4, 6 E4 & 6 G5
Address 54000 (Meurthe-et-Moselle). Fermont: 9 Rue Albert Lebrun, 54260 Longuyon; ligne-maginot-fort-de-fermont.asso.fr. Hackenberg: Route du Hackenberg, 57920 Veckring; maginot-hackenberg.com. Simserhof: Rue André Maginot, Le Légeret, 57410 Siersthal; www.simserhof.fr. Four à Chauz: 67510 Lembach; www.lignemaginot.fr
- 🚗 **Car** The forts are best reached by car. There is no public transport to or between the forts.
- 📍 **Visitor information** Fermont: ot-longuyon.pagesperso-orange.fr; Hackenberg: www.ot-thionville.com; Simserhof: www.ot-pays-debitche.com

- 🕒 **Open** Fermont: Apr–Oct. Hackenberg and Four à Chauz: year round. Simserhof: mid-Nov–mid-Mar. Days vary, check websites. Guided tours take 2–3 hours. Wear warm clothes as it gets cold in the underground tunnels.

- 🍴 **Eat and drink** **Real meal** L' Auberge du Lac (Rue Etang Hasselfurth, 57230 Bitché; 03 87 96 96 00; www.laubergedulac.fr) offers well-priced buffets, plus a playground. **Real Meal** La Brasserie des Caves (19 Rue de Sètes, 54260 Longuyon; 03 82 23 15 41) does reasonably priced market-based cooking.



Handsome buildings surrounding the splendid Place Stanislas, Nancy

The Lowdown

- Map reference** 6 E4
Address 57000 (Moselle).
Musée de la Cour d'Or: 2 Rue du Haut Poirier, 57007; 03 87 20 13 20
- Train** TGV from Paris, Nancy, Strasbourg and Verdun
- Visitor information** 2 Pl d'Armes, 57007; 03 87 55 53 76; tourisme.mairie-metz.fr
- Open** Musée de la Cour d'Or: Wed–Mon
- Eat and drink** *Picnic* Marché Couvert (Pl de la Cathédrale, 57007) has superb food stalls. Picnic at the Plan d'Eau de Metz. *Family treat* L'Aloyau (3 Rue de la Fontaine, 57007; 03 87 37 33 72) is the place for meat lovers, with traditional French cuisine on offer.

hangs from the ceiling of the crypt: Graouilly by name, it used to terrorize Metz until it was slain by St Clement in Roman times. The **Musée de la Cour d'Or**, an archaeological museum set in a 17th-century monastery, is noted for its Gallo-Roman and Frankish collection. For an adventure into modern architecture, visit the tent-like Centre Pompidou-Metz, near the station, inaugurated in 2010, which mounts a programme of high-profile temporary art exhibitions.

Letting off steam

Head for the **Plan d'Eau de Metz**, just west of the city centre, a wide expanse of water surrounded by parks and walks, with beaches, pedalos and playgrounds.

5 Nancy

Home of a new kind of art

Once the capital of the Dukes of Lorraine, Nancy is a grand city. Its central square is the stately Place

Stanislas, built in the 1750s for Duke Stanislas Leszczyński. Nancy is also known for its superb Art Nouveau glass – the sparkling creations of Emile Gallé, the Daum brothers and others, on show at the **Musée de l'École de Nancy**, along with pottery, furniture and accessories. From the same era, the **Musée des Beaux-Arts** has a visually stunning presentation of Daum glass in its medieval cellar, and houses a great collection of 19th- and 20th-century paintings.

Letting off steam

Located north of the Place Stanislas, **La Pépinière** is a huge park. To the west of the ring road around Nancy is the **Parc de Loisirs de la Forêt de Haye** (www.parcdeloisirs-haye.com), with a forest farm, playgrounds, picnic areas and guided walks.

The Lowdown

- Map reference** 6 E5
Address 54000 (Meurthe-et-Moselle). Musée de l'École de Nancy: 36–38 Rue Sergent Blandan, 03 83 40 14 86; www.ecole-de-nancy.com. Musée des Beaux-Arts: 3 Pl Stanislas, 54000; 03 83 37 96 50; mban.nancy.fr
- Train** TGV-Lorraine from Paris; from Verdun, change at Conflans-Jarry or at Hagondange
- Visitor information** 14 Pl Stanislas, 54000; 03 83 35 22 41; www.ot-nancy.fr
- Open** Musée de l'École de Nancy & Musée des Beaux-Arts: Wed–Mon
- Eat and drink** *Snacks* Flunch (Rue Grand Rabbin Haguenauer, 54000; 03 83 32 65 85) sells tasty snacks. *Family treat* Brasserie Excelsior (50 Rue Henri-Poincaré, 54000; 03 83 35 24 57; www.brasserie-excelsior.com) boasts a classic Art Nouveau decor and fine French cuisine. Book ahead.

KIDS' CORNER

Make new art!

Art Nouveau means "New Art". It was called this because in the 1890s no one had seen anything quite like it before. Designers of vases, jewellery, furniture and furnishings and even buildings were inspired by nature – plants, trees, seaweed, shells, insects, lizards, long hair – anything with flowing, swirly lines.

Try designing a piece using the same starting point, such as a brooch inspired by butterflies, or a lamp based on a willow tree. Let your imagination go wild!



FAST AND FURIOUS

With their mighty walls of lattice woodwork and giant curves, wooden roller coasters were the biggest, scariest fairground rides in the 1920s. Parc d'Attraction Walygator has had its **Anaconda** since 1989, when it was the biggest wooden roller coaster in Europe.



Keeping his head in a crisis

A Christian nobleman in Roman times, St Livier defended Metz against the invading forces of Attila the Hun. In AD 451 he was captured, and when he refused to renounce his religion, he was beheaded. But St Livier picked up his head and staggered up a hill with it; at the place where he dropped it, a spring began to flow.



The scene of this miracle became a pilgrimage site, which is still marked by the ruins of the Église St-Livier, to the north of the Île du Petit Saulcy in Metz.

Letting off steam

A short walk from the town centre, the **Parc du Champ de Mars** (2 Ave de la Marne, 68000) is a tree-shaded park with formal paths, lawns and fountains. There is a beautiful 1920s carousel – choose between sitting in a carriage, a hot-air balloon, a bi-plane, or on a horse, stork or bull.



A child playing at the edge of a fountain in the Parc du Champ de Mars

Eat and drink

Picnic: under €20; Snacks: €20–45; Real meal: €45–90; Family treat: over €90 (based on a family of four)

PICNIC Marché Couvert (Rue des Écoles, 68000; closed Sun & Mon) is a 19th-century covered market offering charcuterie, cheese, bread, fruit, pastries and ready-made sandwiches. A good picnic spot is the Parc du Champ de Mars.

SNACKS L'Artisan Gastronomer - Kempf (Marché Couvert de Colmar, 13 Rue de Écoles, 68000; 03 89 21 65 10), set in the middle of the busy and beautifully restored covered market, is a good place to stop for a quick bite of Alsatian savouries or an assortment of well-priced snacks.

REAL MEAL Le Comptoir de Georges (1 Pl des 6 Montagnes Noires, 68000; 03 89 20 60 72;

www.le-comptoir-de-georges.fr) is a bright restaurant that serves a great range of Alsatian dishes, from salads and quiches to steaks and Alsatian specialities; includes a kids' menu.

FAMILY TREAT Chez Hansi (23 Rue des Marchands, 68000; 03 89 41 37 84) is housed in a half-timbered building dating from 1532, with a beamed interior to match and staff in traditional dress. This is the place to eat in true Alsatian style: excellent *choucroute* (sauerkraut with sausages and often potatoes), savoury tarts, Alsatian stews and wine by the glass.

Shopping

Colmar is a delightful place to shop, with plenty of upmarket boutiques and curious speciality shops. Hunt in the streets around the Place de la Cathédrale and Rue des Marchands. Head for **Le Hameau** (23 Rue des Serruriers, 68000), a great, old-fashioned toyshop. Drop in to **Du Pareil...au même** (5 Rue des Clefs, 68000), which is an excellent kids' clothes chain.



A selection of cuddly toys at Le Hameau, a toyshop

Find out more...

DIGITAL Go to www.ot-colmar.fr for a range of pictures and short texts about the town, including sections called "Down the Road of History" and "Colmar for Children".

Next step...

NEUF-BRISACH This octagonal 17th-century military town, located 18 km (11 miles) east of Colmar, has buildings laid out on a neat grid, surrounded by a star-like formation of fortifications. Constructed in 1698–1707 by Louis XIV's great military engineer Vauban, this masterpiece was built to guard the French border with Germany. Admire its perfect shape on the model in Porte Belfort or explore it on the ground.

KIDS' CORNER

Art activity

Try making a set of paintings on folding wings, with pictures on every surface – like the Isenheim altarpiece (1512–16) in the Musée d'Unterlinden. This masterpiece has a complex construction, with two sets of folding wings and three layers. In the museum, there are moveable models on the walls to show how the whole piece worked. There are paper models on sale at the museum shop.



THE CRAZY CLUBMEN

Legend has it that the ancient Greek hero Hercules, on his way home back from one of his Twelve Labours, stopped in Colmar to quench his thirst with the wine of Alsace. He drank vast amounts, fell asleep, woke up and stumbled off in a daze, leaving his club behind. The town put the club in its coat of arms and the inhabitants are known as as **Kolbarren** (mad clubmen).



Hansi the French hero

The restaurant Chez Hansi is named after the artist and children's book illustrator Jean-Jacques Waltz (1873–1951), who was born in Colmar and used the pen-name Hansi. Colmar was in German territory from 1871 to 1918, and Waltz used his skills as a caricaturist to criticize German occupation, for which he was arrested and imprisoned, making him a popular hero in Alsace and France. Look out for his books – some are available in English – such as *My Alsace*, or *My Village*, and *L'Histoire d'Alsace*, which show his distinctive style.



-  **Guided tours** Contact the tourist office for details.
-  **Age range** All ages
-  **Activities** Follow self-guided tours on map from the tourist office.
-  **Allow** At least half a day
-  **Toilets** At the tourist office

Good family value?

Colmar can be enjoyed for free just wandering the streets, but hotels and restaurants are pricey.



Children performing a traditional handkerchief dance, Eguisheim

7 Enchanted towns of Alsace

A world of knights and ladies

This car journey follows the Alsace Route du Vin (wine road), but it offers much more than wine. The route winds its way through a hilly landscape dotted with picture-book towns and villages, redolent of a medieval past of knights, ladies, ogres and villains.

Travel on the D83 to Eguisheim, a beautifully preserved town, filled with half-timbered houses, surrounded by 13th-century ramparts. Riquewihr is perhaps the fairest of them all, with cobbled streets, geranium-filled balconies and ramparts crowned by watchtowers. Ribeauvillé is overlooked by three ruined hilltop castles. Pay a visit to the **Château du Haut-Koenigsbourg**, north of Ribeauvillé and just west of the town of Sélestat. It was rebuilt as an exact copy of the original for Kaiser Wilhelm II in 1900–1908, with ornate Neo-Renaissance interiors. Outside, the battlements stand at nearly 750 m (2,500 ft), offering a bird's-eye view over the plain of Alsace.

The Lowdown

Map reference 10 G1, 6 G6 & 6 G6
Address 68000 (Haut-Rhin) & 67000 (Bas-Rhin). Château du Haut-Koenigsbourg: Lièpvre, on N59, 67600; 03 88 82 50 60; haut-koenigsbourg.fr

Car from Colmar or bus from Sélestat railway station

Visitor information Eguisheim: 22A Grand Rue, 68420; 03 89 23 40 33; www.ot-eguisheim.fr. Riquewihr: 2 Rue de la 1ère Armée, 68340; 03 89 73 23 23. Ribeauvillé:

Letting off steam

Go to **Cigoland** (www.cigoland.fr), a theme park 9 km (5 miles) north of Ribeauvillé. There are animals to watch, a stork info-centre and rides particularly for younger children.

8 Ecomusée d'Alsace

Travel back in time

Some 72 historic traditional Alsace buildings have been reconstructed in France's biggest open-air museum, covering 100 ha (247 acres); it is 4 km (2 miles) from the village of Ungersheim, creating a time-warp village set out in a lake-filled park. The buildings are brought to life by costumed volunteers who demonstrate crafts and professions from daily life in the 19th and early 20th centuries. See the working mills, the forge, pottery, shoemaker's, cartwright's and saddlemaker's workshops, a barber's shop and a farm. There is also a rare, historic indoor merry-go-round. Shops and stalls sell the products of the potter, baker, blacksmith and beekeeper.

Letting off steam

The **Petite Cour** in the Maison Monsviller is a particular favourite with children who can play with the



A rustic horse-drawn cart at the Ecomusée d'Alsace, Ungersheim

1 Grand'Rue, 68153; 03 89 73 23 23; www.ribeauville-riquewihr.com

Open Château du Haut-Koenigsbourg: daily

Eat and drink **Snacks** Au Relais des Moines (21 Rue du Général de Gaulle, 68340 Riquewihr; 03 89 86 04 74; www.relaisdesmoines.com/fr/) specialises in meat pies and Venison with spaetzle. It has a nice terrace. **Real meal** Wistub Zum Pfifferhüs (14 Grand'Rue, 68150 Ribeauvillé; 03 89 73 62 28) offers regional cuisine.

The Lowdown

Map reference 10 G1

Address 68000 (Haut-Rhin). Chemin Grosswald, 68190 Ungersheim; 03 89 74 44 74; www.ecomusee-alsace.fr

Train to Mulhouse, then Séléa bus 54. Best reached by car

Visitor information Hôtel de Ville, Pl de la Réunion, 68100 Mulhouse; 03 89 35 48 48; www.tourisme-mulhouse.com

Open 2 Apr–2 Nov: daily

Eat and drink **Picnic** Hypermarché Cora (130 Route de Soultz, 68271 Wittenheim; 03 89 52 84 84), located 5 km (3 miles) south of the museum, has provisions for an excellent picnic at the park. **Real meal** Restaurant La Taverne (on site; 03 69 58 50 25) specializes in a full range of Alsatian dishes.

rabbits and piglets. Nearby, the Place des Artisans has two roundabouts from the 1950s.

9 Mulhouse

Steam engines and pedal cars

In a pocket of eastern France, close to the Swiss and German borders, Mulhouse had a long history as an independent republic and later became an industrial powerhouse. It has thirteen museums, two of which are top-ranking – the **Cité du Train** is Europe's biggest railway museum, filled with impressive steam engines, carriages, machines and memorabilia. It offers plenty of activities and interactive exhibits. The **Cité de l'Automobile** claims to be the biggest museum of motor vehicles in the world, with 464 vintage cars. The museum has antique children's pedal cars, a roll-over accident simulator, a pedal go-kart track plus tours on the "petit train". The main draw is the Schlumpf collection of Bugattis and



Glamorous vintage cars on display at the Cité de l'Automobile



Exquisitely carved statues ornamenting the Cathédrale Notre-Dame, Strasbourg

The Lowdown

Map reference 10 G1
Address 68100 (Haut-Rhin).
 Cité du Train: 2 Rue Alfred Glehn; 03 89 42 83 33; www.citedutrain.com.
 Cité de l'Automobile: 15 Rue de l'Épée; 03 89 33 23 23; www.collection-schlumpf.com.
 Musée Historique: Hôtel de Ville, Pl de la Réunion; 03 89 33 78 17; www.musees-mulhouse.fr

Train TGV from Colmar, Strasbourg, Dijon & Paris

Visitor information Hôtel de Ville, Pl de la Réunion, 68100; 03 89 35 48 48; www.tourisme-mulhouse.com

Open Cité du Train & Cité de l'Automobile: daily, closed 25 Dec. Musée Historique: Wed–Mon

Eat and drink *Real meal* Cafétéria "La Piste" (on site, Cité de l'Automobile) is a self-service restaurant offering a broad choice of dishes; mid-range among five food outlets at the museum. *Family treat* Tour de l'Europe (3 Blvd de l'Europe, 68100; 03 89 45 12 14; www.restaurant-tour-europe.com) has a refurbished sky-high revolving restaurant with a good menu.

other fantastic vehicles. The **Musée Historique** in the splendidly painted old Hôtel de Ville presents a mix of grand civic rooms and folk culture, with reconstructed interiors, toys and dolls' houses. The Museum of Printed Textiles and the Museum of Electropolis are also worth visiting.

Letting off steam

Go to the **Parc Zoologique et Botanique** (51 Rue du Jardin Zoologique, 68100; 03 69 77 65 65) with 1,200 animals of all kinds.

10 Strasbourg

Bright, brisk and prosperous

Strasbourg is a capital city of the European Union. The old town, on an island surrounded by branches of the Ill river, is a medieval web of streets, lined with half-timbered houses. At the western end is the lovely fishermen's and tanners' district called "La Petite France", with its three bridges with watchtowers, the "Pons Couverts". For a bird's-eye view, climb the 332 steps to the spire-platform of the superb Gothic **Cathédrale Notre-Dame**; look out also for its famous 16th-century astronomical clock. The **Palais de Rohan** has three museums: Musée Archéologique, Musée des Beaux Arts and Musée des Arts Décoratifs, displaying 18th-century interiors, arts and crafts, particularly ceramics. The **Musée Alsacien** presents folk art and traditions, while the **Musée d'Art Moderne et Contemporain** has an excellent collection of European art, from 1850 to now.

Letting off steam

The **Parc de l'Orangerie**, northeast of the cathedral, has plenty of space to run about, along with a small zoo, with resident storks.

The Lowdown

Map reference 6 G5
Address 67014 (Bas-Rhin).
 Cathédrale Notre-Dame: Pl de la Cathédrale, 67082; www.cathedrale-strasbourg.fr.
 Palais de Rohan: 2 Pl du Château, 67000; 03 88 88 50 68. Musée Alsacien: 23–25 Quai St-Nicolas, 67000; 03 88 52 50 01. Musée d'Art Moderne et Contemporain: 1 Pl Hans Jean Arp, 67000; 03 88 23 31 31; www.musees-strasbourg.org

Train TGV from Paris

Visitor information 17 Pl de la Cathédrale, 67082; 03 88 52 28 28; www.otstrasbourg.fr

Open Palais de Rohan & Musée Alsacien: closed Tue. Musée d'Art Moderne et Contemporain: closed Mon

Eat and drink *Real meal* Zuem Strissel (5 Pl de la Grande Boucherie, 67060; www.strissel.fr) serves a range of Alsatian dishes; there is a kids' menu. *Real meal* Pommes de Terre et Cie (4 Rue de l'Écurie, 67060; 03 88 22 36 82; www.pommes-de-terre-cie.com) offers potato and cheese dishes.

KIDS' CORNER

Spot the Alsatian!

Alsace is an area of eastern France that borders Germany. The local language is German-based Alsatian. Even the word Alsace actually comes from the German *Elsass* (sitting on the Ill river). Look out for Alsatian words as you travel through this region, especially in restaurants and food shops. Here are a few examples (spellings vary across the region):

Baeckeffe: pork and potato stew, often also with beef and lamb
Kugelhopf or **gugelhupf**: an almost bread-like sponge cake, similar to *brioche*

Flammekueche (French: *tarte flambée*): pizza-like savoury tart
Surkrut (French: *choucrou*): dishes based on pickled cabbage
Winstube or **winstub**: wine bar
Ziwekueche: onion tart



HOLD YOUR TONGUE

The *Klapperstein* is a heavy stone carved as a face with a swollen tongue. Slanderers were made to wear this stone around their neck and to parade around the city riding backwards on a donkey. The original *Klapperstein* is in the Musée Historique in Mulhouse.

Spot the storks

White storks are a big feature of Alsace – in mythology and in reality. Their numbers fell to just 10 pairs in the 1970s, but have grown back to 300 pairs through protection and breeding programmes. They migrate to

Africa in winter and return to breed in spring. If you are lucky, you might see some perched on their large nests on chimney pots, roofs, tree stumps and pylons.



Where to Stay in Alsace and Lorraine

Camp sites and rural *chambres d'hôtes* make the most of this region's rolling, forested, deeply rural landscape, while historic, half-timbered hotels – or their sleekly efficient modern counterparts – match the history and dynamism of the cities. Chain hotels step up where more individual options are lacking.

AGENCY

Gîtes en Alsace

www.gite-en-alsace.net

The French website provides a list of 370 properties for rent and B&Bs, presented by their owners, with links to their websites.

Colmar

Map 6 G6

HOTEL

Hôtel St Martin

38 Grand'Rue, 68000; 03 89 24 11 51; www.hotel-saint-martin.com

Located in the city centre, this is a smart, well-run hotel in an 18th-century mansion. Rooms are elegant and bathrooms modern. Free public parking sometimes available nearby.



€€

BED & BREAKFAST

Chez Leslie

31 Rue de Mulhouse, 68000; 03 89 79 98 99; www.chezleslie.com

A 15-minute walk from the city centre, this characterful, cosy B&B offers four bedrooms with en-suite bathrooms, sleeping two, three or five. There is a garden to relax in during summer.



€€

CAMPING

Camping des Amis de la Nature

Map 10 F1

4 Rue du Château, 68140 Luttenbach-près-Munster; 03 89 77 38 60; www.camping-an.fr

Located 20 km (12 miles) west of the city, in the foothills of the Vosges mountains, this spacious camp site is for tents and caravans. Shop and restaurant on site. Activities include mini-golf and boules pitch.



€

Longuyon

Map 5 D4

HOTEL

Hôtel de Lorraine

63 Rue Augistrou, 54260; 03 82 26 50 07; tinyurl.com/3qmyhrd

An attractive, flower-bedecked hotel, well placed for visiting the Maginot



Medieval sign outside the Hôtel St Martin, Colmar

Line (Fermont). Rooms are basic, but the restaurant is great: outdoor terrace in summer and a kids' menu.



€€

Metz

Map 6 E4

HOTEL

Novotel Metz Centre

Pl des Paraiges, Centre St-Jacques, 57000, 03 87 37 38 39; www.novotel.com

Smooth, modern and centrally located, this hotel has superior rooms for two adults and two kids.



€€

Mulhouse

Map 10 G1

HOTEL

Kyriad Mulhouse Centre

15 Rue Lambert, 68100; 03 89 66 44 77; www.kyriad-mulhouse-centre.fr

Well located in the city centre, this hotel retains the sleek modern style that the Kyriad chain of hotels are known for. Free for under 12s when sharing with parents.



€€

Nancy

Map 6 E5

HOTEL

Best Western Hotel Crystal

5 Rue Chanzy, 54000; 03 83 17 54 00; www.bestwestern.fr/crystal

A short walk from Place Stanislas, this is a smart, modern hotel. Two suites and two family rooms are on offer. Kids' beds are free for under 12s.



€€

Strasbourg

Map 6 G5

HOTEL

Hôtel du Dragon

2 Rue du Dragon, 67000; 03 88 35 79 80; www.dragon.fr

A set of brightly painted 17th-century mansions, located just to the south of the Ill river and old town, has been thoroughly modernized to create a comfortable 32-room hotel with a patio. Family rooms sleep up to five.



€€

Verdun

Map 5 D4

HOTEL

Le Montaubain

4 Rue de la Vieille Prison, 55100; 03 29 86 86 00 47; www.hoteldemontaubain.fr

Centrally located, close to the Meuse river, this is a two-star hotel with ten somewhat basic rooms, including a family room that sleeps four to five. Public parking is a short walk away.



€€

CAMPING

Camping Les Breuils

8 Allée des Breuils, 55100; 03 29 86 15 31; www.camping-lesbreuils.com

Just to the west of the town, the site has pitches, caravans, camping cars, chalets and mobile homes for hire. A playground and brasserie are on site.



€



A kid enjoying a splash down the water slide at Camping Les Breuils, Verdun

Price Guide

The following price ranges are based on one night's accommodation in high season for a family of four, inclusive of service charges and any additional taxes.

€ Under €100 €€ €100–200 €€€ over €200

Champagne

The rich, undulating landscape patchworked with vineyards is a reminder of this area's most famous product. Its stature as a prosperous trading hub in medieval times is reflected in the Reims Cathedral. Further north are the forested Ardennes and borderlands that have been the scene of many historic conflicts, to which the Château Fort de Sedan bears witness.

Below A typical village near Épernay surrounded by vineyards



1 Reims Cathedral

Where kings were crowned

The Cathédrale Notre-Dame at Reims was built to impress – for this was the place where the French kings were crowned. The coronation tradition goes back to AD 498, when Clovis, king of the Franks, was baptized as a Christian on this site at the age of 30. The classic Gothic structure was begun in 1211 and completed over the century that followed. Coronation ceremonies continued to take place here till 1825. Above its entrance is a frothy mass of sculpture; inside are soaring spaces.



Jeanne d'Arc A statue of Joan of Arc in armour made by Prosper d'Épinay in 1902 stands in the apse.

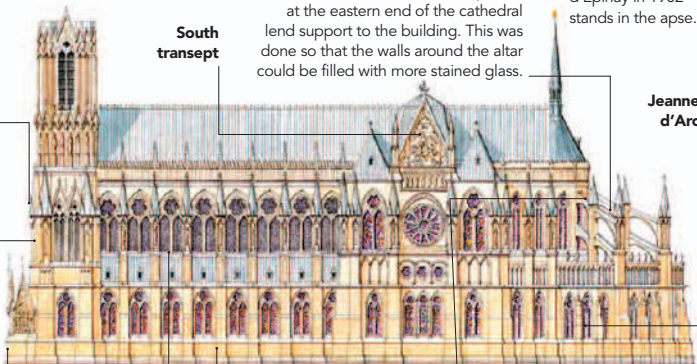
Key Sights

Great Rose Window The 13th-century stained-glass window with the Virgin Mary, 12 apostles, musical angels, kings and prophets looks spectacular at sunset.

West façade



The Nave The highest ceiling in Europe when it was built, this section rises to a height of nearly 38 m (125 ft).



South transept

Flying buttresses High arches placed at the eastern end of the cathedral lend support to the building. This was done so that the walls around the altar could be filled with more stained glass.

Jeanne d'Arc

The Nave

Smiling angel

Chagall Window The stained-glass windows in the axial chapel behind the high altar were designed by the Russian-born artist Marc Chagall. They were installed in 1974.



Smiling Angel Above the left doorway is the most famous of the angels that has given the cathedral its nickname "la cathédrale des anges".

Colossal scale The cathedral covers an area of 4,800 sq m (51,688 sq ft) – nearly the size of a soccer pitch. The exterior is nearly 149 m (489 ft) long.



West façade This section looks completely encrusted with stone carvings and sculptures. Try to spot the recent additions in metal, featuring gargoyles of three monstrous heads – a laughing bull, a rhino and a hound with chicken legs.

The Lowdown

Map reference 5 B4
Address 51100 (Marne).
 Pl du Cardinal Luçon; 03 26 47 55 34; www.cathedrale-reims.com

Train TGV from Paris to Reims, then bus or tram from station

Visitor information
 2 Rue Guillaume de Machault, 51100; 03 26 77 45 00; www.reims-tourisme.com

Open 7:30am–7:30pm daily

Price Free

Skipping the queue Go at the beginning or end of the day to avoid crowds.

Guided tours Audio guides of the main historical sites in English and other languages. Pick them up at the visitor information office next door.

Age range 3 plus

Allow 30–45 mins

Café In the Palais du Tau next door (summer only)

Toilets Beside the visitor information office

Good family value?

The cathedral's high point is its sheer magnitude. On a bright day, the stained glass lights up the interior like a kaleidoscope.

Letting off steam

Walk around the pedestrianized streets northwest of the cathedral. There is a grand fairground **carousel** on Rue Condorcet. For open spaces, visit the **Parc Naturel Régional de la Montagne de Reims** (www.parc-montagnedereims.fr), 14 km (9 miles) south of Reims, a huge area of hills, woodland and vineyards.



Flying horses on the 1950s fairground carousel on Rue Condorcet

Eat and drink

Picnic: under €20; Snacks: €20–45; Real meal: €45–90; Family treat: over €90 (based on a family of four)

PICNIC Monoprix (34 Rue Jeanne d'Arc, 51100; 03 26 83 97 08) is an upmarket supermarket from where provisions can be picked up. Picnic in the Parc de la Patte d'Oie, the city centre's main park, nearby on Boulevard Leclerc.

SNACKS Crêperie Louise (15 Rue Marx-Dormoy, 51100; 03 26 78 00 61) is a beautiful little eatery where the old world meets the modern in a relaxed style. It serves salads, ice creams, coffee, *galettes* (savoury pancakes) and *crêpes*.

REAL MEAL Le Gaulois (2–4 Place Drouet d'Erlon, 51100; 03 26 47 35 76), a bar-brasserie-restaurant with a



A platter with desserts on display at the Café du Palais

sprawling pavement terrace, serves a great range of food, from salads and pizzas to elaborate dishes.

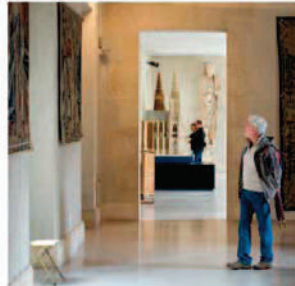
FAMILY TREAT Café du Palais (14 Pl Myron-Herrick, 51100; 03 26 47 52 54; www.cafedupalais.fr) has retained its ambience since the time it opened in 1930. This splendid café and restaurant, with an outdoor terrace, is the perfect location for a glass of the local wine – champagne.

Find out more

DIGITAL Kids aged 5 plus can browse www.historyforkids.org/learn/medieval/architecture/reims.htm to learn about the cathedral's history.

Shopping

The main shopping street is Rue Vesle, northwest of the cathedral. For individualistic shops, try the streets north of here, like Rue Condorcet and Rue Talleyrand. The latter has the city's biggest toy shop, **Le Royaume du Jouet** (7–9 Rue de Talleyrand, 51100; 03 26 47 41 26).



The art gallery at Palais du Tau, the archbishop's palace

Next step...

A PALACE AND A CANAL Next to the cathedral is the **Palais du Tau** (palais-tau.monuments-nationaux.fr), the archbishop's palace, with its huge banqueting hall used by the kings of France after their coronation and a rich selection of costumes and treasures. To cool off, stroll along the *Coulée Verte* (a wide band of green), along the banks of the Vesle river and the adjacent Canal de l'Aisne à la Marne. The **AquaGlissConcept** (8 bis rue Gabriel Voisin, 51100; 33 06 67 45 13 00; www.aquaglissconcept.fr) offers canoeing and boat rides on the Vesle river. There are five municipal swimming pools in and around Reims.

KIDS' CORNER

Look out for...



- 1** The knight on horseback opposite the West façade of the cathedral. Who is waving that sword?
- 2** Fifty-six kings, all in a row. Where are they?
- 3** The sound of Charlotte comes from high up in the south tower. Who is Charlotte?
- 4** The large petals in the Great Rose Window over the entrance. How many are there? What do they represent?
- 5** The astronomical clock on the wooden clock in the choir. What does the blue and silver disk above the clockface represent?

Answers at the bottom of the page.

BURNT AT THE STAKE



Already fêted as a great warrior at 17, in 1429 Joan of Arc stood at the side of Charles VII for his coronation in Reims Cathedral. Two years later, she was burnt, for heresy, at Rouen.

Caught in the wars

After the French Revolution, revolutionaries attacked churches in France. Reims Cathedral's sculptures were hacked and stained-glass windows were smashed. During World War I, it was severely damaged by fire. Restoration was completed in 1938, but World War II brought further damage. It was fixed up just in time for the 1996 function that marked the baptism of King Clovis, 1,500 years ago.



Answers: **1** Joan of Arc. **2** High on the West façade, and around the towers (King Clovis is in the middle). **3** Charlotte is the name given to one of the two bells. Made in 1570, she weighs over 11 tons (10 tonnes). **4** Twelve, for each of the 12 apostles, pictured in the inner circle. **5** The phases of the moon.

② Épernay

Underground bubbles

A hub of champagne production, Épernay is not much to look at, but it is what goes on underground that makes it worth a visit. A number of major champagne *marques* (brands) such as **Moët et Chandon** have their headquarters here, with vast cellars chiselled out of the chalky hills and loaded with bottles. Tours explain the mysteries of champagne making – right down to how they get those bubbles in the bottle – by taking visitors to an underground world, where inverted



Wine barrels in the cellars of De Castellane, Épernay

bottles are turned every few days, a process called *remuage*. At **Mercier**, travel through some of its 18 km (11 miles) of cellars in a laser-guided electric train. **De Castellane** has a soaring tower; climb its 237 steps for spectacular views of the vineyards of Épernay and the Marne Valley.

The Lowdown

Map reference 5 B5
Address 51200 (Marne).
Moët et Chandon: 20 Ave de Champagne; 03 26 51 20 20; www.moët.com. Mercier: 68–70 Ave de Champagne; www.champagnemercier.fr. De Castellane: 63 Ave de Champagne; www.castellane.com

Train from Reims and Paris

Visitor information 7 Ave de Champagne, 51200; www.ot-epernay.fr

Open Moët et Chandon: end-Mar–mid-Nov: daily; rest of the year: Mon–Fri. Mercier: mid-Mar–mid-Nov: daily. De Castellane: Apr–Dec: daily

Eat and drink **Snacks** *Tout en Saveur* (2 Rue du Général Leclerc, 51200; 03 26 32 14 13; www.tout-en-saveur.fr) serves tasty submarine sandwiches. **Real meal** La Brasserie de la Banque (40 Rue du Général Leclerc, 51200; 03 26 59 50 50; www.brasserie-labanque.fr) offers a range of classic French dishes in a converted bank.

Letting off steam

Kids can run around in the tree-shaded **Jardin de l'Hôtel de Ville** (7 bis Ave de Champagne, 51200), a central public park, in Épernay.

③ Troyes

Wild art and knitwear

The city centre of Troyes is said to be shaped like a champagne cork – appropriate for this former capital of the Champagne region. Troyes is a delightful historic city, with a largely pedestrianized old town, which has narrow alleys and is filled with multi-coloured half-timbered houses, *hôtels* (city mansions) and many churches. Do not miss the *Ruelle des Chats*, where houses are so close together that cats can supposedly jump from one house

The Lowdown

Map reference 5 B6
Address 10000 (Aube).
Musée d'Art Moderne: 14 Pl St-Pierre; 03 25 76 26 80. Musée de l'Outil et de la Pensée Ouvrière: 7 Rue de la Trinité; 03 25 73 28 26; www.maison-de-l-outil.com

Train from Paris to Reims, then bus 14 to Troyes

Visitor information 16 Blvd Carnot, 10000; 03 25 82 62 70; www.tourisme-troyes.com

Open Musée d'Art Moderne: May–Sep: Tue–Sun; Oct–Apr: daily. Musée de l'Outil et de la Pensée Ouvrière: daily

Eat and drink **Snacks** *Crêperie la Tourelle* (9 Rue Champeaux, 10000; 03 25 73 22 40) serves *galettes* (savoury pancakes) or sweet crêpes. **Real meal** *Brasserie de la Paix* (52 Rue du Général de Gaulle, 10000; 03 25 73 15 26) has *terrines* and grilled meats.

to the other across the street. The Gothic *Cathédrale St-Pierre-et-St-Paul*, begun in the 13th century and built over the course of 400 years, has beautiful interior proportions, magically illuminated by stained glass – a speciality of the city. The **Musée d'Art Moderne**, next to the cathedral, contains an interesting mix of works – the Fauves, the Cubists and African art. The unusual **Musée de l'Outil et de la Pensée Ouvrière** displays 10,000 17th–19th-century tools and their related craftwork. Troyes is also famed as the “capital of knitwear”, and has numerous clothing factory-outlet stores in the suburbs.

Letting off steam

Head for the **Jardin de Chevreuse** (Blvd Carnot, 10000) for a turn in its playground. The **Lac et Forêt d'Orient** (www.pnr-foret-orient.fr), 10-km (6-miles) east of Troyes, is a huge forest with nature reserves and well-indicated walks, along with artificial lakes, swimming beaches and watersports.

④ Chaource

See it, smell it, taste it!

A modest but pretty town with half-timbered houses, Chaource has an old outdoor laundry and a cast-iron covered market built in 1892.



Nativity scene in wood in the 12th-century *Église St-Jean Baptiste*, Chaource

Prices given are for a family of four



Half-timbered medieval houses in the old town of Troyes

But the town is best known for its eponymous soft and creamy cheese. The cheese used to be made on individual farms; visit the last surviving artisan producer at the **Fromagerie de Mussy**. There is a shop on site, tastings and a video film to watch. Go to the **Musée du Fromage**, which has a collection of historic cheese-making equipment.

Chaource is renowned for a remarkable sculpture: in its unusual 12th-century Église St-Jean Baptiste, the *Entombment of Christ* consists of 11 painted figures created in 1515 by the “Master of Chaource”. The church also has a 16th-century nativity scene in sculpted wood.

The Lowdown

Map reference 9 B1
Address 10210 (Aube).
 Fromagerie de Mussy: 30 Route de Maisons Lès Chaource; www.fromageriedemussy.com.
 Musée du Fromage: 17 Pl de l'Église; 03 25 40 10 67

Bus 6 from Troyes (www.courriersdelaubefr)

Visitor information: 2 Pl de l'Échiquier, 10210; 03 25 40 97 22; www.tourisme-en-chaourcois.com

Open Fromagerie de Mussy: closed Wed & Sun. Musée du Fromage: closed Tue

Eat and drink Snacks Les Routiers à Chaource (1 Grande Rue, 10210; 03 25 40 12 81) is an agreeable pizzeria. **Family treat** L'Auberge Sans Nom (1 Rue des Fontaines, 10210; 03 25 42 46 74; www.aubergesansnom.fr) serves not just proper meals, but also *tartines* (open sandwiches).

Letting off steam

Chaource is surrounded by the **Forêt d'Aumont** to the north and the **Forêt de Cussagny** to the south. Follow part of the 18-km (11-mile) marked path called the Circuit du Chaourçois to the west or south of Chaource.

5 Langres

Get ready for battle

Set on a rocky limestone spur, the little town of Langres has been a stronghold since Roman times and is almost entirely surrounded by medieval fortifications. These were erected to defend the borderlands between Champagne and Burgundy and offer breathtaking views to the east over the Marne Valley and the Vosges mountains. Walk around the ramparts – some 4 km (2 miles) – passing a series of towers and town gates or see the town from the comfort of the Petit Train Touristique. The famous writer Denis Diderot, who was born here in 1713, went on to create the colossal *Encyclopédie*, one of the first modern encyclopaedias. The elegant Maison des Lumières Denis Diderot celebrates the life of the writer.

The Lowdown

Map reference 9 D1
Address 52200 (Haute-Marne).
 Petit Train Touristique: 03 25 87 67 67; www.tourisme-langres.com

Train from Paris and intercity link from Reims

Visitor information Pl Bel Air, 52200; 03 25 87 67 67; www.tourisme-langres.com

Eat and drink Snacks Le Kerimen (9 Rue Jean Roussat, 52200; 03 25 84 58 06) is a family-friendly restaurant that serves crêpes. **Real meal** Le Corsaire (5 Rue de la Plage, 52200 Peigny; 03 25 88 76 48, www.le-corsaire.com) has a terrace overlooking the Lac de Liez. It offers pizzas, pastas and substantial menus.

Letting off steam

Head for the **Lac de la Liez**, 5 km (3 miles) east of Langres, with views of the town, footpaths, swimming beaches in summer and canoes and electric boats for hire. Or play in **Sensation Nature** (*accrobranche-langres.com*), an adventure park 5 km (3 miles) south of Langres, with rope climbs for kids 4 plus.

KIDS' CORNER

Make champagne cola!

In champagne, it is a mixture of yeast and sugar that creates the bubbles (carbon dioxide gas). Want to see how sugar makes bubbles? Pour some fizzy drink into a glass to about a third full. Now add a teaspoon of sugar. Fizz-pop! (In truth, this is not quite the same process that is used to make champagne: here the sugar is not making the carbon dioxide, but reacting with the carbon dioxide already dissolved in the fizzy drink.)



THE SOUND OF A NAME

The coat of arms of Chaource (pronounced “sha-orce”) shows two cats and a bear. In French, that is two *chats* (pronounced “sha”) and an *ours* (pronounced “oorce”). In heraldry, these are called “canting arms”: images that represent the sound of a name.



A special sausage

Troyes's speciality is a type of sausage called *andouillette*. It is made with strips of pork, seasoned with onion and pepper, as well as bits of intestines and tripe, which give a distinct smell and flavour. A company in Troyes makes 20 million *andouillettes* every year. The high quality *andouillettes* come with the label AAAAA (Association Amicale des Amateurs d'Andouillette Authentique) – the association of lovers of genuine *andouillettes*.



⑥ Château Fort de Sedan

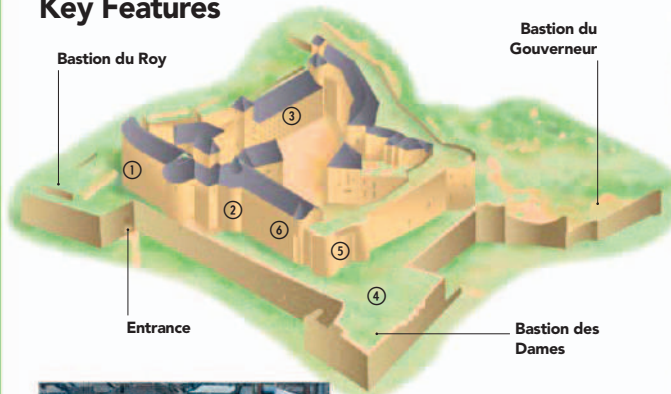
Medieval mega-fortress

Perhaps the largest medieval castle in Europe, the Château Fort de Sedan is massive, with monstrously thick walls, cavernous halls, dripping passages, arrow slits and cannon ports. It was founded on the Meuse river in 1424 by the warlord Everard de la Marck and became the base of the princes of Sedan, who ruled over a territory that stood independent from France until 1642. Seasonal events, festivals, displays of jousting and falconry help to bring the castle alive.



Wax figures on display in the Château Fort de Sedan

Key Features



⑤ **Le Tours Jumelles** Built in the 1420s, this massive gate was flanked by twin towers, which have since lost their cone-shaped tops. Inside, the slot for the portcullis can still be seen.



① **Mighty walls** The castle grew bigger and stronger over the centuries, to match the increasing power of cannons. Some 15th-century outer walls ended up 26 m (85 ft) thick.

② **Memorial** During World War I, the castle was occupied by the Germans and used as a prison and place of execution, as recalled on a plaque beside the Grand Châtelet gate.

③ **Hôtel le Château Fort** A wing of the old castle has been turned into a luxury hotel. The hotel's Restaurant Tour d'Auvergne recalls the family name of the princes of Sedan.

④ **Bastions** The pointed corner bastions, filled with earth and rubble, were built in the 1550s as a defence against the new cannons, which could destroy the older and weaker castle walls.



⑥ **Galerie des Princes** The once-luxurious apartments of the princes now house a museum on the history of the Principedom of Sedan. Some artifacts recall the Battle of Sedan in 1870, which saw the defeat of Napoleon III in the Franco-Prussian War.

The Lowdown

Map reference 5 C3
Address 08200 (Ardennes).
 Cours Clos du Château, 08200
 Sedan; www.chateau-fort-sedan.fr

Train TGV from Paris & Reims. **Bus**
 RDTA from Charleville-Mezières

Visitor information 6 Rue de la
 Rochefoucauld, 08208; 03 24 27
 73 00; www.sedan.fr

Open Jul & Aug: 10am–6pm
 daily; Apr–Jun, Sep & school
 hols: 10am–noon & 1:30–5pm

daily; Oct–Mar: 10am–noon
 & 1:30–5pm Tue–Sun, closed
 Christmas & 1 Jan

Price €26–36; under 6s free

Skipping the queue There is
 hardly any queue

Guided tours Audio tours
 available in English, French,
 Dutch and German

Age range 4 plus. Note that
 there are several stone staircases
 and rough paths.

Activities The château offers a
 self-guided tour, using audio
 guides that can be loaded on to
 a portable phone. The tour starts
 from the castle courtyard.

Allow At least 1 hour and 30 mins

Café A small café on site next
 to the shop

Shop La Boutique, close to
 the central courtyard, has all
 kinds of medieval-themed
 toys, games, souvenirs, books
 and figurines.



Tree climbing in the charming Jardin Botanique

Letting off steam

There is plenty of open space both inside and outside the castle for kids to scamper about in. Down in the pretty, sandstone town is the lovely **Jardin Botanique** (Pl d'Alsace-Lorraine, 08200), a 10-minute walk away. Further south, next to the Meuse river, is an artificial lake, the **Lac de Sedan**, which has footpaths, a public swimming pool called Centre Aquatique de Sedan and also a swimming beach with lifeguards in July and August.

Eat and drink

Picnic: under €20; Snacks: €20–45; Real meal: €45–90; Family treat: over €90 (based on a family of four)

PICNIC Maison Jacquemart (10 Rue du Ménéil, 08200; closed Sun & Mon) is a charcuterie-traiteur that stocks tasty snacks. The picturesque Jardin Botanique or the Lac de Sedan are good picnic spots. **SNACKS Café Turenne** (Cour du Château, 08200; 03 24 29 98 80; www.chateau-fort-sedan.fr/fr/

le-cafe-turenne) is located in the courtyard of this chateau, offering pancakes and Tartines Ardennaises, with locally brewed beers.

REAL MEAL Le St-Michel (3 Rue St-Michel, 08200; 03 24 29 04 61; www.le-saint-michel.fr) is an agreeable family-run hotel restaurant, popular with locals. The menus are reasonably priced and offer reliable standard dishes and local specialities. Spot the huge boar's head wearing a football scarf.

FAMILY TREAT Brasserie Artisanale du Château Fort (45 Promenoir des Prêtres, 08200; 03 24 53 13 52) is a jolly, traditional restaurant with a micro-brewery, close to the castle's boutique. Decorated with retro posters and memorabilia, it serves a good range of typical brasserie dishes to suit all tastes.

Shopping

The best toy shop is in the castle. In Sedan, there is a small shopping hub between Rue du Ménéil, Place de la Halle and Rue Gambetta.



The Horloge du Grand Marionette in Charleville-Mézières

Next stop...

CHARLEVILLE-MÉZIÈRES Located 13 km (8 miles) to the west of Sedan, capital of the Ardennes Department is also known as the "capital of marionette puppets" because of the **Institut International de la Marionette** (Pl Winston Churchill, 08000; www.marionette.com), which holds temporary exhibitions. The Horloge du Grand Marionnettiste, a giant animated clock, opens up as the hour strikes to play out scenes from a local legend here.

KIDS' CORNER

In the castle, find out...

- 1 Can you spot who is wearing huge pointy shoes?
- 2 Which way do spiral staircases turn while going up: clockwise or anticlockwise? Do you know why?
- 3 Who has got a picture of the sun on his chest (and loads of curly hair)?
- 4 Do you know what *jumelles* means – as in Les Tours Jumelles?
- 5 Chequerboards were part of the crest of the La Marck family. Where can you see them?



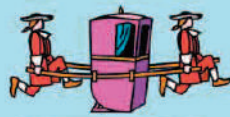
Answers at the bottom of the page.

DOWN THE HOLE

Go down the stairs beside La Boutique in the castle to find the deep hole that was once thought to be an *oubliette* – a dungeon where prisoners were thrown. It was in fact only a well.

The Sedan chair

This is an ancient form of taxi service without wheels: the passenger sat in an enclosed box and was lifted on a pair of poles by two strong men front and back. In the early 17th century, Henri de la Tour d'Auvergne, prince of Sedan, used to be ferried like this from his new mansion to visit his young second wife, Elisabeth of Nassau, who preferred to live in the old castle.



Answers: 1 The waxwork soldiers and also on some of the crests.
2 Anticlockwise. This gave advantage to defenders, who had more space to use their weapons, usually held in the right hand. 3 A marble bust of Louis XIV.
4 Twins. Jumelles also means the "Sun King", in the Galerie des
5 On the tincoils – can you see why?
6 Indicators – can you see why?
7 On the tincoils of some the waxwork soldiers

- Toilets** In the main castle courtyard and also at the tourist office opposite the castle
- Festival** Festival Medieval de Sedan, with participants dressed as soldiers, lords and ladies, as well as mythical monsters (May)

Good family value?

This is an unforgettable castle, for its sheer size, and the trail through its labyrinthine interior is great fun to explore.

Where to Stay in Champagne

Champagne is proud of its bubbly traditions of hospitality, never far from the surface in this broad choice of *gîtes* and manor-house *chambres d'hôtes* – some of which are splendidly grand – and hotels that range between straight-down-the-middle reliable and agreeably quirky.

AGENCY

Tourisme Champagne-Ardenne

www.champagne-ardenne-tourism.co.uk

The website has links to the main self-catering accommodation agencies operating in the region.

Chaource

Map 9 B1

BED & BREAKFAST

Domaine Saint-Roch

42 Grande Rue, 10210 Prusy; 03 25 70 06 04; www.domaineleshates.com

Located 12 km (7 km) southwest of Chaource, this is a group of farm buildings. There are two adjacent B&Bs, sleeping two to three, and a separate *gîte* sleeping four to five.



€€

Épernay

Map 5 B5

HOTEL

Hostellerie du Mont Aimé

51130 Bergères-les-Vertus; 03 26 52 21 31; www.hostellerie-mont-aime.com

About 20 km (12 miles) south of Épernay, this comfortable Logis hotel-restaurant has family rooms for four.



€€

Langres

Map 9 D1

HOTEL

Hôtel du Cheval Blanc

4 Rue de l'Estres, 52200; 03 25 87 07 00; www.hotel-langres.com

This hotel occupies a former abbey, parts of which date from the 12th



Farm buildings around the swimming pool at Domaine Saint-Roch, Chaource

century. Several rooms have original stone features and are subtly styled. Restaurant on site.



€€

Reims

Map 5 B4

HOTELS

Hôtel Azur

7-9 Rue des Écrévées, 51100; 03 26 47 43 39; www.hotel-azur-reims.com

This friendly little hotel is close to the Place Drouet d'Erlon and is a short walk across the city centre from the cathedral. Rooms are brightly decorated, simple and modern.



€€

Hôtel Crystal

86 Pl Drouet d'Erlon, 51100; 03 26 88 44 44; www.hotel-crystal.fr

An elegant 1920s Neo-Classical mansion with a delightful courtyard garden, this hotel is located in the thick of Reims' most popular public square. The rooms are comfortable. Underground car park nearby.



€€

Le Pot d'Etain

Map 5 C5

18 Pl de la République, 51000; 03 26 68 09 09; www.hotel-lepotdetain.com

This traditional, family-run hotel offers thirty Neo-Colonial-style rooms with satellite TV and a free Wi-Fi network. There are several restaurants, shops and a children's playground in the vicinity.



€€

Sedan

Map 5 C3

HOTELS

Le Saint Michel

3 Rue St-Michel, 08200; 03 24 29 04 61; www.le-saint-michel.fr

A welcoming family-run Logis hotel near the castle, with modern and well-equipped rooms. The restaurant is popular with locals.



€€



Simple but elegant room in the friendly Hôtel Azur, Reims

Hôtel Le Château Fort

08200 Portes des Princes; 03 24 26 11 00; www.chateaufort-sedan.fr/en/

This excellent historic yet modern hotel within the Château Fort de Sedan has 54 rooms decorated in modern-antique style. Family rooms sleep four to five. Free visitor passes to the castle available.



€€€

CAMPING

Camping de Douzy

Map 5 D3

Base de loisirs, 08140 Douzy; 03 24 27 23 25; www.camping-douzy.com

About 3 km (2 miles) east of Sedan, this three-star camping site has 125 pitches, caravans, camping cars and five fully equipped chalets for rent. It offers lake swimming, fishing, a playground and a family restaurant.



€

Troyes

Map 5 B6

HOTEL

Les Comtes de Champagne

54/56 Rue de la Monnaie, 10000; 03 25 73 11 70; tinyurl.com/6s3hbvw

This welcoming, centrally located two-star hotel has a quirky set of four 16th-century half-timbered mansions. Some family rooms and suites sleep up to six and have kitchenettes.



€€

Price Guide

The following price ranges are based on one night's accommodation in high season for a family of four, inclusive of service charges and any additional taxes.

€ Under €100 €€ €100–200 €€€ over €200

Le Nord and Picardy

Magnificent Nausicaá brings year-round interest to the Côte d'Opale, where a rugged line of cliffs, sand beaches and marshy bays face the Channel. Lille, Arras and Amiens display the prosperity of medieval times, and the Somme reveals memories of World War I. The grand Château at Chantilly and Parc Astérix provide two more attractions.

Below The central atrium of the impressive and engaging sealife centre, Nausicaá



① Nausicaá, Boulogne-sur-Mer

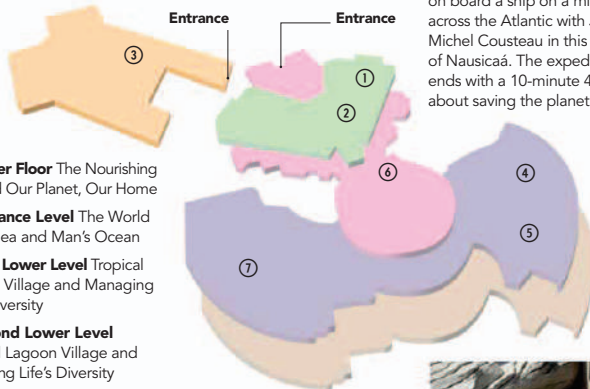
Explore beneath the waves – on land

With an inspired architectural design, Nausicaá is full of drama, but also delivers educational information underpinned by a strong ecological message. Get up close with scary sharks, dance with a sea lion or stroke a skate in one of the largest sea-life centres in Europe. Walk through darkened passageways, resonating with evocative sounds, to travel around the underwater world, from the ocean depths to the lakes of Africa, visiting a collection of 35,000 living creatures.



Key Features

- ③ Upper Floor** The Nourishing Sea and Our Planet, Our Home
- Entrance Level** The World of the Sea and Man's Ocean
- First Lower Level** Tropical Lagoon Village and Managing Life's Diversity
- Second Lower Level** Tropical Lagoon Village and Managing Life's Diversity
- Annexe** Cap au Sud



① **Fishing business** A section of a large fishing trawler, with screen projections showing it being buffeted by high seas, forms the hub of this section devoted to the fishing industry.

② **Touch Pool** Stroke a pollack, cod, dogfish, stingray and turbot swimming at eye level in this aquarium. The stingrays, in particular, seem to enjoy it – and do not sting.

③ **Cap au Sud** Imagine being on board a ship on a mission across the Atlantic with Jean-Michel Cousteau in this part of Nausicaá. The expedition ends with a 10-minute 4D film about saving the planet.

④ **Coral lagoon** View the wave-effect coral reef from above, then go downstairs to see 3,100 colourful species of fish and some sharks as well.

⑤ **Reptiles** Meet the two giant Aldabra tortoises from the Seychelles in the Tropical Lagoon Village section and caimans in the Submerged Tropical Forest section.

⑥ **Giant seaweed** The Californian tank has a forest of kelp, with smooth-hound sharks and bright Garibaldi damselfish weaving in and out.



⑦ **Sea lions** Animal trainers demonstrate the amazing intelligence and agility of sea lions by getting them to mirror movements and read signs through a glass wall in the Sea Lion Reserve.

The Lowdown

- Map reference** 4 F1
- Address** 62000 (Pas de Calais) Blvd Ste-Beuve, 62203 Boulogne-sur-Mer; 03 21 30 99 99
- Train** TGV from Paris to Calais-Fr tre, then line 1 from town centre to Nausica 
- Visitor information** Parvis de Nausica , 62203; 03 21 10 88 10; www.tourisme-boulogne-surmer.com
- Open** Jul–Aug: 9:30am–7:30pm daily; Sep–Jun: 9:30am–6:30pm daily; closed 25 Dec, 1 Jan am & last three weeks in Jan

- Price** €50–70; under 3s free. Students and concessions €13. Group ticket holders get discount at shops and snack bars.
- Skipping the queue** Buy a ticket two hours before closing time, when the aquarium is less busy. Use the ticket until midday the following day. The Nausica Pass (www.nausicaa.fr) can be bought online to avoid queues and for discounts, but must be stamped.
- Guided tours** Audio guides available in French, English

- and Dutch. Limited places for "Behind the Scenes" guided tours (10am & 3pm); book in advance
- Age range** All ages
- Activities** Look out for the daily schedule of presentations and activities, such as feeding the sea lions and feeding the fish of the Tropical Lagoon Village section.
- Allow** At least 3 hours. Ticket holders can leave the building and return any time during the day.



Rides and activities for kids at the beach next to Nausicaá

Letting off steam

Visit the superb sandy beach next door to Nausicaá; it has a broad promenade running along the back. Boulogne is located in the middle of the long stretch of coast called the Côte d'Opale. Just north of the city is Wimereux, with excellent beaches.

Eat and drink

Picnic: under €20; Snacks: €20–45; Real meal: €45–90; Family treat: over €90 (based on a family of four)

PICNIC Bourgeois Traiteur

(1 Grande Rue, 62203; 03 21 31 53 57; www.bourgeois-traiteur.eu; closed Mon) has delicious prepared dishes and snacks. Stock up with picnic supplies on offer at the excellent food market (8:30am–noon Wed & Sat) at Place Dalton. Picnic at the small, tree-shaded park nearby or on the beach next to Nausicaá.

SNACKS Au Ch'ti Casse Croûte

(208 Rue National, 62200; 03 21 80 85 79) serves snacks such as mussels and chips, kebabs, hamburgers.

REAL MEAL Chez Jules (8 Pl Dalton, 62203; 03 21 31 54 12; www.chezjules.fr) is a brasserie, restaurant and

pizzeria, with a wood-fired oven. Seafood and *plateaux de fruits de mer* (seafood platter) are available as well.

FAMILY TREAT Restaurant Le

Chatillon (6 Rue Charles Tellier, 62200; 03 21 31 43 95; www.le-chatillon.com; open for lunch Mon–Fri & some Sundays) serves fresh seafood and is popular with the local fish merchants. Book ahead.

Shopping

In Boulogne, the small Centre Ville area has a number of appealing shops such as the delightful kids' clothes chain **Sergent-Major** (7/9 Rue Thiers, 62200; 03 21 31 56 45; www.sergent-major.com).

Find out more

DIGITAL Check out the kids' section on www.nausicaa.co.uk/children.html for printable colouring pages and animal cards. The Ocean Files section on www.nausicaa.co.uk/ocean-files.html has illustrated articles on sharks, whales and other creatures of the deep, with links and news posts.



Towering stone walls surrounding the Haute Ville, Boulogne

Next step...

BOULOGNE-SUR-MER Set above the city centre, the old town area of Boulogne, called Haute Ville, is a short walk from the city centre. The old city gates lead into an enclave that has changed little since the 18th and 19th centuries. Surrounded by medieval walls, it is tightly packed with houses, shops and restaurants. Walk around the walls and visit the **Château-Musée** (Rue de Bernet, 62200; 03 21 10 02 22). Set in a medieval castle, this museum has an intriguing collection of historical curiosities on display.

KIDS' CORNER

Discover...

1 How many years can an Aldabra giant tortoise live?

a) 20 years b) 80 years
c) 150 years

2 Where are the penguins in the Cap au Sud section from?

3 What are Otaries?
4 What colour is the tomato clownfish?



Answers at the bottom of the page.

THE SIN OF GLUTTONY

The fish and other animals at Nausicaá eat 25 tons (23 tonnes) of food each year. But the sea lions are the greediest by far: just five of them eat 16 tons (15 tonnes) of fish each year – well over half the total!



The biggest beast

The biggest animal in Nausicaá's collection is a sand tiger shark, 3 m (9 ft) long and weighing 250 kg (550 lb). It is also known as a spotted ragged-tooth shark and grey nurse shark. The names reflect the fact that despite its array of crooked teeth, it is in fact a fairly placid creature and not particularly aggressive – unless provoked. Nausicaá's sand tiger shark has lived here since 1993.



Answers: **1** 150 years and more. **2** South Africa. **3** Charles is the French word for sea lions, which are different from seals. One difference is that sea lions have ear flaps. **4** Red.

-  **Café** The Tropical Lagoon Bar and Au Bistrot du Port on site
-  **Shop** The on-site shop, close to the main entrance, sells a variety of aquatic-themed toys, posters, books, ornaments and clothes.
-  **Toilets** Near the entrance and also near the Tropical Lagoon Bar.

Good family value?

Educating and entertaining, Nausicaá appeals to all ages and makes for a fine family day out.



Artistic glassware on display at Arc International, Arques near St-Omer

2 St-Omer

Glass and rockets

An attractive town, St-Omer boasts the Gothic Cathédrale Notre-Dame, with 17th- and 18th-century streets clustering around it. The town makes an enjoyable base for visiting nearby sites. The **Ascenseur à Bateaux**, east of St-Omer, is a boat lift, built in the 1880s, on the Canal de Neuffossé. Though no longer used, a museum shows how it worked. Southeast of St-Omer, Arques has the famous glass factory **Arc International**, a source of Luminarc, Pyrex and Crystal d'Arques glassware. Located 5 km (3 miles) south of St-Omer is **La Coupole**, a World War II facility built by the Germans to fire V2 rockets

The Lowdown

Map reference 4 G1

Address 62500 (Nord-Pas-de-Calais). **Ascenseur à Bateaux:** Rue Denis Papin, 62510; 03 21 88 59 00. **Arc International:** Zone Industrielle, RN 43, 62510; 03 21 12 74 74; www.arc-intl.com. **La Coupole:** Rue de Mont-à-Car, D210, 62570 Helfaut; www.la.coupole-france.com. **Maison du Papier:** Rue Bernard Chochoy, 62380; 03 21 95 45 25

Train from Boulogne and Lille

Visitor information 4 Rue du Lion d'Or, 62500; 03 21 98 08 51; www.tourisme-saintomer.com

Open Ascenseur à Bateaux: Apr–Sep: daily. Arc International: Mon–Sat. La Coupole: daily. Maison du Papier: Apr–Aug: Tue–Fri (Jul & Aug: also Sat & Sun)

Eat and drink **Picnic** Auchan Rives de l'Aa (2 Ave des Frais Fonds, 62219 Longuenesse; 03 21 98 78 00) is a mega-supermarket just to the south of St-Omer. **Real meal** Chez Tante Fauvette (10 Rue Ste Croix, 62500; 03 21 11 26 08; www.chezantefauvette.com) serves country kitchen-style meals and also authentic regional dishes.

on London in 1944. A museum provides a story of rockets from that time to the space exploration era. The **Maison du Papier** in Esquerdes, southwest of St-Omer, a papermaking centre since the 15th century, shows how paper was traditionally made. It offers hands-on activities for kids.

Letting off steam

The Marais Audomarois, the marshes to the east of St-Omer, are a rare area of farmed wetlands crisscrossed by narrow canals. **Isnor** (www.isnor.fr) runs open-topped boat trips from Clairmarais, to the east of the town.

3 Lille

Brand new, old and prehistoric

The capital of French Flanders, Lille is one of France's biggest cities. Vieux Lille, its historic centre, has winding streets threading out from a cluster of three squares and is an excellent place to explore on foot. By contrast, "Euralille" located 2 km (1 mile) to the east, is an ultra-modern development with a number of striking pieces of architecture and a mega shopping mall. Go to the **Palais des Beaux-Arts**, which has a great collection of paintings, notably of Flemish art. Visit the **Musée d'Histoire Naturelle et de Géologie**, a wonderland of animals, shells and dinosaur models. Climb up the belfry of the **Hôtel de Ville** for fine views.

Letting off steam

The **Citadelle de Lille** (59800 Esquermes) is a star-shaped fortress – typical of military engineer Vauban, who was also its military governor. Although still used as a military base, it is ringed by the Bois de Boulogne parkland, gardens and a playground.



Ferris wheel in the Grand'Place in the heart of Lille

The Lowdown

Map reference 4 H1

Address 59000 (Nord). Palais des Beaux-Arts: Pl de la République; 03 20 06 78 00; www.pba-lille.fr. Musée d'Histoire Naturelle et de Géologie: 19 Rue de Bruxelles; 03 28 55 30 80; www.mairie-lille.fr. Hôtel de Ville: Pl des Héros; 03 20 49 50 00

Train TGV from Paris

Visitor information Pl Rihour, 59000; 03 33 59 57 94 00; www.lilletourism.com

Open Palais des Beaux-Arts: closed Tue. Musée d'Histoire Naturelle et de Géologie: closed Tue & Sat. Hôtel de Ville: Tue–Sun

Eat and drink **Snacks** Paul (6 Pl de Strasbourg, 59000; 03 20 57 26 29) is a chain of international bakeries and salons de thé since 1953. **Real meal** La Pâte Brisée (63–65 Rue de la Monnaie, 59000; 03 20 74 29 00; www.lapatebri.see.fr) specializes in quiches and tarts and includes a kids' menu.

4 Arras

Beneath the streets

A grand little city, Arras is centred around its two main squares – the Grand'Place and the Place des Héros. Next to the cathedral, the Abbaye de St-Vaast houses the admirable **Musée des Beaux-Arts**, with beautiful paintings, tapestries and especially fine medieval carvings. Much of the city has been rebuilt in original style since its widespread destruction in World War I. Les Boves, a network of underground passages that spread beneath the city, was cut out from quarry stone in the 9th century and is a must-see. Go to the underground **Carrière**



Splendid view of the city's charming buildings and cathedral, Arras

The Lowdown

Map reference 4 H2
Address 62000 (Pas-de-Calais).
 Musée des Beaux-Arts: 22 Rue Paul Doumer; 03 21 71 26 43.
 Carrière Wellington: Rue Delétoire; 03 21 51 26 95; www.carriere-wellington.com
 Hôtel de Ville: Pl des Héros; 03 21 51 26 95

Train from Boulogne, Paris & Lille

Visitor information Hôtel de Ville, Pl des Héros, 62000; 03 21 51 26 95; www.ot-arras.fr

Open Musée des Beaux-Arts: closed Tue. Carrière Wellington: late Jan-Dec: daily. Hôtel de Ville: daily

Eat and drink *Real meal* Le Petit Rat Porteur (11 Rue de la Taillerie, 62000; 03 21 51 29 70; www.lepetitratporteur.fr) serves reasonably priced regional food, including a kids' menu. *Family treat* La Cave des Saveurs (36 Grand'Place, 62000; 03 21 59 75 24; www.lacavedessaveurs.fr) is a family-run restaurant with excellent food.

Wellington, which sheltered 24,000 Allied soldiers as they prepared for the Battle of Arras in April 1917, and its memorial museum. Climb the belfry of the **Hôtel de Ville** for a bird's-eye view of the city.

Letting off steam

Zip off to the **Jardin des Allées** (Blvd Crespel, 62000; 03 21 51 26 95), a park with walkways and playgrounds for kids.

5 Montreuil-sur-Mer

But don't bring swimming costumes

Although it is called *sur-Mer*, literally "on sea", Montreuil is actually 15 km (9 miles) inland. This hilltop town once overlooked a busy port on

estuary of the Canche river – a fortified royal town with a castle and a meeting place of kings. But, the estuary silted up in the late Middle Ages and the sea retreated. The key attraction is its ramparts, with views out over the nearby countryside and to the coast. Visit the old fortress and former royal castle called the **Citadelle**. The flower-bedecked streets of the town, lined with 17th- and 18th-century buildings, make it a nice place to wander. Seek out the cobbled Rue du Clape-en-bas. Victor Hugo made Montreuil the setting for the first part of his novel *Les Misérables*. It is the subject of a son *et lumière* with hundreds of local actors at the Citadelle.

Letting off steam

Scamper about the ramparts of Montreuil or beaches of Le Touquet, located 18 km (11 miles) west of the town. On the seafront, to the northwest is **Aqualud** (www.aqualud.com), a giant pool with indoor and outdoor pools, shoots and tubes.



The quaint, flower-decked town of Montreuil-sur-Mer

The Lowdown

Map reference 4 F2
Address 62170 (Pas-de-Calais).
 Citadelle: Rue Carnot; 03 21 06 10 83

Train from Arras and Boulogne

Visitor information 21 Rue Carnot, 62170; 03 21 06 04 27; www.tourisme-montreuillois.com

Open Citadelle: Wed-Mon

Eat and drink *Picnic* Le Cafe Victor Hugo (3 Place Gambetta, 67170 Montreuil; 03 21 06 01 74) sells sandwiches for a picnic. Picnic on the ramparts. *Family treat* Les Hauts de Montreuil (19-23 Rue Pierre Ledent, 62170; 03 21 81 95 92; www.leshautsdemontreuil.com) offers tasty regional food and a menu for kids.

KIDS' CORNER

Giants on the loose

According to legend, in the 7th century, the Prince of Dijon was travelling to England when he was attacked and killed in the woods by the evil brigand Phinaert. The prince's wife fled the scene and gave birth to a baby boy, handing him to a hermit before she died. The hermit raised the boy and christened him Lydéric. Years later, Lydéric, a brave, young knight, found Phinaert and killed him in a duel. Today, the legend lives on when vast giant figures of Phinaert and Lydéric are carried through the streets of Lille on feast days and in carnival parades.



TALE OF A TAPESTRY

Tapestry-making was a speciality of Arras in the Middle Ages, so much so that the word "arras" became synonymous with tapestry. In Shakespeare's play *Hamlet*, Polonius hides behind an arras to spy on the young prince and is stabbed to death through the cloth.



My son et lumière

A son et lumière is usually put on outdoors at night to tell the story of a historic building, such as a castle. The "sound" tells the story in music, words and sound effects; dramatic "lighting" illuminates parts of the building where the historic scenes took place. In Montreuil, costumed actors also play out the scenes.

Create your own *son et lumière* using torches in a dark room. Shine them on the objects in the room and tell the story of each object. It could be a serious story or something entirely made up.



6 Baie de Somme

Birds, boats, beaches, bikes and seals

The Somme river is channelled into a canal at Abbeville, to make the last 15 km (9 miles) of its journey to the sea. It broadens out into a wide and beautiful estuary called the Baie de Somme, edged by salt marshes, beaches and nature reserves, with the easygoing fishing ports of Le Crotoy to the north and St-Valery-sur-Somme to the south. The upper town of St-Valery retains most of its medieval fortifications. William the Conqueror set out to invade England from here in August 1066. The **Parc du Marquenterre**, north of the bay, is a huge bird sanctuary, with many species of birds, including cranes, herons and storks. Rent kayaks, or take a guided trip in large Polynesian-style pirogues from the Quai Jeanne d'Arc in St-Valery to see seals at close quarters in the estuary. In summer, the historic steam trains of the **Chemin de Fer de la Baie de Somme** run between Le Crotoy and St-Valery, with a diesel train link 12 km (7 miles) to Cayeux-sur-Mer.

The Lowdown

- **Map reference** 4 F3
Address 80230 (Somme). Parc du Marquenterre: 25 bis Chemin des Garennes, 80120; 03 22 25 68 99, www.marcanterra.fr. Chemin de Fer de la Baie de Somme: Ave Gare, 80550 Le Crotoy; 03 22 26 96 96; www.chemin-fer-baie-somme.asso.fr
- **Car** from Abbeville
- i **Visitor information** St-Valery: 2 Pl Guillaume le Conquérant, 80230; 03 22 60 93 50. Le Crotoy: 1 Rue Carnot, 80550; 03 22 27 05 25; www.visit-somme.com
- ⌚ **Open** Parc du Marquenterre: timings vary throughout the year. Chemin de Fer de la Baie de Somme: Apr–Oct (trains depart late morning)
- **Eat and drink** **Snacks** Les Galettes de Tante Olympe (36 Rue de la Ferté, 80230 St-Valery; 03 22 60 42 59) serves *galettes* (savoury pancakes) and *crêpes*, with a lovely bay view. **Family treat** Chez Mado (6 Quai Léonard, 80550 Le Crotoy; 03 22 27 81 22; www.chezmado.com) serves good seafood and offers great bay views.
- 🎪 **Festival** Fête de la Mer, sea festival with traditional costumes and parades in St-Valery (Aug)



Cyclists approaching St-Valery on the cycling path running around the Somme Estuary

Take cover

Go to the **Ecomusée Picarvie** (5 Quai de Romerel, 80230 St-Valery; 03 22 26 94 90) that reconstructs the local life and crafts of historic Picardy.

7 Grottes-Refuges de Naours

Explore an underground city

The extensive network of *muches* (cave-refuges) dug out of limestone beneath the town of Naours forms an underground city, all some 33 m (100 ft) below the surface. With 2 km (1 mile) of subterranean streets, public squares, as well as 300 rooms, there was enough space to shelter 2,600 people – complete with wells, bakeries and chapels, as well as stalls for their cattle and horses. The first caves were dug as quarries in Roman times, nearly 2,000 years ago. The caves were used by the Nazis as military headquarters in World War II. Be sure to dress warmly.

Letting off steam

Run about in the big wooded park above the caves, which has two windmills on top of the hill, a watermill, a playground, as well as animals such as peacocks and deer.



Splendid caribou statue at the Parc-Mémorial de Beaumont Hamel, Somme

The Lowdown

- **Map reference** 4 G3
Address 80260 (Somme).
- **Car** from Amiens to Naours
- i **Visitor information** 5 Rue des Carrières, 80260; 03 22 93 71 78; www.grottesdenaours.com
- ⌚ **Open** Feb–mid-Dec: daily; (45-min English audio guides available)
- € **Price** €36–46; under 4s free
- **Eat and drink** **Picnic** Carrefour Market (22 Rue General Leclerc, 80000 Amiens; 03 22 91 07 38) stocks supplies. Picnic in the park attached to the caves. **Snacks** Le Restaurant de la Cite Souterraine (on site; May–Jun: Sat & Sun only; Jul & Aug: open daily) serves savoury pancakes, quiches and salads.

8 Battlefields of the Somme

Memories of war

One of the most bitterly contested areas of the front in World War I was the Somme, east of Albert; some 20,000 British troops died on the first day of the Battle of the Somme on 1 July 1916, and between then and November around a million more men died in the fighting on both sides. Visit the trenches of the **Parc-Mémorial de Beaumont Hamel**, devoted to the Royal Newfoundland Regiment. At La Boisselle, the Lochnagar Crater made by a British mine bomb displays the power of the munitions used. The Memorial at Thiepval, to more than 72,000 missing British soldiers, dwarfs neat ranks of 600 British and French graves. The **Historial de la Grande Guerre**, a museum set in the château at Péronne, gives a full and moving account of the war through exhibits, posters and films.

The Lowdown

Map reference 4 G3 & 4 H3
Address 80300, 80200 (Somme).
 Parc-Mémorial de Beaumont
 Hamel: D55, 62580; 03 21 50 68
 68. Historial de la Grande Guerre:
 Château de Péronne, 80201; 03
 22 83 14 18; www.historial.org

Car from Amiens to the
 battlefields

Visitor information Albert: 9 Rue
 Gambetta, 80300; 03 22 75 16 42.
 Péronne: 16 Pl André Audinot,
 80200; 03 22 84 42 38; [www.
 visit-somme.com](http://www.visit-somme.com)

Open Parc-Mémorial de
 Beaumont Hamel: year round.
 Historial de la Grande Guerre:
 daily, closed mid-Dec–mid-Jan

Eat and drink Picnic Intermarché
 (Rue 11 Novembre, 80300
 Albert; 03 22 75 21 21) is a
 convenient one-stop source of
 supplies. **Real meal** Le Bistrot
 d'Antoine (8 Pl André Audinot,
 80200 Péronne; 03 22 85 84 46;
www.bistrot-antoine.fr) offers
 regional cookery and a special
 kids' menu.

Letting off steam

The Somme river provides a tranquil
 setting for walks, especially along the
 marshland pools called Les Étangs
 de la Haute Somme near Péronne.
 Take a trip on a historic stream or
 diesel train: in summer, **Le P'tit
 Train de la Haute Somme** ([http://
 appeva.perso.neuf.fr](http://appeva.perso.neuf.fr)) runs along the
 Somme river to the south of Albert.

9 Amiens

Soaring cathedral and floating gardens

The capital of the historic province
 of Picardy, located on the Somme
 river, Amiens boasts the Cathédrale

Notre-Dame, the largest Gothic
 cathedral in France. Built between
 the 13th and 15th centuries, it stuns
 with masses of statues and relief
 sculptures; the soaring nave is the
 highest in France. The **Musée de
 Picardie** has an art and archaeology
 collection. Visit the **Maison de Jules
 Verne**, home of the great pioneer
 science-fiction and adventure-book
 writer, who wrote the famous *Around
 the World in Eighty Days*. A rare
 attraction is the *Hortillonages*, an
 area of cultivated marshlands
 threaded by canals; boat trips run
 through the little "floating" market
 gardens and orchards.

Letting off steam

The **Parc St-Pierre**, a 10-minute walk
 from the cathedral across a bridge
 over the Somme, has riverside walks,
 a lake, and climbing frame: it is a
 good place to picnic.



Sculpture on the main portico of
 Cathédrale Notre-Dame, Amiens

The Lowdown

Map reference 4 G3
Address 80000 (Somme).
 Musée de la Picardie: 48 Rue de la
 République; 03 22 97 14 00; [http://
 picardie-muses.fr/musee/musee-de-
 picardie/](http://picardie-muses.fr/musee/musee-de-picardie/); Maison de Jules Verne: 2
 Rue Charles Dubois; 03 22 45 45 75;
[www.amiens.fr/maison-jules-verne/
 maison-jules-verne.html](http://www.amiens.fr/maison-jules-verne/)

Train from Paris, Calais, Boulogne
 and Lille

Visitor information 40 Parvis Notre
 Dame, 80000; 03 22 71 60 50;
www.amiens-tourisme.com

Open Musée de Picardie: Tue &
 Fri–Sat (till 9pm Thu). Maison de

Jules Verne: mid-Apr–mid-Oct:
 daily; rest of the year: closed Tue

Eat and drink **Real meal** Le 7ème
 Art (7 Blvd de Belfort, 80000; 03
 22 67 17 17) is a fun place, with
 a broad menu and modern pizzas
 on offer. **Family treat** Les Orfèvres
 (14 Rue des Orfèvres; 03 22 92 36 01;
www.lesorfèvres.com), in the heart
 of the old town, serves traditional
 dishes by chef Jean-Michel Descloux.

Festival Fête au Bord de l'Eau,
 a medieval festival in the historic
 St-Leu quarter (Sep)

KIDS' CORNER

Motto of a king: "Eat, drink and do nothing"

Amiens is known for its traditional
 puppetry – marionettes, locally
 known as *cabotans*.



Carved out of wood and
 beautifully dressed, they
 stand about 50 cm
 (20 inches) high. Using
 the old language of
 Picard, they act out
 folk stories set in and
 around the historic
 St-Leu quarter of

Amiens. The key character
 is their red-suited King Lafleur,
 who is famously lazy and
 bad-tempered. His wife Sandrine,
 his pal Tchot Blaise and
 characters such as Popaul
 Caliquot and Papa Tchu Tchu
 accompany him on stage.

FISHY FACTS

There are two types of seals in
 the Baie de Somme: harbour
 seals and grey seals. The seals
 rest on the sandbanks at low tide
 and when the tide rises, they go
 fishing. Spot their heads bobbing
 in the water from the
 quay in St-Valery as
 they follow fish upriver.



Count the poppies

The battlefield region of the
 Somme is called the *Pays du
 Coquelicot* (Poppy Country). Red
 poppies became the symbol of
 remembrance for British soldiers
 who died in World War I because
 they grew among the devastation
 and graveyards of the battle zone.
 See how many poppies you can
 count: find them on signboards,



on the memorials
 and growing in
 the fields in
 summer. The
 French symbol of
 remembrance is the
 blue cornflower.

10 Parc Astérix

Greedy Gauls, rotten Romans and roller coasters

By 50 BC, Julius Caesar had conquered most of Gaul, now France, except for a tiny unnamed village situated in the province of Armorica.

Parc Astérix is centred around this legendary village, which Asterix the Gaul and his sidekick Obelix famously defended from the Roman invaders. The park, which has lots of charm and was approved by Asterix's creator, Albert Uderzo, has exhilarating rides, a calm cruise through the village and, of course, characters to meet and greet.



Figure of a Roman soldier in Parc Astérix

Key Features



1 Menhir Express Get wet on this spectacular water ride while hurtling down the 13-m (43-ft) slide in one of Obelix's standing stones.

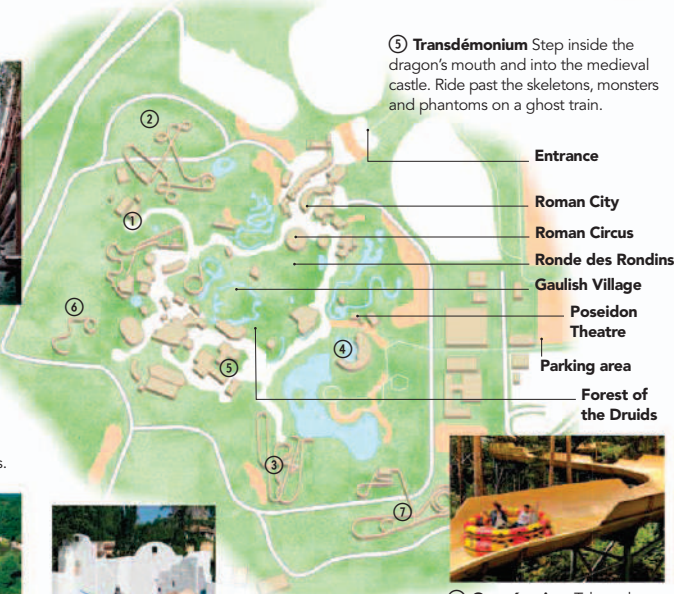
2 Trace du Hourra Shoot along a bobsleigh. Run, slide, glide, swirl and shout hurra while plunging downwards.



3 Goudurix Twirl upside down seven times at a speed of 75 km (47 miles) per hour on this thrill-seeking roller coaster.



4 Dancing dolphins Watch these lively creatures in a superb magical show that will enchant kids.



5 Transdémonium Step inside the dragon's mouth and into the medieval castle. Ride past the skeletons, monsters and phantoms on a ghost train.



6 Oxygénarium Take a deep breath before plunging 195 m (640 ft) in this giant water slide.

7 Tonnère de Zeus Ride the biggest, gravity-defying wooden roller coaster in Europe, which whizzes along at 80 km (50 miles) per hour to the summit of Mount Olympus.

Letting off steam

To take a break from the rides, run around the Gaulish village to spot Obelix and the others, or let loose in the **Forest of the Druids** playground nearby; walk in the wise old druid Getafix's footsteps through the menhirs across moving marshes, located next to the **Ronde des Rondins**, a mini roller coaster that is suitable for younger members of the family. When the park opens for Christmas holidays, there is plenty of entertainment to look out for, including a lovely ice-skating rink.

Prices given are for a family of four

Eat and drink

Picnic: under €25; Snacks: €25–45; Real meal: €45–90; Family treat: over €90 (based on a family of four)

PICNIC Buy picnic ingredients at Leclerc in Paris to keep costs down. Picnic by the lake.

SNACKS Food kiosks and cafés are scattered across the park.

REAL MEAL Aux Fastes de Rome is a fast food outlet in the Roman city, with a pleasant terrace. **Le Cirque** is the best bet for a good hot meal. It also has an indoor play area for kids near the Oxygénarium.

FAMILY TREAT Arcimboldo, located near the exit of the Gaulish village, is decorated with a mountain of plastic fruits and vegetables but has classic dishes on the menu.



Fun façade and entrance to the park's popular restaurant, Arcimboldo

The Lowdown

Map reference 4 G5
Address 60000 (Oise).
 60128 Plailly; 08 26 46 66 26;
www.parcasterix.fr

Train RER B3 from Paris to
 Aéroport Charles de Gaulle,
 from where a shuttle bus leaves
 every 30 mins, 9:30am–6:30pm.
 Joint train and entry tickets are
 available. **Bus** Direct shuttle
 bus from Paris (€70–80 return)

Open Apr–Aug & some winter
 school hols: 10am–6pm Mon–
 Fri, 9:30am–6pm Sat & Sun;
 Sep–Oct: 10am–6pm Sat
 & Sun; late night opening for
 Gaulish nights in Jul & Aug.
 Check website for timings.

Price €160–170; under 3s free.
 Check website for special offers.

Skipping the queue Buy tickets
 online and avoid Sunday as it
 gets too crowded.

Age range 7 plus

Allow A day

Toilets On the left by
 the entrance, on the left of
 the village and by the circus
 big top

Good family value?

Kids have to love the stories of
 Asterix to get the best out of the
 trip. Cut costs by bringing a picnic.



A boat tour through the Gaulish village at Parc Astérix

Shopping

There is no end to souvenirs with
 Asterix, Obelix and Dogmatix on
 towels, glasses, T-shirts, key rings
 and refrigerator magnets. The park
 offers a good selection of the books
 and films in English. *Asterix and
 the Golden Sickle*, the second volume
 of the famous comic book series,
 is set in Lutetia, now Paris.

Find out more

DIGITAL The magical web potion
 can be taken at www.asterix.com.

FILM There are as many as 11 films
 made on this popular comic strip.
The Twelve Tasks of Asterix (1976)
 is a unique cartoon as it is not based
 on an existing comic book. The
 Romans almost win in *Asterix and
 the Big Fight* (1989). Gérard
 Depardieu is brilliant as Obelix in
Asterix and Obelix (1999), *Asterix*

and *Obelix: Mission Cleopatra*
 (2002) and *Asterix and the Olympic
 Games* (2008).

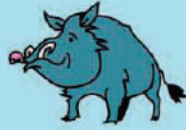
Take cover

There are shows over weekends
 and in high season at the Poseidon
 Theatre and the Roman Circus.

Next step...

FORÊT D'ERMENONVILLE Be
 Getafix and Dogmatix and gather up
 leaves in the Forêt d'Ermenonville.
 To get there, take the A1 to the city
 of Senlis, 10 km (6 miles) north of
 the theme park, then the D330A
 east for 4 km (2 miles) and south
 on the N330 through the forest.
 Inhabited by wild boar, deer, hares,
 roe deer and rabbits, the huge
 forest has hiking trails and is also
 suited for leisurely walks.

KIDS' CORNER



Test your knowledge...

- 1 Do you know what is Obelix's favourite food?
- 2 Who invents a potion to make it rain?
- 3 Name the supreme chief of the Britons.
- 4 What sort of dog is Dogmatix?

Answers at the bottom of the page.



GAULS AND ASTEROIDS

Asterix means little star in Greek. The first French satellite that was launched in 1965 was named A-1 Asterix. There is also an asteroid named after the intrepid Gaul, 29401 Asterix.

The real Asterix

In 52 BC, Gaulish warrior chief
 Vercingetorix united the Gauls
 and led a revolt against the
 Romans. He was defeated in
 the Battle of Alésia, which took
 place in the village of Alise-Ste-
 Reine in Burgundy. He was held
 prisoner for five years until he
 was paraded through the streets



of Rome by the
 triumphant Caesar
 and then executed.
 There is a huge
 statue of him on
 the hilltop where
 he fought till the
 end, and a Métro
 station in Paris
 is named after
 the battle.

belong to any breed.
 4 Dogmatix is unique and does not
 drink a rival 3 Cassivellanus.

Answers: 1 Wild Boar 2 Peltex, the



Horse-riding through the lovely Forêt de Chantilly

11 Chantilly

Fabulous château and horses

This town is famous for four things: its Neo-Renaissance château, horse-racing, Chantilly cream and Chantilly lace. It has been the capital of French horse-racing since 1834, with an aristocratic history closely linked to the Château de Chantilly, and is still a centre for breeding and training. The château is actually two connected châteaux – the Grand Château and the Petit Château – all but surrounded by water. The Grand Château now houses the **Musée Condé**, filled with top-ranking paintings. The Petit Château's sumptuous apartments house a library containing the 15th-century *Les Très Riches Heures du*

Duc de Berry, one of the world's greatest illuminated manuscripts. Outside, the stables, known as the Grandes Écuries, were built in 1719, with room for 240 horses and 500 dogs. They house the **Musée Vivant du Cheval**, which has a daily rabbit race, a collection of 30 horse breeds and presents riding performances three times a day.

Letting off steam

The château is surrounded by a beautiful park, laid out with water features in the late-17th century by the great landscape designer Le Nôtre. Le Petit Train tours the park and rowing boats can be hired at weekends. The huge **Forêt de Chantilly**, adjoining the city, has woodland paths.

12 Compiègne

Kings, emperors and a dictator

This is where Joan of Arc was captured in 1430 by the Burgundians and sold to the English. The city boasts the famous **Château de Compiègne**, which was built for Louis XV in the 18th century. It went on to become the favourite residence of Napoleon III. It now houses the Musée du Second Empire about the Napoleon III era (1852–70). The château also has the Musée de la Voiture, a collection of old carriages, bicycles and vintage cars. In the town centre, beside the 16th-century Hôtel de Ville, the **Musée de la Figurine Historique** has 100,000 model figurines in diorama settings.

About 5 km (3 miles) east of the city is the the Clairière de l'Armistice, a forest clearing where the Armistice ending World War I was signed in 1918, in a train carriage. The **Musée de l'Armistice** marks the site with a carriage of the same era. This is also where Hitler chose to sign the French surrender in 1940 (see p52).

The Lowdown

Map reference 4 H4

Address 60200 (Oise).

Château de Compiègne: Pl du Général de Gaulle; 03 44 38 47 02; www.musee-chateau-compiegne.fr. Musée de la Figurine Historique: 28 Pl de l'Hôtel de Ville; 03 44 40 72 55; www.musee-figurine.fr. Musée de l'Armistice: Route de Soissons; 03 44 85 14 18

Train from Paris and Amiens

Visitor information Pl de l'Hôtel de Ville, 60200; 03 44 40 01 00; www.compiegne-tourisme.fr

Open Château de Compiègne: Wed–Mon. Musée de la Figurine Historique: closed Mon. Musée de l'Armistice: daily; winter: closed Tue

Eat and drink Real meal Le Vivenel (30 Rue Vivenel, 60200, 03 44 86 10 15) offers a delicious range of dishes from the French West Indies, such as stuffed crab, creole sausages and spicy colombo stews. **Family treat** Le Bouchon (4 Rue Austerlitz, 60200; 03 44 20 02 03; www.le-bouchon.com) serves excellent traditional local cuisine in an ancient building with a summer terrace; includes kids' menu.

The Lowdown

Map reference 4 G4

Address 60500 (Oise).

Musée Condé: Château de Chantilly; 03 44 62 62 62; www.chateauduchantilly.com. Musée Vivant du Cheval: 7 Rue Connétable; 03 44 57 75 51; www.museevivantducheval.fr

Train from Paris; RER from Châtelet Les Halles, Paris

Visitor information 60 Ave du Maréchal Joffre, 60500; 03 44 67 37 37 37; www.chantilly-tourisme.com

Open Musée Condé & Musée Vivant du Cheval: Wed–Mon

Eat and drink Snacks Le Hameau (03 44 57 46 21), the model village in the park, offers modest fare and food to take away. **Family Treat** La Capitainerie (03 44 57 15 89; www.lacapitainerie-domainede-chantilly.fr) serves meals in the original kitchens of the château.

Festival Prix du Jockey Club, the main flat-racing meeting (Jun)



Above The beautiful Petit Parc of the Château de Compiègne
Below The Petit Château, Chantilly



Letting off steam

Kids can run about in the acres of parkland surrounding the Château de Compiègne, known as the **Petit Parc**, to distinguish it from the Grand Parc southeast of the city. East of the town is the old hunting forest of the **Fôret de Compiègne**, ideal for walks and picnics.

13 Château de Pierrefonds

A fairy-tale château

This 14th-century château was falling into ruins until 1857, when it was restored and transformed by Eugène Viollet-le-Duc, the master of French Neo-Gothic design, to create a medieval fantasy castle for Napoleon III. The outside is a decently accurate reproduction of a working military fortress. But work petered out when Napoleon III's reign ended and the planned sumptuous interior was never completed. Still, it remains a fun place to explore through its vast halls, towers, walkways and staircases.

The Lowdown

-  **Map reference** 4 H4
Address 60350 (Oise).
Rue Viollet-Le-Duc; 03 44 42 72 72; www.pierrefonds.monuments-nationaux.fr
-  **Train** from Compiègne, then bus 27 (best reached by car)
-  **Visitor information** Pl de l'Hôtel de Ville, 60350; 03 44 42 81 44; www.pierrefonds-tourisme.net
-  **Open** May–Aug: daily; Sep–Apr Tue–Sun
-  **Price** €15; under 18s free
-  **Eat and drink** *Snacks* Vanille et Chocolat (13 Pl de l'Hôtel-de-Ville, 60350; 03 44 42 29 56) specializes in home-made chocolates. *Real meal* Le Commerce (11 Hôtel de Ville, 60350; 03 44 42 80 66) offers seafood, pizzas and more.

Letting off steam

Just to the northwest of Pierrefonds is the **Fôret de Compiègne**. Walks begin at a number of points off the D973 and D85.

14 Laon

Cable car to an ancient capital

Once the capital of Frankish France, the old town of Laon, called the Ville-Haute, is set on a dramatic

The Lowdown

-  **Map reference** 5 B4
Address 02000 (Aisne).
Cathédrale de Notre-Dame: 8 Rue Cloître; 03 23 20 26 54
-  **Train** from Paris, Amiens & Reims
-  **Visitor information** Hôtel Dieu, Pl du Parvis Gautier de Mortagne, 02000; 03 23 20 28 62; www.tourisme-paysdelaon.com
-  **Eat and drink** *Real meal* L'Estaminet St-Jean (23 Rue St Jean, 02000; 03 23 23 04 89; www.estaminetsaintjean.com), modelled on an old-style tavern, specializes in Picard cuisine and has fairly priced set menus. *Family treat* Zorn La Petite Auberge (45 Blvd Brosollette, 02000; 03 23 23 08 38) boasts an excellent reputation and serves French classic cuisine. Book ahead.

ridge. Leave your car in the Ville-Basse (lower town) and take the Poma, an automated cable car, that climbs up to the Hôtel de Ville in the old town. The **Cathédrale de Notre-Dame**, one of the oldest in France, is impressive above all for the immense space beneath the vaults of its soaring nave, lit up by stained glass. Walking tours lead around the medieval streets. Walk right round the 16th-century Citadelle for great views. Starting from the cathedral, a Petit Train Touristique chugs its way around the medieval town.

Letting off steam

Head for **Le Dôme** (74 Ave Charles de Gaulle, 02000; 03 23 23 94 00; www.ledome-equalia.fr), a swimming pool and ice-skating complex. The **Forêt de St-Gobain** (evasion-aisne.com), to the west of Laon, is a hunting forest, with cycle paths and walking routes.



The Poma cable car ascending to Laon's old town

KIDS' CORNER

A calendar in pictures



Les Très Riches Heures du Duc de Berry is a medieval book of hours, a kind of calendar

illustrating events in the Duke of Berry's life and the work and activities of ordinary folk for every month of the year. Create your own "illuminated" calendar by showing what you like doing best in every month of the year. If you want to see what is in *Les Très Riches Heures*, then go to www.ibiblio.org/wm/rh.



CREME DE LA CREME

Whipped cream, sweetened with sugar and flavoured with vanilla, is called *Crème Chantilly*. It was said to have been invented in the 1600s by a chef at the Château de Chantilly, which was famous for its fine food.

Bertha Broadfoot

Bertrada of Laon, daughter of the Count of Laon, was also known as Bertha Broadfoot; she may have had a deformity called a club foot (those days nicknames could be pretty direct!). In AD 740, she married Pepin the Short. In 751, they became King and Queen of the Franks. They had four kids, one of whom was Charlemagne, the greatest king of the Franks and founder of the French line of kings. The tombs of Bertha and Pepin can be seen in the Basilica St Denis in Paris (see p117).



Where to Stay in Le Nord and Picardy

The salt breezes and silver marine light bring sparkle to the coastal accommodation, much of which seems designed to evoke the relaxed, sun-filled seaside holidays of childhood. Inland, hotels provide useful base camps from which to explore towns and cities on foot.

AGENCIES

Pour les Vacances

www.pour-les-vacances.com

This French company has a good range of cottages and farmhouses across the region, as well as B&Bs.

Belvilla

www.belvilla.fr

This well-established Dutch company represents numerous properties of all ages and sizes in Le Nord and Picardy.

Amiens

Map 4 G3

HOTEL

Hôtel Prieuré

17-6 Rue Porion, 80000; 03 22 71

16 71; www.hotel-prieure-amiens.com

Right by Amiens' cathedral, this is a converted 18th-century ecclesiastical building. Each of the 23 rooms in this modern hotel are different, with some beneath the exposed beams of the attic eaves.



€€

Arras

Map 4 H2

HOTEL

Ibis Arras Centre Les Places

11 Rue de Justice, Pl Ipswich, 62000;

03 21 23 61 61; www.accorhotels.com

This is a modern, comfortable, mid-range hotel in the Accor Group chain. It has an excellent location – close to the city's two main squares. Rooms sleep up to three. Interconnecting rooms for large families are available.



€€

BED & BREAKFAST

Le Clos Grincourt

18 Rue du Château, 62161

Duisans; 03 21 48 68 33;

www.leclosgrincourt.com

Located 7 km (4 miles) northwest of Arras, this is a Neo-Classical 19th-century manor. The first floor has a two-room interconnecting suite familiale for four to five people, plus a separate double bedroom.



€€



Foliage-covered façade of Hôtel-Restaurant L'Escale, near Calais

Boulogne-sur-Mer

Map 4 F1

HOTEL

Hôtel Faidherbe

12 Rue Faidherbe, 62200; 03 21 31

60 93; www.hotelhamiot.fr

A family-run hotel close to the city centre, the rooms, all individually styled, are somewhat basic, but there is a friendly welcome. Nausicaá is a 20-minute walk.



€

Calais

Map 4 F1

HOTEL

Hôtel-Restaurant L'Escale

Rue de la Mer, 62179 Escalles; 03 81

85 25 20; www.hotel-lescale.com

This hotel, 11 km (7 miles) from Cap Blanc Nez, has simple, well-presented rooms. Family rooms sleep four to five. Playground and games court for kids available; restaurant on site.



€€

BED & BREAKFAST

La Grand'Maison

Hameau de la Haute-Escalles,

62179 Escalles; 03 21 85 27 75;

lagrandmaison.chez-alice.fr

Located 10 km (6 miles) northeast of Calais, this modernized 17th-century courtyard farmhouse has rooms done in an antique-rustic style. Donkey rides and play equipment entertain.



€€

Chantilly

Map 4 G4

HOTEL

Hôtel La Nonette

Pl de la Gare, 60560 Orry-la-Ville;

03 44 58 98 76; www.hotel-lanonette-oise.com

Located about 10 km (4 miles) from Chantilly and Parc Astérix, this is an attractive 29-room Logis hotel. The rooms are smart and comfortable. Restaurant options in Orry-la-Ville.



€€

Compiègne

Map 4 H4

CAMPING

La Croix du Vieux Pont

02290 Berny-Rivière; 03 23 55 50 02;

www.la-croix-du-vieux-pont.com

A four-star camp site and holiday park on the Aisne river, 20 km (12 miles) east of Compiègne, it has pitches and chalet-style gîtes. There is an artificial lake and a restaurant on site.



€-€€



A handsomely decorated room with a baby cot in La Grand'Maison, near Calais

Le Crotoy

Map 4 F2

HOTEL

Les Tourelles

2-4 Rue Pierre Guerlain, 80550; 03 22 27 16 33; www.lestourelles.com

Right beside the Baie de Somme, this two-star eco-friendly hotel has a quirky decor: turreted exterior and a sun-bleached interior. Attractive restaurant; garden terrace in summer.

€€

BED & BREAKFAST

La Villa en Baye

16 Rue du Moulin, 80120; 03 22 25 19 54; www.lavillaenbaie.com

This grand early 19th-century villa, 5 km (3 miles) from Le Crotoy, offers three *suites familiale* and *gîtes*. Dinner is available on reservation. Beaches at Le Crotoy and Fort-Mahon are 10 km (6 miles) away from the property.

€€

CAMPING

Camping Le Champ Neuf

8 Rue du Champ Neuf, 80120 St-Quentin-en-Tourmont; 03 22 25 07 94; www.camping-lechampneuf.com

Located near Parc du Marquenterre and beaches of Le Crotoy and Fort-Mahon, this site has mobile homes, tents, caravans and camper vans.

Playground, bike hire and bar on site. €

Laon

Map 5 B4

HOTEL

Hôtel-Restaurant de la Bannière de France

11 Rue Franklin-Roosevelt, 02000; 03 23 23 21 44; www.hoteldelabannieredefrance.com

An old coaching inn dating from 1685, this three-star hotel has a charmingly dated feel. Rooms are comfortable; some sleep four.

€€

Lille

Map 4 H1

HOTELS

Hôtel de la Paix

46 bis, Rue de Paris, 59800; 03 20 54 63 93; www.hotel-la-paix.com

This two-star hotel is close to the pedestrianized centre. It has an Art-Nouveau-style café and rooms hung with replicas of 20th-century art. Free for kids under 14 sharing with parents.

€€

L'Hermitage Gantois

224 Rue de Paris, 59000; 03 20 85 30 30; www.hotelhermitagegantois.com

Formerly a 15th-century hospital, this five-star hotel near the Grand'Place has 72 sumptuous rooms. Restaurant in the former chapel; the *Estaminet* (tavern) serves modest but pricey fare.

€€€

SELF-CATERING

Citadines City Centre Lille

Ave Willy Brandt, 59777 Euralille; 03 28 36 75 00; www.citadines.com

This is a branch of the reliable Citadines chain, which specializes in apart-hotels. Modern, well-equipped, short-stay studio apartments, with a bedroom, living room and kitchen.

€€

Montreuil-sur-Mer

Map 4 F2

HOTEL

Coq Hôtel

2 Pl de la Poissonnerie, 62170; 03 21 86 64 67; www.coqhotel.fr

This 19th-century townhouse makes a perfect base to explore the pretty town. Rooms are well-decorated. The Cocquempot restaurant offers good dining.

€€



Al fresco tables at the Hôtel des Trois Hiboux in Parc Astérix

Parc Astérix

Map 4 G5

HOTEL

Hôtel des Trois Hiboux

Parc Astérix, 60128 Plailly; 08 26 30 10 40; www.parcasterix.fr

Built like a giant woodland cabin in a tranquil forested area, this three-star hotel within Parc Astérix has spacious family rooms. There is

a child-friendly restaurant on site.

Accommodation includes the entrance price to Parc Astérix.

€€€

Pierrefonds

Map 4 H4

HOTEL

Hôtel Beaudon

10 Rue du Beaudon, 60350; 03 44 42 80 18; www.hotel-pierrefonds.com

A two-star hotel overlooking a lake and Château de Pierrefonds, its 21 rooms are simply furnished. Family rooms sleep four. There is a pleasant restaurant and free parking nearby.

€€

St-Omer

Map 4 G1

HOTEL

Saint Louis

25 Rue d'Arras, 62500; 03 21 38 35 21; www.hotel-saintlouis.com

This 18th-century coaching inn, in the city centre, has been modernized and extended around a courtyard garden. The rooms, sleeping up to four, are elegant. The Flaubert restaurant specializes in local dishes.

€€

St-Valery-sur-Somme

Map 4 F2

HOTEL

Hôtel Picardia

41 Quai du Rommerel, 80230; 03 22 60 32 30; www.picardia.fr

A fine 19th-century mansion close to the seafront, it offers 18 airy rooms, with split-level family rooms sleeping up to six. An independent studio flat, with a kitchen, available by the week.

€€

BED & BREAKFAST

Le Manoir les Arums

2 Rue de Oisement, 80490 Citernes; 03 22 20 43 32; www.manoir-les-arums.com

This elegantly restored manor, 9 km (6 miles) from St Valery, offers comfortable rooms. Picnic baskets with a range of regional products can be provided.

€€

Price Guide

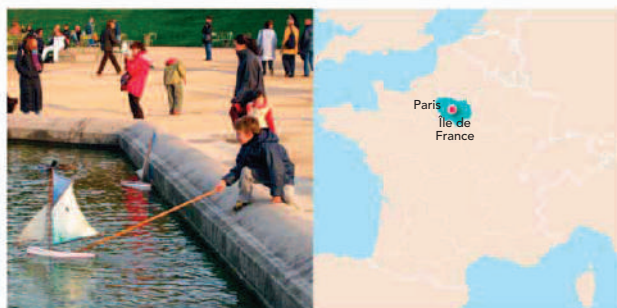
The following price ranges are based on one night's accommodation in high season for a family of four, inclusive of service charges and any additional taxes.

€ Under €100 €€ €100–200 €€€ over €200



Paris and Île de France

A mix of rich culture, delectable cuisine and child-friendly activities makes this area, which includes the French capital, perfect for a family holiday. Bask in the splendour of the palace at Versailles, then meet Mickey Mouse at Disneyland. In summer, unwind in Paris's parks or in Fontainebleau's forest; in winter, marvel at the city's Christmas lights; and, in autumn, take a stroll around the Île St-Louis at sunset.



Highlights

Notre-Dame

Visit this Gothic cathedral, which stands majestically on the Île de la Cité, the boat-shaped island on the Seine (see pp90–91).

Jardin du Luxembourg

Spend an afternoon in these vast gardens, a children's paradise. Sail wooden boats, catch a colourful puppet show and ride on the pretty *belle époque* carousel (see p93).

Musée du Louvre

Meet mummies, including those of fish, and smile at the *Mona Lisa* at the stunning Musée du Louvre (see pp98–9).

Eiffel Tower

Whizz up this towering structure and see the city of lights spread out like a wonderland at your feet. It is as magical at night as it is in the day (see pp104–5).

Château de Versailles

Spend a weekend exploring Louis XIV's sumptuous palace and stroll through the magnificent gardens. In summer, watch the Saturday night fireworks (see pp124–7).

Disneyland Resort Paris

Meet Mickey and Goofy, ride a runaway train, be Pocahontas or fly with Peter Pan in this magical park (see pp130–33).

Left The Pyramide du Louvre, the strikingly modern main entrance to the Musée du Louvre

Above left Sailing a wooden boat in the Jardin du Luxembourg

The Best of Paris and Île de France

Families are spoiled for choice here. Paris is bursting with culture and historic monuments, but is also full of amazing cake shops and cafés, merry-go-rounds and marionettes. The French capital is surprisingly relaxing and its beauty is evident along the banks of the Seine and in its pretty parks. Île de France has the glamour of Versailles and the fun of Disneyland on offer, as well as scenic countryside and wild forests.



In a week

Start off exploring the many attractions along the streets of Île de la Cité, among them **Notre-Dame** (see pp90–91), the **Conciergerie** (see p92) and **Sainte-Chapelle** (see p92). Spend a day climbing the **Arc de Triomphe** (see pp106–110) or letting off steam in the **Jardin des Tuileries** (see p99) before exploring the world's biggest museum, the **Musée du Louvre** (see pp98–9).

After all that culture, it is time for some crazy fun. Catch the RER to **Disneyland Resort Paris** (see pp130–33) and take the kids on some wild rides.

History buffs should visit Napoleon's tomb in **Les Invalides** (see p112), spend an afternoon in the lovely **Jardin du Luxembourg** (see p93), then go to the top of the **Tour Montparnasse** (see p111) to see the sunset. Take a day out to discover the majesty of the **Château de Versailles** (see pp124–7). And before leaving the city, do what everyone is dying to do – shoot to the top of the **Eiffel Tower** (see pp104–5).

Left Space to run around at the Château de Versailles
Below The magnificent Notre-Dame on the Île de la Cité





Candy-coloured paintings on the gilded ceiling of the main foyer of the Opéra Garnier

On a budget

Rent affordable self-catering accommodation in the countryside to the south of Paris. There is no fee for exploring the wild forests around **Fontainebleau** (see p128–9) and **Rambouillet** (see pp128–9), and the stunning gardens at the **Château de Versailles**. Use the RER to take day trips to Paris. Carry a picnic basket as the city is full of inexpensive bakeries and street markets that sell top-class food at reasonable prices.

There is no charge to enter **Notre-Dame**. Look for museums that allow free entry on any specific day, such as the **Musée du Louvre**, which offers free access to everyone on the first Sunday of the month. Considering the vast collection on show here, it is a bargain even on other days. End the day with a nice picnic in the **Jardins du Trocadéro** (see p106), and watch the **Eiffel Tower** begin to sparkle as night falls.

Culture vultures

There is no need to worry about bored kids in cultural places. Nearly all museums in Paris and Île de France have fun workshops and activity programmes especially for kids. Admire some of the world's most famous paintings in the impressive **Musée d'Orsay** (see pp110–11) before exploring buildings, parks and train stations. For mini ballerinas and avid theatre enthusiasts, a trip to the **Opéra Garnier** (see pp100–110) is an absolute must. Twirl down the staircase, and if the pocket allows, catch a show. There is plenty too for musical kids, with many concerts and plays aimed to engage them.

Relive the grandeur and richness of France's kings at two of the most magnificent châteaux in the nation: the glittering halls and rooms at

the **Château de Versailles** are awe-inspiring, as is **Fontainebleau**, with its famous staircase and its striking gallery and garden. Paris also has some excellent Roman remains and the **Musée du Louvre** features one of the best Egyptology collections in the world.

Foody families

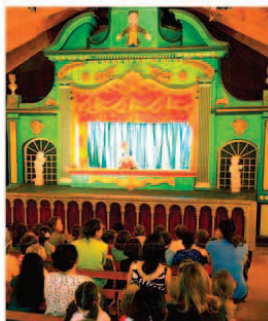
Colourful street markets abound all over Île de France and in Paris. And with numerous delis and bakeries selling delicious savouries and sweets, the city is also a picnicker's paradise. Treat children to an ice cream at the legendary **Berthillon** (see p92) on **Île St-Louis** (see p91). Do not miss the Sunday brunch and then a magic show in **Metamorphosis** (see p91). Eat yummy multi-coloured macarons for tea at **Ladurée** (see p113), and satisfy a sweet tooth at **A La Mère de la Famille** (see p101).



Summer crowds enjoying the sun on the lawns of the Champ-de-Mars, beneath the Eiffel Tower

Paris and Île de France

Paris is a compact city and many of the main sights are within easy walking distance of each other. A small, folding push-chair is useful with smaller children. Métro and bus systems are excellent. The Métro serves the city, with 14 lines identified by number. The Île de France can be accessed by the RER, a regional train service, which has five lines identified by letters, and the main train network, the SNCF. The simplest way to get to Disneyland® Paris and Versailles is to take the RER. A car is not needed in Paris but is necessary for exploring the countryside to the south.



Puppet show in progress at the Marionettes du Champ-de-Mars, Paris

Places of interest

PARIS (see pp87–122)

ÎLE DE FRANCE

- 1 Château de Versailles
- 2 Bois de Boulogne
- 3 Le Parc Zoologique de Thoiry
- 4 Rambouillet
- 5 Fontainebleau
- 6 Disneyland® Paris

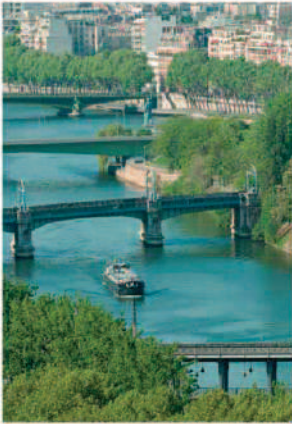


Family enjoying a walk through peaceful countryside near the Château de Versailles



View of the Château de Fontainebleau rising above the neat garden





Exploring Paris by cruising on the Seine river

The Lowdown



Getting there and around

Air (see p86). **Riverboat** www.batobus.com & www.bateaux-mouches.fr. **Train** Eurostar links London and Paris and the TGV connects major French cities with the capital. RER links the airports to the city centre as do the airport bus services (see p86). **Autoroutes** (motorways) converge on Paris from every direction.

Bike Self-service bike scheme Velib' is only for use by children over 14, and a credit card with a chip is required. **Métro, Bus, RER** Buy a carnet of tickets at any metro station for use on the metro, buses and the RER. Kids over 10 pay adult fare; under 3s travel free (www.ratp.com).

Car Avis: 01 42 66 67 68 (www.avis.fr). Hertz: 01 47 03 49 12 (www.hertz.fr)



Supermarkets The main chains are Monoprix (www.monoprix.fr); Franprix (www.franprix.fr) and Carrefour (www.carrefour.fr).

Markets There are excellent markets on Rue Mouffetard, 75005; Ave Président Wilson, 75016 & Blvd Raspail, 75006. There are flea markets at St-Ouen and Porte des Vanves and a stamp market on the Champs-Élysées. For a full list of markets see www.parisinfo.com.



Festivals Foire du Trône, funfair in the Bois de Vincennes

(Apr–May). **Grandes Concerts de Versailles**, open-air concerts and firework displays in the gardens (Apr–Jul). **Les Grandes Eaux Musicales**, Château de Versailles (Apr–Oct: Sat & Sun & some public hols). *Son et lumière* by the Versailles lake (Jun–Aug); **Paris-Plages**, a temporary beach along the Right Bank of the Seine & along the Canal de l'Ourcq (Jul & Aug). **Bastille Day**, military parade and fireworks by the Eiffel Tower (Jul 14). **Christmas markets** (Dec) and ice-skating rinks in front of the Hôtel de Ville and the Tour Montparnasse (Dec–Feb)



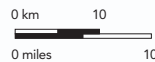
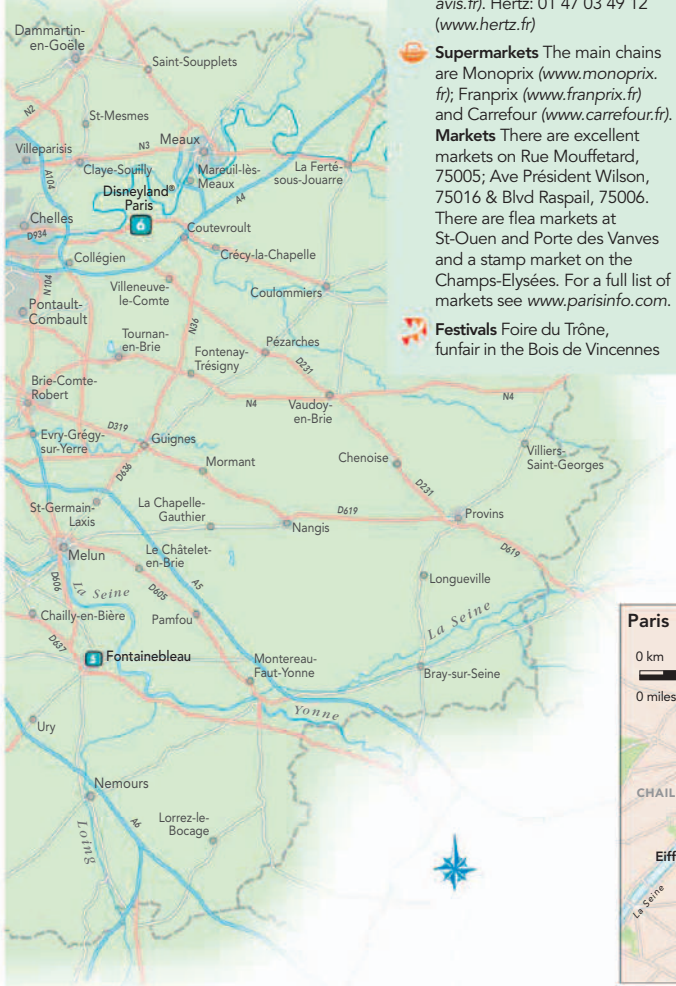
Opening hours Shops are usually open 10am–7pm Monday to Saturday. Monoprix on Ave des Champs-Élysées is open till midnight Mon–Sat. Local shops: closed Mon; many shops and restaurants close in Aug.



Pharmacies 24-hour pharmacy: Pharmacie Dhery, 84 Ave des Champs-Élysées, 75008; 01 45 62 02 41. See www.pharmaciesdegarde.com for a list of 24-hour pharmacies.



Toilets There are luxury public toilets in the Carrousel du Louvre, on the Champs-Élysées and in the Printemps department store (<http://departmentstoreparis.printemps.com>). Otherwise take a café pit stop.



Paris and Île de France Airports

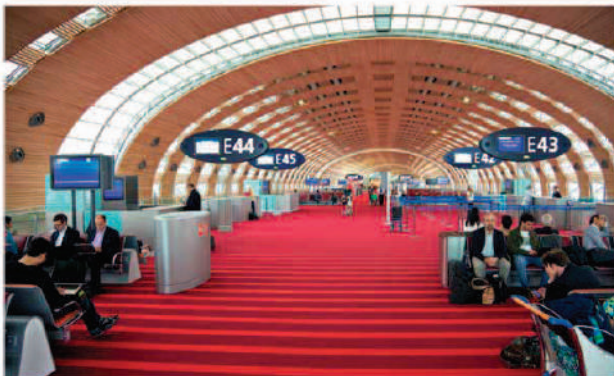
Paris is a vital airport hub and direct flights from around the world serve the two main international airports: Roissy Charles-de-Gaulle and Orly. From the UK, British Airways flies regularly to Paris. From the US, American and United offer regular flights. Air Canada also runs direct flights, as does Qantas from Australia and New Zealand. Budget airlines and charter flights arrive at Beauvais Tillé.



The Orlyval train connecting Orly Airport to the metro system

Roissy Charles-de-Gaulle

Most international flights arrive at **Roissy Charles-de-Gaulle (CDG)**, 30 km (19 miles) northeast of Paris. It has three terminals, two of which – T1 and T2 – are linked by a driverless train. Negotiating the terminals involves walking long distances – important to remember if travelling with younger kids. It is poorly signposted as well, so always ask if not sure where to go. The best option for travelling into the city will depend on which part of Paris is your destination. The **RER** line B is the fastest run to the city centre (about 40 minutes). It stops at



Travellers waiting at the gates of Roissy Charles-de-Gaulle Airport

Gare du Nord, Châtelet-Les Halles, Luxembourg and St-Michel. Trains run every 15 minutes from 4:58am to 11:58pm. **Air France buses** also run daily every 15 minutes from 6am–11pm from both terminals with links to Métro Etoile (40 minutes) and from 6am to 10:30pm to Gare de Lyon and Gare Montparnasse. The **RATP Roissybus** runs daily every 15–20 minutes from 5:35am to 11pm to Opéra Garnier, and is the easiest option if you are travelling to the Grands Boulevards area. A taxi from CDG to central Paris from the airport takes 30–60 minutes, and costs over €60, with a minibus for a large family up to €100. The **VEA bus**, which can be booked online, offers direct links to Disneyland® Paris.

Orly

Domestic and some international flights arrive at **Orly (ORY)**, 18 km (11 miles) south of the city. The airport, which has two terminals, is smaller and easier to negotiate than CDG, but can still involve a lot of walking. Air France buses depart every 30 minutes from 6am to 11:40pm and stop at Invalides and Montparnasse. The **Orlybus** runs to Denfert-Rochereau (lines 4, 6) and the RER (line B) every 20 minutes from 6am to 11:50pm Mon–Fri, and

until 12:50am on weekends. The journey takes around 30 minutes. **Orlyval** is an automatic metro link to both the Orly terminals, and connects to the RER line B at Métro Antony. Taxis to the city centre take about 45 minutes – expect to pay €40 or more. The VEA bus links direct to Disneyland® Paris.

Paris airports have good facilities for families, including free play areas, Playstations, baby-changing areas and buggy loan. Look out for Gus, the airport mascot, who wanders about the terminals, giving colouring books and pencils during holidays.

Beauvais Tillé

Beauvais Tillé airport, situated 70 km (44 miles) north of Paris, is used by charter and some budget carriers like Ryanair. The shuttle buses depart for Porte Maillot 15–30 minutes after each arrival, and leave Porte Maillot for the airport 3 hours 15 minutes before each departure. This service costs about €64 for a family (under 3s free). The VEA bus service to Disneyland® Paris operates as well.

The Lowdown

Air France buses 08 92 35 08 20; www.lescarsairfrance.com

Airport information 39 50 (within France only); +33 170 36 39 50 (from outside France); www.aeroportsdeparis.fr

Orlyval 32 46 (within France only); www.orlyval.com; www.ratp.fr

Paris Airports Service A minibus service; 01 55 98 10 80; www.parisairportservice.com

RATP Roissy/Orlybus 32 46 (within France only); 08 92 68 41 14; www.ratp.fr

RER trains 32 46 (within France); www.ratp.fr

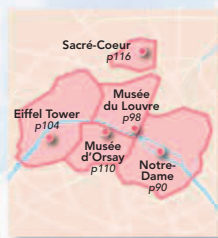
Shuttle bus Paris-Beauvais; 08 92 68 20 64; www.aeroportbeauvais.com/bus.php

VEA www.vea.fr

Paris

Paris is a wonderful city to visit with children of any age. The world-famous museums put on plenty of activities to attract even the youngest visitor. Afterwards, join local families in one of the city's parks, sample scrumptious pastries at a *pâtisserie*, take a boat trip on the Seine or climb the Eiffel Tower – the ingredients of a great family holiday are all here.

Below Old-fashioned carousel with wooden horses in front of the Eiffel Tower



Notre-Dame and around

Walking is a pleasure along the streets of the Île de la Cité, Île St-Louis, the Quartier Latin and the quaint yet fashionable neighbourhood of the Marais. A gentle stroll while taking in the fantastic views can be enjoyed at any time of the day, but some parts of the area are particularly lovely in the evening when most of the tourists have left. Bring a pushchair for small children, as exploring the sights can get tiring; the many scenic parks serve as pleasant stops for a relaxing break. On Sundays and public holidays, the Voie Georges Pompidou on the Seine's Right Bank is closed to traffic and becomes a haven for rollerbladers and cyclists.

Places of interest

SIGHTS

- 1 Notre-Dame
- 2 Conciergerie
- 3 Sainte-Chapelle
- 4 Quartier Latin
- 5 Panthéon
- 6 Place des Vosges
- 7 Rue des Rosiers
- 8 Musée Picasso
- 9 Centre Pompidou

EAT AND DRINK

- 1 Calixte
- 2 Café la Bûcherie
- 3 Pizza Marzano
- 4 La Nouvelle Seine
- 5 Berthillon
- 6 Chez Clément
- 7 Franprix
- 8 Au Bougnat
- 9 Breakfast in America (17 Rue des Ecoles, 75005)
- 10 L Zyriab
- 11 Crêpes à Gogo
- 12 Le Comptoir du Panthéon
- 13 Le Moulin de Rosa
- 14 Carette des Vosges
- 15 Florence Kahn
- 16 Breakfast in America (4 Rue Malher, 75004)
- 17 Boulangerie Malineau
- 18 Merci
- 19 Le Hangar

See also Centre Pompidou (p95)

SHOPPING

- 1 Shakespeare and Company
- 2 Arche de Noé

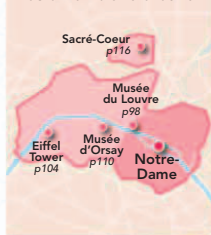
WHERE TO STAY

- 1 Appartement d'hôtes Folie Méricourt
- 2 Bonne Nuit Paris
- 3 Citadines St-Germain-des-Prés
- 4 Hôtel Britannique
- 5 Hotel Ibis Bastille Opéra
- 6 Hôtel du Jeu de Paume
- 7 Hôtel Résidence Henri IV
- 8 Le Pavillon de la Reine
- 9 Résidence Le Petit Châtelet
- 10 Résidence Le Prince Regent



The Shakespeare and Company book shop and literary meeting place

Notre-Dame and around



0 metres 500
0 yards 500



The glassed-in escalator of the Centre Pompidou overlooking Place Georges Pompidou

The Lowdown

M **Métro** Cité or St-Michel & St-Sulpice or Les Halles, line 4; Sully Morland, Jussieu & Châtelet, line 7; Maubert Mutualité, line 10; Bastille, lines 1 & 8 or Rambuteau, line 11. **RER** St-Michel, lines B & C; Gare d'Austerlitz, line C or Châtelet les Halles, lines A, B & D. **Bus** 21, 24, 38, 47, 67, 76, 85, 86, 87, & 96. **River boat** Quai de Montebello

i **Visitor Information** Kiosks: Pl du Parvis-Notre-Dame, 75004; end May–mid-Oct: 10am–7pm daily. Pl de l'Hôtel de Ville, near Rue de Rivoli, 75004; Jul & Aug: 10am–6pm daily

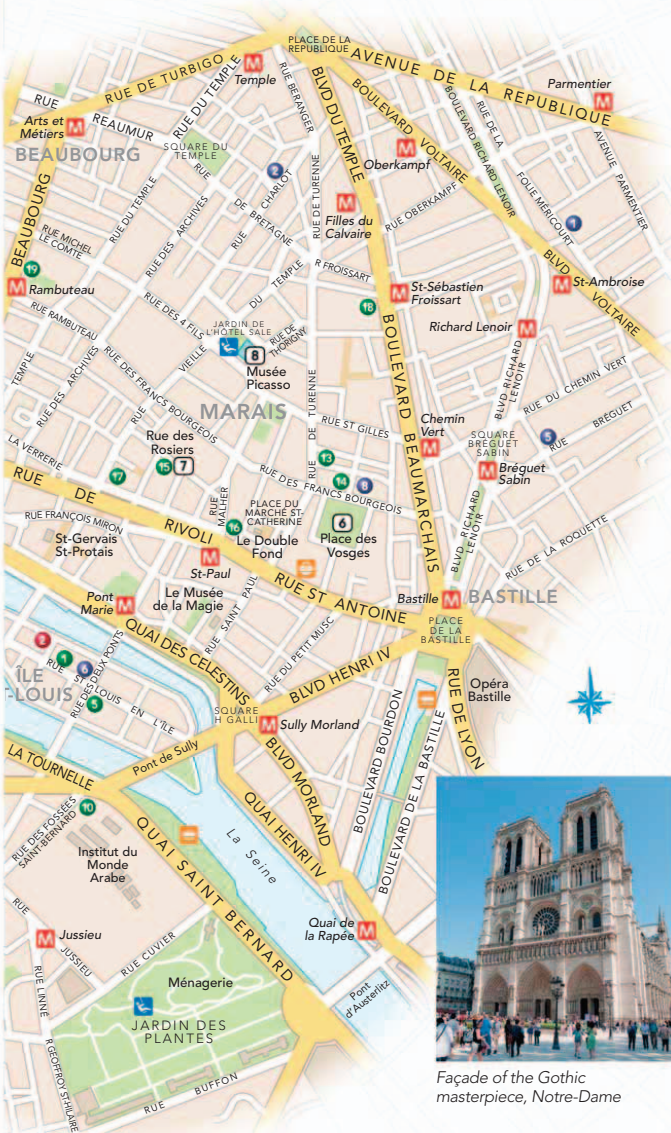
S **Supermarkets** Monop', 35 Blvd, St-Michel, 75005 & 135 Rue St-Martin, 75004. Monoprix, 71 Rue St-Antoine, 75004. Carrefour Market, 79 Rue de Seine, 75006. Franprix, 35 Rue Berger, 75001

M **Markets** Marché aux Fleurs et Oiseaux (Flower and Bird Market): Pl Louis Lepine, 75004; flowers: 8am–7pm Sun; birds: 8am–7:30pm Mon–Sat

F **Festivals** Fête du Pain: bread festival; www.fetedupain.com (May). La Course des Garçons de Café, Hôtel de Ville: waiters race around the city balancing heavy trays; www.waitersrace.com (late Jun/early Jul). Paris-Plages: artificial beaches on the Seine's Right Bank during summer; www.parisplages.fr (Jul & Aug, see p97). Christmas crèche, Notre-Dame (Dec & Jan). Ice-skating rink, Pl de l'Hôtel de Ville (mid-Dec–Feb)

+ **Pharmacies** Pharmacie des Halles, 10 Blvd de Sébastopol, 75001; 01 42 72 03 23; open till midnight Mon–Sat, till 10pm Sun. Pharmacy Bader, 12 Blvd St-Michel, 75005; 01 43 26 92 66; 9am–9pm Mon–Sat, 11am–9pm Sun

P **Nearest playgrounds** Square Jean XXIII, Pl du Parvis-Notre-Dame, 75004; dawn–dusk daily (see p91). Jardin du Luxembourg, Blvd St-Michel, 75006; dawn–dusk daily (see p93). Jardin des Plantes, 54 Rue Cuivier, 75005; dawn–dusk daily (see p93). Jardin de l'Hôtel Salé, 101 Rue Coutures St-Gervais, 75003; dawn–dusk daily (see p95)



Façade of the Gothic masterpiece, Notre-Dame

1 Notre-Dame

History, hunchbacks and gargoyles

Home to Victor Hugo's hunchback, Quasimodo, Notre-Dame is over 800 years old, and built on the site of a Roman temple. The cathedral, covered with swooping buttresses and funny-faced gargoyles, took over a century to complete, and can accommodate 6,000 people. Many dramatic events in French history occurred here. In the Revolution, it was looted and made into a wine warehouse. In 1804, Napoleon crowned himself emperor here, instead of waiting for the pope.



Stained-glass rose window, Notre-Dame

Key Features

Biblical characters The façade, covered in easily recognizable biblical characters, was known as the poor man's Bible. Most Parisians could not read when the cathedral was built.



Gothic masterpiece Finished in 1330, the cathedral is 130 m (430 ft) tall, and features flying buttresses, a large transept and 69-m (228-ft) high towers.

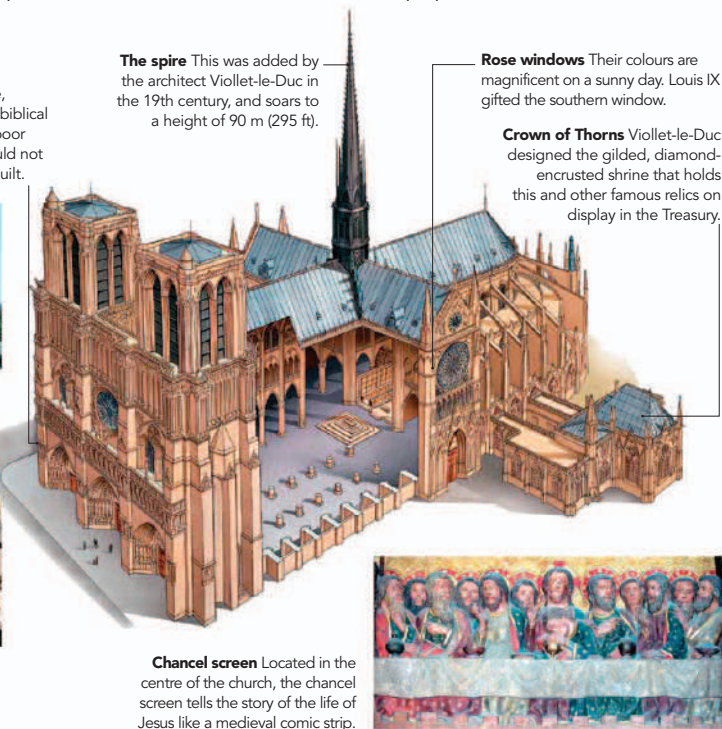


Gargoyles and chimeras Glare back at these creatures sitting hunched up on the façade and up in the tower.

The spire This was added by the architect Viollet-le-Duc in the 19th century, and soars to a height of 90 m (295 ft).

Rose windows Their colours are magnificent on a sunny day. Louis IX gifted the southern window.

Crown of Thorns Viollet-le-Duc designed the gilded, diamond-encrusted shrine that holds this and other famous relics on display in the Treasury.



Chancel screen Located in the centre of the church, the chancel screen tells the story of the life of Jesus like a medieval comic strip.



The Lowdown



Map reference 25 A6
Address 6 Pl du Parvis-Notre-Dame, Pl Jean-Paul II, 75004; 01 42 34 56 10; www.notredame.deparis.fr. Towers: 01 53 40 60 80 & 01 53 10 07 00; www.notre-dame-de-paris.monuments-nationaux.fr



Métro Cité or St-Michel, line 4 or Châtelet, lines 1, 4 & 14.
RER St-Michel, lines B & C.
Bus 21, 24, 27, 38, 47, 85 & 96.
River boat Quai de Montebello



Open Cathedral: 8am–6:45pm, till 7:15pm Sat & Sun. Treasury: 9:30am–6pm, from 1:30pm Sun. Towers: Apr–Sep: 10am–6:30pm

daily; Jul & Aug: 10am–6:30pm Mon–Fri, 10am–11pm Sat & Sun; Oct–Mar: 10am–5:30pm. For access to the towers, climb the 387 steps from Rue du Cloître.



Price Cathedral: free. Towers: €17; under 18s & EU citizens under 26 free. Treasury: €8–18



Skipping the queue Paris Museum Pass (www.parisinfo.com) accepted. To avoid long queues for the towers, visit in the evening when there are fewer people, or early in the day before the crowds arrive.



Guided tours In English at 2pm Wed & Thu & at 2:30pm Sat. English audio guide €5



Age range 3 plus; under 12s to be accompanied by adults



Activities Magic shows in Metamorphosis; 01 43 54 08 08



Allow 2–3 hours



Wheelchair access Limited



Toilets By the cathedral entrance

Good family value?

Entry to the cathedral itself is free. So no entry fee has been wasted if the kids cannot bear more than a quick look inside. Children enjoy climbing up the towers, and everyone loves the view.

Letting off steam

Twirl around the square in front of the cathedral like Esmeralda, the gypsy dancer in Victor Hugo's novel *Notre Dame de Paris* (1831), and stroll along the quayside. **Square Jean XXIII**, behind Notre-Dame, is a park with a sandpit. In summer, head for the **Paris-Plages** on the Right Bank, where the main road along the river is transformed into beaches with real sand, water fountains and activities. In winter, go skating at the **Place de l'Hôtel de Ville** on the Right Bank.



Square Jean XXIII with Notre-Dame in the background

Eat and drink

Picnic: under €25; *Snacks:* €25–45; *Real Meal:* €45–90; *Family treat:* over €90 (based on a family of four)

PICNIC Calixte (64 Rue St-Louis-en-l'Île, 75004) sells luxury picnic supplies, which can be enjoyed in the park alongside the cathedral. **SNACKS Café la Bûcherie** (41 Rue de la Bûcherie, 75005; 01 43 54 24 52; open daily) is a great spot to unwind with a drink and nibbles, and has splendid views of Notre-Dame.

REAL MEAL Pizza Marzano (2 Pl St-Michel, 75006; 01 44 07 32 27), part of the ever reliable and tasty Pizza Express family, is a safe bet in a section of the city that can be a tourist trap.

FAMILY TREAT La Nouvelle Seine (Opposite 3 Quai de Montebello, 75005; 01 43 54 08 08; <http://lanouvelleseine.com/infos/>; 11am–11pm Tue–Sun) serves contemporary Mediterranean and Asian cuisine made from the freshest seasonal ingredients. The restaurant shares a barge with a small theatre; enjoy dinner followed by a show.

Shopping

Click through English books in **Shakespeare and Company** (37 Rue de la Bûcherie, 75005), and in the green boxes of the Bouquinistes, who have been selling books on the Seine's banks since the 16th century. After the Revolution, they peddled the entire libraries of noble families.

Find out more

DIGITAL The cathedral website www.notredamedeparis.fr/-Children-s-site has a kids' section. Watch the video *General de Gaulle at Notre Dame on 26 August 1944* on tinyurl.com/3jyujw5 and *King Babar hunting Father Christmas in Paris* in the Babar Christmas Special on tinyurl.com/3v7gvt0. Discover Roman Paris on www.paris.culture.fr/en/

FILM Disney's *Hunchback of Notre Dame* (1996) will show kids how the cathedral dominated medieval Paris.

Next step...

ÎLE ST-LOUIS This tranquil village in the heart of Paris was known as Île des Vaches, after the cows that grazed here. It was only in 1614 that the 13-year-old Louis XIII was persuaded that building stylish town houses here would be a good idea. But thanks to its narrow streets, Île St-Louis retains its village-like feel even now. Lined with historic houses, it is a fun place to walk and peruse the shops. Look out for the dragons on No. 51 and No. 54, once a real tennis court, on Rue St-Louis-en-l'Île. The street is a foody paradise and has several good toy shops, including the Arche de Noë at No. 70.



Street musicians on the Pont de Sully, on the eastern end of Île St-Louis

KIDS' CORNER

Look out for ...

1 The grimacing gargoyles are not just for decoration. Can you guess what they do?

2 A gargoyles and a chimera. What is the difference between the two?
3 Climb up the 387 steps of the north tower. At the second level you will see a chimera holding its head in its hands and doing something cheeky. What is it?

Answers at the bottom of the page.



PROWLING MAN-EATERS

In the winter of 1450, a pack of man-eating wolves terrified Parisians and killed 40 people before being stoned to death in front of Notre-Dame.



Them bones...

In the Middle Ages, pilgrims would travel far to see pieces of saints' bodies. Kings had treasuries stuffed with holy bones and drops of blood, which showed how pious as well as rich and powerful they were. King Louis IX was so keen to own the Crown of Thorns worn by Jesus when he was crucified, that he paid the equivalent of half the money spent in France in a year on it. Famous for his religious devotion, he was made a saint.



Answers: **1** They channel the water off the roof. On a rainy day, you can see it pouring from their mouths. **2** The gargoyles look as if they are hanging on the ledge of the building, and the chimeras are the statues that are standing up. They both have gruesome expressions. **3** He is sticking his tongue out.



View of the Conciergerie with the Pont au Change in the foreground

2 Conciergerie

Fairy-tale towers fit for a torturer

A haunting symbol of the Revolution of 1789, the Conciergerie is the oldest remaining part of a royal palace built around 1300 by Philippe le Bel (Philip the Fair). After Charles V moved to the Louvre, it became a prison with a grim reputation. In 1793, the Revolutionary Tribunal condemned thousands to death here during the Reign of Terror. Prominent inmates, including Marie Antoinette, spent their final night here before being taken to the guillotine.

Visit the Salle de Toilette, where inmates were stripped of their belongings and had their heads shaved; wander into the so called Rue de Paris where the poorest

prisoners slept in tiny cells, and be awed by the Salle des Gens d'Armes, Europe's largest surviving medieval hall. The Conciergerie remained a prison until 1914.

Letting off steam

After a walk through the past, enjoy playing *boules* (a game played with metal balls) in **Place Dauphine** (enter by Rue Henri-Robert, 75001) built by Henri IV to honour his son and heir, Louis. In summer, children can build sandcastles on the **Paris-Plages on the Right Bank** (see p91).

3 Sainte-Chapelle

Psychedelic heaven

The only French king to be made a saint, Louis IX was a keen collector of relics. He built the breathtakingly beautiful Sainte-Chapelle in 1239 for his prize acquisitions, including the Crown of Thorns and a fragment of Christ's Cross. Built in just 10 years, this architectural marvel also served to express the king's absolute power.

The Flamboyant-Gothic-style chapel has some of the finest medieval stained-glass windows in the world. The 15 giant windows tell the stories of the Bible in a cartoon strip that soars to the star-studded roof. The 33-m (108-ft) high spire seems to point to heaven, while the rose window ominously depicts the Day of Judgement.

Letting off steam

The **Square du Vert-Galant**, at the tip of the Île de la Cité, is an ideal place for a picnic. This is the point from where the Vedettes du Pont Neuf pleasure boats depart.



Stunning stained-glass windows in Sainte-Chapelle showing scenes from the Bible

The Lowdown

- Map reference** 24 G5
Address 6 Blvd du Palais, 75001; 01 53 40 60 80; www.sainte-chapelle.monuments-nationaux.fr/en
- Méto** Cité or St-Michel, line 4.
RER St-Michel, lines B & C. **Bus** 27, 38, 85 & 96
- Open** 9:30am–6pm daily; Nov–Feb: till 5pm; 15 May–15 Sep: till 9pm to see the chapel lit by the setting sun; closed 1 Jan, 1 May & 25 Dec
- Price** €18–28; under 18s & EU citizens under 26 free
- Skipping the queue** Buy joint tickets with Conciergerie: €12.50 per person; Paris Museum Pass accepted
- Guided tours** Tours in English can be arranged three weeks in advance; 01 44 54 19 33
- Age range** 8 plus
- Allow** 30–45 mins
- Wheelchair access** Limited
- Eat and drink** *Picnic* Franprix (16 Rue Bertin Poirée, 75001; Mon–Sat) is the best place to buy supplies. *Picnic* in Square du Vert-Galant. *Family Treat* Au Bougnat (26 Rue Chanoinesse, 75004; 01 43 54 50 74; www.aubougnat.com; open daily) serves excellent ravioli and duck.
- Toilets** By the entrance, in the courtyard

The Lowdown

- Map reference** 24 G5
Address 2 Blvd du Palais, 75001; www.conciergerie.monuments-nationaux.fr/en
- Méto** Cité or St-Michel, line 4.
RER St-Michel, lines B & C. **Bus** 21, 24, 27, 38, 58, 81 & 85. **River boat** Quai de Montebello
- Open** 9:30am–6pm daily; Nov–Feb: 9am–5pm; closed 1 Jan, 1 May & 25 Dec
- Price** €18–28; under 18s & EU citizens under 26 free
- Skipping the queue** Paris Museum Pass accepted
- Guided tours** Tours in English. (book ahead); 01 44 54 19 30
- Age range** 8 plus
- Allow** 1–2 hours
- Wheelchair access** Limited
- Eat and drink** *Snacks* Berthillon (31 Rue St-Louis-en-Île, 75004; 01 43 54 31 61; www.berthillon.fr) is famed for its marvellous ice cream. *Real Meal* Chez Clément (Pl St-André des Arts, 75006; 01 56 81 32 00; www.chezclément.com; open daily) has kids' menus.
- Toilets** In one of the towers

4 Quartier Latin

Downtown Lutetia

Since the Middle Ages, this ancient part of the city has been associated with scholarly learning; its university, Sorbonne, was founded in 1257. The students often studied outdoors on straw laid down in Rue de Fouarre (Straw Street). For centuries, it was obligatory for all the inhabitants to speak only Latin, and the area came to be known as the Latin Quarter.

The area is a wonderful maze of cobbled streets and narrow passages. Among them sits the **Musée de Cluny**, which features some stunning medieval art. Stroll down the Gallery of Kings and see 21 of the 28 decapitated stone heads of the Kings of Judah. There are also Gallo-Roman artifacts, such as shields and jewellery, as well as stained-glass windows from Sainte-Chapelle. Of particular interest to kids are the remains of the large Thermes de Cluny Roman baths, dating back to AD 200.



Stone heads of the Kings of Judah in the Musée de Cluny, Quartier Latin

The Lowdown

- 1** **Map reference** 28 G1
Address 75005, Musée de Cluny: 6, Pl Paul-Painlevé, 75005; www.musee-moyenage.fr
- 2** **Métro** Cluny-La-Sorbonne, line 10; St-Michel, line 4; Maubert Mutualité, line 10 or Odéon, lines 4 & 10. **RER** St-Michel, line C. **Bus** 24, 47, 63, 86 & 87
- 3** **Open** Musée de Cluny: 9:15am–5:45pm; closed Tue, 1 Jan, 1 May & 25 Dec
- 4** **Price** Musée de Cluny: €16–18; under 18s & EU citizens under 26 free; free first Sunday of month
- 5** **Age range** Musée de Cluny: 8 plus
- 6** **Allow** 2 hours
- 7** **Eat and drink** **Snacks** Breakfast in America (17 Rue des Ecoles, 75005; 01 43 54 50 28), a diner, is popular with local families and students. **Real meal** Le Zyriab (1 Rue des Fossées-St-Bernard, 75005; 01 55 42 55 42; www.noura.com), located on the roof of the Institut du Monde Arabe, offers stunning views and is best for afternoon tea or a meal.
- 8** **Toilets** Sanisette, 123 Rue St-Jacques, 75005 & in the Musée de Cluny.

Letting off steam

There are many activities on offer at the botanical garden, **Jardin des Plantes** (54 Rue Cuvier, 75005). Enjoy leafy walks under trees that are hundreds of years old, or stroll through greenhouses filled with exotic flowers. There is also a small zoo and a maze.

5 Panthéon

Panoramas and famous tombs

The sheer size of the Panthéon is stunning. This Roman-looking temple was commissioned to be built as a church by Louis XV in 1755. However, money for the grandiose project soon ran out, as France teetered on the brink of bankruptcy. By the time it was finished, the Revolution was in full swing and churches were out of

fashion. It was rededicated as a temple of reason, then became the secular resting place of famous people such as Victor Hugo, Emile Zola, Alexander Dumas and Marie Curie. The Panthéon's 85-m (278-ft) high dome has a magnificent ceiling. Climb up for fantastic views of Paris.

Letting off steam

Head straight down the hill to the **Jardin du Luxembourg** (Blvd St-Michel, 75006), one of Paris's prettiest parks. Kids are sure to love the merry-go-round; puppet shows at Théâtre des Marionnettes de Paris also enthrall. The octagonal lake in front of the palace is the best place to watch ducks swimming or to rent wooden boats to sail.



A model of the Statue of Liberty in the lovely Jardin du Luxembourg

The Lowdown

- 1** **Map reference** 28 H2
Address Pl du Panthéon, 75005; www.panthéon.monuments-nationaux.fr
- 2** **Métro** Maubert Mutualité or Cardinal Lemoine, line 10. **RER** Luxembourg, line B. **Bus** 21, 27, 38, 82, 84, 85 & 89
- 3** **Open** Apr–Sep: 10am–6:30pm daily; Oct–Mar: 10am–6pm daily, closed 1 May, 25 Dec & 1 Jan
- 4** **Price** €15; under 18s & EU citizens under 26 free
- 5** **Guided tours** In English upon reservation: 01 44 54 19 30. Access to the dome at regular intervals during the day, by guided tour only
- 6** **Age range** 10 plus
- 7** **Allow** 2 hours
- 8** **Eat and drink** **Snacks** Crepès à Gogo (12 Rue Soufflot, 75005; 01 43 54 22 80; open daily) serves excellent crêpes. **Family treat** Le Comptoir du Panthéon (5 Rue Soufflot, 75005; 01 43 26 90 62; bar closed Sun; restaurant open daily) just scrapes into the top price band with food to match other more expensive venues.
- 9** **Toilets** By the entrance

KIDS' CORNER

Find out more ...

1 A famous French queen was imprisoned in the Conciergerie for nine months before she was executed. Who was she?

2 Who is Victor Hugo's most famous character? (Hint: He rings the bells in Notre-Dame.)

3 There is a statue of four ladies holding up the world in the Fontaine de l'Observatoire in the Jardin du Luxembourg. They represent four continents when actually there are five. Which is the missing one?



Answers at the bottom of page.

The deadly towers

The Conciergerie still retains the Bonbec Tower, site of the 11th-century torture chamber, where torturers once loosened the tongues of their victims until they babbled.

BRRRRR!

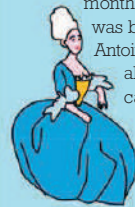
A Roman bath began in the hottest room, the Caldarium, then moved into the Tepidarium, where lukewarm water tubs lined the walls. The bath was finished off with a cold dip in the Frigidarium.



A much-hated queen

Foreign and considered frivolous, Marie Antoinette was hated by the Parisians, and especially women. The queen was imprisoned in the Conciergerie for several months. Before she

was beheaded, Marie Antoinette was paraded alone in an open cart around the streets, and jeered by the crowd.



Notre-Dame: 3 Oceania or Australasia
2 Quasimodo, the Hunchback of
Answers: 1 Marie Antoinette.

⑥ Place des Vosges

All for one and one for all!

Bring a cape and a sword – this is Three Musketeers country. One of the world's most beautiful squares, Place des Vosges in the Marais area is surrounded by matching rose-coloured houses with slate roofs and atmospheric arcades. At its heart is a lovely park that little children will enjoy. Started in 1605 by the dashing but smelly Henri IV, the square was once called Place Royal, and Cardinal Richelieu, the bad guy in Dumas' classic novel, lived at No. 21.

Perfectly symmetrical, the square is bordered by 36 identical houses, nine on each side. Of these, only 24 were built of brick; the others were finished with plaster to speed up the building schedule. Victor Hugo lived in **Maison de Victor Hugo** at No. 6 with his four children. He wrote part of his classic *Les Misérables* here. Dip into his house to see his belongings.

Take Cover

Le Double Fond (1 Pl du Marché Ste-Catherine, 75004; 01 44 71 40 20; [www.doublefond.com](http://doublefond.com)) is a café that features a magic show.



Above The tree-lined Place des Vosges, surrounded by symmetrical façades
Below Colourful interiors of the Maison de Victor Hugo



⑦ Rue des Rosiers

Falafels, bagels and poppy seed cake

There is nothing nicer on a sunny Sunday afternoon than a stroll down Rue des Rosiers, the hub of Paris's traditional Jewish quarter. Kids love it, as it is all about eating. The street is lined with bakeries selling bagels and cakes from Eastern Europe, and restaurants serving great Jewish fare, as well as shops full of candlesticks and other Jewish artefacts and antiques. At the end of the 19th century, Ashkenazi Jews from Eastern Europe fled the Russian Empire, and settled in the run-down, ramshackle area around Rue des

Rosiers. In the 1950s and 1960s, Jews from North Africa joined them, bringing a different cuisine of falafels, hummus and tabbouleh, giving the place a deliciously cosmopolitan flavour. The street is immortalized in the hilarious, cult French comedy, *The Mad Adventures of Rabbi Jacob* (1973).

Take cover

Le Musée de la Magie (11 Rue St-Paul, 75004; www.museedelamagie.com) is a subterranean 16th-century vault full of curios, optical illusions, games and magic tricks.

⑧ Musée Picasso

Sculptures and ceramics

The dominant artist of the 20th century, Pablo Picasso was one of the greatest creative geniuses of all time. Born in Málaga, he lived and studied in Barcelona, Spain, before moving to France, where he spent most of his life. This collection of his work is the world's finest, and was inherited by the state in lieu of the \$50m in death duties owed by his family. The collection is housed in the Hôtel Salé. The airy museum spans his lifetime, and covers paintings, sculpture, textiles and ceramics. The collection opens with his self-portrait in blue, painted in 1901. This is a great museum to visit with the kids – they find his work both fascinating and comical.



A popular bakery selling falafels and other savouries in Rue des Rosiers







The Lowdown

- Map reference** 25 D5
Address 75003 & 75004;
Maison de Victor Hugo:
6 Pl des Vosges, 75004; 01 42 72 10 16; <http://maisonvictorhugo.paris.fr/>
- Métro** Bastille, lines 1, 5 & 8; St-Paul, line 1 or Chemin Vert, line 8. **Bus** 20, 29, 65, 69 & 96
- Open** Maison de Victor Hugo: 10am–6pm, closed Mon & public hols
- Price** Maison de Victor Hugo: free
- Guided tours** Audio guide in English at Maison de Victor Hugo
- Age range** Maison de Victor Hugo: 8 plus
- Allow** 45–90 mins
- Eat and drink** *Picnic* Le Moulin de Rosa (32 Rue de Turenne, 75003; closed Sun) serves fruit tarts, great quiches and pastries. *Picnic* in the Place des Vosges.
- Family treat** *Carette des Vosges* (25 Pl des Vosges, 75003; 01 48 87 94 07) is a popular brunch spot. There is also a takeaway service at the counter.
- Toilets** In Maison de Victor Hugo

The Lowdown

- Map reference** 25 C5
Address 75004
- Métro** St-Paul, line 1. **Bus** 67, 69, 76 & 96
- Eat and drink** *Picnic* Florence Kahn (19 Rue des Rosiers, 75004; www.florence-kahn.fr) a deli, sells gefilte (stuffed) fish and *pletzels* (onion and poppy seed covered flat bread), and *vatrushka*, a cheese cake. **Real Meal** Breakfast in America (4 Rue Malher, 75004; www.breakfast-in-america.com) is a burger bar serving burgers and fries and all-day breakfasts with bacon and pancakes.
- Toilets** No

The Lowdown

-  **Map reference** 25 D4
- Address** Hôtel Salé, 5 Rue de Thorigny, 75003; www.musee-picasso.fr
-  **Métro** St-Paul, line 1 & Chemin Vert, line 8. **Bus** 29, 96, 69 & 75
-  **Open** Check website for timings
-  **Age range** 3 plus
-  **Allow** 1–2 hours
-  **Eat and drink** *Picnic* Boulangerie Malineau (18 Rue Vieille du Temple, 75004; 01 42 76 94 88; closed Sun) sells a delicious *pain au chocolat framboise* (chocolate raspberry bread) and an equally scrummy *pain au chocolat banane* (chocolate banana bread). Have a picnic in Place des Vosges. *Snacks Merci* (111 Blvd Beaumarchais, 75003; 01 42 77 78 92; closed Sun) is a concept store; inside it is the Used-Book Café, which serves grilled cheese, soups, salads and cakes.

Letting off steam

The **Jardin de l'Hôtel Salé** (101 Rue Coutures St-Gervais, 75003) has a playground and ping-pong tables. There is also a merry-go-round at Métro St-Paul, which is a convenient treat at the end of a day out.

Centre Pompidou

Cubes, views and tubes

President Pompidou of France, who was in office from 1969–74, himself chose the winning entry by Richard

Rogers and Renzo Piano for the Centre Pompidou, often just referred to as Beaubourg. It is a crazy glass building turned inside out with its air-conditioning shafts, escalators and pipes on the outside. Inside is the Musée National d'Art Moderne, which exhibits cutting-edge modern art that is always on the move; its 65,000 pieces rotate constantly. La Galerie des Enfants makes art and design accessible to kids as young as two. Children will love the views of Paris from the building's panoramic terrace.



Letting off steam

The big pedestrianized piazza, **Place Georges Pompidou**, in front of the museum, is buzzing with street entertainers. Around the corner, the colourful Stravinsky Fountain is like a giant musical box.



Street entertainer on a unicycle in front of the Centre Pompidou

The Lowdown

-  **Map reference** 25 B4
- Address** Pl Georges Pompidou, 75004; www.centrepompidou.fr
-  **Métro** Rambuteau, line 11 & Hôtel de Ville, line 1. **RER** Châtelet–Les Halles, lines A, B & D. **Bus** 21, 29, 38, 47, 58, 69, 70, 72, 74, 75, 81, 85 & 96
-  **Open** 11am–9pm Wed–Mon (until 11pm Thu)
-  **Prices** Exhibitions, museums and panoramic viewing point: €26 depending on the season; under 18s & EU citizens under 26 free. Panoramic viewing point only: €6; under 26s free. Écran des Enfants, inside Galerie des Enfants: €11–21
-  **Skipping the queue** Paris Museum Pass accepted. Free entry every first Sun of the month. Tickets for adults can be bought online or at the

automatic machines. Older kids have to show their IDs to get free tickets.

-  **Guided tours** Audio guides in English. Tours in French at 3:30pm every Sat & 4pm every Sun. The bookshop sells *My Little Pompidou*, a children's guide
-  **Age range** 2 plus
-  **Activities** Workshops on Wed & Sat. Family activities on Sun & during school hols. Films at Écran des Enfants, occasionally in English
-  **Allow** 1–2 hours
-  **Eat and drink** *Real meal* Le Hangar (12 Impasse Berthaud, 75003; 01 42 74 55 44; closed Sun & Mon) is a traditional bistro. **Family treat** *Georges* (on site; 01 44 78 47 99; closed Tue) serves mostly French dishes. Great views.
-  **Toilets** At several locations

KIDS' CORNER

Look out for...

- 1** The shop that sells *driedels* and other Jewish knick-knacks on Rue des Rosiers.
- 2** Giant collages by Matisse at the Centre Pompidou. Buy scissors, glue and paper and make your own versions. Send them to family and friends instead of a postcard.
- 3** Victor Hugo's inkwell. The creator of Quasimodo and Esmeralda lived at No. 6 Place des Vosges. Get a pen and practise swirly handwriting.



TOAST TO HIS HEALTH

According to his mother, Pablo Picasso's first words were "piz, piz", which is short for *lapiz* – Spanish for "pencil". His final words were "drink to me, drink to my health, you know I can't drink anymore". Toast the master the next time you sit down for a drink.



Colour coding

The pipes on the outside of the Centre Pompidou are all colour-coded – the air-conditioning ducts are blue, the water pipes are green, the electricity lines are yellow and the ventilation shafts are white. The undersides of pipes in which people move about, such as the escalators, are painted red. The architects wanted to make people think more about how a building actually works.



Musée du Louvre and around

The biggest museum in the world, the Musée du Louvre dazzles through the sheer scale and brilliance of its art collections. This bustling heart of Paris is also home to two pretty parks: Jardin des Tuileries and Jardin du Palais Royal. Both are ideal for a break or picnic. Traffic is heavy during rush hours, so pick a Sunday morning or a public holiday for a walk, or cut across the Jardin des Tuileries to Place de la Concorde and Place Vendôme to avoid traffic.

0 metres 400
0 yards 400

The Lowdown

Metro Concorde, lines 1, 8 & 12; Tuileries, line 1; Bourse, line 3; Palais Royal–Musée-du-Louvre, lines 1 & 7; Opéra, lines 3, 7 & 8 or Grands Boulevards & Richelieu-Drouot, lines 8 & 9. **RER** Musée d'Orsay, line C; Auber, line A. **Bus** 20, 21, 22, 27, 29, 39, 42, 48, 53, 66, 67, 68, 69, 72, 74, 81, 85 & 95. **River Boat** Quai du Louvre

Visitor information 25 Rue des Pyramides, 75001; summer: 9am–9pm Mon–Sat; winter: 10am–7pm Mon–Sat; year round: 11am–7pm Sun & public hols. Carrousel du Louvre, 99 Rue de Rivoli, 75001; 10am–6pm daily

Supermarkets Mon'op, 9 Blvd de la Madeleine, 75001. Franprix, 9 Rue du Mail, 75001 & 20 Pl Marché St-Honoré, 75001

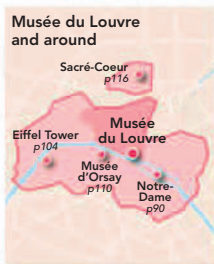
Markets Marché St-Honoré, Pl du Marché St-Honoré, 75001; 12:30–8:30pm Wed & 7am–3pm Sun

Festivals Fêtes des Tuileries funfair (Jul & Aug). Paris-Plages (Jul & Aug, see p91)

Pharmacy Pharmacy des Petits-Champs, 21 Rue des Petits-Champs, 75002; 01 42 96 97 20; 8am–8:30pm Mon–Fri, 9:30am–8pm Sat

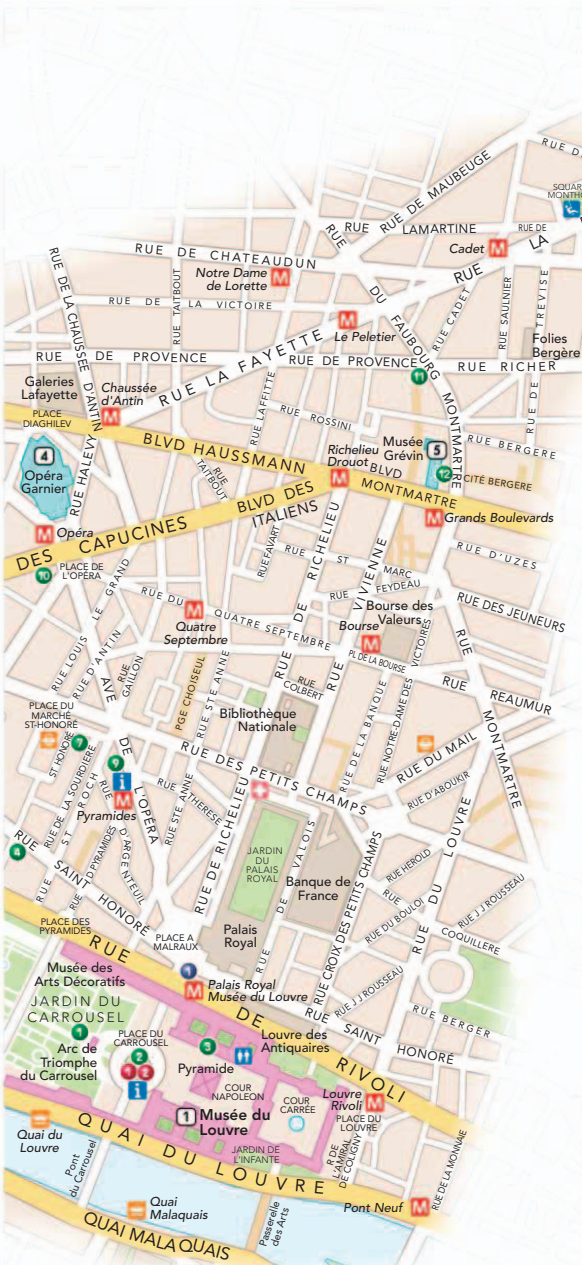
Nearest playgrounds Jardin des Tuileries, Rue de Rivoli, 75001 (see p99). Square de Montholon, 80 Rue Lafayette, 75009 (see p101)

Toilets Point WC: Carrousel du Louvre; Printemps, 64 Blvd Haussmann, 75009



The well-manicured lawns of the Jardin du Palais Royal





The stunning interiors of the historic waxworks museum, the Musée Grévin



The Musée du Louvre lit up at night

Places of interest

SIGHTS

- 1 Musée du Louvre
- 2 Place de la Concorde
- 3 Place Vendôme
- 4 Opéra Garnier
- 5 Musée Grévin

EAT AND DRINK

- 1 Paul
- 2 Mira
- 3 Café Marly
- 4 Water Bar
- 5 Ladurée
- 6 Les Ambassadeurs
- 7 Le Zinc d'Honneur
- 8 Le Soufflé
- 9 Monoprix

- 10 Chez Clément
- 11 A La Mère de la Famille
- 12 Le Bouillon Chartier

SHOPPING

- 1 Virgin Megastore
- 2 Nature et Découvertes
- 3 W H Smith

See also Musée du Louvre (p99)

WHERE TO STAY

- 1 Hôtel du Louvre
- 2 Le Bristol
- 3 Le Burgundy
- 4 Résidhome Paris-Opéra
- 5 The Westin

The Vendôme Column in Place Vendôme



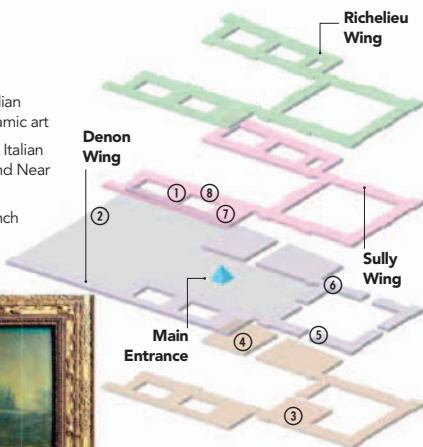
① Musée du Louvre

Mummies, mysterious ladies and medieval moats

Fascinating and beyond famous, the Musée du Louvre houses a stunning selection of art from the Middle Ages to 1848, as well as one of the biggest collections of ancient Egyptian treasures in the world. In all there are 35,000 things to see. In over 800 years, the Louvre has metamorphosed from fortress to palace, stable, granary and, after Louis XIV moved the court to Versailles in 1678, squatters' home. In 1793, after the Revolution, it opened as a museum of royal treasures.

Key Features

- **Second Floor** French and Dutch paintings
- **First Floor** French and Italian paintings, Decorative and Islamic art
- **Ground Floor** French and Italian sculpture; Egyptian, Greek and Near Eastern antiquities
- **Lower Ground Floor** French and Italian sculpture, and Islamic art



① **Mona Lisa** Da Vinci never revealed the identity of the mysterious lady in this famous painting, which has hung both on Louis XIV's and Napoleon's bedroom walls.

② **Arc de Triomphe du Carrousel** This triumphal arch was built to celebrate Napoleon's victories in 1805. Its marble columns are adorned with statue of soldiers of the Grande Armée.

③ **Medieval moat** The sheer size of the twin towers and the drawbridge in the moat will impress the kids and give them a taste of the vast fortified castle that stood there.

④ **Marly Horses** These dramatic statues once stood in the garden of Louis XIV's Château de Marly, but were later shifted to the Place de la Concorde.

⑤ **The Giant Sphinx** A mythical monster guards the museum's amazing collection of ancient Egyptian treasures.

⑥ **Winged Victory of Samothrace** The more natural style typical of the Hellenistic period is obvious in this very famous ancient Greek statue.



⑦ **The Galerie d'Apollon** Looking like a jewel box, this gallery holds the crown jewels, including Empress Eugenie's crown, which had 2,490 diamonds.



⑧ **The Coronation of Napoleon** Jacques-Louis David painted this piece of propaganda in 1807. Napoleon's family is shown, including his mother, who was not even present for the ceremony.

The Lowdown

Map reference 24 F4
Address 75001; 01 40 20 50 50; www.louvre.fr

Métro Palais-Royal–Musée-du-Louvre, lines 1 & 7. **Bus** 21, 24, 27, 39, 48, 68, 69, 72, 81 & 95.
River boat Louvre–Quai du Louvre

Open 9am–5:45pm, till 9:45pm Wed & Fri; closed Tue, 1 Jan, 1 May & 25 Dec

Price €24–34; under 18s & EU citizens under 26 free. Free entry on first Sun of the month & 14 Jul

Skipping the queue Paris Museum Pass accepted. Buy tickets in advance online, through TicketWeb or FNAC. Tickets are valid for the entire day. Queues are shorter at the entrance by the Arc de Triomphe du Carrousel and at the Porte de Lions by the Seine; advance ticket holders have priority access at the pyramid. If you have a pushchair, walk to the front of the queue and the staff will let you through.

Guided tours For adults in English: €5–15. For children in

Letting off steam

On the doorstep of the Louvre is one of Paris's oldest and loveliest parks, the **Jardin des Tuileries** (*Rue de Rivoli, 75001*). Sail wooden boats or play in the playground. As tickets to the Louvre are valid all day, it is a good idea to treat it as a number of different museums, and take a long midday break at the park, if tired.



Children playing in the playground in Jardin des Tuileries

Eat and drink

Picnic: under €25; Snacks: €25–45; Real meal: €45–90; Family treat: over €90 (based on a family of four)

PICNIC Paul (*Paul Paris Opera, 25 Avenue De L'Opéra, 75001; 01 42 60 78 22; www.paul.fr; open daily*), a bakery chain, serves sandwiches. Opt for a picnic on the grass nearby or in the museum's Cour Carrée.

SNACKS Mira (*Carrousel du Louvre; 01 55 35 12 60; open daily*) is a self-service Spanish tapas bar, which also serves a tasty paella.

REAL MEAL Café Marly (*Richelieu Wing; 01 49 26 06 60; open daily*) offers stunning views of the Louvre, pasta and sandwiches.

FAMILY TREAT Colette Water Bar (*213 Rue St-Honoré, 75001; 01 55 35 33 90; open daily*) in the trendy

concept store Colette, sells bottled water from around the world and bites to eat. Enjoy lunch or tea.

Find out more

DIGITAL The Louvre website is child-friendly. Simply click on the cartoon figure of the first director, Dominique Vivant Denon, for 'Tales of the Museum'. The museum shops sell two good CD ROMs, *The Louvre, Art for Kids and One Minute at the Museum*.

FILM The museum has excellent films for children. Enjoy watching *The Amazing Museum*, which is sold in the shop. Looney Tunes' *Louvre Come Back to Me* (1962) is a bit more light-hearted.

Shopping

The underground Carrousel du Louvre is full of shops, including the **Apple Store** (*99 Rue de Rivoli, 75004*), **Nature et Découvertes** (*174 Rue de Rivoli, 75004*), a branch of the scientific toy shop, and many shops full of knick-knacks.

W H Smith (*248, Rue de Rivoli, 75001; www.whsmith.fr*) has the best collection of English-language books for children in Paris.

Next step...

JARDIN DU PALAIS ROYAL After a trip to the Musée du Louvre, everyone needs some time to relax. In summer, the gardens at the Palais Royal, once home of the all-powerful Cardinal Richelieu, are a lovely place to take a shady stroll or unwind over a drink.

KIDS' CORNER

A devilish little pyramid

The modern glass pyramid in the main entrance is exactly ten times smaller than the Pyramid of Cheops in Egypt, and contrary to belief, it does not have 666 panes of glass. The number 666 is linked with the Devil, and has sparked all sorts of rumours about the Louvre and shot it to fame in the film *The Da Vinci Code*. In fact, it has a completely uninteresting 673 panes.



FILCHING FACTFILE



Venus de Milo, the armless sculpture of the Goddess of Love, was discovered hidden under the ground by a Greek peasant while he was ransacking an ancient site on the island of Milos. You can find her on the ground floor.

A thief in the museum

On a hot summer Sunday in August 1911, the *Mona Lisa* was stolen by an Italian glazier who was working in the Louvre. The newspapers went wild and overnight it became the scandal of the year. The question was where the stolen painting was located. Thousands queued to stare at the bare wall as a massive manhunt got underway. Two years later, the glazier tried to sell the painting in Florence. He claimed to have kidnapped the painting in order to avenge the wagonloads of treasure hauled back from Italy by Napoleon Bonaparte.



French during school hols, Mon, Tue, Thu & Fri; 01 40 20 51 77. Audio guide Louvre-Nintendo 3DSXL: €5; under 18s €3. There is an Egyptian trail in 7 languages for children. The bookshop sells a variety of useful guides for children and families.

Age range 5 plus

Activities Workshops, films and talks for children and families in French. Take a walk after dark in the Cour Carrée, which is magical.

Allow At least 2–3 hours

Wheelchair access Limited

Shops The subterranean Carrousel du Louvre is a great place to browse the shops.

Toilets In the lobby, on all floors, and at the Point WC in the Carrousel du Louvre.

Good family value?

Considering the amount on show in what is one of the world's most important museums, it is a bargain. Plan the trip in advance using the children's website.



The Fountain of River Commerce and Navigation in Place de la Concorde

② Place de la Concorde

Revolutionary guillotine and an Egyptian obelisk

The Place de la Concorde provides great views of the Champs-Élysées, north to La Madeleine, east to the Louvre and south across the river to the Assemblée Nationale. It is truly magical after dark. Laid out in 1757, and named Place Louis XV, it was the main location for the guillotine during the Revolution. In 1792, the square literally ran with blood as thousands, including Louis XVI and Marie-Antoinette, were all executed here. Later, after the horrors of the Revolution, it was named “concorde” or “harmony” in the hope of peaceful times ahead.

On the square's northwestern corner is one of the most luxurious hotels in the city, Hôtel Crillon. The identical, imposing building located on the northeastern side is the Navy Ministry. The obelisk in the middle of the square was made 3,200 years ago, and is the oldest monument in

The Lowdown

Map reference 23 C2
Address 75008

Méto Concorde, lines 1 & 8. **Bus** 24, 42, 52, 72, 73, 84, & 94

Activities Giant Ferris wheel from Nov–Jan. Summer fair in the Jardin des Tuileries

Eat and drink *Real meal* Ladurée (16 Rue Royale, 75008; closed Sun), which opened in 1862, is a luxury tearoom. *Family treat* Les Ambassadeurs (10 Pl de la Concorde, 75008; 01 44 71 16 16; open daily), is the Hôtel Crillon's fairy-tale restaurant, where families go for lunch.

Toilets At the entrance to the Jardin des Tuileries

Paris. At one time, it stood in the Temple of Ramses in Luxor, but was given to the French people by the Pasha of Egypt in 1829. In exchange for this gift, the pasha received a clock that never worked.

Take cover

La Madeleine (Pl de la Madeleine, 75008) is a church dedicated to Mary Magdalene. Although work began on it in 1764, it was only consecrated in 1845. Its design was ordered by Napoleon who wanted a Roman-style temple honouring his army, which is why it has no bell and does not face towards Jerusalem like most other churches.

③ Place Vendôme

Paris's chicest square

Built in 1699 to reflect the glory of the statue of Louis XIV placed in the centre, the square failed to impress the revolutionaries who melted the statue to make canons. In 1806, a huge column made out of captured enemy canons was erected, showing the exploits of Napoleon's army in a spiral comic strip around the edge. Although it was torn down in 1871 by revolutionaries again, a copy of the column now stands in its place.

The square is simply beautiful at night, and has also witnessed some famous events, such as the marriage of Napoleon to Josephine at No. 3. The Ritz hotel at No. 15 has a long list of illustrious guests including Ernest Hemingway, Edward VII, Charlie Chaplin and Princess Diana.

Letting off steam

Nearby is the **Jardin des Tuileries** (see p99) with a popular playground. Let the kids be mini-Parisians and sail wooden boats on the lake.



Elegant buildings on Place Vendôme, housing exclusive shops

The Lowdown

Map reference 24 E2
Address 75001

Méto Tuileries, line 1. **Bus** 67, 74, 81 & 85

Age range All ages

Eat and drink *Picnic* Le Zinc d'Honoré (36 Pl du Marché St-Honoré, 75001; open daily) serves steak with potato gratin or fries. *Real meal* Le Soufflé (36 Rue du Mont Thabor, 75001; 01 42 60 27 19) serves sweet and savoury soufflés.

Toilets No

④ Opéra Garnier

Phantoms and chandeliers

Decorated like a giant birthday cake, the Opéra National de Paris Garnier or Palais Garnier, was designed by Charles Garnier in 1861. Its opulent splendour and red velvet boxes exude the sensuous and slightly sinister atmosphere of a short story by writer Guy de Maupassant. The red and gold auditorium is lit by a gigantic crystal chandelier. In 1896, it fell down and crushed the audience below. This event, as well as the

The Lowdown

Map reference 18 E6
Address 1 Pl de l'Opéra, 75009; www.operadeparis.fr

Méto Opéra, lines 3, 7 & 8. **RER** Auber, line A. **Bus** 21, 22, 27, 29, 42, 53, 66, 68, 81 & 95

Open 10am–5pm daily; Jul–Sep: till 6pm; matinee days: till 1pm; closed 1 Jan, 1 May & 25 Dec

Price €28–38; under 10s free. Entry tickets offer a reduction to the Musée d'Orsay, valid for a week after the visit

Guided tours In English at 11:30am daily; 2:30pm on Wed, Sat & Sun in Jul & Aug & school hols; €36 for a family; 1 hour 30 mins

Age range 5 plus

Wheelchair access Yes

Activities Family workshops in French; 01 40 01 19 88.

Allow 45 mins

Eat and drink *Picnic* Monoprix (21 Ave de l'Opéra, 75009) is a great stop to pick up supplies for a picnic in the Jardin du Palais Royal. *Real meal* Chez Clément (17 Blvd des Capucines, 75002; 01 53 43 82 00; www.chezclément.com) serves tasty meals and is child friendly.

Toilets On all levels



The statues, fountains and trim hedges of the Jardin du Palais Royal on a sunny day

building's underground lake and vast cellars, inspired Gaston Leroux's novel *Phantom of the Opera*. There is a shop too, so bring the piggy bank.

Letting off steam

Walk down to the lovely gardens at the **Palais Royal** (*Pl de Palais Royal, 75001*) situated at the end of Avenue de l'Opéra. The present garden is smaller than the original one laid out for Cardinal Richelieu in the 1630s.

5 Musée Grévin

Great events and ghoulish murders

This is the best place for spotting celebrities captured in wax – kings and queens, pop stars and footballers. Comparisons with London's Madame Tussauds are inevitable, but Grévin is less gruesome and more authentic. Mingle with celebrities in the stunning Le Théâtre Tout-Paris. Step back in time in the Histoire de France, which features numerous

historical scenes, among them a gory portrayal of the Revolution, and depictions of the big events of the 20th century. But what steals the show is the museum's splendid Baroque building, home to the original light and sound show from the 1900 Universal Exhibition.

Letting off steam

A 10-minute walk to the northeast is the **Square de Montholon** (*80 Rue Lafayette, 75009*). The pretty park here has a playground and some ping-pong tables.



Opéra Garnier, symbolizing the opulence of the Second Empire

The Lowdown

Map reference 18 G6

Address 10 Blvd Montmartre, 75009; www.grevin.com

Métro Grands Boulevards & Richelieu-Drouot, lines 8 & 9; Bourse, line 3. **Bus** 20, 39, 48, 67, 74 & 85

Open 10am–6:30pm, till 7pm Sat, Sun, public & school hols; from 9am autumn & Christmas school hols; closed for five days after Christmas

Price €68–78; under 6s free

Skipping the queue Paris Museum Pass accepted. Buy tickets in advance, or go at lunchtime.

Guided tours Tours in French at 2.30pm Wed, Sat & Sun, except during school hols; €18 per child; 01 47 70 83 97

Age range 6 plus.

Allow 1 hour 30 mins

Wheelchair access Yes

Café Café Grévin, next to the museum

Eat and drink **Picnic** A La Mère de la Famille (*35 Rue du Faubourg Montmartre, 75009*) opened in 1761 and sells everything to satisfy a sweet tooth. Walk over to the Square de Montholon for a picnic.

Real meal Le Bouillon Chartier (*7 Rue du Faubourg Montmartre, 75009; 01 47 70 86 29; www.restaurant-chartier.com; open daily*) is a classic French bistro, with waiters dressed in white aprons.

Toilets At several locations

KIDS' CORNER

Look out for...



1 The old barometer on the corner of Rue Duphot and Rue St-Honoré, not far from Place Vendôme.

2 An axe, a helmet and a lion on the base of the Vendôme Column.

3 The eight ladies in

Place de la Concorde. Each one represents a French city.

4 Buzzing bees. 450,000 of them live on the roof of Opéra Garnier.



CARTOON CAPER

The first animated film was shown at the Musée Grévin in 1894 by Charles Émile Reynaud. He died penniless after the audiences deserted him preferring to watch real movies rather than animation. Despondent, he threw most of his work into the Seine before he died.

Mr Meyer's model

Waxwork museums were the celebrity magazines of their day as photos were still a novelty and TV was yet to be invented. In 1882, a trip to theatre designer Alfred Grévin's new museum was the only way to get a good look at the people who were hitting the headlines in the new mass-circulation newspapers that were taking Paris by storm. Look out for Grévin's friend, journalist Arthur Meyer, who cleverly came up with the whole idea – he is portrayed sleeping over a copy of his own newspaper!



Eiffel Tower and around

From the moment most kids arrive in Paris, they want to get to the top of the Eiffel Tower. In summer, be prepared for big crowds. Across the river on the Right Bank, the area known as the Trocadéro is crammed with museums that are a good option on a rainy day. The grand Avenue des Champs-Élysées, leading up to the Arc de Triomphe, is perfect for strolling. Exploring this area requires a lot of walking; the best way to get around is by bus. On Sundays and public holidays, quai Branly is closed to traffic, and is a fun place to Rollerblade or take a family stroll.

Places of interest

SIGHTS

- ① Eiffel Tower
- ② Palais de Chaillot
- ③ Arc de Triomphe
- ④ Avenue des Champs-Élysées

EAT AND DRINK

- 1 Boulangerie Secco
- 2 Thè aux 3 Cerises
- 3 58 Tour Eiffel
- 4 Le Jules Verne
- 5 Café Carlu
- 6 Zen Café
- 7 Ladurée
- 8 Drugstore Publicis
- 9 Dalloyau
- 10 114 Faubourg

WHERE TO STAY

- 1 Adagio Paris Tour Eiffel
- 2 Citadines Trocadéro
- 3 Four Seasons George V
- 4 Hôtel du Collectionneur
- 5 Hotel Duquesne Eiffel
- 6 Jays
- 7 Novotel Eiffel Tower

Eiffel Tower and around



Bronze statues atop the pillars on Pont Alexandre III



People under the Eiffel Tower, splendidly lit up at night





The Eiffel Tower with the Champ-de-Mars in the foreground



A view of the Trocadéro from the Eiffel Tower





Triumph of Napoleon relief on the Arc de Triomphe's base


The Lowdown

-  **Méto** Bir Hakeim, line 6; Charles de Gaulle-Etoile, lines 1, 2, & 6 or Trocadéro, lines 6 & 9.
- RER** Champ-de-Mars-Tour Eiffel, line C or Pont de l'Alma, line C. Charles de Gaulle-Etoile, line A.
- Bus** 22, 30, 32, 42, 63, 72, 73, 80, 82 & 93. **River boat** Quai de la Bourdonnais
-  **Visitor information** Kiosk at the corner of Ave des Champs-Élysées & Ave de Marigny, 75008; mid-Apr–mid-Oct: 9am–7pm; closed 14 Jul
-  **Supermarkets** Franprix, 107 Ave La Bourdonnais, 75007 & 27 Rue Cler, 75007. Monoprix, 52 Ave des Champs-Élysées, 75008 & 18 Rue de Passy, 75016
- Markets** Marché Président Wilson, Ave du Président Wilson, 75016; 7am–2:30pm Wed & Sat
-  **Festivals** Familathlon: family sports day in the Champ-de-

Mars; www.familathlon.org (Sep). Ice-skating at the Eiffel Tower (mid-Dec–end Jan). Paris Marathon (Apr). La Défilé, a huge military parade (14 Jul). Tour de France; www.letour.fr Armistice (11 Nov).

 **Pharmacy** Pharmacie de la Tour Eiffel, 24 Rue de Montessuy, 75007; 8am–8pm Mon–Sat

 **Nearest playgrounds** There is a large playground with a sandpit at the southern end of the Champ-de-Mars, 75007; dawn–dusk daily (see p105). Jardins du Trocadéro, 75016; dawn–dusk daily (see p106). Parc Monceau, Blvd de Courcelles, 75008; 7am–10pm daily (see p107). Jardin de Champs-Élysées, 75008; dawn–dusk daily (see p107)

 **Toilets** Point WC, 26 Ave des Champs-Élysées, 75008; baby changing facilities €2

1 Eiffel Tower













The iron lady of Paris

There is something irresistible about the Meccano-style star of the Paris skyline. It is a magnet for children, whose main ambition is to get to the top as fast as possible. In 1886, a competition was held to build a tower at the gates of the Universal Exhibition of 1889, to commemorate 100 years since the Revolution. Gustave Eiffel emerged as the winner from among 170 entries, which included a giant watering can and an enormous guillotine. Although an instant success, the Eiffel Tower (Tour Eiffel) was lucky not to be torn down later.



Colourful souvenirs of the Eiffel Tower

The Lowdown

-  **Map reference** 22 E3
- Address** Champ-de-Mars, 75007; 08 92 70 12 39; www.tour-eiffel.fr
-  **Métro** Bir Hakeim, line 6 or Trocadéro, lines 6 & 9.
- RER** Champs-de-Mars-Tour Eiffel, line C. **Bus** 42, 69, 82 & 87. **River boat** Quai de la Bourdonnais
-  **Open** 9:30am–11pm; mid-Jun–Aug: 9am–midnight; Easter weekend: to midnight
-  **Price** Summit: €50–60; first & second levels: lift €25–35; stairs: €16–17; under-4s free
-  **Skipping the queue** The queues are shorter at night. Buy tickets online.
-  **Guided tours** Download guides and iPhone apps from www.eiffel-tower.com.
-  **Age range** All ages, but small children may find the summit frightening.
-  **Activities** Download kids' quiz book from www.eiffel-tower.com.
- Allow** 1 hour 30 mins, or 3 hours in high season
-  **Wheelchair access** Yes, but first and second levels only
-  **Café** On first and second levels
-  **Toilets** On every floor
- 

Good family value?

It may be pricey, but the kids will love it. It is best to visit the tower at the end of a trip to Paris so that children can spot from above the sights they have visited.

Key Features



Viewing gallery On a clear day, it is possible to see Chartres Cathedral, 80 km (50 miles) away.



Bust of Eiffel Eiffel was sculpted by Antoine Bourdelle in 1929, and the bust was placed below the tower in his memory.

Double-decker lifts These vintage lifts ply their way up and down the tower.

Eiffel's staircase See a piece of the original staircase that was taken down in 1983 to make way for new lifts. Gustave Eiffel would walk up to the top to his office.

Champ-de-Mars A former parade ground, these long gardens stretch from the tower's base to the Ecole Militaire (military school).

Third level The viewing gallery is 276 m (906 ft) above the ground. Mr Eiffel had an office here.



Sparkling Eiffel Every evening since the millennium, a 200,000-watt lighting system makes the Eiffel Tower sparkle for 5 minutes every hour, on the hour, till midnight.

Crisscross girders The complex pattern of the girders helps to stabilize the tower on windy days. The metal parts can expand up to 12 cm (5 inch) on hot days.

Second level At 115 m (376 ft), this level is separated from the first by 359 steps, or a few minutes in the lift.

First level At a height of 57 m (187 ft), this level can be reached by lift or by 360 steps. It has a glass floor that offers fabulous views and a new exhibition space.





The Eiffel Tower soaring above a playground on Champ-de-Mars

Letting off steam

The adjoining **Champ-de-Mars**, with its sweeping pathways, is perfect for riding a bike or kicking a ball about. Watch a puppet show at the Marionnettes du Champ-de-Mars theatre in the northeastern side of the park; this is fun even if the kids do not speak a word of French.

Eat and drink

Picnic: under €25; Snacks: €25–45; Real meal: €45–90; Family treat: over €90 (based on a family of four)

PICNIC Boulangerie Secco

(20 Rue Jean Nicot, 75007; closed Sun & Mon) is famous for its seasonal selection of pastries. Picnic in the Champ-de-Mars.

SNACKS Thé aux 3 Cerises (47 Ave de Suffren, 75007; 01 42 73 92 97; 12–6pm Tue–Fri, till 7pm Sat & Sun) is ideal for a cup of tea. Kids can enjoy a delicious hot chocolate with whipped cream.

REAL MEAL 58 Tour Eiffel (08 25 56 66 62; www.restaurants-toureffel.com; 11:30am–5:30pm & 6:30–11:30pm daily) is located on the first floor. Lunch is the best option, when the menu is lighter and prices more competitive.



Contemporary decor at 58 Tour Eiffel, the first-floor restaurant

FAMILY TREAT Le Jules Verne

(01 45 55 61 44; www.lejulesverne-paris.com; noon–2:30pm & 7–11pm daily), on the tower's second floor, is perfect for a special meal. It has stunning panoramic views, and is in the hands of Michelin-starred chef Alain Ducasse.

Find out more

DIGITAL On tinyurl.com/2g5beua, watch daredevil French inline skater Taïg Khris set the world record for the highest rollerskate jump, at 40 m (131 ft), from the first floor of the Eiffel Tower in 2010. Find out about more towers on www.great-towers.com and play Eiffel Tower games on www.tour-eiffel.fr.

FILM Check out James Bond in action on the tower in *A View to Kill* (1985), Chuckie and his friends in *Rugrats in Paris* (1996) and the cartoon heroes in *Looney Tunes Back in Action* (2003).

It appears in *Zazie dans le Métro* (1960), *The Aristocats* (1970) and *Ratatouille* (2007). Ludwig Bemelmans' heroine Madeline lives in a leafy street nearby in *Madeline* (1998).

Shopping

The only thing to buy next to the Eiffel Tower is a model of it. The original models were made of scrap metal from the tower, but now they come in all colours and materials.

Next stop...

NOTRE-DAME Take a river cruise from the Eiffel Tower past various famous sights, ending up at the other ultimate Parisian symbol, Notre-Dame (see pp90–91).

KIDS' CORNER

Did you know...

- 1 On a hot sunny day, the tower grows 18 cm (7 inch) in height, and in the depth of winter, shrinks 15 cm (6 inch).
- 2 It takes 25 painters and 60 tons of paint to touch up the base of the tower every seven years and the top part every five years.
- 3 Every five months, 25 mountain climbers scale the tower to change the 20,000 light bulbs.



Towering towers

The Eiffel Tower was the tallest building in the world until the Empire State building was completed in 1931.

CAR CRAZY

In 1959, Julien Bertin, aged 10, became the 35-millionth visitor to the Eiffel Tower. He won a car but neither of his parents could drive.



What a heap of scrap!

In the 1920s, the Eiffel Tower was in such a bad state of repair that the government considered pulling it down. In 1925, con man Victor Lustig, who claimed he was the official in charge of secretly selling it off, met six scrap metal dealers at the Hôtel Crillon. He demanded a heavy bribe to secure the deal and escaped to Austria with the money. The metal dealers, however, were too embarrassed to admit what had happened and a month later

Lustig came back and sold the tower a second time. This time he was not so lucky and the victim reported him.



② Palais de Chaillot

Fishy films and model boats

From humble beginnings as a pastoral village, this part of Paris is now dominated by the monumental Palais de Chaillot, universally known by the locals as the Trocadéro. It is the best place from which to gaze at the Eiffel Tower, but also somewhere to take a crash course in architecture, French maritime heritage and the history of humankind, by visiting its museums.

The **Musée de l'Homme** houses one of the world's best prehistoric collections, while the **Musée de la Marine** is a must for fans of blistering barnacles and model boats. The palace's east wing houses the **Cité de l'Architecture et du Patrimoine**, featuring France's most famous buildings in miniature. That done, relax at **Cinéaqua**, touring its aquarium or taking in a film.

The Lowdown

Map reference 21 D1
Address 17 Pl du Trocadéro, 75016. Musée de l'Homme: reopens during 2015. Musée de la Marine: www.musee-marine.fr. Cité de l'Architecture: www.citechaillot.fr. Cinéaqua: www.cineaqua.com

Méto Trocadéro, lines 6 & 9.
RER Champ-de-Mars–Tour Eiffel, line C. **Bus** 22, 30, 32, 63, 72 & 82. **River boat** Quai de la Bourdonnais

Open Musée de la Marine: 10am–6pm, till 9pm Fri & till 7pm Sat & Sun. Cité de l'Architecture et du Patrimoine: 11am–7pm, till 9pm Thu. Museums are closed Tue, 1 Jan, 1 May & 25 Dec. Cinéaqua: 10am–7pm daily

Price Musée de la Marine: €14–24; under 18s & EU citizens under 26 free. Cité de l'Architecture et du Patrimoine: €16–26; under 18s & EU citizens under 26 free. Cinéaqua: €70–80; under 3s free

Eat and drink **Snacks** Café Carlu (Cité de l'Architecture) is a self-service eatery with views of the Eiffel Tower. **Real Meal** Le Zen Café (Cinéaqua, 5 Ave Albert de Mun; www.cineaqua.com); open daily noon–2pm lunch & 3–4pm afternoon tea) offers freshly prepared lunch boxes, seafood delicacies and Sunday brunch. One of its walls is part of the Cinéaqua's giant fish tank.

Toilets At several locations



View of the Arc de Triomphe from Avenue Marceau

Letting off steam

The **Jardins du Trocadéro** run down to the Seine alongside Paris's most fantastic fountain. The gardens also have a vintage merry-go-round and a playground. On weekends, street performers dance on the esplanade.

③ Arc de Triomphe

Generals and French history

After defeating the Austrian and Russian troops at the Battle of Austerlitz in 1805, Napoleon commissioned a triumphal arch in the Roman style. However, no sooner were the foundations for the arch laid, than his empire began to collapse. The arch was finally completed in 1836. Four years later, Napoleon's remains passed under it, on the way to his final resting place at Les Invalides. Since then, both occupying armies and liberating troops have marched through it.

Known for having witnessed the best as well as the worst moments in the nation's history, this monument

celebrates France's military heroes; the names of generals who served in Napoleon's army are engraved here, and the names of those who died on the battlefield are underlined. A relief on the left base celebrates the Treaty of Vienna peace agreement of 1810, a symbol of Napoleon's triumph. A great place to get a feel for French history, the Arc de Triomphe is also possibly one of the best spots in Paris to enjoy fine views, especially at sunset.



Tropical fish at the state-of-the-art aquarium in Cinéaqua, Palais de Chaillot

The Lowdown

Map reference 16 E4
Address Pl Charles de Gaulle, 75008; www.arc-de-triomphe.monuments-nationaux.fr

Méto Charles de Gaulle-Etoile, lines 1, 2 & 6. **RER** Charles de Gaulle-Etoile, line A. **Bus** 22, 30, 31, 52, 73 & 92

Open Apr–Sep: 10am–11pm; Oct–Mar: 10am–10:30pm; closed 1 Jan, 1 Apr, 8 May am, 14 Jul am, 11 Nov am & 25 Dec

Price €19–29; under 18s & EU citizens under 26 free

Age range All ages

Activities Ceremony to relight the eternal flame: 6.30pm daily. Annual military parade: 14 Jul

Allow 1 hour

Wheelchair access Yes, but limited. No access to the roof/views

Eat and drink **Snacks** Ladurée (75 Champs-Elysées, 75008; open until midnight) serves macaroons in its belle époque tea rooms. **Family treat** Drugstore Publicis (133 Champs Elysées, 75008; www.publicisdrugstore.com; open daily) is famous for its giant club sandwiches.

Toilets In Drugstore Publicis nearby

Letting off steam

Opt for a short ride on bus No. 30 or take an easy walk to **Parc Monceau** (Blvd de Courcelles, 75008), a great place for kids to run around. Created in 1769, this English-style garden has curving paths and some monuments. Look out for an Egyptian pyramid and Paris's biggest tree, an Oriental plane, whose trunk measures a whopping 7 m (23 ft) round.

4 Avenue des Champs-Élysées

Stroll along in style

Running southeast from the grand Arc de Triomphe, the lively Champs-Élysées is one of the most famous avenues in the world. Although this is where the exclusive designer shops cluster, it also offers some regular shopping, especially on a Sunday. Further down, towards the Seine, are two galleries, the Grand and the Petit Palais, which were built for the Universal Exhibition of 1900. Check out the permanent art exhibition at the latter. From here, a few steps lead to the prettiest bridge in Paris, the glittering Pont Alexandre III. Double back and cross the Jardin de Champs-Élysées to take a quick look at the Palais de l'Élysées, which is and has been the official residence of the French President since 1873.

Letting off steam

Paris's oldest puppet theatre, **Théâtre Guignol** (Rond Point de Champs-Élysées, 75008; 01 42 45 38 30; www.theatreguignol.fr; 3pm, 4pm & 5pm Wed, Sat, Sun & school hols), in the Jardin de Champs-Élysées has been entertaining children since



A puppet show in progress at the Théâtre Guignol in the Jardin de Champs-Élysées

1818. The colourful marionettes are a treat for kids even if they do not follow the language. Be sure to catch another Paris institution in the park's northern corner, and start a stamp collection at the **Marché aux Timbres** (Ave Gabriel, 75008; open Thu, Sat & Sun and on public hols).

The Lowdown

Map reference 16 G5
Address 75008

Métro Charles de Gaulle-Etoile, lines 1, 2 & 6 or Champs-Élysées-Clémenceau, lines 1 & 13. **RER** Charles de Gaulle-Etoile, line A.
Bus 28, 42, 72, 73, 83, & 93

Allow 1 hour 30 mins

Eat and drink *Picnic* Dalloyau (101 Rue du Faubourg St-Honoré, 75008) serves tasty macaroons and other delicacies. Their invention, the famous l'Opéra cake, is a must-try. *Picnic* in the Jardin des Champs-Élysées. **Family treat** 114 Faubourg (01 53 43 43 00; www.lebristolparis.com; open daily), Hôtel Bristol's restaurant serves waffles with smoked salmon.

Toilets No



Pont Alexandre III, connecting the Left Bank to the Grand Palais

KIDS' CORNER

Look out for ...

- 1** Napoleon's glittering golden barge in the Musée de la Marine. He used it only once to inspect the fortifications in Antwerp in 1811.
- 2** The statue of a famous French general on the Champs-Élysées near the Grand Palais. Whose statue is it?
- 3** Baby sharks swimming around in their see-through eggs at Cinéaqua.

Answers at the bottom of the page.

WHOOSH!

Was that the sound of a bicycle whizzing past? The final stage of the world-famous cycling race, the Tour de France, is along the Champs-Élysées every year in July.



Balloon antics

The hot-air balloon was invented in France by the Montgolfier Brothers. In 1797, André Jacques

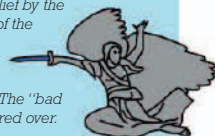
Gamerin made the first silk-parachute jump from a hot-air balloon in front



of a crowd gathered in Parc Monceau. The parachute, which looked

like a gigantic umbrella, was at the time an amazing new-fangled invention. Hot-air balloons were first used in the Battle of Fleurus in 1794.

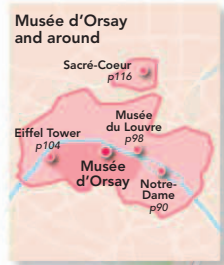
All for want of a sword!
La Marseillaise is one of the most famous reliefs on the triumphal arch. The sword carried in this relief by the symbolic figure of the Republic broke in 1916, just before the Battle of Verdun. The "bad omen" was covered over.



Answers: 2 General Charles de Gaulle.

Musée d'Orsay and around

Children love the bright colours and the liveliness depicted in the Impressionist paintings in the Musée d'Orsay, and young military historians will discover one of the best collections of guns, flags and armour at the Invalides. This area is a good rainy-day option as the sights are all indoors and there are several shops and cafés along the Left Bank. The sights are spread over a large area, so best explored by river boat, RER or bus. Alternatively, take a taxi to travel between the museums and St-Germain.



Kids playing football in the gardens in front of Les Invalides

The Lowdown

Métro Solferino, line 12; Invalides, lines 8 & 13; La Tour-Maubourg, line 8; Varenne or St-François Xavier, line 13; St-Germain-des-Prés, line 4. **RER** Invalides & Musée d'Orsay, line C. **Bus** 24, 63, 68, 69, 73, 83, 84 & 94

Visitor information 25 Rue des Pyramides, 75001; Nov–Apr: 10am–7pm, May–Oct: 9am–7pm. 11 Pl Hôtel de Ville, 75004, Jul–Aug: 10am–6pm.

Supermarkets Monoprix, 50 Rue de Rennes, 75006 & 35 Rue du Bac, 75007

Markets Marché St-Germain (covered market), 4/6 Rue Lobineau, 75006; 8:30am–1pm & 4–8pm Tue–Sat, 8:30am–1:30pm Sat & 8am–1:30pm Sun. Marché Raspail, Blvd Raspail, 75007; 7am–2:30pm Tue & Fri, 9am–3pm Sun

Festivals Christmas village, Pl St-Germain-des-Prés, 75006

Pharmacies Pharmacie St-Germain-des-Prés, 45 Rue Bonaparte, 75006; 01 43 26 52 92; 9am–midnight daily. Pharmacie des Invalides, 25 Blvd de la Tour Maubourg, 75007; 01

47 05 43 77; 8am–8pm Mon–Fri, 9am–8pm Sat, closed Sun

Nearest playgrounds Jardin des Tuileries, Rue de Rivoli, 75001; dawn–dusk daily (see p99). Ave de Breteuil, south of Les Invalides, 75007; dawn–dusk daily (see p112). Champ-de-Mars, 75007; dawn–dusk daily (see p105). Jardin Catherine Labouré, 33 Rue de Babylone, 75007; dawn–dusk daily (see p112). Square Félix Desruelles, 168 Blvd St-Germain, 75006; dawn–dusk daily (see p113).



A view of the Musée d'Orsay across the Seine



Elegant Art Deco tiles in Brasserie Lipp, one of St-Germain's cafés

Places of interest

SIGHTS

- 1 Musée d'Orsay
- 2 Les Invalides
- 3 Musée Rodin
- 4 St-Germain-des-Prés
- 5 Cafés of St-Germain-des-Prés

EAT AND DRINK

- 1 Debaue & Gallais
- 2 Kayser
- 3 Eggs & Co
- 4 Les Climats
- 5 Les Cocottes de

Christian Constant

- 6 Bellota-Bellota
- 7 Besnier Père et Fils
- 8 Le Bon Marché
- 9 Grom
- 10 Ladurée
- 11 Le Bonaparte
- 12 Café de Flore

SHOPPING

- 1 Bonpoint
 - 2 Six Pieds Trois Puces
- See also Musée d'Orsay (p111)

① Musée d'Orsay

All aboard for world-class art

Home to some of the most famous Impressionist paintings in the world, the light and airy Musée d'Orsay used to be a steam train station, but it had to close when its platforms became too short for modern trains. The giant station clock is still here, and the halls are still bustling, but now with art lovers of all ages who flock here to see the amazing collection of paintings, artistic oddities and intriguing Art Nouveau objects. Kids as young as five come here on school trips, jumping on the glass floor that covers a scale model of the Opéra quarter.



Clock in the main hall

Key Artists

① **François Pompon** Get nose to nose with the *Ours Blanc*, a huge polar bear sculpted between 1923 and 1933.

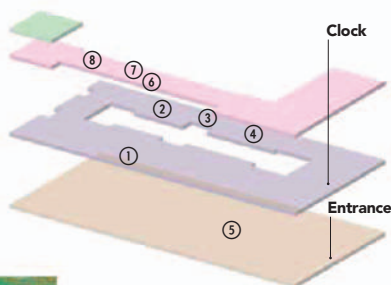
② **Georges Seurat and Paul Signac** These artists were the pioneers of the Pointillist style, using tiny dots of colour that blend together to form an image when viewed from a distance. See Seurat's *Le Cirque* (The Circus) and Signac's *Femmes au Puits* (Women at the Well).

③ **Van Gogh** *Bedroom at Arles* was one of Van Gogh's favourite paintings. He also painted more than 40 self-portraits. Spot one hanging over the bed in the painting.

④ **Henry Matisse** In 1905, critics were shocked by the works of Matisse and his friends, which used bright, clashing colours, and called the artists *fauves* (wild beasts), from which Fauvism took its name. Look out for Matisse's *Luxe, Calme et Volupté*.

⑤ **Honoré Daumier** *The Washerwoman* by Daumier depicts one of the many women who would spend their days washing laundry in the Seine, a child in tow.

- **Le Pavillon Amont** Art from European schools
- **Upper Floor** Impressionism and Post-Impressionism
- **Middle Floor** Art Nouveau Symbolist, Post- and Neo-Impressionist and other decorative art and sculptures from the late 19th century
- **Ground Floor** Pre- and early-Impressionist paintings, mid-19th-century sculpture



④ **Pierre-Auguste Renoir** Poor and excluded from the official art world, painters such as Renoir spent a lot of time in working-class bars and cafés, painting real people. Look out for his *Dancing at the Moulin de la Galette*.



Letting off steam

Head across the river to the **Jardin des Tuileries** (see p99) to sail wooden boats on the pond. There is also a nice free playground here.



Musée d'Orsay, housed in a converted iron-and-glass railway station

Eat and drink

Picnic: under €25; *Snacks:* €25–45; *Real meal:* €45–90; *Family treat:* over €90 (based on a family of four)

PICNIC **Debauve & Gallais** (30 Rue des Sts-Pères, 75007; www.debauve-et-gallais.com; closed Sun), Paris's oldest chocolate shop, at one time prepared chocolate delicacies for Marie Antoinette.
SNACKS **Kayser** (18 Rue du Bac, 75007), a popular bakery, has sandwiches to take away, and a café serving risotto, salads and tartines (open sandwiches).
REAL MEAL **Eggs & Co** (11 Rue Bernard Palissy; 01 45 44 02 52) offers eggs in all shapes and sizes.

FAMILY TREAT **Les Climats** (41 Rue de Lille, 75007; 01 58 62 10 08; closed Sun & Mon) serves refined French cuisine and good Burgundy wine. It is housed in an Art Nouveau post office and has a terrace.

Shopping

Bonpoint (67 Rue de l'Université, 75007; www.bonpoint.com) has great reductions for kids on previous season's clothes.
Six Pieds Trois Pouces (223 Blvd St-Germain, 75007; www.sixpiedstroispouces.com) offers a wide range of stylish and trendy children's shoes.

The Lowdown

Map reference 23 D4
Address 1 Rue de la Légion d'Honneur, 75007; 01 40 49 49 78; www.musee-orsay.fr/en

Méto Solférino, line 12. **RER** Musée d'Orsay, line C. **Bus** 24, 63, 68, 69, 73, 83, 84 & 94

Open 9:30am–6pm, till 9:45pm
 Thu, closed Mon & public hols

Price €22; under 18s & EU citizens under 26 free

Skipping the queue Paris Museum Pass accepted. Avoid Tue when the museum is one of the few in the city that is open. Buy tickets online in advance.

Guided tours For adults in English; for families and kids in French. Audio guide available. The bookshop offers children's guides, *My Little Orsay* and *A Trip to the Orsay Museum*.

Age range 5 plus

Activities Workshops & activities for children in French; 01 40 49 47 50. Lovely colouring books for budding artists are available in the museum shop.

Allow At least 2 hours

Wheelchair access Yes

Café On the ground floor; the restaurant on the middle floor has good views of the clock.

Shop The museum bookshop in the entrance hall has a special kids' section.

Toilets On the ground floor

Good family value?

The museum is very child-friendly. Introduce kids to the lives and pictures of the artists displayed here. The ticket also gives a reduced rate at the Palais Garnier and the Opera house for a week after the visit.



⑦ **Claude Monet** The Impressionists wanted to catch the moment. Monet was fascinated by how light changed at different times of the year, especially when it snowed. *The Cart* is one of the many works on show by the artist in the museum.

⑧ **Edgar Degas** Interested in movement, Degas focused much of his work around two diverse subjects – racehorses and dancers, the latter beautifully observed in his painting, *The Ballet Class*.



Find out more

DIGITAL Download colouring pages from www.nowyouknowabout.com and watch a BBC mini series about the history of Impressionism on tinyurl.com/3jwqsz3.

FILM *Now You Know About Artists* (2006), a documentary film for kids is based on the great painters. *Degas and the Dancer* (1998) is the story behind the famous statuette.

Next step...

TOUR MONTPARNASSE At 210 m (688 ft), this is one of the tallest skyscrapers in France (*Rue de l'Arrivée* 75015; 01 45 38 53 16;

www.tourmontparnasse56.com). Take the Métro from Solférino to Montparnasse Bienvenue (line 12) for views of Paris from the rooftop terrace. See the lights come on at the Eiffel Tower – or watch planes taking off at Orly airport from the deck.



View of Paris from the dizzying heights of Tour Montparnasse

KIDS' CORNER

Look out for...

1 The bronze elephant, rhinoceros and horse that welcome the visitors to the museum.

2 Toulouse-Lautrec's *Dance at the Moulin Rouge* and *Moorish*



Dance. Both are pictures of a dancer nicknamed *La Goulue*, or the glutton.

3 The names of all the places in France that the trains would depart for. They are written on the walls.

4 Rouen Cathedral. Monet painted many different pictures of the cathedral, often at different hours of the day. The more it rained or the hotter it got, the more its colours would change.



THE BIG "R"

When official art dealers saw the paintings of artists Cézanne and Monet, they burst out laughing. "R" for *refusé* – rejected – was stamped on the back of the canvases and they were returned. So, the artists decided to exhibit these pictures in their own show, the *Salon des Refusés*, or "Room of the Rejected".

All aboard

When the first trains left Paris for Rouen and Orléans in 1843, it suddenly became possible for ordinary people to go for a walk in the countryside, have a picnic and spend a weekend on the beach in Normandy. Both Manet and Monet, who loved to paint outdoors, jumped on the train and followed them, painting wheat fields, haystacks and lily ponds in all kinds of weather. Cézanne and others soon followed.



② Les Invalides

A dome, guns and generals

Louis XIV built the Hôtel des Invalides in 1671–76, for the thousands of soldiers who were wounded and disabled in his endless campaigns. At its centre rises the glittering dome of the Eglise du Dôme, the final resting place of Napoleon Bonaparte. More about him, as well as wars and weapons from medieval times to World War II, can be found in the museums surrounding the church. One of the best collections of military history in the world, it is a must for toy soldier enthusiasts – the complex is home to the Musée de l'Armée and the Musée de l'Ordre de la Libération.

Letting off steam

Kids can run on the lawns in front of Hôtel des Invalides or in the playground on Avenue de Breteuil. The nearby **Champ-de-Mars** (see p105) is another lovely park, just a 10-minute walk away.



Children's playground on Avenue de Breteuil, south of Les Invalides' golden dome

③ Musée Rodin

People in bronze and plaster

Home to beautiful masterpieces by the greatest French sculptor of the 19th century, Auguste Rodin, this museum, set amidst a vast garden, is one of the most peaceful places in the city. There is nothing nicer than strolling around the garden with an ice cream in hand, admiring some of the world's most famous sculptures – *The Kiss*, *The Thinker*,



The Thinker by Rodin, one of the many well-known sculptures in the Musée Rodin

The Burghers of Calais and *The Gates of Hell*. Works spanning Rodin's whole career are presented in a chronological order. A room devoted to works by Rodin's lover Camille Claudel is also here.

Letting off steam

The garden at the Musée Rodin has the best sculptures. Bring a spade and bucket and create your own sculptures in the sandpit. The **Jardin Catherine Labouré** (33 Rue de Babylone, 75007), a 10-minute walk from the museum, has a little playground.

④ St-Germain-des-Prés

The oldest church in Paris

The church of St-Germain-des-Prés once stood at the centre of a large abbey, founded in the 6th century by Childebert I, the son of Clovis,








The Lowdown

- 📍 **Map** 23 A5
- 📍 **Address** 129 Rue de Grenelle, 75007; www.musee-armee.fr
- 🚇 **Métro** Invalides, lines 8 & 13; La Tour-Maubourg, line 8; Varenne or St-François Xavier, line 13. **RER** Invalides, line C. **Bus** 28, 63, 69, 80, 82, 83, 87, 92 & 93
- 🕒 **Open** Apr–Sep: 10am–6pm, till 9pm Tue; Oct–Mar: till 5pm; closed first Mon of the month & 1 Jan, 1 May, 1 Nov & 25 Dec
- 💰 **Price** €19–29; under 18s & EU citizens under 26 free. €15–25 on Tue eve & after 5pm on other days; free on 14 Jul
- 👤 **Skipping the queue** Paris Museum Pass accepted
- 🗣️ **Guided tours:** Multimedia guides: €6; €4 for children; tours in English for children
- 👤 **Age range** 7 plus
- 👨👩👧👦 **Activities** Kids' workshops and activities; 01 44 42 51 73
- 🕒 **Allow** 2–3 hours
- ♿️ **Wheelchair access** Yes, for the Musée de l'Armée
- 🍷 **Eat and drink** **Real meal** Les Cocottes de Christian Constant (139 Rue St-Dominique, 75007; 01 47 53 73 34; closed Sun) whips up good-value gourmet food in a relaxed diner-style setting. **Family treat** Bellota-Bellota (18 Rue Jean Nicot, 75007; 01 53 59 96 96; open daily) specializes in Spanish food.
- 🚻 **Toilets** Near the ticket office

The Lowdown

- 📍 **Map** 23 B5
- 📍 **Address** 77 Rue de Varenne, 75007; www.musee-rodin.fr
- 🚇 **Métro** Varenne, line 13. **RER** Invalides, line C. **Bus** 69, 82, 87 & 92
- 🕒 **Open** 10am–5:45pm, closed Mon, 1 Jan, 1 May & 25 Dec. On the second Sun in May, the gardens are lit by torchlight.
- 💰 **Price** Family ticket: €10. €6 per person; under 18s & EU citizens under 26 free. Garden: €1
- 👤 **Skipping the queue** Paris Museum Pass accepted. Buy tickets online.
- 🗣️ **Guided tours** For children Wed & school hols: 2:30pm for children between 6–12, €6; 10:30am for under 6s
- 👤 **Age range** 5 plus
- 🕒 **Allow** 1–2 hours
- ♿️ **Wheelchair access** Limited
- 🍷 **Eat and drink** **Picnic** Besnier Père et Fils (40 Rue de Bourgogne, 75007; closed Sat & Sun) sells excellent *brioche* (sweet French bread). Picnic in the lawns of the Invalides. **Snacks** Le Bon Marché (24 Rue des Sevres, 75007), the oldest department store in Paris, has a great food hall, La Grande Epicerie de Paris (www.lagrandeepicerie.fr).
- 🚻 **Toilets** In the garden café

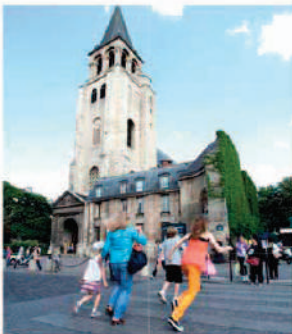
The Lowdown

-  **Map** 24 E6
- Address** 3 Pl St-Germain-des-Prés, 75006; www.eglise-sgp.org
-  **Métro** St-Germain-des-Prés, line 4. **Bus** 39, 95 70, 63 & 86
-  **Open** 8am–7:45pm Mon–Sat, 9am–8pm Sun
-  **Price** Free
-  **Wheelchair access** Yes
-  **Eat and drink** *Picnic Grom* (81 Rue de Seine, 75006) serves excellent ice cream, or buy a sandwich to eat in the square in front of the church, or bring to Jardin du Luxembourg. *Snacks Ladurée* (21 Rue Bonaparte, 75006; 01 44 07 64 87) serves the best macaroons in the city.
-  **Toilets** Sanisette, 186 Blvd St-Germain, 75006

King of the Franks. Initially not even inside the city walls, the abbey became an important centre of intellectual life for the French Catholic church, and also the burial place for France's kings before the founding of the basilica of St-Denis. The church originally had three towers, but the two on the eastern side were badly damaged in the Revolution. Among the notables buried inside are John Casimir, king of Poland, and the father of modern philosophy, René Descartes. Look out for a statue of the Egyptian goddess Isis at the entrance – a bit surprising in a church.

Letting off steam

There is a small playground with a sandpit on **Square Félix Desruelles** (168 Blvd St-Germain, 75006), to the south of the church. The nearby Pont des Arts footbridge is perfect



Tower of St-Germain-des-Prés, with one of the oldest belfries in France

for a picnic. The covered market, **Marché St-Germain**, also houses a swimming pool, **Piscine St-Germain** (12 Rue Lobineau, 75006; 01 56 81 25 40), but be aware that swimming hats are obligatory.

5 Cafés of St-Germain-des-Prés

Coffee for culture vultures

The café is a vital part of Parisian life and people of all ages come here for conversation, discussion and gossip over a coffee, apéritif or *citron pressé*; it is a great place to introduce kids to Parisian culture.

In the mid-20th century, St-Germain was a buzzing place where American authors and jazz musicians mingled with local artists, writers and philosophers. Ernest Hemingway, Bud Powell, Pablo Picasso, Alfred Camus, Jean-Paul Sartre and Simone de Beauvoir all quenched their thirst in the cafés that cluster around the belfry of St-Germain-des-Prés. The most famous ones are Café de Flore; Les Deux Magots, which takes its name from the two wooden statues of Chinese merchants inside; and the Brasserie Lipp, a distinguished restaurant-brasserie.

Letting off steam

Walk down Rue Bonaparte to the **Jardin du Luxembourg** (see p93), one of the best parks in town, for a real Parisian experience.

The Lowdown

-  **Map** 24 E6
- Address** Brasserie Lipp: 151 Blvd St-Germain, 75006. Les Deux Magots: 6 Pl St-Germain, 75006. Café de Flore (see below)
-  **Métro** St-Germain-des-Prés, line 4. **Bus** 63 & 95
-  **Price** All the cafés are expensive.
-  **Age range** All ages
-  **Wheelchair access** Limited
-  **Eat and drink** *Snacks* Le Bonaparte (42 Rue Bonaparte, 75006; 01 43 26 42 81) serves drinks with a sandwich or salad on its terrace. **Family treat** Café de Flore (172 Blvd St-Germain, 75006; 01 45 48 55 26; www.cafe-de-flore.com) serves quiches, sandwiches, omelettes and onion soup. The café still has a literary clientele.
-  **Toilets** In the cafés

KIDS' CORNER

Look out for ...

- 1** *The Gates of Hell* that Rodin designed for a museum that was never built. Guess how many figures are on the gates?
- 2** Some of Rodin's most famous statues started out as details on *The Gates of Hell*. Can you spot one that stands in the garden?
- 3** One of Napoleon's horses. His name was Vizir; find him, stuffed, in the Eylau Room of the Musée de l'Armée.
- 4** The cannons on the lawns outside the Invalides. Guess how many there are.



Answers at the bottom of the page.



FOOD FOR THOUGHT

Napoleon set out strict rules for baking methods. Some say that the baguette was invented by him so that his soldiers could transport their bread in their backpacks.

Get tasting

Le Bon Marché's food hall has a mouthwatering display of unmissable treats – Eiffel Tower lollipops and chocolate pearls, bottles of syrup in the shape of the Babapapas to add a zing to your drinks, and even salt from the Himalayas. The kitchens open at 1am when the bakers arrive. They are joined at 4am by the pastry chefs who whisk up mountains of multicoloured macaroons, delicious mini chocolate tarts and lemon meringue pies while you are still in bed. At 6am they start roasting meat and chopping vegetables to make stuff for the most sumptuous picnics in town.



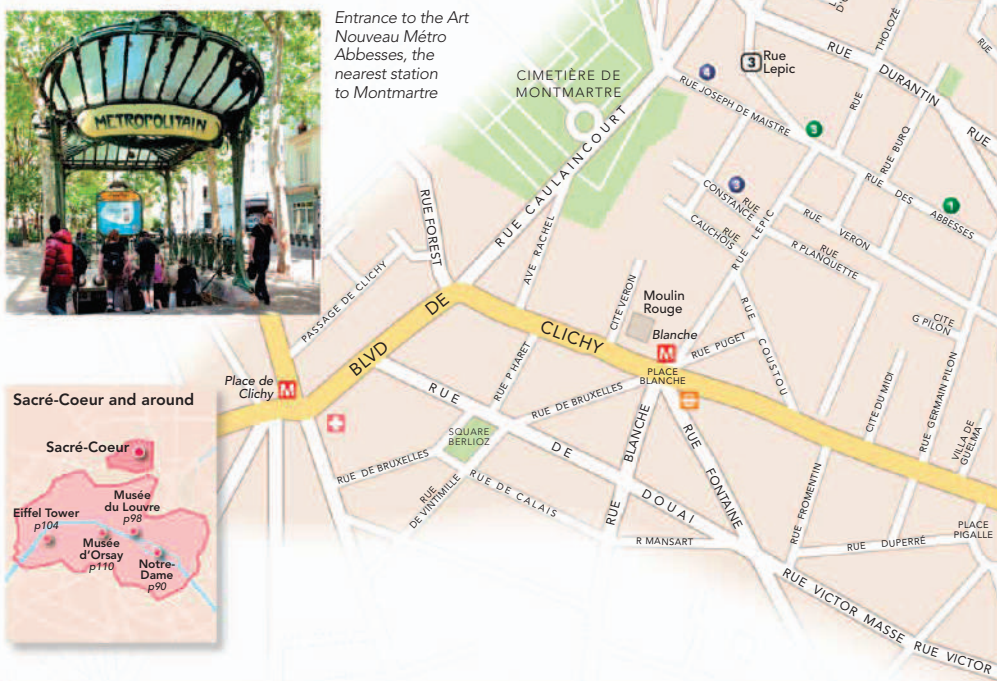
Answers: 1 186 2 2 A mini version of *The Thinker* sits above the doors. 4 808.

Sacré-Coeur and around

The meringue-like domes of the sparkly white Basilica of Sacré-Coeur soar above Montmartre. The easiest way to get to the heart of things is to take the little tourist train or the funicular; climbing the steps can be tiring. Walk back down Rue Lepic for a real Montmartre experience. On Sundays, traffic is restricted on Rue des Martyrs and across Montmartre, adding to the village-like feel. To the east of Montmartre is the creatively designed, very modern Parc de la Villette, which houses a fantastic science museum – a huge attraction for families.



Entrance to the Art Nouveau Métro Abbesses, the nearest station to Montmartre



The Lowdown

M **Métro** Abbesses, line 12; Anvers, line 2; Pigalle, lines 2 & 12; Porte de la Villette, line 7. **Bus** 30, 31, 80, 81 & 95 & Montmartrobus 64. Parc de la Villette: PC2, PC3, 75, 139, 150, 152 & 249 **Train** Le Petit train de Montmartre from Pl Pigalle; Funiculaire de Montmartre from Square Louise Michel; Montmartrain (tourist train) from Pl Pigalle

i **Visitor information** Pl du Tertre, 75018; 10am–6pm daily. Metro Anvers (under Sacré Coeur), 72 Blvd Rochechouart; 8am–6pm daily, closed 1 Jan, 1 May & 25 Dec

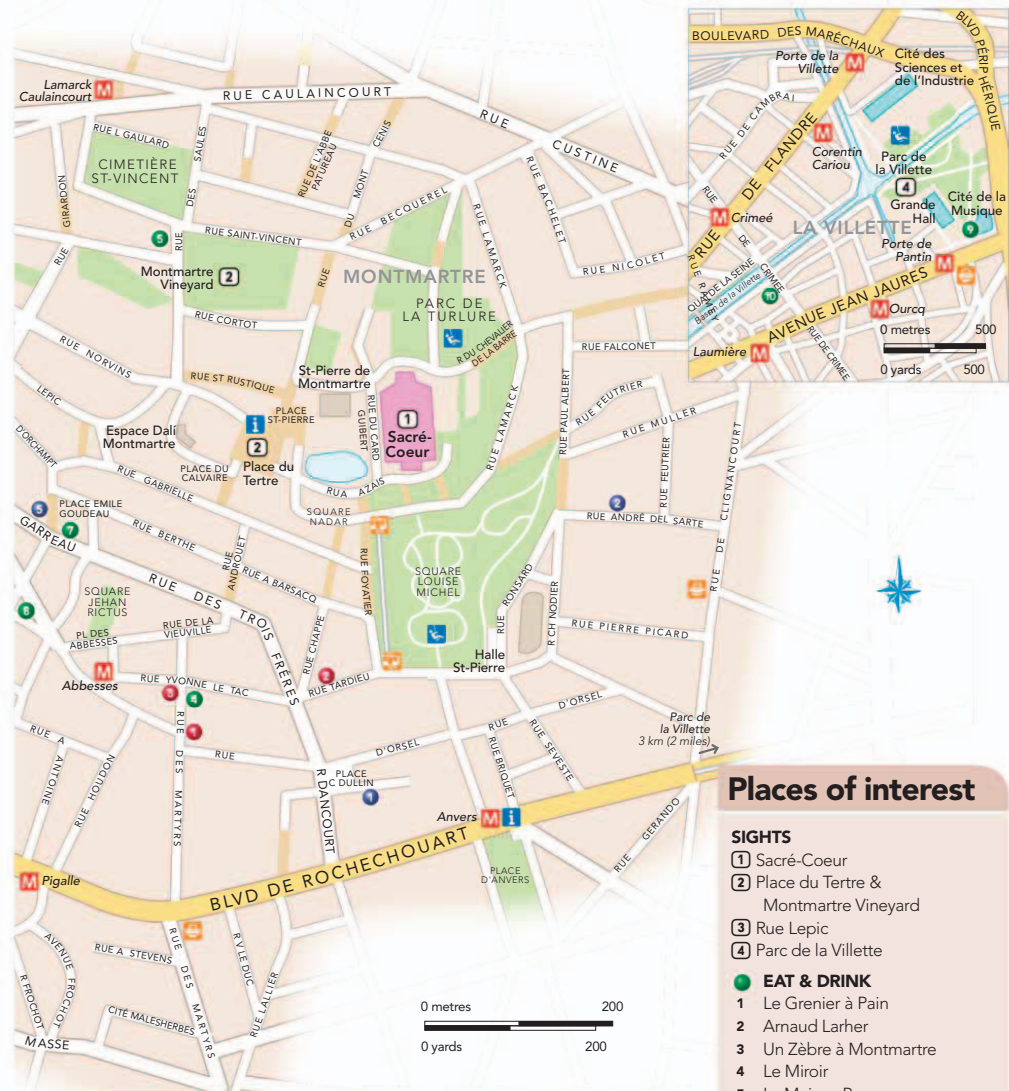
S **Supermarkets** Carrefour, 17 Rue Clignancourt, 75018 & 63 Blvd de Rochechouart, 75009. Monoprix, 52 Rue Fontaine, 75009. Monop', 200 Ave Jean Jaurès, 75019 **Markets** Marché Place d'Anvers (produce market), 75009; 3–8:30pm Fri. Marché Jean Jaurès, 75019; 7am–2:30pm Tue & Thu, till 3pm Sun

F **Festivals** Lavagem do Sacré-Coeur: a religious procession by the city's Brazilians (early Jul). Fête des Vendanges: grape harvest in Montmartre Vineyard; www.fete-desvendangesdemontmartre.com (Oct). Christmas creche, Sacré-Coeur basilica (Dec). Open-air

film festival, Cinema en Plein Air, Parc de la Villette (Jul & Aug).

P **Pharmacy** Pharmacie Européenne, 6 Pl du Cligny, 75009; 01 48 74 65 18; 8:30am–noon Mon–Thu & Sun (until 1pm Fri & Sat)

P **Nearest playgrounds** Parc de la Turlure, Rue de la Bonne, 75018; dawn–dusk daily (see p116). Square Louise Michel, 75018, between Pl St-Pierre and Sacré-Coeur; dawn–dusk daily (see p116). Parc de la Villette, 211 Ave Jean Jaurès, 75019; 01 40 03 75 75; dawn–dusk daily (see pp 118–19)



Places of interest

SIGHTS

- 1 Sacré-Coeur
- 2 Place du Tertre & Montmartre Vineyard
- 3 Rue Lepic
- 4 Parc de la Villette

EAT & DRINK

- 1 Le Grenier à Pain
- 2 Arnaud Larher
- 3 Un Zèbre à Montmartre
- 4 Le Miroir
- 5 La Maison Rose
- 6 Le Café qui Parle
- 7 Relais de la Butte
- 8 Coquelicot
- 9 Café de la Musique
- 10 Le Cafézoidé

SHOPPING

- 1 Antoine et Lili
- 2 La Case de Cousin Paul
- 3 La Chaise Longue

WHERE TO STAY

- 1 Adagio Apartments Montmartre
- 2 Paris Oasis
- 3 Relais Montmartre
- 4 Terrass Hôtel
- 5 Timhotel



View of Sacré-Coeur from Square Louise Michel

① Sacré-Coeur

A big white meringue

Perched on the highest point in Paris, Sacré-Coeur reaches almost as high in the sky as the Eiffel Tower. Paris lies at its feet, and kids will love the view from above. Built as a penance to expiate the sins of France in 1873, it was intended to symbolize the restoration of conservative, Catholic values. Hence many of the Neo-Byzantine design elements incorporate nationalist themes. It is also seen as a symbol of the repression of the Paris Commune uprising of 1871, which both started and came to a bloody climax here.



Stained-glass rose window, Sacré-Coeur

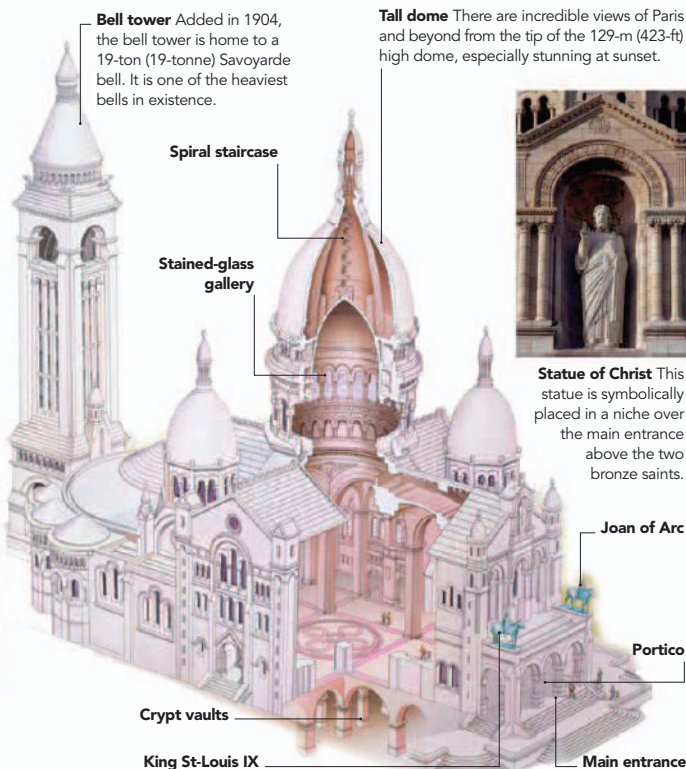
Key Features



Great Mosaic of Christ This glittering mosaic, dominating the chancel vault, is one of the largest in the world, and represents France's devotion to the Sacred Heart.



Bronze doors Beautifully decorated with relief sculptures, the doors in the portico entrance illustrate the story of the life of Jesus.



Bell tower Added in 1904, the bell tower is home to a 19-ton (19-tonne) Savoyarde bell. It is one of the heaviest bells in existence.

Tall dome There are incredible views of Paris and beyond from the tip of the 129-m (423-ft) high dome, especially stunning at sunset.



Statue of Christ This statue is symbolically placed in a niche over the main entrance above the two bronze saints.

Joan of Arc

Portico

Crypt vaults

King St-Louis IX

Main entrance

Letting off steam

In Montmartre, kids are spoilt for choice. The pretty gardens of **Square Willette** slope down in front of Sacré-Coeur, and there is a carousel at the bottom of the hill. There is also **Square Louise Michel** between Place St-Pierre and the Sacré-Coeur. Behind the church is the **Parc de la Turlure**, where the Turlure windmill once stood. It is a peaceful place for a picnic.

Prices given are for a family of four

Eat and drink

Picnic: under €25; Snacks: €25–45; Real meal: €45–90; Family treat: over €90 (based on a family of four)

PICNIC Le Grenier à Pain (38 Rue des Abbesses, 75018; 01 46 06 41 81), winner of the 2010 Golden Baguette contest, sells a large selection of cakes and sandwiches, all perfect to bring along to the Parc de la Turlure for a delightful picnic.

SNACKS Arnaud Larher (53 Rue Caulaincourt, 75018; www.arnaud-larher.com; closed Sun & Mon) is one of the few prize-winning chocolatiers to make delicious milk chocolates.

REAL MEAL Un Zèbre à Montmartre (38 Rue Lepic, 75018; 01 42 23 97 80) is a friendly, laid-back little restaurant, which serves an excellent chocolate mousse.

The Lowdown

Map reference 18 G2
Address 35 Rue du Chevalier de la Barre, 75018; 01 53 41 89 00; www.sacre-coeur-montmartre.com







Méto Abbesses, line 12; Anvers, line 2; Pigalle, lines 2 & 12. Catch the funicular, using the same tickets, or the tourist train, from Pl Pigalle. **Bus** 30, 31, 80 & 85

Open 6am–10:30pm daily. Dome: 9am–7pm; winter: till 6pm. Crypt: opening times vary

Price Basilica: free. Crypt: €10. Dome: €16

Skipping the queue Sacré-Coeur is a very busy place,

but is less crowded in the evening, when the basilica is at its most magnificent and romantic.

-  **Guided tours** No
-  **Age range** All ages
-  **Allow** 30 mins–1 hour
-  **Wheelchair access** Limited
-  **Café** No
-  **Toilets** By the exit

Good family value?

Montmartre's charms are for free and the view from the basilica's steps is almost as good as from the top of the dome. Inside the basilica, silence is the rule.

KIDS' CORNER

Look out for ...

- 1** The relief sculptures on the bronze doors. Whose life do they depict?
- 2** Two equestrian statues on the front of the building. Which one is Joan of Arc?
- 3** The statue of Jesus Christ. What is he doing?

Answers at the bottom of the page.



VISION IN WHITE

Sacré-Coeur is made of a special stone, travertine, which gets whiter when it rains. You can get the best view of the basilica from the gardens below.

Mountain of martyrs

Montmartre gets its name from the early Christians who were beheaded by the Romans at the site where the Chapelle du Martyre now stands on Rue Yvonne Le Tac. The Romans, who preferred to worship the god Mercury up on the hill, tried to get rid of St Denis, the first bishop of Paris. According to legend, after being beheaded, he stood up, picked up his head and walked over to a fountain on the corner of Rue Girardon to give it a wash before heading further north, finally

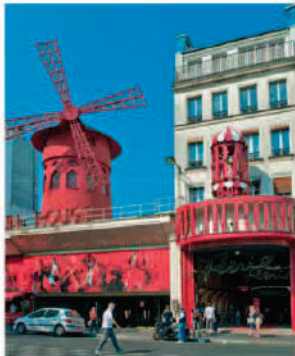
dropping down dead where the Basilica St-Denis (1 Rue de la Legion d'Honneur, 93200) now stands 9 km (5 miles) away to the north.



FAMILY TREAT Le Miroir (94 Rue des Martyrs, 75018; 01 46 06 50 73; closed Mon, Sun lunch & Aug), a casual bistro, serves delicious duck with wild mushrooms and little pots de crème vanille (pots of vanilla cream).

Shopping

Montmartre has lots of interesting shops selling original gift items, homewares and clothes. Do not miss the outfits and accessories at **Antoine et Lili** (90 Rue des Martyrs, 75018; www.antoineetlili.com) or the garlands of fancy lights (choose your own colour combination) in **La Case de Cousin Paul** (4 Rue Tardieu, 75018; lacasedecousinpaul.com). **La Chaise Longue** (91 Rue des Martyrs, 75018; www.lachaiselongue.fr) is also a fun place to browse around for home decor items.



The Moulin Rouge cabaret with its red windmill, a symbol of fin-de-siècle Paris

Find out more

DIGITAL Watch rock band U2's music video *Two Hearts Beat as One*, shot in front of the basilica and around Montmartre, at tinyurl.com/b8epuk.

FILM *Moulin Rouge* (2001) is a romantic musical with Nicole Kidman. Most films set here reflect life's grittier side and are better for older kids. Louis Feuillade's *Fantômas* films (1913–14), set in and around Place Pigalle, depict the criminal exploits of a slick but dastardly villain. Watch a clip at tinyurl.com/7zhcd6h.

Next step...

A CABARET AND A CEMETERY

One of the world's most famous cabarets, the **Moulin Rouge** (82 Blvd de Clichy, 75018; 01 53 09 82 82; www.moulinrouge.fr) was built in 1885 and is topped off with a red windmill. Its name is synonymous with the high-kicking dance, the cancan, and was made famous in Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec's drawings and posters. The building is worth a look from the outside, and if families fancy a show, 6–12 year olds can get in to matinees half-price on two Sundays a month. The tourist train that leaves from Place Pigalle passes right in front and heads up to Sacré-Coeur.

Close by, the **Cimetière de Montmartre** (20 Ave Rachel, 75018), built in the hollow of an old quarry, is also the final resting place of Louise Weber, or "La Goulou", the cancan dancer painted by Toulouse-Lautrec.

Answers: 1 Jesus Christ 2 The one to the right of the main entrance 3 Giving a blessing



Strollers in the Montmartre Vineyard, a peaceful corner behind Place du Tertre

② Place du Tertre & Montmartre Vineyard

The roof of Paris

“Tertre” means a little hill and, at 130 m (430 ft), this square is one of the highest spots in Paris. It was once the site of a gallows but, in the 19th century, artists began to sell their work here. It is still full of painters peddling their wares. To visit Montmartre without going for a wander in the quieter, narrow cobbled streets behind Place du Tertre is to miss out on the spirit of the area. The Montmartre Vineyard on Rue St-Vincent is one such peaceful corner, and is all that is left of the acres of vineyards that once grew on the hill. It is particularly

The Lowdown

Map reference 18 G2 & 18 G1
Address 75018

Méto Abbesses, line 12. **Bus** Monmartrobus 64 runs from Pl Pigalle to the top of Montmartre

Open Montmartre Vineyard: not open to the public

Skipping the queue Pl du Tertre is very popular with visitors, so go in the evening or the early morning when it is less crowded.

Age range All ages

Allow 1 hour

Eat and drink **Snacks** Au Rendez-vous des Amis (23 Rue Gabrielle, 75018), a cosy café-bar, is a good stop for a drink. **Real meal** Le Café qui Parle (24 Rue Caulaincourt, 75018; 01 46 06 06 88; 11am–5pm; no reservations, so arrive early) is great for brunch on Sat, Sun & public hols.

Toilets No

lovely in autumn, and can be viewed through the surrounding fence. Pull away the tourist veneer and Montmartre has a lot of character and a strong local community, which celebrates the wine harvest in style every October.

Take cover

Espace Dalí Montmartre (11 Rue Poulbot, 75018; 01 42 64 40 10; www.daliparis.com) is the only place to get a look at some famous works of art in the area, and although it is a bit commercial, it is a fun place to visit with kids. The museum has an exciting collection of sculptures and other objects by the Spanish Surrealist artist, Salvador Dalí (1904–89). Children will find his dreamlike models of melting watches, a table with human feet and crazy sculptures intriguing.

③ Rue Lepic

Montmartre from top to bottom

The best way to see Montmartre with children is to take the little tourist train from Place Pigalle and then to walk back down Rue Lepic, a great place to shop and eat, ending in Rue des Abbesses. At the top of the street, there are two windmills that once milled flour. In 1870, they were converted into a dance hall and restaurant, and are immortalized in the painting *Dance at the Moulin de la Galette* by Pierre-Auguste Renoir. The artist Vincent van Gogh and his brother Theo once lived at No. 54. Just behind Place des Abbesses is the



Children's clothes and accessories on display in a shop on Rue Lepic

The Lowdown

Map reference 18 E2

Address Rue Lepic, 75018

Méto Abbesses, line 12. **Bus** 54, 80 & Montmartrobus 64

Age range All ages

Allow 30 mins–1 hour

Eat and drink **Picnic** Le Grenier à Pain (38 Rue Abbesses, 75018), President Sarkozy's favourite bakers, sell tasty cakes and sandwiches. They won the 2010 Golden Bagette award. Head to the gardens in front of Sacré-Coeur, or walk up to Rue Lepic to Square Suzanne Buisson, which is popular with local families. **Real meal** Coquelicot (24 Rue des Abbesses, 75018; 01 46 06 18 77; open daily) offers boiled and poached eggs in brioche, has a good selection of takeaway food and a scrummy sweet counter.

Toilets No

pretty Place Emile Goudeau, where Pablo Picasso painted the groundbreaking Cubist picture, *Les Femmes d'Alger*, in 1907. Head home from the Métro Abbesses. Built in 1912, it is one of the prettiest, and has one of the only three original Hector Guimard-designed Art Nouveau glass entrances left in Paris. It is also the deepest station in the city.

Letting off steam

There is a tiny square, **Square Jehan Rictus**, close to Place des Abbesses, which is known for its “*mur des je t'aime*” (wall of love).

④ Parc de la Villette

Museums, themed gardens and canal boats

In the northeastern corner of Paris, the old slaughterhouses and livestock market have been transformed into a wonderfully whacky park that runs along Canal de l'Ourcq. Full of playgrounds for kids, the complex also houses a concert hall, music centre and exhibition pavilion. The main attraction for families is the futuristic **Cité des Sciences et de l'Industrie**, Europe's biggest science museum – it houses the thematic Cité des Enfants. Here children aged 2–12 can pretend to be TV presenters,



Helicopter in the Cité des Sciences et de l'Industrie museum, Parc de la Villette

weather forecasters or robot designers. Fly over the surface of Mars in the Planetarium, or travel through the human body in the Explora exhibit.

Climb aboard and discover marine life through the radar screens and periscopes in the L'Argonaute, a submarine from the 1930s. The park also boasts **La Géode** – the giant hemispherical screen, and **La Cinaxe**, a moving movie theatre with virtual-reality technology. The **Cité de la Musique** has a museum with a vast collection covering the history of music since the Renaissance. The Grande Hall, once a cattle market, when La Villette was a huge abattoir, now hosts temporary exhibitions.

Letting off steam

In front of the Cité des Sciences et de l'Industrie museum there are 10 different themed gardens, among them the garden of mirrors, mists and acrobatics. There are lots of activities for kids over the weekend.

Watch a show on the canal boat, *Antipode* (55 Quai de la Seine, 75019; 01 42 03 39 07; www.abricadabra.fr; open daily but timings vary).

The Lowdown

Map reference (see inset p115)
Address Parc de la Villette: 211 Ave Jean Jaurès, 75019; 01 40 03 75 75; www.lavillette.com.

Métro Porte de la Villette, line 7 for Cité des Sciences; Porte de Pantin, line 5 for Cité de la Musique. **Bus** PC2, PC3, 75, 139, 150, 152 & 249

Open Parc de la Villette: daily. Cité des Sciences et de l'Industrie: 9am–6pm, till 7pm Sun, closed Mon. La Géode: 10:30am–8:30pm, closed public hols. Cité de la Musique: noon–6pm, 10am–6pm Sun, closed Mon

Price Parc de la Villette: Free. Cité des Sciences: Explora: €28–38. Cité des Enfants: €12–22. La Géode: €21–31. Joint ticket: €63–73; €3 additional for the Planetarium & €4.80 for La Cinaxe. Family ticket: €64–74. Cité de la Musique: €16–26

Skipping the queue Paris Museum Pass accepted.

Guided tours Guided tours in French. Shows in the Planetarium in English and French.

Age range All ages

Allow 1 day

Eat and drink *Picnic* Café de la Musique (34 Rue Yves Toudic, 75010) sells savoury tarts and pastries. *Picnic* in the Parc de la Villette. *Snacks* Le Cafézoïde (92 Quai de la Loire, 75019; 01 42 38 26 37; www.cafezoide.asso.fr) is a café where kids can play games, see concerts, or join a workshop.

Toilets At several locations

KIDS' CORNER



Look out for...

1 A giant bicycle half-sunk into the ground across the moat from L'Argonaute in Parc de la Villette.

2 Windmills. There were once 30 windmills on Montmartre, but today only a few remain. How many are there?

3 The wall of love in Square Jehan Rictus, next to Métro Abbesses. "I love you" is written 311 times in 280 languages! Are there any you know?

Answer at the bottom of the page.



BRAVE FIGHT

In 1814, when the Russians occupied Montmartre, the brothers who owned the windmill Moulin Blute Fin at 74 Rue Lepic fought back bravely. One of them was killed and the Cossacks nailed his body to its blades.

Dada Dalí

A lot of people thought the artist Salvador Dalí was crazy. He was a great showman, and had an enormous moustache with waxed curly ends that he claimed were antennae that helped him connect with cosmic forces. A Surrealist, Dalí lived a life as strange and magical as his art, once almost suffocating when he tried to give a lecture in a diving suit. He even died in a surreal way; he refused

to drink anything after his wife Gala died, believing that he would simply dry out, and that later a drop of water would bring him back to life.



Answers: 2 Two, at the top of Rue Lepic.



La Géode, the giant movie screen in the Parc de la Villette

Where to Stay in Paris

Hotels tend to cluster by type in Paris. Most of the deluxe hotels, among them some of the most family-friendly in Europe, are to be found around the Champs-Élysées and the Tuileries, while boutique hotels, which have fewer family facilities, are more numerous on the Left Bank and in Montmartre.

AGENCIES

France Appartements

<http://france-appartements.com>
A good value rental agency. Rates begin at around €100 per night for a one-bedroom apartment.

A Haven in Paris

www.haveninparis.com
A boutique vacation rental agency, which offers luxury apartments and villa rentals across Paris.



Elegant façade of the hotel *Le Pavillon de la Reine*, Place des Vosges

Notre-Dame and around

HOTELS

The Five

Map 29 A5

3 Rue Flatters, 75005; 01 43 31 74 21; www.thefivehotel.com;

Métro: Gobelins

With floating mattresses and a Jacuzzi on the terrace of the suite, this hotel is about statement – from the red leather lifts to the customized room fragrance and the star-studded ceilings. The designer rooms for up to four are excellent value.

€€€

Hôtel Britannique

Map 24 H5

20 Ave Victoria, 75001; 01 42 33 74 59; www.hotel-britannique.fr;

Métro: Châtelet

Located near the main sights on the Île de la Cité, this three-star hotel oozes Grand Tour charm. There is a warm welcome for kids and a hearty breakfast. The suite for four is good value and the hotel is air conditioned.

€€

Hotel Ibis Bastille Opéra

Map 26 F5

15 Rue Breguet, 75011; 01 49 29 20 20; www.ibishotel.com;

Métro: Bastille or Breguet-Sabin

This no-frills hotel has air-conditioned interconnecting rooms that are cheaper at weekends and if booked online. The bonus for families is a great price for the location.

IOIP

€

Hôtel du Jeu de Paume

Map 25 C6

54 Rue St-Louis en l'Île, 75004; 01 43 26 14 18; www.jeudepaumehotel.com;

Métro: Pont Marie
A discreet courtyard entrance leads to a magical, unique 17th-century timbered building, once a tennis court. The Labrador greets guests at the door and sets the tone for this homely but chic hotel. For the upper price band, it is good value.

☺

€€€

Hôtel Résidence Henri IV

Map 28 H2

50 Rue des Bernardins, 75005; 01 44 41 31 81; www.residencehenri4.com;

Métro: St-Michel

This hotel is located in the heart of the Quartier Latin, opposite a pretty playground and near the Panthéon. All rooms have kitchenettes, and some interconnect, so that a family can take over an entire floor. The hotel attracts a lot of guests with very small children who settle down early.

☺

€€

Le Pavillon de la Reine

Map 25 D5

28 Pl des Vosges, 75003; 01 40 29 19 19; www.pavillon-de-la-reine.com;

Métro: Bastille or St-Paul

This has suites for families of four and, although there is no restaurant, the café *Carette des Vosges*, on the doorstep, more than compensates for this. Air conditioning and spa, and babysitting can be provided.

P

€€€

BED & BREAKFAST

Appartement d'hôtes Folie Méricourt

Map 26 F3

20 Rue de la Folie Méricourt, 75011; 01 77 15 69 54; www.appartement-hotes-folie-mericourt.com;

Métro: St-Ambroise

This B&B, in a self-contained apartment for four to six people, offers breakfast and the option of dinner. Cots are available. There are similar apartments near Oberkampf and République, if this is booked.

☺

€

Bonne Nuit Paris

Map 25 D3

63 Rue Charlot, 75003; 01 42 71 83 56; www.bonne-nuit-paris.com;

Métro: République or Temple

Built in 1609, this restored house is full of old beams and modern comforts. The owners serve homemade jams and their own honey for breakfast. Their daughter, a history graduate, offers personalized guided tours of the city. A baby crib and child's folding bed are available.

€€

SELF-CATERING

Résidence Le Petit Châtelet

Map 25 A4

9 Rue St-Denis, 75001; 01 42 33 32 31; www.lepetitchatelet.com;

Métro: Châtelet

Housed in a charming old-fashioned house in the heart of historic Paris, these apartments for four to six people have air conditioning. Those on the top floors have balconies but the downside is that there is no lift and it can be a little noisy at night.

☺

€



Interior of a self-catering apartment in *Résidence le Petit Châtelet*

Citadines St-Germain-des-Prés

Map 24 G5

53 *Quai des Grands Augustins*, 75006; 01 44 07 70 00; www.citadines.com; **Métro:** *St-Michel*
 These self-catering apartments are in a magnificent location opposite the Île de la Cité, close to several main sights. The apartments are air conditioned and have kitchenettes. A babysitting service is provided, and breakfast is optional.

☰ P €€

Résidence Le Prince Regent

Map 28 G1

28 *Rue Monsieur le Prince*, 75006; 01 56 24 19 21; <http://leprinceregent.com>; **Métro:** *Odéon*
 A great option for families staying for more than just a few nights, these air-conditioned apartments for up to six people have fully fitted kitchens.

☰ €€

Musée du Louvre and around

HOTELS

Relais du Louvre

Map 24 G4

19 *Rue des Prêtres-Saint-Germain l'Auxerrois*, 75001; 01 40 41 96 42; www.relaisdulouvre.com; **Métro:** *Pont Neuf*

Located close to the Musée du Louvre, this family hotel offers a self-catering apartment for five. There are also several family suites and connecting rooms available.

☰ P €€

The Westin

Map 23 D2

3 *Rue de Castiglione*, 75001; 01 44 77 11 11; www.westin.com; **Métro:** *Tuileries*

This rather grand, family-friendly four-star hotel is right opposite the Jardin des Tuileries. The rooms are large but the smaller attic rooms have the most charm. Cots and highchairs are provided.

☰ ☹ €€€

Le Bristol

Map 17 B6

112 *Rue du Faubourg St-Honoré*, 75008; 01 53 43 43 25; www.lebristolparis.com; **Métro:** *Miromesnil*

One of the city's best luxury hotels for families, this is a place where kids can relax. The rooms are big and there are many interconnecting suites – two with roof terraces. There is a gourmet restaurant, the 114, and a special Japanese



Tables laid out in the pretty garden of the one of Paris's finest hotels, Le Bristol

breakfast. Kids love the penthouse swimming pool.

☰ ☹ P €€€

Le Burgundy

Map 23 D2

6 *Rue Duphot* 75001; 01 42 60 34 12; www.leburgundy.com;

Métro: *Madeleine*

Le Burgundy offers family-friendly luxury all round. A light and airy hotel with a welcome pack and teddy bears for kids, its duplex rooms are excellent for families. It is within walking distance of several main sights. There is a swimming pool and a babysitting service.

☹ P €€€

SELF-CATERING

Résidhome Paris-Opéra

Map 17 D5

30 *Rue Joubert*, 75009; 01 56 35 00 35; www.residhome.com; **Métro:** *Havre Caumartin*

This hotel has modern, air-conditioned apartments, some of which are duplexes for up to six people. There are wooden floors. Facilities for babies include babysitting. Though cleaned weekly, additional cleaning is available.

☰ P €€

Eiffel Tower and around

HOTELS

Novotel Eiffel Tower

Map 21 C5

61 *Quai de Grenelle*, 75015; 01 40 58 20 00; www.novotel.com; **Métro:** *Dupleix* or *Bir Hakeim*

The family-friendly Novotel chain has a good location 10 minutes from the Eiffel Tower. There is a playground, pool and Japanese restaurant. It is a great value location for families with 50 per cent reduction on a second room.

☹ P €€

Hotel Duquesne

Eiffel

Map 22 G4

23 *Ave Dequesne*, 75007; 01 44 42 09 09; www.hotel-duquesne-eiffelparis.com; **Métro:** *Ecole Militaire*

Located near the Ecole Militaire and the Champ-de-Mars, this hotel has small but smartly decorated rooms at reasonable prices; some have views of the Eiffel Tower.

P €€

Four Seasons

George V

Map 16 F5

31 *Ave George V*, 75008; 01 49 52 70 00; www.fourseasons.com/paris; **Métro:** *Georges V*

This traditional deluxe hotel has a fantastic array of children's activities, which include whizzing up some madeleines in the kitchen with the pastry chef and special kids' tours of Paris. Kids have their own Bulgari soap set and are greeted by balloons and a chocolate Eiffel Tower. A babysitting service is provided.

☰ ☹ P €€€

Hôtel du Collectionneur

Map 16 G3

51–57 *Rue de Courcelles*, 75008; 01 58 36 67 00; www.hilton.com; **Métro:** *Courcelles*

This luxury hotel decorated in Art Deco style, has good-sized rooms. The location is excellent, just a stone's throw from the Champs-Élysées and by the golden gates of the Parc Monceau. The 59 suites are the best option for families and the executive lounge has all-day refreshments. A babysitting service is provided.

☰ ☹ P €€€



Beautiful belle époque exterior of the Westin

Price Guide

The following price ranges are based on one night's accommodation in high season for a family of four, inclusive of service charges and any additional taxes.

€ Under €200 €€ €200–500 €€€ over €500



Radio taxi dropping off passenger in front of the handsome 19th-century Terrass Hôtel

SELF-CATERING

Adagio Paris Tour Eiffel

Map 21 C5

14 Rue du Théâtre, 75015; 01 45 71 88 88; www.adagio-city.com;
Métro: Duplex

This hotel offers unbeatable value apartments for up to six people, each with a kitchenette and microwave, in a high-rise with great views. There is a laundry room and a pool. It is a 10-minute walk to the Eiffel Tower.



€

Citadines Trocadéro

Map 15 C6

29 bis Rue St-Didier, 75116; 01 56 90 70 00; www.citadines.com
Métro: Victor Hugo

A short walk from the Trocadéro museums and gardens, these air-conditioned apartments accommodate up to six people. The apartments have kitchenettes with a grill and microwave. Babysitting and breakfast are provided.



€€

Jays

Map 15 D5

6 Rue Copernic, 75016; 01 47 04 16 16; www.jays-paris.com;
Métro: Victor Hugo

The draw for families is the beautiful spacious apartments, in a great location close to the Trocadéro and the Arc de Triomphe. Families with children are welcome. Daily cleaning and breakfast are provided.



€€

Musée d'Orsay and around

HOTELS

Hôtel Aviatic

Map 27 C2

105 Rue de Vaugirard, 75006; 01 53 63 25 50; www.aviatic.fr;

Métro: Montparnasse Bienvenue

This friendly boutique hotel is close to the Invalides and the Jardin du

Luxembourg. Rooms are in tones of chocolate, berry and cream. You can ask for triple rooms, or for a baby cot. There is also one communicating room that sleeps up to four. Staff are happy to pack guests a picnic.

€€

Pullmann Montparnasse

Map 27 C4

19 Rue du Commandant René Mouchotte, 75014; 01 44 36 44 36; www.pullmanhotels.com;

Métro: Gaité

The hotel has modern family rooms with two double beds. There is entertainment for children at Sunday brunch. There are excellent deals if booked online in advance. There is a babysitting service.



€€€

Sacré-Coeur and around

HOTELS

Ibis Berthier Porte de Clichy

Map 17 C1

163 bis Ave de Clichy, 75017; 01 40 25 20 20; www.ibishotel.com;

Métro: Porte de Clichy or Brochant

This is an excellent-value chain hotel with family and interconnecting rooms, some of which have views of the Eiffel Tower. The draw for families besides the price, is the location opposite a modern park on the edge of the Batignolles district, which has another, more traditional park and restaurants.



€

Timhotel

Map 18 F2

11 Rue Ravignan, 75018; 01 42 55 74 79; www.timhotel.com;

Métro: Abbesses

A picturesque hotel, it is located in a pedestrianized square not far from Sacré-Coeur. The rooms are tiny

and basic, but outstanding value given the location. For families there are rooms for three and a suite for five with a great view.

€

Terrass Hôtel

Map 18 E2

12 Rue Joseph de Maistre, 75018; 01 46 06 72 85; www.terrass-hotel.com; Métro: Blanche

This four-star is in a building with a stunning seventh-floor terrace. It has big, airy suites and junior suites that are ideal for families. Many have balconies with amazing views and one of the suites has an interactive touch-screen table and floating bed that will delight older kids.



€€

BED & BREAKFAST

Le Relais Montmartre

Map 18 F2

6 Rue Constance, 75018; 01 70 64 25 25; www.hotel-relais-montmartre.com; Métro: Abbesses

Conveniently located on a quiet street off the Rue des Abbesses, not far from Sacré-Coeur, this small hotel has a cosy ambience with nicely decorated rooms, many of which are connected and are perfect for families.



€

SELF-CATERING

Adagio Apartments Montmartre

Map 18 G3

10 Pl Charles Dullin, 75018; 01 42 57 14 55; www.adagio-city.com/montmartre; Métro: Pigalle

The big draw for families is the good location, just moments from Sacré-Coeur in an area packed with restaurants and delis. There are fully modern air-conditioned apartments for up to six people, each with a kitchenette and a microwave. Kids will love the pretty garden. Cots are available and there is a laundry room.



€

Paris Oasis

Map 18 H2

14 Rue André del Sarthe, 75018; 01 42 55 95 16; www.paris-oasis.com;
Métro: Anvers

These family-sized top-floor apartments are well maintained. Kids will love the indoor pool and the garden. There is a minimum stay of three nights but it is excellent value for the location. Guests can use the washing machine. Breakfast is not provided.



€€

Île de France

The Périphérique, the urban motorway that runs around Paris, divides the city from the suburbs. Beyond the suburban sprawl, Île de France has pretty, rural countryside, the very essence of provincial France. The area is great for a family holiday combined with day trips to Paris and Disneyland. The major sights can be reached by public transport from Paris.

Below A fountain adorned with statues in the formal gardens of Château de Versailles



1 Château de Versailles

Playground of the Sun King and the shepherdess queen

A stunning palace with fabulous gardens, Versailles is a great place for a day trip, or even a weekend, as there is so much to see and do. All that stood here before 1661 was an old royal hunting lodge, but Louis XIV converted it into Europe's largest palace (see pp126–7). The gardens were just as important to him, and his gardener, André Le Nôtre, spent 40 years flattening hills and draining marshes to make them perfect. Truly special, they are full of fountains and home to two smaller palaces, the Grand and Petit Trianons.

Key Features of the Gardens



① **Orangerie** Louis XIV loved oranges, which were a delicacy, and built this huge garden so he could grow his own.



Main Entrance

④ **Potager du Roi**
1 km (½ mile)

Palace (see pp126–7)

Hameau de la Reine
2 km (1 mile)

② **Fountains** Ranging from bombastic multi-tiered creations to calm mirrors, fountains abound here. Find the one with a writhing dragon, or where the sun god Apollo is having a bath.

③ **Grand Canal** Louis XIV held extravagant boating parties here. He also kept gondolas, a gift from the Republic of Venice, at the head of the canal in a building known as "Little Venice".



The Lowdown

Address 78000 (Yvelines)
Pl d'Armes, Versailles (21 km/13 miles southwest of Paris); 01 30 83 78 00; www.chateauversailles.fr

RER Line C from central Paris to Versailles Rive Gauche; trains depart every 15 mins. **Train** SNCF Montparnasse to Versailles Chantiers or St-Lazare to Versailles Rive Droite, both a 20-minute walk from the palace. **Car** A13, exit 2. **Taxi** By the train stations; 01 39 50 50 00 or 01 39 51 04 04 **Getting around** A mini-train runs from the château to the Trianon palaces & Hameau de Marie Antoinette, 20 minutes on foot, (family ticket €25–35; under 11s

free); electric cars €35 per hour; the best option is to hire a bike at the entrance to the park; €6.50 per hour

Visitor information 2 bis Ave de Paris, 3985; 01 39 24 88 88; www.versailles-tourisme.com; Apr–Sep: 9am–7pm Tue–Sun, 10am–6pm Mon; Oct–Mar: 9am–6pm Tue–Sat, 11am–5pm Sun–Mon

Open Gardens: 7am–6:30pm daily; summer: till 8:30pm; closed Mon & public hols. **Palace:** 9am–5:30pm Tue–Sun; winter: till 6:30pm; summer: closed Mon & public hols. **Potager du Roi:** Mar–Oct: 10am–6pm Tue–Sun

Price €30–40; under 18s and EU citizens under 26 free. Trianon palaces: €20–30. Gardens: free (except Apr–Sep: Tue, Sat & Sun). Passport to all sights: €36–46. Grandes Eaux Musicales & Jardins Musicaux; special sessions when all the fountains are turned on, with music and, at night, fireworks: €50–60

Skipping the queue Buy tickets online or at www.fnac.com. Paris Museum Pass accepted. Entrance C with a passport ticket is often faster. The palace is busiest on Tue & Sun. Book in advance for concerts and firework shows.

4 Potager du Roi Louis XIV loved food, especially melons, figs, peas and asparagus. The king's vegetable garden, Potager du Roi, outside the main gardens, in front and to the left of the entrance to the palace, is a fun place to explore with kids in the summer and autumn months.



5 Petit Trianon This small chateau was given to Marie Antoinette by her husband, Louis XVI, when she was 18 years old. It is a magical miniature palace.



6 Hameau de la Reine About 2 km (1 mile) from the main palace is a thatched village, the Hameau de La Reine. This was Marie Antoinette's dream world, with a ballroom disguised as a barn and a large billiard room.



7 Grand Trianon On summer evenings, Louis XIV would hold parties at this small palace. Only the ladies of the court were invited.

Guided tours Audio guide for kids over 8 years old. The palace shop sells a useful children's guide *My Little Versailles*. Tours in English €46-56; under 10s free; check website for themes and times. Download podcasts from www.chateauversailles.fr

Age range 5 plus for chateau

Activities Children's workshops in French. *Son et lumière*, History Galleries; 01 30 83 78 00; Oct-Jun for school groups; during school hols & Jul during summer hols for families. Farm workshop at the Petit Trianon

Allow 2-3 hours

Wheelchair access Yes

Café Grand Café d'Orléans, just outside the palace, and several restaurants along the canal

Shop Children's books in English available at the Librairie des Princes, a children's bookshop

Toilets Cour Royale, Hameau de Marie Antoinette, La Petite Venise & the Buvette du Dauphin for baby-changing facilities

Good family value?

Excellent value especially if visitors get around on foot. Although it can be tiring, the sheer diversity of things to see makes boredom impossible.

KIDS' CORNER

Look out for...

- 1 Apollo.** Why are statues and paintings of the Greek sun god all over the palace?
- 2 Statues representing the rivers of France** around the Water Parterre. Can you name any of them?
- 3 Golden babies** sit on the Children's Island near the garden. How many are there?



Answers at the bottom of the page.

Where's the queen?

Marie Antoinette spent too much time hiding away at the Petit Trianon. It set tongues wagging, alienated the court and added to her reputation for being an airhead. She alone held the key, which was decorated with 531 diamonds, to her palace.



A FRIVOLOUS QUEEN

While Marie Antoinette tied blue bows around the necks of her sheep, French peasants starved to death. A volcanic eruption in Iceland led to poor harvests and cold winters, but the queen got the blame.

Flying sheep

Plenty of scientific discoveries were made at Versailles. Louis XIV brought the best scientific minds to the palace and founded an Académie des Sciences here in 1666. He also had a rhinoceros brought all the way from India to put in his personal zoo. Later, there was an electricity demonstration in the Hall of Mirrors and in 1783 the first hot-air balloon took to the air. The passengers were a rooster, a duck and a sheep called *Mont au Ciel*, or "Up to the Sky".



Answers: **1** Louis XIV, who was known as the Sun King, identified with him. **2** The Marne, the Loire and the Rhône among others. **3** Six.

Château de Versailles, continued

2,300 rooms, 67 staircases and 1,944 windows

After Louis XIV moved into his splendid new palace, he made most French aristocrats come and spend time at his court. Around 3,000 people lived in the palace at any one time, often in cold and dingy apartments, but near the centre of power and favours. It symbolized all that was wrong with the Ancien Régime and only just escaped being destroyed in the Revolution. Start with the Hall of Mirrors, passing through the first floor rooms, and then head for the park.



Queen's bedroom

Key Features of the Palace

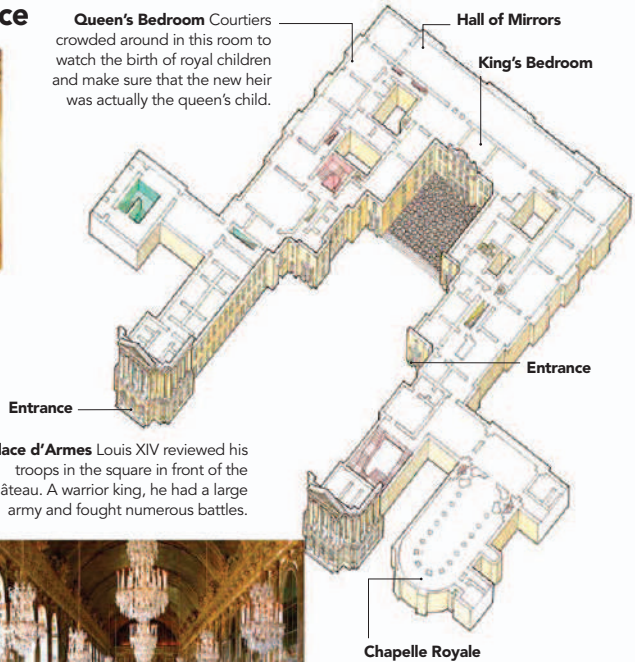


King's Bedroom This room was strategically located on the axis of the sun's journey across the sky, affirming that Louis XIV was at the centre of the world.



Chapelle Royale Louis XIV attended mass here every morning. The first floor was reserved for the royal family and the ground floor for the court.

Queen's Bedroom Courtiers crowded around in this room to watch the birth of royal children and make sure that the new heir was actually the queen's child.



Place d'Armes Louis XIV reviewed his troops in the square in front of the château. A warrior king, he had a large army and fought numerous battles.



Hall of Mirrors The peace treaty after the end of World War I was signed in this sparkling hall in June 1919.

Eat and drink

Picnic: under €25; Snacks: €25–45; Real meal: €45–90; Family treat: over €90 (based on a family of four)

PICNIC **Guinon** (60 Rue de Paroisse, 78000; 01 39 50 01 84; closed Mon & Sun pm) is the place to shop for a picnic in the town of Versailles. This bakery has been cooking up food since 1802. Picnic in the gardens.

SNACKS **La Parmentier de Versailles** These refreshment stands can be found in high season at the Grand Trianon Square and Southern bank of the Grand Canal and in low

season at Domes Grove Alley and Grand Trianon Square. They sell baked potatoes with different toppings.

REAL MEAL **Angelina** (Pavillon d'Orleans, Château de Versailles 78000; www.angelina-versailles.fr), located in the château, is perfect for a tea-time treat. Eat macaroons and drink its famous hot chocolate. There are cafés and ice-cream stalls around the château and gardens.

FAMILY TREAT **Trianon Palace** (1 Blvd de la Reine, 78000; 01 30 84 50 00; www.trianonpalace.fr), located



Angelina, a great tea-time spot inside the palace

Prices given are for a family of four



Shopping at the fruit and vegetable shop in the Potager du Roi

outside the gardens, is a luxurious hotel with a restaurant run by British chef Gordon Ramsay. Sunday brunch is served on the terrace overlooking the park in summer. In winter, it is in the room where President Clemenceau once dictated the terms of the 1919 peace agreement. The hotel is especially good around Christmas, when there are cookery courses for children, a Christmas market and an ice rink here.

Find out more

DIGITAL At [youtube.com/watch?v=YIOjoQYaMMQ](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YIOjoQYaMMQ) watch *Marie Antoinette, The Last Queen of France*, a drama-documentary that sheds a different light on the story of a frivolous queen who alienated France. Two historical video games, *Versailles Mysteries* and *Marie Antoinette and the War of Independence*, can be found at www.nemopolis.net.

FILM Older children will enjoy *Marie Antoinette* (2006), directed by Sofia Coppola, which gives a Hollywood view of life at Versailles, while *Versailles: Le Rêve d'un Roi* (2007) is a French drama about Louis XIV.



Examining the small-scale wonders at France Miniature

Shopping

There are plenty of designer shops selling children's clothes in the town of Versailles but they are a bit stuffy and prim. Pick up some unusual vegetables at the **Potager du Roi** (see p125), the former palace kitchen garden where, in the 18th century, they grew new and exotic fruits from the overseas colonies.

Next step...

FRANCE MINIATURE Laid out on a piece of land shaped like the map of France, this miniature landscape (*Blvd André Malraux, Elancourt, 78990; 01 30 16 16 30; www.franceminature.com*) is crisscrossed by rivers, train tracks and engines. An outdoor theme park, it has scale models of major French landmarks and monuments. Look out for the Alps; the Autoroute de Soleil, which runs south to the Mediterranean; the amphitheatre at Arles; and St-Tropez with film stars' yachts bobbing in the bay. Feel like a giant beside a mini version of the famous Eiffel Tower. Kids can drive electric cars around a cartoon town in **Ronde des Zotos**.

KIDS' CORNER

Look out for...

- 1 The false door in the queen's bedroom. Marie Antoinette escaped the revolutionary mob by fleeing through it into the king's room on 6 October 1789.
- 2 Mirrors. How many are there in the Hall of Mirrors?
- 3 The blue and gold clock overlooking the royal courtyard with a sun in the middle. Louis XIV was known as the Sun King.



Answer at the bottom of the page.

And, we all lie down

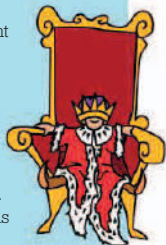
When Louis XV became king he was just 5 years old. He loved to lie on the floor of the Hall of Mirrors and demanded that his ministers did so too.

WHAT'S THAT SMELL?

Versailles was famous for its foul smells. There were only nine toilets and chamber pots were frequently emptied out of the windows into the garden!

Good morning, your majesty

Everything the king did was an important event – even getting out of bed. He was woken up every morning at 8 o'clock and given a medical check by his doctor. While he washed, his closest friends and family took the opportunity to ask favours. He even dressed in front of a huge audience of several hundred people.



Answer: 2 357.



Lion on the roof of the glass tunnel in the thrilling Parc Zoologique

2 Bois de Boulogne

Puppet shows and farm animals

Located between the western edges of Paris and the Seine, this 865-ha (2,137-acre) park offers a refreshing break from the hustle and bustle of the city. For generations of kids, the epicentre of this vast and leafy park has been the wonderfully retro **Jardin d'Acclimatation**, a *belle époque* amusement park opened by Napoleon III in 1860. There is a large selection of activities and rides for all ages. If the kids tire of that, the surrounding parkland is great

The Lowdown

Address Bois de Boulogne, 75116; 01 40 67 90 85; www.jardindacclimatation.fr

Méto Les Sablons or Porte Maillot, line 1. **Bus** 43 from Opéra, 73 from the Champs-Élysées, 82 from Trocadéro. Buses PC1, 174 & 244 serve the Bois and the garden.

Open 10am–7pm daily (winter: till 6pm); closed 25 Dec

Price €9–19

Guided tours Follow the bike trails around the park

Age range All ages

Activities Puppet shows: 3–4pm Wed, Sat & Sun; daily during school hols

Allow 3–4 hours

Eat and drink **Picnic** Monoprix (72 Ave Charles de Gaulle, 92200) is a good place to pick up tasty supplies for a picnic in the park. **Real meal** La Terrace (near the Madrid entrance; 01 45 00 14 18) serves classic French food and offers a special children's menu.

Toilets Inside the park

for cycling, running and exploring. There is also mini golf, puppet shows, pony rides and even a bowling alley. Be sure to visit the Normandy Farm to see newborn lambs. Also stop at the pedagogical hives for a peek at the busy bees at work. Visitors should be aware that the “Bois” is best avoided altogether after dark.

Letting off steam

Take a boat out on the lake – boat rentals are available from the takeaway snack stand of the Le Chalet des Îles restaurant. This is a great way to see the entire park.

3 Le Parc Zoologique de Thoiry

Animal magic

Kids will love the drive through this safari park, one of Europe's finest, full of elephants, hippos and bears. There is also a zoo, which can be visited on foot. Here kids can watch lions from glass tunnels, and get face-to-face with a tiger. Among other inhabitants are lemurs and even Komodo dragons. The park also has rare plants, and there is a maze with a few raised bridges from which to plan a route to the middle, or spot lost kids. It makes for a great day out.

Take cover

Visit the **Château de Thoiry** (01 34 87 53 76) in the park, which includes the Salon Blanc, where everything, including the piano, is white. The château is uniquely positioned so that, during the summer and winter solstices, the sun's rays form a “bridge of light” in the main hall that lights up the building like a lantern.



Geese on the lush lawns of the Château de Rambouillet

The Lowdown

Address 78770 (Yvelines) Rue du Pavillon de Montreuil, Thoiry (40 km/25 miles west of Paris); 01 34 87 40 67; www.thoiry.net

Car Take the A13, then follow D76 & D11. The nearest train station is over 6 km (4 miles) away.

Open Late Feb–early Apr, Sep–mid-Nov: 10am–5pm daily (till 6pm late Apr–Aug, Sat & Sun and during school hols); closed mid-Dec–early Feb

Price €130–140; under 3s free

Guided tours Tours in English for the château by a guide in period costume; www.parisvision.com

Age range All ages

Allow A day

Eat and drink **Picnic** Migros (Centre Commercial Val Thoiry, 01710) is best for supplies. **Picnic** in the zoo. **Snacks** There are kiosks selling snacks in the park.

Toilets At several locations

4 Rambouillet

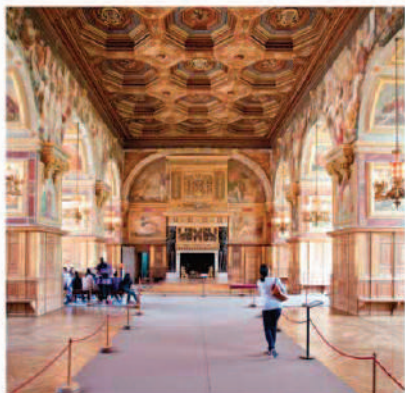
Lambs, trains and trees

Rambouillet is a lovely, classic French town situated on the edge of the Forêt de Rambouillet, an enchanting forest full of birds of prey, deer and wild boar. It is dominated by the **Château de Rambouillet**, the official summer residence of France's President, which has fairy-tale towers, as well as a Queen's Dairy, where Marie Antoinette used to play at being a milkmaid. Napoleon spent his last night in France here, on 30 June 1815.

For kids, the highlight of the trip is bottle-feeding the lambs during the lambing season at the **Bergerie Nationale**, the national sheep farm, founded in 1784. Do not miss the **Musée Ramboiltrain**, which has 4,000 miniature train models.

Letting off steam

Climb trees or get up close to the birds at Odysée Verte, the forest park at **Espace Rambouillet** (3 Rue de Groussay, 78120 Rambouillet; 01 34 83 05 00; www.espacerambouillet.onf.fr), which features 19 bridges and 18 platforms. Take a walk and enjoy rock climbing by the Abbaye des Vaux-de-Cernay, a ruined abbey in the stone quarries located near Forêt de Rambouillet. There is also an ice-skating rink in Place Félix Faure in winter.



Galerie François I in the palace of Fontainebleau

palace by François I, who discovered this style while campaigning in Italy. Later kings, queens and mistresses left their mark too and it was one of Napoleon's favourite residences. Much quieter and more intimate than Versailles, Fontainebleau is surrounded by a fairy-tale forest with villages and winding paths, and beautiful gardens. A 1200-m (3,937-ft) long canal runs through the wooded park.

The Lowdown

Address 78120 (Yvelines) Château de Rambouillet (55 km/34 miles southwest of Paris); <http://chateau-rambouillet.monuments-nationaux.fr/en>. Bergerie Nationale: Parc du Château, 78120. Musée Ramboltrain: 4 Pl Jeanne d'Arc, 78120; www.ramboltrain.com

Train Gare Montparnasse to Rambouillet. **Car** A13, then A12, then N10

Visitor information Pl de la Libération, 78120; 01 34 83 21 21

Open Château de Rambouillet: 10am–noon & 2–5pm; summer: till 6pm; closed Tue, public hols & when the President is in residence. Bergerie Nationale: 2–5pm Wed, Sat, Sun & public hols, daily in school hols; winter: Sat & Sun only; closed three weeks Dec–Jan. Musée Ramboltrain: 10am–noon & 2–5:30pm Wed–Sun; closed two weeks in Jan

Price Château de Rambouillet: €17; under 18s free. Bergerie Nationale: €15–25; under 3s free. Musée Ramboltrain: €12–22

Activities Children's workshops during the school hols at the château & the Musée Ramboltrain

Allow At least half a day

Eat and drink **Picnic** La Vieille Boulangère (6 Rue Général de Gaulle, 78120) sells sweet and savoury snacks. Picnic in the forest. **Real meal** Villabate (15 Ave du Maréchal Leclerc, 78120; closed Wed) serves good pizza.

Toilets In the château & museum

5 Fontainebleau

Tranquil forests and formal gardens

The royal château at Fontainebleau was little more than a hunting lodge when, in the early 16th century, it was transformed into a Renaissance

Letting off steam

Run along the paths around the Grand Canal and play in the gardens. Row across the lake in a boat or ride in a horse-drawn carriage through the grounds. Stop at the playground at the nearby **Musée Napoleon d'Art et d'Histoire Militaire** (88 Rue St-Honore, 77300 Fontainebleau).

The Lowdown

Address 77300 (Seine-et-Marne) Fontainebleau (69 km/43 miles south of Paris); 01 60 71 50 60; www.musee-chateau-fontainebleau.fr

Train Gare de Lyon to Gare de Fontainebleau-Avon, then bus A to the château. **Bus** Shuttle bus by Parivision (www.parivision.com) **Car** A6 direction Lyon, exit Fontainebleau

Open Château: Oct–Mar: 9:30am–5pm Wed–Mon; Apr–Sep: 9:30am–6pm Wed–Mon. Gardens: Mar, Apr & Oct: 9am–6pm daily; Nov–Feb: 9am–5pm daily; May–Sep: 9am–7pm daily

Price Château: €22–32; under 18s free for main apartments; garden free

Guided tours Audio guide: €1 per person; kids' audio guide in French

Age range All ages

Activities Workshops for children in French.

Allow 1 hour 30 mins

Wheelchair access Yes, for the château

Eat and drink **Snacks** Le Grand Café (33 Pl Napoleon Bonaparte, 77300) is a good place for a drink. **Real meal** Pizza Pizza (1 Rue Bouchers, 77300; 01 60 72 05 61), a pizzeria, serves small versions of any pizza for kids.

Toilets At several locations

KIDS' CORNER

Find out more...

- 1 Why is there a sphinx in Château de Malmaison?
- 2 Quack! Quack! What is unique about hippos' feet at Le Parc Zoologique?
- 3 What is special about the sheep at Rambouillet?

Answers at the bottom of the page.



CANINE DISCOVERY

The town of Fontainebleau and the palace are named after a dog called Bliaud, who discovered a spring here that became known as the "Fontaine de Bliaud". The town and palace hence came to be called Fontainebleau.



A family man

Napoleon was born in Ajaccio in Corsica in 1769, just after France took over the island. He was sent to school at the military academy at Brienne, where he was picked on because he had a strong accent and wore threadbare clothes. When he left the school at the age of 16, he lived on stale bread for a time so he could save money to send home to his widowed mother and his seven brothers and sisters. A celebrated general by the age of 24, he went on to become Emperor. But he never forgot his family, making his brothers kings of the Netherlands, Spain and Westphalia, and one of his sisters, Queen of Naples.



Answers: 1 After Napoleon's victory at the Battle of the Pyramids (1798) anything Egyptian was the height of fashion. 2 They are webbed like those of ducks. 3 The sheep are Merinos de Rambouillet, which produce a particularly fine type of wool and have curly horns.

④ Disneyland® Paris

Mickey's kingdom

There is hardly a kid on the planet who would turn down a trip to Disneyland, making Disneyland® Paris the most visited theme park in Europe. Comprising two theme parks – Disneyland® and Walt Disney Studios® – children can meet their favourite cartoon characters and take a spin on some of the best rides on the continent. In addition, there is the Disney® Village, which has restaurants, shops and the Buffalo Bill Wild West Show. The main Disneyland® Park is divided into five lands, linked by the 19th-century-style shopping street, Main Street, USA®. In 2016, Europe's largest waterpark will open next to the park.



Mickey in Buffalo Bill Wild West Show, Disney® Village

Key Features

① **Main Street, USA®** Based on Disney's home town of Marceline, Missouri, this fantasy land is full of shops and restaurants. The magical Disney parade takes place here every afternoon, making it a good place to finish the day.

② **Disneyland Railroad** Walt Disney was a great train enthusiast and had his own miniature steam train in his garden. The railroad here runs along the perimeter of the park and stops in Main Street, USA®, Frontierland®, Fantasyland® and Discoveryland®.

③ **Adventureland®** Enjoy the wild rides and exciting animatronics, be Peter Pan and battle the pirates here. Take a perilous jungle ride with Indiana Jones, then play Swiss Family Robinson up in the trees.



⑤ **Sleeping Beauty's Castle** Step into the pink fairy-tale castle, which features a dragon in its dungeon and stained-glass windows showing popular characters.

④ **Frontierland®** Visit the haunted house, ride on a paddle steamer and get the adrenalin going on the thrilling roller coaster, Big Thunder Mountain, in this homage to America's Wild West. Phantom Manor is a ghost ride with excellent special effects.



⑥ **Discoveryland®** With a futuristic theme, this is the place to set off on an intergalactic adventure. It includes Buzz Lightyear Laser Blast®, an interactive ride, and is the most interesting part of the park for older kids.



7 Fantasyland®

Make this the first stop – it is where the true Disney magic is found.

All the classic characters are here to be greeted. It is the perfect part of the park for younger kids, with fairy tales such as Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs brought to life.



KIDS' CORNER

Look out for...

- 1 King Arthur's Sword in the Stone in Fantasyland®.
- 2 Captain Hook's pirate ship in Adventureland®.
- 3 Aladdin's lamp in Adventureland®.
- 4 Alice's amazing maze, the Curious Labyrinth, in Fantasyland®.



Top 10 Rides



1. PHANTOM MANOR

Ghoulish laughter and ghostly apparitions provide scary company on this classic ghost train ride in Frontierland®. The graveyard scenes are a little scary for very small children.

2. BIG THUNDER MOUNTAIN

Enjoy discovering an abandoned mine aboard a runaway train that cranks and creaks in the most ominous way before plunging at high speed into the darkness. Completely refurbished in 2015, it is in Frontierland®.



3. PINOCCHIO'S FANTASTIC JOURNEY

Set in Fantasyland®, this ride revisits the second full-length feature film made by Disney, as the little wooden puppet struggles to become a real boy.

4. IT'S A SMALL WORLD

In Fantasyland®, this is the best ride in the park for smaller children. Take the kids on a musical tour of the world, watching out for the monkeys swinging overhead.

5. SNOW WHITE AND THE SEVEN DWARFS

Travel through the forest past the wicked witch and then watch Snow White being rescued by her prince in Fantasyland®. This ride is quite scary for very young children.

6. PETER PAN'S FLIGHT

Located in Fantasyland®, this is perhaps the most magical ride in the park. Jump aboard a pirate ship and fly across London at night, all the way to Neverland.

7. PIRATES OF THE CARIBBEAN

Watch pirates attack a Spanish fort from a river boat on this great boat ride in Adventureland®.

8. INDIANA JONES™ AND THE TEMPLE OF PERIL

Rattle on a roller coaster through a jungle full of exotic ruins on this perilous ride in Adventureland®.

9. SPACE MOUNTAIN: MISSION 2

Blast off into space and travel to the edge of the universe on the biggest thrill ride in Discoveryland®. Not for the faint-hearted, and only for those over 1.32 m (4 ft).

10. BUZZ LIGHTYEAR LASER BLAST®

Head to Discoveryland® for this exciting, interactive game – ride in laser-armed star cruisers and help Buzz save the universe.



HAPPY BIRTHDAY MICKEY!

Mickey Mouse's birthday is officially 18 November 1928, even though he first put in an appearance in May 1928. He was originally voiced by Walt Disney himself.

How well do you know your cartoons?

- 1 Which was Disney's first full-length feature film?
- 2 What is the name of Disney's flying elephant?
- 3 What poisoned fruit does the Queen give Snow White?
- 4 What animal does Pinocchio turn into?
- 5 What is the Little Mermaid's real name?
- 6 Which movies feature Captain Jack Sparrow?

Answers at the bottom of the page.

Monsieur Disney

Walter Disney was descended from a Norman knight, Robert d'Isigny, who invaded England with William the Conqueror in 1066. In 1918, during World War I, Disney came to France to drive an ambulance.



Answers: 1 Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs (1937), 2 Dumbo, 3 An apple, 4 A donkey, 5 Ariel, 6 The Pirates of the Caribbean series.

Disneyland® Paris, continued

Letting off steam

There are two playgrounds in the park: the Pocahontas Indian Village in Frontierland® and the Plage des Pirates in Adventureland®.

Eat and drink

Picnic: under €25; *Snacks:* €25–45; *Real meal:* €45–90; *Family treat:* over €90 (based on a family of four)

PICNIC Even though picnics are not allowed in the park, no one is going to stop kids from eating so cary snacks and water. The money-saving

option is to buy biscuits from the souvenir shops. There is a designated picnic area outside the entrance too.

SNACKS Casey's Corner (*Main Street, USA*®) serves hot dogs. Eat a waffle from one of the stands that are scattered all over the park.

REAL MEAL Rainforest Café® (*Disney® Village; 01 60 43 65 65*) is where visitors can experience eating in a jungle, complete with a tropical rainstorm every 30 minutes.

FAMILY TREAT Auberge de Cendrillon (*Fantasyland*®; *01 60 30 40 50*) is the best – and the most

expensive – restaurant in the park. Classic French dishes are on offer, but the main draw for kids is the chance to spend quality time with Cinderella and her mice, along with other Disney princesses and princes.

Find out more

DIGITAL Go to www.disney.fr, www.disney.co.uk/playhouse-disney or www.hiddenmickeys.org for Disney-themed fun and games.

FILM Watch DVDs of the cartoons with a French feel such as *Aristocats* (1970), *Beauty and the Beast* (1991), *Sleeping Beauty* (1959), *Cinderella* (1950), *The Hunchback of Notre-Dame* (1996) and *Ratatouille* (2007).



A meal in the jungle at the tropical-themed Rainforest Café®

Shopping

The **Disney® Village**, just outside the park, is full of shops and restaurants, which stay open after the park has closed so there is no need to rush to shop in the park itself. Purchases made in the park before 3pm can be delivered to hotels or to the Disney® Village for collection at the end of the day. Souvenirs are expensive, so choose the bigger shops where there is more choice among the cheaper

The Lowdown

Address 77705 (Seine-et-Marne) Marne-la-Vallée, (32 km/20 miles east of Paris); www.disneyland.paris.com

Train RER A to Marne la Vallée, just outside the park, takes 45 mins from Paris; trains run every 15 mins; joint RER & entry ticket available. Direct Eurostar from London St Pancras; www.eurostar.com. **Bus** Airport buses from Charles-de-Gaulle & Orly airports every 30 mins; www.vea.fr. **Car** A4, exit 14; parking €15

Visitor information City Hall, Main Street, USA®. Studio Services, Walt Disney Studios®, Pl des Frères Lumière. Lost & found: Kids who get lost in the park are taken to Coin Bébé by the Plaza Gardens Restaurant, Main Street, USA®. Lost property is taken to City Hall, Main Street, USA®.

First-aid centre In the park by the Plaza Gardens Restaurant, Main Street, USA®

Open 10am–9.30pm Mon–Fri, 10am–10pm Sat & Sun; check the website before visiting as there are different hours for the main park and Walt Disney Studios®. Times may also vary according to season. Disney® Village is open all day until late at night.

Price One-day one-park pass for main park only: £236–246; under 3s free; Day pass, for both parks: £270–280; under 3s free. Tickets are cheaper if bought online; 2–3, 4-day & 5-day passes available. Look out for promotions, especially in Jan–Mar when ticket price covers admission to all parks. See the website for promotions on hotel packages; there are often good deals for families but they change seasonally. Disney® Village: free

Skipping the queue There can be long queues both to get into the parks and for individual rides – up to an hour in high season. To avoid entrance queues, arrive at

least 30 mins before the park opens, or book in advance online, by phone, through a travel agent, on Channel ferries, at Eurostar terminals, at Disney Stores or at RATP Métro stations. Avoid Sundays and, if possible, peak holiday seasons. Once inside, the **Fastpass**® system allows visitors to pre-book for some rides without queueing: insert the park ticket into the Fastpass machine at a ride entrance to get a Fastpass ticket with a time slot, and return at the allotted time. However, each person can only hold one Fastpass ticket at a time and many rides are fully booked by noon. The **VIP Fastpass**® offered by some Disney hotels gives instant access to some rides, and the **Hôtel Disneyland® Fastpass**® gives timed entry to a choice of attractions for guests. Disney hotel guests can enter the park at 8am in high season.



Colourful entrance to the Disney Store in the Disney® Village

options. The **Liberty Arcade** (Main Street, USA®) shop is a good option. Buy books, stationery, videos, posters and CDs at the cosy **Storybook Store** (Main Street, USA®). **La Boutique du Château** (Fantasyland®) is a year-round Christmas-themed shop. Kids will enjoy spending hours in the big **Disney Store** and the new **World of Disney** (Disney® Village). If the plan is to stay overnight, save the souvenir shops for the next morning, when nobody is overtired.

Staying over

The best way to relax is to stay overnight at one of the on-site hotels, which are also in Disney® Village. For children the bonus is that at the end of the day, when the park is empty, it is possible to have several



The fantasy-castle architecture of the Disneyland® Hotel

turns on some of the rides. The hotels closest to the park are the most expensive (see p134). Watch out for seasonal package deals available for families on the official website.

Next stop...

WALT DISNEY STUDIOS® AND VILLAGES NATURE

Under-10s will be exhausted by a day out at Disneyland® Park, so do not plan anything for the first evening. On day two head over to **Walt Disney Studios®**, the smaller theme park, next to the Disneyland® Park. This is the place to discover the world of the movies and find out how films are

made, especially animated cartoons in the Toon Studio. The central feature of Front Lot, just inside the giant studio gates, is a fountain in the shape of Mickey. The big attraction is Toy Story Playland with rides such as the Toy Soldiers Parachute Drop and the Slinky Dog Zigzag. Do not miss the Studio Tram tour, which travels through an earthquake in an oilfield and on to the destroyed city of London. The Twilight Zone Tower of Terror™ is a white-knuckle ride for older children.

Villages Nature, 6 km (3 miles) from the Disneyland® Park, is a sustainable family resort offering cottages and apartments. There is plenty here for kids including forest attractions, a petting farm and Aqualagoon, one of the biggest and most impressive water parks in Europe. Visit www.villagesnature.com for further information.

Baby Switch allows parents to take turns holding the baby while the other one rides, without going to the back of the queue.

Queue fatigue busters An information board in the Central Plaza lists queueing times. Some attractions in Adventureland® rarely get busy: Les Cabanes des Robinson, Adventure Isle, Le Passage Enchanté d'Aladdin and Sleeping Beauty's Castle in Fantasyland®. In bad weather, rides may be closed, if so take cover in the Liberty and Discovery arcades.

Guided tours Enquire at City Hall; €40–80; under 3s free

Age range All ages

Activities Disney Parade, 5pm daily; check website or central notice board by the Plaza Gardens Restaurant, Main Street, USA®. Get an entertainment programme from City Hall.

Allow A full day, or two days for both parks. If staying in a Disneyland® hotel, arrive the night before to meet the Disney characters at breakfast.

Café There are food kiosks and cafés across the park and a baby change with microwaves by the Plaza Gardens Restaurant, Main Street, USA®.

Toilets Across the park. Baby-changing facilities by the Plaza Gardens Restaurant in the Central Plaza, Main Street, USA®

Good family value?

Disneyland® Paris is expensive, and it is not everybody's cup of tea. Some visitors feel it has not stood the test of time well and is getting a little shabby, but most kids love it. It is well worth seeking out special promotions and planning your visit carefully to make the most of it.



Entrance to the all-action Walt Disney Studios® park

Where to Stay in Île de France

You will find hotels aplenty across Île de France, especially in Fontainebleau and Versailles, but you could take things at a slower pace by hiring a *gîte* or farmhouse (with a garden for the kids to run around in). There are also many camp sites around Paris. Whatever you choose, there are great deals to be had.

AGENCIES

Clé Vacances

www.clevacances-paris-idf.com/
This agency lists quality houses, apartments and B&Bs in Île de France, all certified by France's tourism board.

Gîtes Île-de-France

www.gitesiledefrance.com/
Part of Gîtes de France, this site lists over 280 *gîtes* available to rent in the area surrounding Paris.

Auvers-sur-Oise Map 4 G5

SELF-CATERING

Gîtes aux Ecuries

5 bis, Rue de la Bourgoigne, 95430;
01 30 36 81 44/06 84 81 67 52;
www.giteauvers.com

Great for a short break, this place has a range of self-contained mini *gîtes* for three to four people. It is set in the village immortalized by Van Gogh.

€ P

Disneyland® Paris Map 4 H5

HOTELS

Hôtel Cheyenne®

Disneyland® Paris BP 112,
Marne-la-Vallée Chessy, 77777
Seine-et-Marne; www.hotels.disneylandparis.co.uk

Take a trip to the Wild West in this clapboard hotel that will delight the kids. Up to five people can stay in a room, which has bunk beds for kids. There is a self-service restaurant,



Typically French façade of the Hôtel des Londres, Fontainebleau

kids' corner and outdoor play area.

Book online for the best deals.

€ P

Hôtel Disneyland®

Disneyland® Paris BP 112,
Marne-la-Vallée Chessy, 77777
Seine-et-Marne; www.hotels.disneylandparis.co.uk

Rooms can accommodate up to four people, and the big draw is the amazing buffet breakfast with Disney characters. Kids like the swimming pool and the Snow White and Seven Dwarfs mirror in the bathroom. Book online for the best deals.

€ P

BED & BREAKFAST

Le Moulin de St-Martin

7 Rue de St-Martin, 77580 Crécy-la-Chapelle; 01 64 63 69 90; www.chambresdhotels.org

Housed in an old mill, this B&B is just a 20-minute drive from Disneyland® Paris. There are two bedrooms with an extra bed, and a garden.

€ P

Fontainebleau Map 4 H6

HOTELS

Novotel Ury

Map 4 G6
Route Nationale 152, 77760 Ury;
01 60 71 24 24; www.novotel.com

This hotel is located on the edge of a pretty village close to Fontainebleau. Kids can stay free in their parents' room and there is a 50 per cent discount on the second room. There is a pool, a tennis court and bike hire.

€ P

Hôtel Aigle Noir

27 Pl Napoleon Bonaparte, 77300 Fontainebleau; 01 60 74 60 00;
www.hotelaignenoir.com

Set in a 17th-century manor close to the château, this lovely hotel has excellent service. Its interconnecting rooms are ideal for families. Highchairs and cots are available.

€ P

Hôtel des Londres

1 Pl Général de Gaulle, 77300 Fontainebleau; 01 64 22 20 21;
www.hoteldelondres.com

This family-run hotel offers spacious rooms for three, as well as suites. Some rooms have a fabulous view of the château. The hotel is located in a peaceful setting close to the town centre. It is closed for Christmas and two weeks in August.

€ P

BED & BREAKFAST

Le Clos du Tertre

6 Chemin des Vallées, 77760 La Chapelle la Reine, near Fontainebleau; 01 64 24 37 80;
www.leclosdutertre.com

This friendly B&B has a home away from home atmosphere, including several family rooms. There is a kitchen corner for guests. It is a good option for those who plan to stay overnight to see Vaux-le-Vicomte by candlelight. Disneyland® Paris is just a short drive away. Great for rock climbers.

€ P

Maffliers Map 4 G5

HOTEL

Novotel Château de Maffliers

Allées des Marronniers, 95560 Maffliers; 01 34 08 35 35;
www.novotel.com

This Novotel hotel provides modern accommodation in the grounds of a 19th-century château, north of Roissy Charles-de-Gaulle airport. In addition to the family-friendly facilities, there are tennis courts and close by, horse-riding for kids.

€ P

Provins Map 5 A6

BED & BREAKFAST

Le Clos de Provins

4 Rue des Jacobins, Ville Haute, 77160 Provins; 06 85 80 86 45;
www.leclosdeprovins.com

Children get a warm welcome at

this B&B, near the historic town centre. The family suite has room for four; under 3s stay for free. The garden has swings and a sandpit. The breakfast is excellent.

P €€

La Maison Stella Cadente

Rue Maximilien Michelin, 77160 Provins; 01 60 67 40 23; www.maisonprovins.com

A luxurious wonderland, all the rooms are themed on fairy tales in this beautiful, 19th-century villa with a huge garden. Various activities for children, including ping-pong and games, are available.

☼ **P** €

Le Logis de La Voulzie

Map 5 A6
16 Rue Aristide Briand, 77160 Provins; 06 14 02 25 10; www.en.logisdelaoulzie.com

This B&B is located in the historic town of Provins, which is classified as a UNESCO World Heritage Site. There are four large bedrooms, with extra beds to convert the doubles into family rooms. Guests can use the kitchen and the charming, leafy garden. It is just 30 minutes from Disneyland® Paris.

☼ ☼ ☼ **P** €

Rambouillet

Map 4 F5

HOTEL

Relays du Château Mercure Rambouillet

1 Pl de la Libération, 78120 Rambouillet; 01 34 57 30 00; www.mercure-rambouillet.com

This three-star hotel, now part of the Accor group, is opposite the château in Rambouillet. There is room for one extra bed in a double room, and a 50 per cent reduction on a second room. Cots are available.

☼ **P** €€

Rolleboise

Map 4 F5

HOTEL

Hôtel Domaine de la Corniche

5 Route de la Corniche, 78270 Rolleboise; 01 30 93 20 00; www.domainedelacorniche.com

This hotel offers stunning views across the Seine and has a great restaurant – meals are served on the terrace in summer. A children's menu is also available. Close to Giverny, the area is ideal for a short break.

☼ **P** €€



Spacious deluxe room at the Hôtel Trianon Palace

Versailles

Map 4 G5

HOTELS

Hôtel des Roys

14 Ave de Paris, 78000 Versailles; 01 39 50 56 00; www.hotel-roys-versailles.com

Located just 5 minutes' walk from the palace, the hotel is close to the RER, shops and restaurants. It is a good option if looking for something that is not a chain hotel, in Versailles.

P €

Novotel Château de Versailles

4 Blvd St-Antoine, 78150 Le Chesnay; 01 39 54 96 96; www.novotel.com/1022

This offers classic Novotel family-friendly facilities, just 5 minutes' walk from the palace. Under-16s can stay free in their parents' room and there is a late check out on Sundays. There is a 50 per cent discount on a second room, and a children's play area.

☼ **P** €

Hôtel Trianon Palace

1 Blvd de la Reine, 78000 Versailles; 01 30 84 51 20; www.trianonpalace.com

This is one of the most serene hotels in the region. The rooms are spacious and some have park views. The Gordon Ramsay bistro, La Veranda, has a kids' menu and serves a Sunday



Deckchairs along the picturesque pool area of the L'Orangerie, Versailles

brunch. The hotel also has an indoor pool and spa, and two tennis courts. There is a skating rink at Christmas.

☼ **P** €€€

BED & BREAKFAST L'Orangerie

7 Rue Hardy, 78000 Versailles; 01 39 53 26 78; www.versailles-orangerie.com

Located just 5 minutes from the RER and the château, in an attractive part of Versailles town, this B&B has an enclosed garden and a family room with a kitchenette and garden access. There is an extra charge for use of a folding bed and the kitchenette.

☼ ☼ **P** €

Villa Versailles

6 Rue Borgnis Desbordes, 78000 Versailles; 06 14 86 90 46; www.villa-versailles.com

Located near the château, this little house in a pretty garden serves as a B&B. There is a double room upstairs and a sofa cum bed downstairs. Dinner can be provided and kids' cooking classes are available.

☼ €€

CAMPING

Huttopia Versailles

31 Rue Berthelot; 01 39 51 23 61; www.huttopia.com

The camp site is a short walk from the Palace of Versailles, and a 30-minute train ride from Paris to the nearby Porchefontaine RER station. It has cabins and wooden caravans, and a kids' club. There is a Huttopia at Rambouillet and Senonches.

☼ **P** €

Price Guide

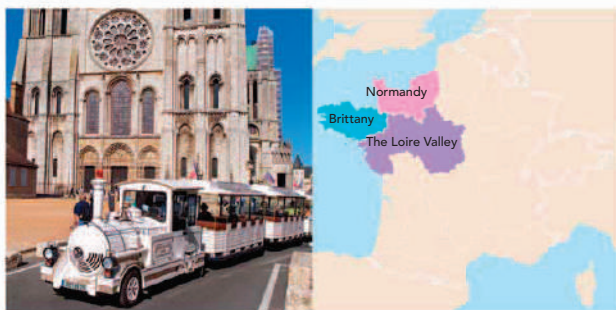
The following price ranges are based on one night's accommodation in high season for a family of four, inclusive of service charges and any additional taxes.

€ Under €200 €€ €200–500 €€€ over €500



Western France

Western France is a region of majestic rivers, splendid coastlines and sumptuous gardens. Beach resorts and fishing ports line the coast, while the Loire Valley is famed for its Renaissance châteaux and gardens, built by kings and queens. William the Conqueror, Richard the Lionheart, Joan of Arc, Leonardo da Vinci and Claude Monet are a few figures who have left their mark on the area's rich array of historic towns.



Highlights

Mont-St-Michel

Follow the footsteps of medieval pilgrims to this stunning granite abbey, surrounded by the sea during high tides (see pp152–3).

Château Royal de Blois

Visit one of the Loire Valley's most beautiful châteaux and the fascinating Maison de la Magie Robert-Houdin nearby (see pp184–5).

Les Machines de l'Île, Nantes

Ride the extraordinary mechanical elephant and watch the latest fantastic machines being built in the grand galleries of this workshop (see pp174–5).

The D-Day Beaches

Relive the biggest one-day invasion in history at the landing beaches and evocative museums and memorials. Take a look at the Bayeux Tapestry, which depicts the Norman Conquest of 1066 (see pp148–9).

Océanopolis, Brest

Travel through polar, temperate and tropical climates inhabited by marine animals (see pp162–3).

Chartres Cathedral

Marvel at this Gothic masterpiece in near perfect condition, with its impressive stained glass and sculpture (see pp188–9).

Left Crystal-clear ocean water lapping against the crags and rocks of Brittany's coast
Above left A petit train outside Chartres Cathedral, the greatest Gothic cathedral in Europe

The Best of Western France

With a remarkably varied coastline and mild climate, Western France is not just celebrated for its beaches and seafaring traditions, but also for its spectacular Gothic cathedrals, Renaissance châteaux and gardens. There are no end of things to see and do: combine historical sights and dazzling art and architecture with picnics and afternoons by the sea.

Hungry for history

Children are fascinated by the medieval island abbey of **Mont-St-Michel** (see pp152–3) and the soaring Gothic majesty of the **Chartres Cathedral** (see pp188–9) and the stories of the Norman Conquest depicted on the **Bayeux Tapestry** (see p149) that can be read like a cartoon strip. Along the Loire river, the **Château Royal de Blois** (see pp184–5) relates stories of kings and assassins, while the **Château de Chenonceau** (see p183) offers the thrill of canoeing right under its majestic arches. In **Rouen** (see pp144–5) visit the Cathédrale Notre-Dame and the excellent Impressionist works in its Musée des Beaux Arts. For towns filled with art and history, head for **Angers** (see pp178–9), **Bourges** (see pp186–7), **Le Mans** (see p179), **Saumur** (see p178) and **Chinon** (see p182). Fans of Asterix will not want to miss the megalithic sites around **Carnac** (see pp166–7),

while the fascinating spectacles and Cinéscénie at **Grand Parc Puy du Fou** (see p177) make history fun for even the youngest child.

The great outdoors

Seaside marvels hold pride of place – from the dramatic cliff arch of **Étretat** (see p147) to the wide sands of **St-Jean-de-Monts** (see p177), where older kids can learn to sand-yacht. In Finistère, take a boat out to **île d'Ouessant** (see p163), populated by the world's smallest sheep. Renowned as the "Garden of France", the Loire Valley boasts the **Château de Villandry** (see p181) with spectacular gardens. The **Terra Botanica** (see p179), a botanical theme park in Angers, is superb for whetting kids' appetites for the plant world. Everyone loves Monet's house and gardens at **Giverny** (see p146). In Brittany, follow the trail of Merlin in the **Forêt de Brocéliande** (see p160).

Below The fabulous mechanical elephant at Les Machines de l'Île, Nantes





Above Mont-St-Michel towering over the marshes

Middle A medieval combat with knights on horses at the Grand Parc Puy du Fou **Bottom** A Japanese-style bridge and lily ponds at the Fondation Claude Monet, Giverny



In a week

Start with **Chartres Cathedral** before spending a couple of days around **Tours** (see pp180–81), visiting the Loire châteaux. Children may especially like the **Château de Clos Lucé** (see p186) at Amboise, where there are models of Leonardo da Vinci's inventions; the **Château de la Ferté** (see p187), with its many fun activities; or the **Château de Cheverny** (see p185) – “Tintin's Château”. Follow this with two days by the beach in the beautiful corsair port of **St-Malo** (see p161). Stop for a day at **Mont-St-Michel** to visit the famous abbey in the bay before heading on to Bayeux, a great base for visiting the **D-Day Beaches** (see pp148–9) and its famous tapestry.

By season

By late spring, the gardens in Western France are in full glory – visit **Giverny** when the irises are in bloom. It is also a lovely time to explore arty destinations such as Gauguin's **Pont-Aven** (see pp168–9) and **Honfleur** (see p147), with its museum of the Impressionists and the Maisons Satie, an offbeat look at composer Erik Satie.

In summer, there are moving commemorations on the **D-Day Beaches**, and the historical spectacles at the **Grand Parc Puy du Fou** are in full flow. A stroll on the mechanical elephant at **Les Machines de l'Île** (see pp174–5), in Nantes, also makes for a fine outing.

Autumn is a time of apple and grape harvests, rich colours and the light beloved by artists in the **Suisse Normande** (see p151).

Winter is a great time to visit the cities and museums for a dose of culture, such as the **Mémorial de Caen** (see p150), **Océanopolis** (see pp162–3) in Brest or the museums in **Bourges**.



Western France

The west is France's maritime region *par excellence*, flanked by the English Channel and the Atlantic Ocean, and where two of the country's biggest rivers – the Loire and the Seine – meet the sea. The area offers every imaginable coastal feature, from cliff to cove to salt marsh to beach and a smattering of fascinating islands. Inland are forests, apple orchards, vineyards and gardens. While there are no mountains, there are rolling hills, known as the Suisse Normande, south of Caen. Road and rail networks are excellent.



Places of interest

■ NORMANDY

- 1 Rouen
- 2 Giverny
- 3 Dieppe
- 4 Le Havre
- 5 Honfleur
- 6 The D-Day Beaches
- 7 Cherbourg
- 8 Caen
- 9 St-Pierre-sur-Dives
- 10 Falaise
- 11 Mont-St-Michel
- 12 Granville
- 13 Coutances
- 14 Villedieu-les-Poëles
- 15 Mortain

■ BRITTANY

- 1 Rennes
- 2 Forêt de Brocéliande
- 3 Dinan
- 4 St-Malo
- 5 Océanopolis, Brest
- 6 Roscoff and the Pays du Léon
- 7 Paimpol
- 8 Douarnenez
- 9 Standing Stones of Carnac
- 10 Vannes

■ THE LOIRE VALLEY

- 1 Les Machines de l'Île, Nantes
- 2 St-Nazaire
- 3 Batz-sur-Mer
- 4 Les Sables d'Olonne
- 5 Grand Parc Puy du Fou
- 6 Abbaye Royale de Fontevraud
- 7 Saumur
- 8 Angers
- 9 Le Mans
- 10 Tours
- 11 Chinon
- 12 Château d'Ussé
- 13 Château de Chenonceau
- 14 Château Royal de Blois
- 15 Château d'Amboise
- 16 Bourges
- 17 Orléans
- 18 Chartres Cathedral



Impressive alignments of megalithic standing stones at Carnac

The Lowdown



Getting there and around

Air (see p142). **Ferry** from the UK or Ireland, linking Newhaven to Dieppe; Poole, Portsmouth and Rosslare to Cherbourg; Portsmouth and Plymouth to St-Malo; Portsmouth to Le Havre & Caen, and Plymouth, Cork & Rosslare to Roscoff. **Train** High-speed TGV trains from Paris, with links to Rouen and Le Havre, Le Mans, Rennes, Quimper and Brest, as well as Angers, Saumur, Tours, Nantes and the coast. Slower-speed trains run from Paris to Caen and northwest Normandy. TER regional trains link many towns in Normandy, Brittany, the Loire and Centre-Val de Loire; www.ter-sncf.com (in French only) lists links to the regional networks. **Bus** Buses provide links in tourist areas around Mont-St-Michel and the D-Day Beaches. Major cities have excellent urban transport: buses (www.crea-astuce.fr) in Rouen; métro and buses (www.star.fr) in Rennes; buses and tramways (www.tan.fr) in Nantes; buses (www.fillebleu.fr) in Tours, and buses and trams (www.reseau-tao.fr) in Orléans. **Car Avis** (www.avis.fr) has branches in most towns.



Supermarkets Essentials can be bought from branches of Intermarché, Carrefour, Super U, Monoprix and Leclerc.

Markets Most cities have a covered market, usually open Tue–Sun. A list of markets is available from the local tourist and Département offices.



Opening hours Many shops are closed on Monday, but open on Sunday morning.



Pharmacies There is at least one pharmacy, identified by a green cross outside, in each town and many villages. A list in the window will give details of the nearest *pharmacie de garde* open outside normal hours (on Sundays and at night). They are also listed in local newspapers and on www.pharmaciesdegarde.com.



Toilets Towns have municipal public toilets, but do carry a supply of emergency toilet paper and hand wipes. Cities have pay or free street toilets that automatically self-clean.



Magnificent façade of the Château d'Ussé, Rigny-Usé

0 km 50
0 miles 50



Spectacular cliffs lining the pebbly beach at Étretat

Western France Regional Airports

Brest and Nantes are the busiest airports in Western France, both linked to cities around Europe and France. Some of the smaller airports rely on low-cost flights from the UK and Ireland. For families travelling to France from outside of Europe, Paris (see p86) will be the hub. While Normandy and the Loire Valley are easy to reach from there by train, Brittany is a bit further – a connecting flight might be worth it.

Deauville

Just 5 km (3 miles) east of Deauville, this airport offers chartered and direct flights to London with Ryanair. The airport is easy to get around. There is a restaurant.

Rennes-St Jacques

Located 8 km (5 miles) southwest of Rennes, just off the *rocade* (bypass), this airport is used by Air France, Flybe, Vueling, Hop! and Aer Lingus. Bus 57 (€1.50), which goes to the city centre, has a stop near the airport. Families with a lot to carry may want to take a taxi (€20). The airport services are easy to locate. There is a restaurant and a café.

Dinard-Pleurtuit-St Malo

The airport is situated 5 km (3 miles) southeast of Dinard on the D64 and 13 km (8 miles) from St-Malo. Ryanair and Aurigny fly here. There are no shuttle buses, but taxis (€13 for Dinard; €25–30 for St-Malo) and car hire are available at the airport. The airport is small and easy to get around. There is a restaurant. The nearest hotel is the Kyriad Saint-Malo Dinard (02 99 20 30 30; www.kyriadsaintmalo.fr), with family rooms.

Brest-Bretagne

In Guipavas, 10 km (6 miles) northwest of Brest, just off the E50, Brest-Bretagne is served by Air France and Chlair (to Paris and Lyon), and Flybe, Cityjet, Volotea, Hop!, Jetairfly, easyJet, Vueling,



A plane preparing for a flight at the Deauville airport

Finist' Air and Ryanair to other destinations. Shuttle buses (€1.50) link the airport to the centre of Brest and the train station. There is a restaurant and sandwich/crêperie/bar. Hôtel Escale Oceania Brest (02 98 02 32 83; www.oceaniahotels.com) is pleasant and closest to the airport.

Lorient-Bretagne Sud

This airport is located 10 km (6 miles) west of Lorient on the D163 and is served by Ryanair (from Southampton in Summer). It is linked to Lorient's city centre by taxi. It is a small airport and closes at night. There is no restaurant. The closest hotel is the Domaine de Kerbastic (*Route de Locmaria, 56520 Guidel*; 02 97 65 98 01). There are several other accommodation options in Lorient.

Nantes Atlantique

Nantes Atlantique is 10 km (6 miles) southwest of Nantes, just off the *périphérique* (ring road) that encircles the city. Flights connect Nantes Atlantique with Bristol,

Southampton, Montreal, London, Liverpool, Manchester, Dublin and Shannon, as well as many other European cities. An airport shuttle (€7.50) runs every 30 minutes (every hour on Sunday) from the train station and Nantes centre, where the city's three tram lines meet. Although this is one of the biggest airports in the west, it is easy to get around. There is a brasserie and several cafés. The Hôtel Escale Oceania Nantes Airport (02 40 32 14 14; www.oceaniahotels.com) has family rooms.

Angers Loire

British Airways flights fly from London City Airport to the small Angers Loire in Marcé, 27 km (17 miles) east of Angers, just off the A11. There is no public transport, just taxis. It has a snack bar.

Tours Val de Loire

The airport is 6 km (4 miles) north of Tours, just off the A10. It is used by Ryanair flights. Alphacar shuttles (€5) go from the airport to Tours train station and depart from there two hours before each flight. The airport is small and easy to get around. There is a restaurant.

The Lowdown

Angers Loire 02 41 33 50 20; www.angersloireaeroport.fr

Brest-Bretagne 02 98 32 86 00; www.brest.aeroport.fr

Deauville 02 31 65 65 65; www.deauville.aeroport.fr

Dinard-Pleurtuit-St-Malo 02 99 46 18 46; www.dinard.aeroport.fr

Lorient-Bretagne Sud 02 97 87 21 50; www.lorient.aeroport.fr

Nantes Atlantique 08 92 56 88 00; www.nantes.aeroport.fr

Rennes-St Jacques 02 99 29 60 00; www.rennes.aeroport.fr

Tours Val de Loire 02 47 49 37 00; www.tours.aeroport.fr

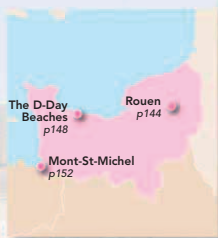


The arrival terminal of Nantes Atlantique airport bustling with travellers

Normandy

Named for the Norsemen, or Vikings, who landed here in the 9th century, Normandy is situated on the English Channel, which has shaped much of its history. The D-Day Beaches evoke World War II, but there are also handsome old resorts, such as Honfleur and Deauville, and inland pastoral landscapes. To the west is the fantastic medieval abbey of Mont-St-Michel.

Below Looking across the Old Harbour to the "skyscrapers" of Quai Ste-Catherine, Honfleur



① Rouen

Monet's cathedral

Rouen was badly damaged during World War II: first in 1940, then during the D-Day landings. Despite major post-war rebuilding, the city's medieval core of half-timbered houses is very evocative, with its Gothic cathedral as the centrepiece. During the Hundred Years' War, Rouen was the seat of the English occupation, and Joan of Arc was burnt at the stake here, while in the 19th century the city played a crucial role in the Impressionist movement.



The Cathédrale Notre-Dame

Key Sights



① **Pont Gustave-Flaubert**
Finished in 2008, this is the world's highest drawbridge, allowing ocean vessels to sail up the Seine to Rouen's port.



② **Place du Vieux-Marché**
Joan of Arc was burnt here in 1431. A statue of her stands in the square, along with the strikingly modern Église de Jeanne d'Arc.

③ **Palais de Justice**
Begun in 1499, the façade of this former seat of Normandy's parliament rises into a forest of pointy pinnacles.



④ **Gros Horloge**
A landmark Renaissance tower, it has a 16th-century astronomic clock, with workings from 1389. Now a city museum, its top floor offers stunning views of the cathedral.

⑤ **Musée des Beaux Arts**
Along with one of Monet's cathedral paintings, this museum displays other Impressionists and works by Surrealist Marcel Duchamp.

⑥ **Musée d'Histoire Naturelle**
This museum's displays range from butterflies to Samurai armour.

⑦ **Abbatale St-Ouen**
Founded in 750 to house the relics of Rouen's bishop, this Gothic church measures a massive 137 m (450 ft) in length. It has a magnificent organ in a Baroque loft from 1630.



⑧ **Cathédrale Notre-Dame**
The cathedral has a unique 16th-century "Butter Tower", which was paid for by the locals in exchange for the right to eat butter during Lent.

The Lowdown

Map reference 4 E4 (Seine-Maritime). Gros Horloge: Rue du Gros Horloge. Musée des Beaux Arts: Esplanade Marcel Duchamp; www.rouen-musees.com. Musée d'Histoire Naturelle: 198 Rue Beauvoisine. Abbatale St-Ouen: Pl du Général de Gaulle. Cathédrale Notre-Dame: 3 Rue St-Romain; www.cathedrale-rouen.net

Train from Paris

Visitor information 25 Pl de la Cathédrale; 02 32 08 32 40; www.rouentourisme.com

Open Gros Horloge: Apr–Oct: 10am–1pm & 2–7pm Tue–Sun; Nov–Mar: 2–6pm Tue–Sun. Musée des Beaux Arts: 10am–6pm Wed–Mon. Musée d'Histoire Naturelle: 2–5:30pm Tue–Sun. Abbatale St-Ouen: 10am–12:30pm & 2–5pm Tue–Thu, Sat & Sun (till 6pm Apr–Oct). Cathédrale Notre-Dame: Apr–Oct: 2–7pm Mon, 9am–7pm Tue–Sat, 8am–6pm Sun; Nov–Mar: 8am–6pm Sun, 2–6pm Mon, 9am–noon & 2–6pm Tue–Sat

Prices Gros Horloge: €18–26; under 6s free. Musée des Beaux Arts: €10; EU residents

under 26 free. Musée d'Histoire Naturelle: €7–14; under 18s free



Skipping the queue Buy a €10 City Pass online (www.monpassenliberte.com); it offers discounts to 200 hotels, restaurants and attractions listed on the website.



Guided tours Contact the tourist office for details.



Age range All ages



Activities Take a horse-drawn carriage to discover the historic centre of Rouen. Guided tours, 30 minutes each, are arranged by the tourist office from Jul–Aug. On summer evenings, head

Letting off steam

There are fenced playgrounds in the charming **Jardins de l'Hôtel de Ville** (*Rue des Faulx, 76000; 02 32 08 32 40*). Race around the indoor track at **Rouen Espace Karting** (*149-169 Chemin du Croisset, 76000; 02 32 12 34 05; www.rouen-espace-karting.fr*). Go swimming or ice-skating at the indoor and outdoor pools at the **Centre Sportif Dr Duchêne** (*Île Lacroix, 76000; 02 35 07 94 70*). Ring ahead for hours and availability for karting and ice-skating.



Outside terrace of Brasserie Paul near the Cathédrale Notre-Dame

Eat and drink

Picnic: under €20; **Snacks:** €20–45; **Real meal:** €45–90; **Family treat:** over €90 (based on a family of four)

PICNIC Les Halles (*Pl du Vieux Marché, 76000*) stocks great goodies for picnics. Square André Maurois in the centre of the city is a good place for a picnic.

for the sound and light show at the Cathédrale Notre-Dame.



Allow A day



Festivals Les Hivernales des Cuivres, brass and vocal concerts (Feb–Mar). Foire St-Romain, one of the biggest funfairs in France (mid-Oct–mid-Nov)

Good family value?

Rouen makes for an affordable day out for culture and history, even if a lot in the city is not specifically oriented to kids.

SNACKS Dame Cakes (*70 Rue de St-Romain, 76000; 02 35 07 49 31*) is a tea room that serves tasty hot chocolates and cakes.

REAL MEAL Brasserie Paul (*1 Pl de la Cathédrale, 76000; 02 35 71 86 07; www.brasserie-paul.com*) is the oldest brasserie in Rouen, specializing in free-range chicken, varieties of cheese and *tarte tatin* (apple pie).

FAMILY TREAT Gill Côté Bistro (*8–9 Quai de la Bourse, 76000; 02 35 71 16 14; www.gill.fr*) is a laid-back bistro run by a Michelin-starred chef, serving savoury tarts in flaky pastry and dishes such as roast veal with herbs, tomatoes, fennel, asparagus and olives.

Shopping

Head for **La Chocolatière** (*18 Rue Guillaume-le-Conquérant, 76000; 02 35 71 00 79*), one of the most famous chocolate-makers in France, housed in a sleek grey shop.

Faïences Saint-Romain (*56 Rue Saint Romain, 76000; 02 35 07 12 30*) sells a vast selection of hand-crafted Rouen porcelain.

Find out more

DIGITAL Read a kids-oriented article about Impressionism on <http://artsmarts4kids.blogspot.fr/2007/09/impressionism.html>.

FILM Over 20 films have featured Joan of Arc. The first film, *Jeanne d'Arc*, was also one of the earliest films ever to be released in 1895.



Artistically sculpted topiaries engage in a fight in the garden of Château Gaillard

Next stop...

CHÂTEAU GAILLARD Located 32 km (19 miles) to the south, is Les Andelys (train to Vernon, then taxi), site of the fabulous ruins of Château Gaillard (lesandelys.com/chateau-gaillard). It was designed and built in one single year, 1198, at a huge cost by Richard the Lionheart, then Duke of Normandy and King of England.

KIDS' CORNER

Find out more...

- 1 Whose statue stands in Place du Vieux-Marché?
- 2 Why is the Butter Tower of the Cathédrale Notre-Dame so called?
- 3 What is the name of the world's highest drawbridge located in Rouen?
- 4 Where do you think the Impressionists preferred to paint?

Answers at the bottom of the page.



CHANGING TASTES

Claude Monet was so fascinated by the effects of light on stone that he painted the Cathédrale Notre-Dame over 30 times, in different weather and times of day. He offered to sell his works to the French state, only to be turned down; the art budget that year went instead to buy one of Napoleon's tea tables!



A critic's opinion

Famous artist Claude Monet gave Impressionism its name in 1872, when he painted *Impression, soleil levant*, showing a sunrise. One critic scoffed that it was certainly an "impression" of a painting – even wallpaper looked more finished! In the Musée des Beaux Arts, compare the dreamy Impressionists with the more realistic looking paintings people were used to seeing.



Answers: 1 Joan of Arc. 2 The locals paid for the tower in exchange for the right to eat butter during Lent. 3 Fontaine-Flaubert. 4 They preferred to paint outdoors.

② Giverny

Monet's paradise garden

In 1883, Impressionist painter Claude Monet moved to a lovely house in the small village of Giverny. He spent much of the rest of his life painting the lily pond and gardens, which he designed to create a riot of shapes and colours. Known as the **Fondation Claude Monet**, the gardens and the house, with its delightful yellow and blue kitchen and scores of Japanese prints, have been carefully preserved as they were in the artist's lifetime. Few historic houses can match its simple beauty or popularity. Nearby, the **Musée des Impressionismes** hosts temporary exhibitions sometimes featuring top Impressionist works, either general collections or devoted to certain artists – many with a connection to Normandy.

The Lowdown

Map reference 4 F5

Address 27620 (Eure).

Fondation Claude Monet: 84 Rue Claude Monet; 02 32 51 28 21; www.fondation-monet.fr. Musée des Impressionismes: 99 Rue Claude Monet; 02 32 51 94 65; www.museedesimpressionismesgiverny.com

Train from Rouen or Paris to Vernon, then shuttle bus

Visitor information 36 Rue Carnot, 27620; 02 32 54 48 05; www.vernon-visite.org

Open Fondation Claude Monet & Musée des Impressionismes: Apr–Oct: daily (arrive before 10am to avoid queues)

Eat and drink *Real meal* Hôtel Baudy (81 Rue Claude Monet, 27620; 02 32 21 10 03; Apr–Oct), is where American and French Impressionists once stayed; kids' menu and lovely gardens.

Family treat L'Esquisse Gourmande (73 Bis Rue Claude Monet, 27620; 02 32 51 86 95) serves grilled salmon and camembert crumble.

Festival Festival Normandie Impressioniste, Impressionist theatre, light and sound shows (May–Sep).

Letting off steam

Play in the gardens of **Hôtel Baudy**. Or hop on to an old-fashioned train on the **CFVE** (www.cfve.org) for a ride through the pretty Eure valley. The ride starts in Pacy-sur-Eure.

Prices given are for a family of four



Boats lining the jetties in Dieppe's busy marina

which is located 18 km (11 miles) southwest of Giverny. Rides are available mostly in June.

③ Dieppe

The ivory port

Named as *djepp* (deep) by the Vikings, Dieppe's port was always a prize. The town had a famous map-making school in the 15th century and sent explorers and corsairs to the New World, reminders of which appear across the town. In **Église St-Jacques**, a 16th-century frieze in the treasury depicts indigenous life in America, Africa and the Indian Ocean. Dieppe was the main ivory client in the Côte d'Ivoire: the 15th-century **Château Musée** shows a collection of sculpted ivories, ship models, maps and Impressionist paintings. Films, reconstructions and models at **L'Estran-La Cité de la Mer** explain the practical aspects of boat building, fishing, marine biology and more. It also has an aquarium of sea creatures from Dieppe's waters.

The Lowdown

Map reference 4 E3

Address 76200 (Seine-Maritime). Église St-Jacques: Pl St-Jacques, 76200; 02 35 84 21 65. Château Musée: Rue de Chastes (on the west cliff); 02 35 06 61 99.

L'Estran-La Cité de la Mer: 37 Rue de l'Asile Thomas; 02 35 06 93 20; www.estrancitedelamer.fr

Train from Rouen and Paris

Visitor information Pont Jehan Ango, 76200; 02 32 14 40 60; www.dieppetourisme.com

Open Château Musée: daily; Oct–May: closed Tue. L'Estran-La Cité de la Mer: daily

Eat and drink *Real meal* Le Calvados (19 Rue Lemoine, 76200; 02 35 84 20 11; closed Sun) offers home-style Normandy cooking. **Family treat** La Victoire 2 (2–4 Grande Rue du Pollet, 76200; 02 35 84 15 92) serves excellent fresh seafood.

Festival Festival International de Cerfs-Volants, the biggest kite-flying festival in the world (Aug)

Letting off steam

Head to Dieppe's beach. Or take bus 61 west to Varengeville-sur-Mer to visit the classic gardens of **Parc du Bois-des-Moutiers** (www.boisdesmoutiers.com), designed by Sir Edwin Lutyens. It is the only Arts and Crafts mansion outside of Britain. Go to the **Manoir d'Ango** (www.manoirdango.fr), home of 16th-century pirate Jean Ango.

④ Le Havre

Comeback city

Founded at the mouth of the Seine, in the 16th century by François I, the busy port of Le Havre suffered major



The exquisite lily pond at the Fondation Claude Monet, Giverny

destruction during World War II. In the 1960s, the city centre was rebuilt in concrete and glass by famous architect Auguste Perret – buildings designated as a World Heritage Site in 2005. His students designed the ship-shaped **Musée Malraux**, home to the second-best collection of Impressionist art in France, after Paris's Musée d'Orsay. Take the LER commuter train to Montivilliers to visit the **Abbaye de Montivilliers**, founded in the 7th century, ruined during the French Revolution, and now an interactive museum on the history of Normandy.



Personnages sur la plage de Trouville by Boudin, Honfleur

Letting off steam

Take bus 24 north to the beaches of Étretat – with walks along Normandy's most spectacular cliffs. The same bus goes to Fécamp, home to **Woody Park** (www.woody-park.com). Kids can take part in a tree-top adventure course, play treasure hunt and paintball, or go sea kayaking.

The Lowdown

Map reference 3 D4
Address 76200 (Seine-Maritime). Musée Malraux: 2 Blvd Clémenceau, 76600; 02 35 19 62 62; www.muma-lehavre.fr. Abbaye de Montivilliers: Jardin de l'Abbaye, 76290; 02 35 30 96 66; www.abbaye-montivilliers.fr

Train from Rouen

Visitor information 186 Blvd Clémenceau, 76600; 02 32 74 04 04; www.lehavretourisme.com

Open Musée Malraux: Wed–Mon. Abbaye de Montivilliers: Apr–Sep: daily; Oct–Mar: closed Mon

Eat and drink *Real meal* La Petite Auberge (32 Rue Ste Adresse, 76600; 02 35 46 27 32), a lovely timbered restaurant, serves succulent meats. **Family treat** L'Orchidée (41 Rue du Général Faïdherbe, 76600; 02 76 25 38 03; www.restaurant-orchidee.com) prepares delicious seafood.

Festival Les Z'estival, summer festival with music & theatre (Jul–Aug)

5 Honfleur

The perfect little harbour

The Pont de Normandie crosses the Seine estuary to Honfleur, Normandy's most engaging port. It has a tiny inner harbour lined by unique 17th-century "skyscrapers" and ringed by restaurant terraces. One of the several landmarks in town is the 15th-century church of Ste-Catherine, built entirely of wood. The **Musée Eugène Boudin** has works by the Honfleur-born pre-Impressionist artist and teacher and friend of Monet, Eugène Boudin (1824–98). The **Maisons Satie**, in the birthplace of avant-garde composer Erik Satie (1866–1925), is an offbeat "museum" that uses sound, light and modern technology to present his music in many fun, imaginative ways.

The Lowdown

Map reference 3 D4
Address 14600 (Calvados). Musée Eugène Boudin: Rue de l'Homme de Bois; 02 31 89 54 00; www.musees-honfleur.fr. Maisons Satie: 88 Rue Haute; 02 31 89 11 11; www.musees-honfleur.fr

Train to Deauville or Le Havre, then bus 20

Visitor information Quai Lepaulmier, 14600; 02 31 89 23 30; www.ot-honfleur.fr

Open Musée Eugène Boudin: closed Tue. Maisons Satie: Wed–Mon; closed Jan–mid-Feb

Eat and drink *Real meal* La Cidrerie (26 Pl Hamelin, 14600; 02 31 89 59 85; Oct–Apr: closed Tue & Wed) serves stuffed crêpes. **Family treat** La Lieutenance (12 Pl Ste-Catherine, 14600; 02 31 89 07 52; www.restaurant-honfleur.com; Wed–Sun) cooks delicious French classics.

Festival Fête des Marins, parade of boats adorned with paper flowers (May)

Letting off steam

Honfleur's beach is safe for kids, but has dismal views of Le Havre. Take bus 20 west to the beaches in chic Deauville, the favourite of film stars, with its seaside villas or the slightly more down-to-earth Trouville-sur-Mer with the **Natur Aquarium** (www.natur-aquarium.fr). At Trouville, kids aged 6 plus can learn to surf at **North Shore** (72 Rue Bains, 14360 Trouville-sur-Mer; 02 31 87 28 98).

KIDS' CORNER

Honfleur's Quirky Composer

Erik Satie's music often puzzled his audiences. Once before a recital, he announced, "Those who do not understand are asked to assume an attitude of submissiveness and inferiority." Find out in **Maisons Satie**:

- 1 What fabric did Satie like to wear?
- 2 What did he collect?
- 3 What was stuffed in the piano?



Answers at the bottom of the page.

SET UP YOUR EASEL

Monet lived at Giverny for 43 years and never tired of painting the gardens and water lily pond. When you visit, bring some crayons and a pad of paper, pick a small area in the gardens and use bold little strokes of colour to create an "Impressionistic effect. The bolder the better!"

The fortune and misfortune of Jean Ango

Dieppe shipowner Jean Ango, a close friend of King François I, once had as many as 70 ships. He became very rich through competing with Spain and Portugal in voyages of exploration to the Americas, which he combined with pirate raids. One of his captains even stole part

of the fabulous treasure the Spanish conquistador Hernán Cortes had taken from the

Aztec Emperor Montezuma. After François I died in 1547, Ango lost royal protection and died in poverty.



Answers: 1 Grey velvet. His nickname was the 'Velvet Gentleman'. 2 Umbrellas. There were over a 100 in his one room when he died. 3 Unopened letters.

⑥ The D-Day Beaches

Operation Overlord: the biggest invasion in history

The Normandy landings on 6 June 1944 were an undertaking that involved over a year of planning and secrecy. Supported by 5,000 ships and 13,000 aircraft, 160,000 Allied soldiers landed on this 80-km (50-mile) stretch of coast, and gained a foothold against the defences of the Germans' Atlantic Wall. Though the landings were a turning point in the battle for the western front, they were only the start of the Battle of Normandy.

Key Sights

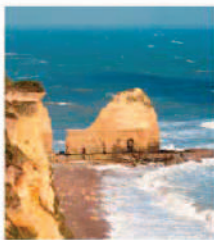


Cemetery near Omaha beach



① Musée Airborne This museum in Ste-Mère-Église honours the American 82nd and 101st Airborne Divisions who parachuted into the town on D-Day, during which Private John Steele's parachute got entangled in the church tower.

② Omaha Beach The Americans faced the fiercest fighting here. Rangers scaled and captured the battle-scarred Pointe du Hoc. Nearby is the huge US military cemetery.



③ Arromanches-les-Bains The ruins of the prefabricated "Mulberry" harbour, Port Artificiel, can be seen here. Head for the Musée du Débarquement and Arromanches 360, a circular cinema room with nine screens.



④ Centre Juno Beach Canadian troops landed on this beach. The museum honours all 45,000 Canadians who died in World War II.

⑤ Mémorial Pégasus This museum focuses on a unit of the British 6th Airborne Division, sent in by gliders to surprise the Germans and take the bridge code-named Pegasus.

⑥ Grand Bunker-Musée du Mur-de-l'Atlantique This tower has exhibits on the 2,000 German fortifications built by 300,000 men. It also covers some of German Field Marshal Rommel's clever but fortunately unused ideas.

⑦ Batterie Merville Overlooking Sword Beach, a museum evokes how this German stronghold was captured by the British 9th Battalion, the Parachute Regiment, with only 150 of the planned 750 troops.

The Lowdown

Map reference 3 C4
Address 14000 & fiercest 00000 (Calvados & Manche). Musée Airborne: 14 Rue Eisenhower, 50480 Ste-Mère; www.airborne-museum.org. Musée du Débarquement: Pl du 6 Juin, 14117 Arromanches-les-Bains; www.musee-arromanches.fr. Arromanches 360: Chemin de Calvaire, 14117 Arromanches-les-Bains; www.memorial-caen.fr. Centre Juno Beach: Voie des Français-Libres, 14470 Courseulles-sur-Mer; www.juno-beach.org. Mémorial Pégasus: Ave du Major Howard, 14860 Ranville; www.memorial-pegasus.org. Grand Bunker-Musée du

Mur-de-l'Atlantique: Ave 6 Juin, 14150 Oustréham; <http://musee.dugrandbunker.com>. Batterie Merville: Pl du 9ème Bataillon, 14810 Merville Franceville; www.batterie-merville.com

Bus Verts (www.busverts.fr) links sights to both Caen (buses 1 & 3) and Bayeux (buses 70 & 74). A special daily D-Day bus runs along the coast in Jul and Aug.

Visitor information Pont St-Jean, 14400 Bayeux; 02 31 51 28 28. www.bessin-normandie.com provides information about the D-Day beaches.

Open Musée Airborne and Mémorial Pégasus: closed Jan.

Musée du Débarquement, Arromanches 360: closed Jan–mid-Feb. Centre Juno Beach and Grand Bunker-Musée du Mur-de-l'Atlantique: closed Jan. Batterie Merville: 15 Mar–15 Nov (book in advance)

Prices Musée Airborne €22–32; under 6s free. Musée du Débarquement: €26–36. Arromanches 360: €49; under 10s free. Centre Juno Beach: €26–36; under 8s free. Mémorial Pégasus: €22–32. Grand Bunker-Musée du Mur-de-l'Atlantique €24–34; under 6s free. Batterie Merville: €20–30; under 6s free

Letting off steam

Kick up sand on the Plage de Riva Bella in Ouistreham. If it rains, take bus 11 or 23 to the indoor **Ouga Park** (02 31 30 26 00), located 5 minutes south of Caen, with bouncy castles, electric karts, art workshops, laser games, bowling and magic golf.



Beach huts at Riva Bella beach in Ouistreham

Eat and drink

Picnic: under €20; Snacks: €20–45; Real meal: €45–90; Family treat: over €90 (based on a family of four)

PICNIC Carrefour (Route de Vaux-sur-Aure, 14400 Bayeux; 02 31 92 06 62) stocks provisions for picnics on Omaha Beach.

SNACKS Café Gondrée (12 Ave Commandant Kieffer, 14970 Bénouville; 02 31 44 62 25), near the Pegasus Bridge, was the first house to be liberated on D-Day. Today, it offers light snacks and hosts a small exhibition.

REAL MEAL La Sapinière (100 Rue de la 2ème Infanterie US, 14710 St-Laurent-sur-Mer; 02 31 92 71 72; www.la-sapiniere.fr; closed Nov–early Mar), surrounded by lawns, is an informal restaurant by Omaha Beach that serves moules-frites

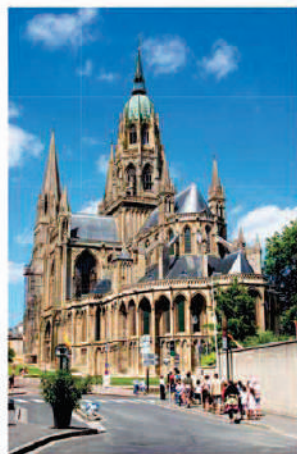
(mussels and french fries), salads, sandwiches and also excellent dessert waffles.

FAMILY TREAT Le Lion d'Or (71 Rue St-Jean, 14400 Bayeux; 02 31 92 06 90; www.liondor-bayeux.fr; closed Mon, Tue & Sat lunch) is a kid-friendly gourmet restaurant that serves velvety chestnut soup and grilled bass with passion fruit chutney.

Find out more

DIGITAL Go to www.britannica.com and search “D-Day” and www.army.mil/d-day/ for photos and videos of D-Day. Play a strategy game based on the event on www.schoolshistory.org.uk/dday.htm.

FILM Watch *The Longest Day* (1962), about Operation Overlord’s build-up and D-Day from the perspective of the Allies, the Germans and the French Resistance.



The spectacular Gothic Cathédrale Notre-Dame in Bayeux

Next step...

BAYEUX The first city to be liberated in France during World War II, Bayeux boasts the **Cathédrale Notre-Dame** (6 Rue du Bienvenu, 14400; 02 31 92 01 85), but above all the Bayeux Tapestry – commissioned for the cathedral’s inauguration in 1077. The 70-m (230-ft) embroidered “comic strip” tells the story of the Battle of Hastings, and is now in the **Musée de la Tapisserie** (www.tapisserie-bayeux.fr). The **Musée-mémorial de la Bataille de Normandie** (02 31 51 46 90) exhibits memorabilia that recounts the harrowing battles after D-Day.

KIDS' CORNER

In the museums, find out...

- 1 The French call D-Day “Jour J”. Both the initials stand for the same word. What is it?
- 2 How many “Mulberries” were there?
- 3 How did paratroopers surprise the Germans the night before the D-Day invasion?
- 4 When the rangers scaled Pointe du Hoc, what did they find there?

Answers at the bottom of the page.



FEARSOME BATTLE

The Battle of Normandy lasted until the end of August 1944, costing 425,000 Allied and German casualties. An estimated 15–20,000 French civilians were killed as well.



Napping on D-Day

In the months that led up to D-Day, the Allies’ strength in the air stopped the Germans from conducting surveillance flights that would have revealed the massive build-up around Portsmouth, on the south coast of England. Some German pilots were “allowed” to fly over the easterly county of Kent and its coast, where they photographed dummy landings, inflatable tanks and planes. The Germans, who thought that the landings would happen further north around Calais, were caught napping on D-Day.



Answers: 1 It stands for “day” and just inland and damaged them bombed, but the rangers found them moved the real guns, fearing they’d be just made noise! 4 The six field guns were taken! The Germans had moved the real guns, fearing they’d be in a storm. 3 They jumped out of gliders. the one for Omaha Beach was wrecked beginning of an operation. 2 Two, but was a common military term for the

- Skipping the queue** A Normandien Pass (www.normandiememoire.com), available at the D-Day sights, offers discounts on other sights.
- Guided tours** Contact the tourist office for details.
- Age range** 7 plus
- Allow** At least a day
- Toilets** In the museums
- Festival** Festival d’Arromanches, a festival of classical music (Jul)

Good family value?

A fantastic and moving educational experience for children, along with fun at the beaches.

7 Cherbourg

A Viking ship and a submarine

Set on the tip of the rugged granite Cotentin peninsula, Cherbourg has the world's largest artificial port. See it in its entirety from the lofty Fort du Roule, which now houses the **Musée de la Libération**, dedicated to the Battle of Cherbourg in 1944.

Cherbourg was a big transatlantic port in the 19th and 20th centuries, but has converted its massive Art Deco port of 1933 into the **Cité de la Mer**, a museum filled with good interactive exhibits on the oceans and their exploration throughout history. Visit the 11-m (36-ft) high aquarium, which is filled with over 1,000 tropical fish, or explore France's first nuclear submarine *Redoutable*, the largest in the world that is open for visits. Also, have a look at the *Dreknor*, a replica of a 9th-century Viking ship at the Quai de Caligny and the botanical gardens in Parc Emmanuel Liáis, where the displays of the **Musée d'Histoire Naturelle** remain as they were in 1910.



The colourful and traditional Monday market in St-Pierre-sur-Dives

Letting off steam

Take an hour-long cruise around Cherbourg's harbour aboard the *Port Liberté* (02 33 78 19 29; mid-Jul–Aug), departing from either the Cité de la Mer or Pont Toumant.

8 Caen

A city of war and peace

Caen was a simple village in 1060 when Duke William of Normandy built the Château de Caen. Today, the château houses the **Musée de Normandie**, which displays exhibits focusing on the Gallo-Romans and Merovingians, as well as lace and cider and the **Musée des Beaux Arts** with some fine Old Master paintings, including Perugino's *Marriage of the Virgin*, French 19th-century art and temporary exhibitions. William lies buried in the **Abbaye aux Hommes**, which he built in 1067. It is attached to the Église St-Etienne. His wife Matilda lies in the more graceful **Abbaye aux Dames**, built in 1066.

Much of Caen was ruined during the Battle of Normandy in 1944. The massive multimedia **Mémorial de Caen** is one of Normandy's main sights vividly retelling the story of the D-Day campaign and other defining moments of the 20th century.

Letting off steam

Play in the Parc du Château, housed within the château's walls. It has the biggest playground in the city centre, and loads of car-free running room.



Underwater exploration vessel in the Cité de la Mer, Cherbourg

The Lowdown

Map reference 3 B3
Address 50100 (Manche).
 Musée de la Libération: Fort du Roule; 02 33 20 14 12; www.ville-cherbourg.fr. Cité de la Mer: Gare Maritime Transatlantique; 02 33 20 26 26; www.citedelamer.com. Musée d'Histoire Naturelle: 19 Rue Bonhome; 02 33 53 51 61

Train from Caen

Visitor information 2 Quai Alexandre III, 50100; 02 33 93 52 02; www.cherbourg-tourisme.com

Open Musée de la Libération & Musée d'Histoire Naturelle: Tue–Sun. Cité de la Mer: year round (Nov–Dec: closed Mon; Jan: closed three weeks)

Eat and drink Snacks Rapid Pizza (31 Rue au Blé, 50100; 02 33 53 30 44) is a good bet for pizza, salads and Ben & Jerry's ice creams. **Real meal** La Marina (30 Quai de Qualigny, 50100; 02 33 43 51 80; www.la-marina-cherbourg.com; closed Mon in winter) specializes in seafood platters.

Festivals Le Mois des Jardins, city garden tours (mid-May–mid-Jun). Festival of children's books (late-May/early-Jun)

The Lowdown

Map reference 3 D4
Address 14000 (Calvados).
 Musée de Normandie: Esplanade du Château; 02 31 30 47 60; www.musee-de-normandie.caen.fr. Musée des Beaux Arts: Esplanade du Château; 02 31 30 47 70; www.mba.caen.fr. Abbaye aux Hommes: Esplanade Jean-Marie Louvel; 02 31 30 42 81. Abbaye aux Dames: Pl de la Reine-Mathilde; 02 31 06 98 98; www.cr-basse-normandie.fr. Mémorial de Caen: Esplanade Général Eisenhower, 14050; 02 31 06 06 45; www.memorial-caen.fr

Train from Paris

Visitor information Pl St Pierre, 14000; 02 31 27 14 14; www.caen-tourisme.fr

Open Musée de Normandie: Nov–May: Wed–Mon; Jun–Oct: daily. Musée des Beaux Arts: Wed–Mon. Abbaye aux Hommes: 9:30am, 11am, 2:30pm & 4pm Mon–Fri. Abbaye aux Dames: 2:30–4pm daily. Mémorial de Caen: Feb–Oct: daily; mid-Nov–Dec: Tue–Sun

Eat and drink Snacks Boulangerie Paul (14 Blvd Yves Guillou, 14000; 02 31 23 76 45) is good for sandwiches and cakes. **Real meal** Maître Corbeau (8 Rue Buquet, 14000; 02 31 93 93 00; www.maitre-corbeau.com; closed lunch Sat & Mon, Sun) is a cheerful restaurant that specializes in delicious fondues and also chocolate desserts.

9 St-Pierre-sur-Dives

Tiny furniture and fountains

The attractive market town of St-Pierre-sur-Dives has a medieval market hall and ornate Renaissance choir stalls in an abbey church that celebrated its 1,000th birthday in 2011. Just 6 km (4 miles) south of the centre is the elegant 17th-century **Château de Vendevure**. It has a great collection of miniature furniture, gardens with fountains and a maze.

Letting off steam

Go for a swim in St-Pierre's outdoor pool (*Rue des Sports*, 14170; 02 31 20 74 99). Take a taxi 10 km (6 miles) north to Mézidon-Canon to visit the 18th-century **Château de Canon** (www.otourisme.com), with a stunning well-preserved English-French garden.

The Lowdown

Map reference 3 D5

Address 14170 (Calvados).
Château de Vendevure: Route de Falaise; 02 31 40 93 83;
www.vendevure.com

Train TER from Caen

Visitor information Rue St-Benoît, 14170; 02 31 20 97 90; www.mairie-saint-pierre-sur-dives.fr

Open Château de Vendevure: Apr pm & May-Sep: daily; Oct: Sun; Nov: school hols pm

Eat and drink Snacks La Pomme à Cidre (134 Rue de Falaise, 14170; 02 31 20 39 63; closed Wed dinner & Thu) offers delicious crêpes. **Real meal** Auberge de la Dives (27 Blvd Collas, 14170; 02 31 20 50 50; closed Mon dinner & Tue) serves traditional Norman cuisine.

10 Falaise

William the Conqueror's hometown

In 1024, William the Conqueror was born in Falaise's castle, today known as the **Château Guillaume-le-Conquérant**, where his colourful life is covered in a non-stop audio-visual presentation.

The castle had to be extensively restored after the fierce battle here in August 1944: Hitler had hoped to bottle the Allies up in Normandy at the Falaise Gap, but it was the German Army that got trapped in



William's statue at the entrance to Château Guillaume-le-Conquérant

the "Cauldron of Death" between Falaise, Mortain and Argentan. On a lighter side, there is the **Musée André Lemaître** dedicated to the artist born in Falaise in 1909; the **Musée des Automates** where 300 automaton bring Old Paris to life; and the **Chapelle St-Vigor**, made into a magical work of art in the 1990s by a Japanese artist Kyoji Takubo.

Letting off steam

The castle has plenty of open space. Take a taxi west to **Pont d'Ouilley** (pontdouilly-loisirs.com) in scenic Suisse Normande to canoe on the Orne river.

The Lowdown

Map reference 3 D5

Address 14700 (Calvados).
Château Guillaume-le-Conquérant: Rue de la Roche; 02 31 41 61 44.
Musée André Lemaître: Blvd de la Libération; www.musee-andre-lemaître.fr.
Musée des Automates: Blvd de la Libération; 02 31 90 02 43; www.automates-avenue.fr.
Chapelle St-Vigor: 14700 St-Martin-de-Mieux

Bus 35 from Caen

Visitor information Blvd de la Libération, 14700; 02 31 90 17 26; www.falaise-tourisme.com

Open Château Guillaume-le-Conquérant: mid-Feb-Dec: daily. Musée André Lemaître: closed late-Jan-early-Feb. Musée des Automates: Apr-Sep: daily; Oct-Mar: weekends. Chapelle St-Vigor: late Jul-mid-Sep: 2:30-6pm daily closed Mon

Eat and drink Real meal

Le Jardin (7/9 Rue du 9ème arrondissement de Paris; 02 31 90 20 74; closed Sun and Mon dinner & Wed) serves classic dishes. **Family Treat** La Fine Fourchette (2 Rue Georges Clemenceau, 14700; 02 31 90 08 59; closed Tue dinner & Feb) offers a gourmet treat with a kids' and vegetarian menu.

KIDS' CORNER

In Falaise, find out...

- 1 How old was William when he became a Duke?
- 2 During the Battle of Hastings, the Normans were ready to give up when they heard a rumour that William had been killed. What did he do then?
- 3 Do you know how William died?

Answers at the bottom of the page.



FORTIFYING FACT

When the Normans invaded England, they brought three prefabricated castles made out of wooden pieces, a feat that was echoed by the "Mulberry" harbours in World War II.



Fearsome sailing machines

With its 32 oars and square sail, Cherbourg's *Dreknor* is a copy of the *Gokstad*, one of the largest Viking boats to have survived. Built around AD 850, the *Gokstad* was found in 1880 on a Norwegian farm in a burial mound and is now in Oslo's Viking Ship Museum. These boats were the best ships of the time, sturdily built with overlapping planks. Their high prows and sterns were adorned with fierce dragon heads.



Answers: 1 He was only seven - his father, Robert, died on a pilgrimage to the Holy Land. 2 He took off his helmet and rode among his troops, shouting, "I've lit a fire on! We shall conquer yet!" 3 He fell off his horse while hunting in 1087.

11 Mont-St-Michel

The rock of the Archangel

Rising like an enchanted island out of the sea and coastal plain, Mont-St-Michel is the icon of Western France, encircled by mighty ramparts and surrounded by a bay subject to the strongest tides in Europe. Founded in 708 as a small oratory, it developed into a great centre of medieval learning after monks began to build an abbey on the Mont's granite pinnacle in the early 11th century. It was used as a prison after the French Revolution until 1863; in 1969 it became a functioning abbey again.



Statue of St Michel

Key Features

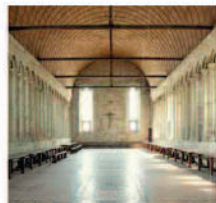


Grand Rue Miquelots (pilgrims) were the first to travel along this road to the abbey, now lined with shops and restaurants.

Abbey church Begun in 1017, the abbey has two crypts, a Romanesque nave and a Flamboyant-Gothic choir.

The spire A gilded St Michel wields his mighty sword on top of the spire.

La Merveille Nicknamed "The Miracle", this three-storey abbey complex, built over 16 years (1211–28), is a medieval feat of engineering.



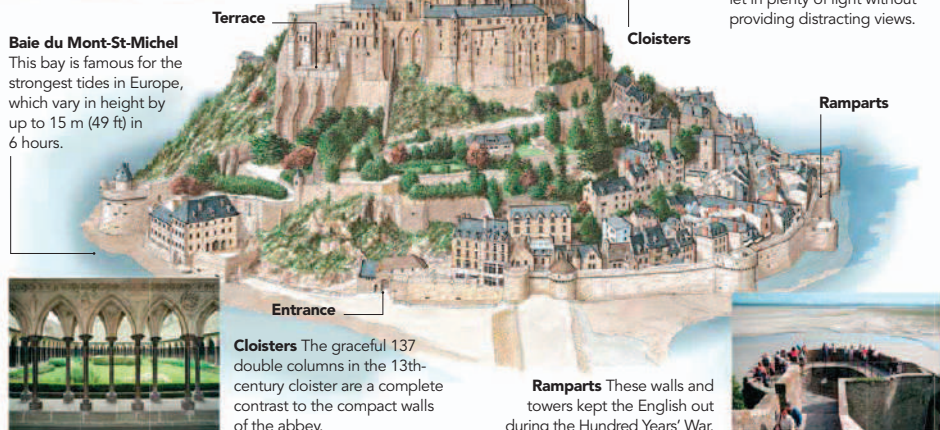
Refectory The full-length windows in the dining hall let in plenty of light without providing distracting views.

Baie du Mont-St-Michel This bay is famous for the strongest tides in Europe, which vary in height by up to 15 m (49 ft) in 6 hours.



Cloisters The graceful 137 double columns in the 13th-century cloister are a complete contrast to the compact walls of the abbey.

Ramparts These walls and towers kept the English out during the Hundred Years' War.



The Lowdown

Map reference 3 B5
Address 50170 (Manche).
 Abbaye de Mont-St-Michel;
 Mont-St-Michel; mont-saint-michel.monuments-nationaux.fr

Train from Paris, then a Keolis Emerald bus (www.destination-montsaintmichel.com) that meets TGVs from Paris in Rennes or Dol-de-Bretagne. There are also two buses (No. 17) a day from St-Malo to Pontorson, as well as a direct shuttle between Pontorson and Mont-St-Michel. A new bridge connecting the Mont to the mainland has been made. A

train-bike transport scheme has been set up between Granville and St-Malo called Ligne Baie (www.lignebaie.fr). It offers day passes and discounts.

Visitor information Blvd de l'Avancée, at the entrance to the Mont, 50170; 02 33 60 14 30; www.ot-montsaintmichel.com

Open Abbaye de Mont-St-Michel: May–Aug: 9am–7pm; Sep–Apr: 9:30am–6pm; Jul & Aug: evening visits with sound and light effects from 7–11:30pm. Ticket desks close an hour before closing time.

Prices Day or night tours: €18–28; under 18s and EU members under 26 free. Combined day and night tickets (used the same day): €28–38. Night tours only Jul–Aug.

Skipping the queue The Mont can be crowded in Jul–Aug. Pick up abbey tickets from the tourist office to avoid the queue.

Guided tours There are 75-min guided tours available in English and French year round within the abbey; ring ahead for timings. Multilingual audio guides are also available at an extra charge.

Letting off steam

Take a taxi or drive to the nearby village of Beauvoir, 6 km (4 miles) from the Mont, to visit **Alligator Bay** (www.alligator-bay.com). A reptilian delight, this animal park has Europe's largest collection of alligators and crocodiles, as well as a dragon maze and a tortoise farm.



An iguana resting on a branch in Alligator Bay, Beauvoir

Eat and drink

Picnic: under €20; *Snacks:* €20–45; *Real meal:* €45–90; *Family treat:* over €90 (based on a family of four)

SNACKS Le Jardin d'Anouck (*Le Bas Pays, 50170 Beauvoir; 02 33 58 46 79*) makes up picnic baskets for adults and kids and has a free picnic area, which is a 5-minute drive from the bridge.

SNACKS Crêperie La Cloche (*on the Mont; 02 33 60 15 65; year-round*) is a good stopover for sweet crêpes or savoury galettes, salads and ice creams.

REAL MEAL Les Pieds dans le Plat (*1 bis Pl St Gervais, 50300 Avranches; 02 33 68 31 60; www.les-pieds-dans-le-plat.fr; closed Wed & Sun dinner*), located near Le Scriptorial, is different from the restaurants on or near the Mont that rely on passing trade and tend to

be pricey. It serves pork braised in cider, seafood and warm *moelleux au chocolat* (chocolate pudding).

FAMILY TREAT La Ferme Saint Michel (*Le Bas Pays, 50170 Beauvoir; 02 33 58 46 79; www.restaurantfermesaintmichel.com*) is a welcoming farmhouse restaurant, 2 km (1 mile) from the Mont. It specializes in traditional *agneau de pré-salé* (lamb raised on the coastal salt-marsh meadows) cooked on a wood fire; there is a kids' menu too. It also runs Le Jardin d'Anouck.

Find out more

FILM The grand finale of the film *The Elusive Pimpernel* (1950), in which David Niven played the Pimpernel, was shot in Mont-St-Michel.

Take cover

Visit **Archeoscope** (www.au-mont-saint-michel.com) on the Mont for a multimedia presentation on the history of the abbey. Alternatively, stop off at the **Projet Mont-Saint-Michel** (www.projetmontsaintmichel.fr) pavilion by the causeway on the mainland to learn about the scheme to return the rapidly silting bay to its original state.



Visitors looking at the scriptures in Le Scriptorial, Avranches

Next stop...

AVRANCHES Drive to the town of Avranches, 25 km (15 miles) from the Mont, to see the masterpieces produced by Mont-St-Michel's scribes in **Le Scriptorial** (www.scriptorial.fr). When the abbey was converted into a prison in 1791, its library, including 203 medieval manuscripts, was sent here for safekeeping. Multimedia displays show how the monks copied and illuminated the texts, in a tour guided by a virtual Titivillus, the patron demon of scribes in the Middle Ages. The hotel **Jardin des Plantes** (*10 Pl Carnot, 50300; 02 33 58 03 68*) offers the best views of the Mont.

KIDS' CORNER

Join the dots

St Michel, often shown pinning down a dragon, was a key saint in the Middle Ages. Plot his most important sanctuaries listed here on a Google map and see what shape the points take:

- 1 Skellig Michael (Ireland)
- 2 St Michael's Mount (Cornwall)
- 3 Mont-St-Michel (Normandy)
- 4 Sacra di San Michele (Italy)
- 5 Monte Sant'Angelo (Italy)
- 6 Angelokasto (Corfu, Greece)
- 7 Panormitis (Symi, Greece)
- 8 Archangel

Michael Trypiotis
(Nicosia, Cyprus)

Answer at the bottom
of the page.



TIDAL TRAUMA

Mont-St-Michel's tides were much dreaded by medieval pilgrims. They were a natural defence of the Mont, and even today, in spite of the warning signs around the bay, three people on average drown every year.



The five-star general from Heaven

The Archangel Michael is the patron saint of many national armies. When he appeared to Bishop Aubert of Avranches and demanded that he build a church on a rock in the bay known as Mount Tombe, he expected to be obeyed at once. When Aubert ignored him twice, St Michael angrily woke him up and tapped him on the head, burning a hole in his skull. See the skull with the hole in the Basilique de St Gervais in Avranches.



Answer: The points form a perfect
straight line.

- Age range** 5 or 6 plus; the abbey's steep steps and crowds can be daunting for young kids.
- Allow** At least a day
- Cafés** Many on or near the Mont, but expensive
- Toilets** Inside the abbey
- Festival** Fête de St-Michel (Sep)

Good family value?

Mont-St-Michel is not only an architectural masterpiece, but many kids love it because it reminds them of Harry Potter's Hogwarts.

12 Granville

Fashion and beach life

Like many Normandy ports, Granville has worn many hats – as a fishing, oyster and corsair (pirate) port, as well as port for the Channel Islands, before it found its more recent niche as a beach resort. In the haute ville (upper town), where successful 16th-century corsairs built their granite mansions along Rue St-Jean, the **Musée du Vieux Granville** tells the history of the town, while the **Musée d'Art Moderne Richard Anacréon** displays a collection of paintings and early 20th-century original editions of books. In lower Granville, the Villa Les Rhumbs, which was the childhood holiday home of fashion designer Christian Dior, is now the **Musée et Jardin Christian Dior**, with frequently changing exhibitions on his haute couture styles. Its garden is full of scents that inspired his perfumes.

Letting off steam

Hit Granville's beach and visit its wonder-filled **Roc des Harmonies** (www.aquarium-du-roc.com), with an aquarium, insect and butterfly



View of the botanical garden of Jardin des Plantes

zoo, the Palace of Minerals and an array of miniature famous buildings, as well as other objects made out of seashells.

13 Coutances

Gardens of rare delight

The old capital of the Cotentin peninsula, Coutances is a lively little city, in spite of being devastated in the Battle of Normandy. Miraculously, the bombs missed its architectural jewel: the **Cathédrale Notre-Dame**, a church first mentioned in 1056 and rebuilt in Gothic style in 1494, with twin towers that resemble rockets, a massive octagonal tower crowning the crossing and a splendid apse. The church has some of its original stained glass, including a window depicting the Last Judgement. The romantic **Jardin des Plantes**, bequeathed to the city in 1850, is a delight, with terraces, rare trees and a labyrinth.

The 17th-century *hôtel particulier*, **Musée Quesnel Morinière** houses a collection of paintings, sculptures and Cotentin pottery.

Letting off steam

Besides playing in Coutances' gardens, zip off to the sandy beach at Agon-Coutainville, located 11 km (7 miles) northwest of the city.

The Lowdown

- Map reference** 3 B5
- Address** 50200 (Manche). Cathédrale Notre-Dame: 1 Rue du Puits Notre Dame; 02 33 45 00 41. Jardin des Plantes: Rue Quesnel-Morinière; 02 33 19 08 10. Musée Quesnel Morinière: 2 Rue Quesnel-Morinière; 02 33 07 07 88
- Train** from Pontorson, Granville and Caen
- Visitor information** Pl Georges Leclerc, 50200; 02 33 19 08 10; www.tourisme-coutances.fr
- Open** Jardin des Plantes: daily. Musée Quesnel Morinière: closed Sun am & Tue
- Eat and drink** *Picnic Carrefour Market* (6 Rue Planche Maurice, 50200; 02 33 19 16 16) stocks supplies for picnics. Picnic at the Jardin des Plantes. *Real meal* Le Don Camillo (4 Rue d'Harcourt, 50200; 02 33 45 00 67; closed Sun out of season) features an array of thin-crust pizzas and other kid-friendly Italian dishes.

14 Villedieu-les-Poêles

Copper pans and 20-ton bells

Inland from Granville, Villedieu-les-Poêles, "God's City of the Copper Pans", is a lovely town that, unlike many in Normandy, escaped damage during World War II. Its people have been uniquely skilled in working metals and making lace since the early Middle Ages, and it has several museums to show off this expertise. The **Musée de la Poeslerie**, dedicated to copper pans, shares a medieval workshop with the **Maison de la Dentellière**, which focuses on traditional lace-making. The **Musée du Meuble Normand** has a fine collection of furniture from across

The Lowdown

- Map reference** 3 B5.
- Address** 50400 (Manche). Musée du Vieux Granville: 2 Rue Lecarpentier. Musée d'Art Moderne Richard Anacréon: Pl de l'Isthme; www.ville-granville.fr. Musée et Jardin Christian Dior: Prom du Plat-Gousset; www.musee-dior-granville.com
- Train** from Pontorson, Cherbourg or Argentan. **Bus** from Mont-St-Michel
- Visitor information** 4 Cours Jonville, 50400; 02 33 91 30 03; www.ville-granville.fr
- Open** Musée du Vieux Granville: Oct–Mar: Wed & Sat–Sun pm; Apr–Sep: closed Tue; closed Jan. Musée d'Art Moderne Richard Anacréon: Jun–Sep: closed Mon; mid-Feb–May & Oct–Nov: closed am; closed Dec–mid-Feb. Musée et Jardin Christian Dior: mid-May–late Sep: daily; Oct–mid-May: Sat & Sun pm, school hols
- Eat and drink** *Real meal* Le Cosy (Rue Paul Poirier, 50400; 02 33 91 98 28; closed Sun & Mon) serves simple dishes and frites (chips). **Family treat** La Citadelle (34 Rue du Port, 50400; 02 33 50 34 10; www.restaurant-la-citadelle.fr) offers mouth-watering fish soup and seafood platters.



Splashing in the waves on Granville beach during summer

Normandy, dating from the 15th century. But the best of all is the story of **La Fonderie des Cloches Cornille-Havard**, a bell foundry practically unchanged since 1865 – come on a weekday to watch bellmakers at work.

Letting off steam

Go to **Piscine arc-en-ciel** (*Rue du 8 Mai, 50800; www.piscine-villedieu.com*), a covered pool. A short drive, 8 km (5 miles) west of Villedieu, is the **Parc Zoologique de Champrépus** (*zoo-champrepus.com*), devoted to preserving endangered species from around the world. There is a petting zoo and playgrounds for kids.

The Lowdown

Map reference 3 B5
Address 50800 (Manche). Musée de la Poéslerie & Maison de la Dentellière: 25 Rue du Général Huard & Musée du Meuble Normand: 9 Rue du Reculé; *www.museesvilledieu.sitew.com*. La Fonderie des Cloches Cornille-Havard: Rue du Pont-Chignon; *www.cornille-havard.com*

Train from Granville or Argentan

Visitor information 8 Pl des Costils, 50800; 02 33 61 05 69; *www.ot-villedieu.fr*

Open Musée de la Poéslerie, Maison de la Dentellière & Musée du Meuble Normand: Jul–Aug: Tue–Sat. La Fonderie des Cloches Cornille-Havard: mid-Feb–11 Nov: Tue–Sat; mid-Jul–Aug: daily

Eat and drink **Real meal** La Cuisine de Léonie (*6 Pl des Chevaliers de Malte, 50800; 02 33 61 07 94*) is a good place for *galettes* (savoury pancakes) and *crêpes*. **Family treat** Le Fruitier (*Place des Costils, 3 Rue Jules Ferry, 50800; 02 33 90 51 00*) serves classic French cuisine plus tapas.

Festival Festival du Film d'Animation (late Feb–early Mar)



A bellmaker at work in La Fonderie des Cloches Cornille, Villedieu-les-Poêles

week – only 300 survived. In the centre of town, visit the **Église de St-Evroult**, founded in 1082 and rebuilt in the 13th century. Inside the church are amusing choir stalls (lift the seats to see the figures carved beneath them in the 15th and 16th centuries) and a unique treasure – the 7th-century chrismal, a copper clad box made in Ireland, decorated with angels and 38 runes. It is said to have been made to carry the communion wafers used in Mass during the conversion of Britain and Ireland to Christianity. Some say poet Christian de Troyes had this object in mind when he wrote his Arthurian romances about the Holy Grail.

Letting off steam

Take a walk – follow the signs from Mortain to Villedieu-Sourdeval to the Cistercian Abbaye Blanche. Just ahead, in a lush setting, is the Grande Cascade – at 20 m (66 ft) it is the highest waterfall in Western France.

The Lowdown

Map reference 3 C5
Address 50140 (Manche). Église de St-Evroult: Grande Rue; 02 33 59 19 74

Train from Granville to Vire, then bus 120

Visitor information Rue du Bourglopin, 50140; 02 33 59 19 74; *www.mortain-tourisme.fr*

Eat and drink **Real meal** Au Bon Vent (*64 Rue du Rocher, 50140; 02 33 59 00 68*) offers a buffet of starters and no-fuss mains. **Family treat** La Table de Saint Vital (*Pl des Arcades, 50140; 02 33 59 00 05; www.hoteldel-apostemortain.fr*) features Norman cuisine, including dishes such as *crème brûlée au camembert*.

KIDS' CORNER

Things to do...

- 1 Get inspired in the garden of Dior's museum. Which flowers would make up your favourite perfume?
- 2 Collect shells on the beach and make a tiny model of something you saw on the trip.
- 3 Pretend to be King Arthur and his knights out looking for the Holy Grail.

Merry melodies at home

- 1 Take an oven rack.
- 2 Tie a piece of string or sturdy thread to either end.
- 3 Hang it from your neck so it dangles against your stomach.
- 4 Loop the string around each index finger and put your fingers in your ears.
- 5 Bang the rack gently with your knee or against the cooker.

It makes the most amazing sound and only you can hear it!



FORGETFUL GRANVILLE

Liberated by General Patton on 31 July 1944, Granville thought the war was over. But on the night of 8 March 1945, the city was suddenly shelled and invaded from sea by the Germans.

Everyone, it seems, had forgotten that the Germans still occupied the nearby Channel Island of Jersey.



The art of making bells

Bronze bells have been made for hundreds of years. In the old days, when a church or town hall needed a bell, the bell-founders would build a furnace next to the building and cast the bell on the spot.



15 Mortain

The model for the Holy Grail

Although off the beaten track east of Mont-St-Michel, Mortain was in the centre of a vicious battle on 2 August 1944, when the German Panzers launched a counterattack against the American 30th Infantry Division. A memorial by the hilltop Chapelle St-Michel honours the 700 American soldiers who were cut off and surrounded but held out for a

Where to Stay in Normandy

A summer holiday destination since the early 19th century, Normandy has an excellent range of places to stay, from stone farmhouses and grand old seafront hotels to simple rural cottages and family-oriented camp sites near the beaches.

AGENCY

Discover Normandy

www.discover-normandy.info

This agency offers over 120 self-catering properties throughout Normandy for all budgets, from cosy thatched cottages to villas with pools.

The D-Day Beaches

Map 3 D4

HOTELS

Hotel Churchill

14-16 Rue St-Jean, 14400 Bayeux; 02 31 21 31 80; www.hotel-churchill.fr

A 10-minute drive from the D-Day Beaches, rooms are cosy and come with Wi-Fi and satellite TV. Day trips to Mont-St-Michel can be organized.



€€€

Hotel des Quatrans

17 Rue Gémairé, 14000 Caen; 02 31 86 25 57; www.hotel-des-quatrans.com

In Caen's city centre, this is a pleasant hotel convenient for visiting the Château de Caen and the D-Day Beaches. Rooms are comfortable and equipped with Wi-Fi and satellite TV. Excellent restaurant on site.



€€

Hôtel d'Argouges

21 Rue St-Patrice, 14400 Bayeux; 02 31 92 88 86; www.hotel-dargouges.com

A lovely, ivy-covered 18th-century mansion with a flower-filled garden,



Hotel d'Argouges in Bayeux, near the D-Day Beaches

it offers bedrooms with mod cons such as Wi-Fi and satellite TV. It also has two beautiful apartments to rent.



€€€

CAMPING

Camping Port'land

Chemin du Castel, 14520 Port en Bessin Huppain; 02 31 51 07 06; www.camping-portland.com

Located next to the D-Day Beaches, this camp ground has simple pitches and luxurious three-bedroom mobile homes. Games, sport grounds and organized activities for ages 5-12.



€€

Un Lit au Pré

52800 Louvières; 01 41 31 08 00; www.unlitaupre.fr

This organization offers an old-fashioned and authentic farmstay experience, for a weekend or a week in luxury tents on select farms. This includes La Ferme de la Folivraie, an organic dairy farm by Omaha Beach.



€€

Honfleur

Map 3 D4

CAMPING

La Briquerie

14600 Equemauville; 02 31 89 28 32; www.campinglabriquerie.com

Located just south of Honfleur and its beaches, this well-equipped camp site has mobile homes and chalets to rent plus mini-golf, bouncy castle and a games room. Free Wi-Fi.



€

Mont-St-Michel

Map 3 B5

HOTELS

Auberge St-Pierre

Grande Rue, 50170; 02 33 60 14 03; www.auberge-saint-pierre.fr

This handsome stone building on the mont itself makes for a superb base to visit the abbey in the morning, before the crowds arrive. There is a restaurant and a private terrace; baby kits, cots and highchairs available.



€€€

Le Relais du Roy

Route du Mont-St-Michel, 50170; 02 33 60 14 25; www.le-relais-du-roy.com

Just opposite Mont-St-Michel on the mainland, this cheerful hotel boasts 15th-century fireplaces in its public rooms. The pretty pastel guest rooms are Wi-Fi-equipped. Good restaurant; offers a kids' menu.



€€

CAMPING

Camping Haliotis

Map 3 B6

Chemin des Soupirs, 50170 Pontorson; 02 33 68 11 59; www.camping-haliotis-mont-saint-michel.com

This attractive camp site, 10 km (6 miles) from Mont-St-Michel, has spacious pitches and three-bedroom mobile homes. Playgrounds on site.



€



The dining room in Auberge St-Pierre, Mont-St-Michel

Rouen

Map 4 E4

HOTEL

Hotel Ermitage Bouquet

58 Rue Bouquet, 76000; 02 32 12 30 40; www.hotel-ermitagebouquet.com

A 10-minute walk from the historic city centre, this modernized 19th-century hotel has rooms that come with flat-screen TVs and free Wi-Fi. Helpful English-speaking staff; baby cots and highchairs available.



€€€

Price Guide

The following price ranges are based on one night's accommodation in high season for a family of four, inclusive of service charges and any additional taxes.

€ Under €100 €€ €100-200 €€€ over €200

Brittany

Stretching far into the Atlantic, Brittany's jagged coastline is an exciting mix of coves, islets and some of France's prettiest beaches. The region's Celtic culture, music and language, as well as its mighty megalithic monuments, lend a mystical allure, while its atmospheric ports and Brest's great Océanopolis aquarium tell of its close links to the sea.

Below View over the beach from the ramparts of St-Malo



1 Rennes

Brittany's young and vibrant capital

Although named after the local Celtic tribe, Rennes only started making a name for itself in 1356–7, when the great Breton knight Bertrand du Guesclin defended it from the English in the Hundred Years' War. Made the capital of Brittany in 1551, when the region became part of France, Rennes is one of the country's fastest-growing cities, with 60,000 university students, the Champs Libres cultural centre, a modern Métro and a lively calendar of music events.



Half-timbered house, Rennes

Key Sight

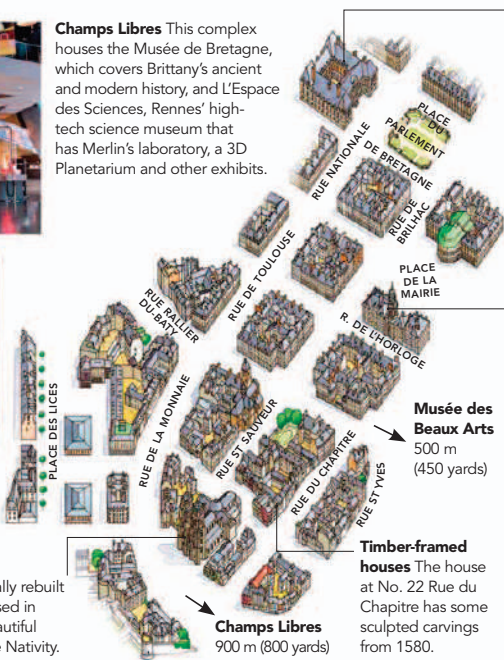


Champs Libres This complex houses the Musée de Bretagne, which covers Brittany's ancient and modern history, and L'Espace des Sciences, Rennes' high-tech science museum that has Merlin's laboratory, a 3D Planetarium and other exhibits.



Musée des Beaux Arts Objects from ancient Egypt share space with paintings by Veronese, the Pont-Aven School and Picasso.

Cathédrale St-Pierre Gradually rebuilt after its Gothic façade collapsed in 1490, this cathedral has a beautiful 16th-century altarpiece of the Nativity.



Parlement de Bretagne

The 17th-century regional parliament is a fine example of French Classical style, its Grand Chamber oozing splendour.

Hôtel de Ville

Built in 1720 by Jacques Gabriel, the town hall has a distinct bulb-topped grand belfry, an elaborate grand stair and a wedding hall.



Place des Lices Knights once jousted in the city's most picturesque square, lined with 17th-century houses. On Saturdays it hosts one of the largest markets in France.

Champs Libres
900 m (800 yards)

Musée des Beaux Arts
500 m (450 yards)

Timber-framed houses The house at No. 22 Rue du Chapitre has some sculpted carvings from 1580.

The Lowdown

Map reference 7 B1
Address 35000 (Ille-et-Vilaine). Musée des Beaux Arts: 20 Quai Emile Zola; www.mbar.org. Cathédrale St-Pierre: Rue de la Monnaie; 02 99 78 48 80. Musée de Bretagne & L'Espace des Sciences: 10 Cours des Alliés; www.musee-bretagne.fr. Parlement de Bretagne: Rue Nationale; 02 99 67 11 66

Train from Paris

Visitor information 11 Rue St-Yves, 35000; 02 99 67 11 11; www.tourisme-rennes.com

Open Musée des Beaux Arts: 10am–6pm Tue, 10am–noon & 2–6pm Wed–Sun, closed hols. Musée de Bretagne & L'Espace des Sciences: Sep–Jun: noon–9pm Tue, noon–7pm Wed–Fri and 2–7pm Sat & Sun; Jul–Aug: 1–7pm Tue–Fri, 2–7pm Sat & Sun; closed hols. Parlement de Bretagne: book a guided tour

Prices Musée des Beaux Arts: €10–20; under 18s free. Musée de Bretagne & L'Espace des Sciences: €29–39; under 8s free. Parlement de Bretagne: €22–33; under 7s free

Skipping the queue Rennes Métropole City Pass – check tourist office website for details

Guided tours Reserve on the tourist office website.

Age range 5 plus

Activities See Rennes from the Canal d'Ille-et-Rance and the Vilaine river on an electric canal boat (www.urbavag.com).

Allow A day

Good family value?

Rennes can be fun, but the place has much more to offer teenagers than younger kids.

Letting off steam

Kids can splash around in the indoor pool at the **Jardin St-Georges** (2 Rue Gambetta, 35000). The Parc du Thabor, east of the Parlement de Bretagne, is the city's largest park, with botanical gardens, caves and a duck-filled lake.



Scrumptious fresh oysters served with lemon wedges at a restaurant in Rennes

Eat and drink

Picnic: under €20; **Snacks:** €20–45; **Real meal:** €45–90; **Family treat:** over €90 (based on a family of four)

PICNIC Halles Martenot (Pl des Lices, 35200) is a good place to pick up supplies. Picnic at the Jardin St-Georges by the Palais St-Georges on Rue Gambetta.

SNACKS Miam & Caetera (5 Pl Bretagne, 35200; 02 99 30 46 43; closed Sun) offers delicious gourmet sandwiches and soups made with organic ingredients, as well as other goodies to eat in or take away.

REAL MEAL La Saint Georges (17 Rue Jules Simon, 35200; 02 99 78 20 07; closed Sun & Mon; www.creperie-saintgeorges.com) is an elegant crêperie and galetterie.

The artisan ice-creams are a delight. **FAMILY TREAT La Fontaine aux Perles** (96 Rue de la Poterie, 35200; 02 99 53 90 90; www.lafontaineauxperles.com; closed Sun dinner & Mon) is Rennes' gourmet temple

with a lovely wooded garden. Dishes such as seafood risotto and cod in a chorizo crust are available; children are welcome.

Shopping

Visit **Flic en Flac** (19 Rue Penhoët, 35000; 02 99 79 30 49), which is full of toys. **Durand** (5 Quai Chateaubriand, 35000; 02 99 78 10 00; www.durandchocolatier.fr) makes Rennes' top chocolates. In **Même Pas Peur du Loup** (49 Rue Vasselot, 35000; 02 99 78 39 75; www.memepaspeurduloup.fr), there are toys, accessories, angel wings and princess dresses.

Find out more

DIGITAL There is an excellent, easy-to-understand online account of the Hundred Years' War at www.theotherside.co.uk/tm-heritage/background/100yearswar.htm. The website chronicles a detailed timeline of the various wars fought between the English and the French.

Next step...

LA ROCHE-AUX-FÉES Head 32 km (20 miles) south to La Roche-aux-Fées (www.cc-rocheauxfees.fr), one of the best preserved and biggest passage graves in France. According to legend, it was erected by fairies in one night to prove their existence; according to archaeologists, it dates from around 3,000 BC. It measures 20 m (64 ft) and is tall enough to walk through; the stones were transported from the Theil-de-Bretagne forest, 4 km (2 miles) away from La Roche-aux-Fées. The heaviest stone weighs 45 tons (50 tonnes). On the winter solstice (21 December), the first rays of the sun illuminate the entrance.



The prehistoric stone tombs of La Roche-aux-Fées, Esse

KIDS' CORNER

Speaking Brezhoneg

One section in the Musée de Bretagne is devoted to *Brezhoneg* (Breton), a Celtic language related to Welsh and Cornish. The Asterix books have been translated into Breton. Try to speak a few words in the language:

Good Day! Demat! (de mat)
How are you? Penaos 'mañ kont? (pen-os man ko?)

I'm fine, thank you. Mat eo ar jeu, trugarez. (mat ay o ju, tre gay)

Goodbye! Kenavo! (ken av ol)
Pancakes/Crêpes Krampouezh (cram-poo-aze)



GENIUS CHEMIST

Rennes was the birthplace of Pierre Jean Robiquet (1780–1840), one of France's greatest chemists. In 1805, while working with asparagus juice, he helped to discover a substance he called asparagin, the very first amino acid (one of the building blocks of life).

Asterix introduces the Roman world

Armorica, the "Place by the Sea", the name of Brittany in ancient times, will be familiar to any fan of Asterix. The famous comic books offer a well-researched introduction into the Roman world at the time of Julius Caesar. A website by two Asterix fans, asterix.openscroll.org, provides a background to the geographical place names, words and items used in the books.

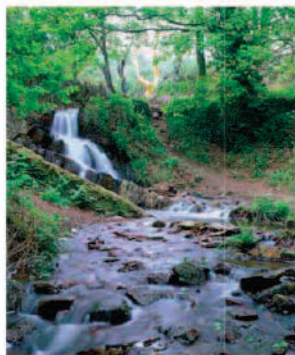


② Forêt de Brocéliande

The Lady of the Lake's realm

The Brocéliande, the last remnant of Brittany's primeval forest, is steeped in Arthurian legends. Start at Paimpont, where the visitor centre provides free maps of places associated with Arthur, Merlin and the Knights of the Round Table, as well as guides to walks. To the north, near Concoret, is the lakeside **Château de Comper**, where the Lady of the Lake is said to have given Arthur his sword, Excalibur. Today, the castle hosts the Centre de l'Imaginaire Arthurien, presenting exhibitions on the Arthurian legends.

At the village of Tréhorentec, 11 km (7 miles) southwest of Concoret, the *Chapelle du Graal* ("Chapel of the Grail") is renowned for its mix of Christian and pagan symbolism; it is near the beginning of a 4-km (3-mile) trail into the *Valsans-Retour* (Valley of No Return – pick up a map at the Tréhorentec tourist office) where Morgan the Fay's spell trapped faithless knights. A map points to sights in Brocéliande – a 1,000-year-old oak tree called the *Chêne à Guillotin* and a beautiful spring, the *Fontaine de Barenton*



A stream rushing through the Forêt de Brocéliande

in the hamlet of La Folle-Pensée where Merlin the magician left a spell to cure madness.

Letting off steam

Head to the **Jardins de Brocéliande** (www.jardinsdebroceliande.fr; early Apr–late Oct), 26 km (16 miles) east of Paimpont. It offers a wide range of family activities and games, including some based on Arthurian legends.

③ Dinan

Walls and a hero's heart

Walled Dinan is one of Brittany's prettiest towns, where cobbled streets lined with timbered houses are still defended by an impressive château of 1380, now the **Musée du Château**, the local history museum. It was the hometown of Bertrand du Guesclin, the "Eagle of Brittany" who in 1357 defeated Englishman Thomas de Cantorbéry in combat; his statue in the Place du Guesclin marks the spot. Although Bertrand du Guesclin was buried with the kings of France in St-Denis in Paris, his heart is in the 12th-century Romanesque church of St-Sauveur, which has some curiously

The Lowdown

- 📍 **Map reference** 2 H3
Address 22100 (Côtes-d'Armor). Musée du Château: Rue du Château; 02 96 39 45 20. Musée du Rail: Pl du 11 Novembre 1918; www.museedurail-dinan.com
- 🚗 **Train/Bus** from Rennes or St-Malo
- 📍 **Visitor information** 9 Rue du Château, 22100; 02 96 87 69 76; www.dinan-tourisme.com
- 🕒 **Open** Musée du Château: Jun–Sep: daily; Oct–mid-Nov & Easter–May: pm only; closed mid-Nov–Easter. Musée du Rail: Jun–mid-Sep: pm & some school hols.
- 🍷 **Eat and drink** *Real meal* Le Cantorbéry (6 Rue Ste-Claire, 22100; 02 96 39 02 52; closed Wed lunch & Sun out of season) specializes in fish and seafood. It also has a kids' menu. *Family treat* Chez La Mère Pourcel (3 Pl des Merciers, 22100; www.chezlamerepourcel.com; May–Sep: open daily; Oct–Apr: closed Tue, Wed & Sun) serves elegant gourmet food and has an excellent kids' menu in a 19th-century building.
- 🎪 **Festival** Recontre Internationale de Harpe Celtique (Jul)

carved capitals. Dinan's landmark is its 15th-century Tour de l'Horloge (clocktower). The **Musée du Rail** has a splendid collection of model trains, which will enthral train lovers of all ages.

Letting off steam

Walk along the walls, set within 10 towers, and admire the view of the town and of the Rance river. Run around **Jardin du Val Cocherel** (02 96 87 69 76) with its playground and picnic tables or take a cruise down the Rance river on the *Jaman IV* (www.vedettejamaniv.com).

The Lowdown

- 📍 **Map reference** 7 A1
Address 35380 (Ille-et-Vilaine). Château de Comper: 56430 Concoret; 02 97 22 79 96; www.centre-arthurien-broceliande.com
- 🚗 **Bus** from Rennes to Paimpont. It is essential to hire a car to get around.
- 📍 **Visitor information** 1 place Judicaël, 35380 Paimpont; 02 99 07 84 23; www.tourisme-broceliande.com. 1 Pl Abbé Gillard, 56430 Tréhorentec; 02 97 93 05 12; broceliande.valsansretour.com
- 🕒 **Open** Château de Comper: late Mar–Jun & Sep–Oct: Thu–Mon; Jul & Aug: Thu–Tue
- 🍷 **Eat and drink** *Snack* Le Miroir aux Fées (19 Rue du Pâtis, 35380 Tréhorentec; 02 97 73 80 92; Jul–Sep: Sat–Sun & school hols) serves crêpes. *Real meal* Les Forges de Paimpont (D38, 35380 Plélan-Le-Grand; 02 99 06 81 07; www.restaurant.forges-de-paimpont.com; closed Mon, Sun dinner & Tue lunch) offers home-made terrines, game, duck and salmon.



A medieval bridge over the Rance river in old Dinan



Above Dinghy-sailing off the beaches of St-Malo
Below One of old Dinan's winding cobbled streets



4 St-Malo

The city of corsairs

Sheltered on its islet, picturesque St-Malo has a history filled with adventure, corsairs and explorers. At the entrance to the old city, the **Musée d'Histoire de St-Malo**, housed in the Château des Ducs de Bretagne, displays paintings, astrolabes, ships' models, scrimshaw, maps and other maritime artifacts. The **Musée du Long Cours Cap-Hornier**, inside the 30-m (100-ft) Tour Solidor, in the southern quarter of St-Servan, commemorates the

history of sailing ships that rounded the dangerous Cape Horn in South America. The **Demeure de Corsaire**, one of the few mansions that escaped damage by Allied bombs in the World War II, was built by François-Auguste Magon, an 18th-century privateer and director of the French East India Company. The 12th-century Cathédrale St-Vincent had to be rebuilt after the war. A mosaic on the floor of the nave marks the spot where Jacques Cartier knelt to be blessed before setting off to claim Canada for France in 1534.

After his third and final voyage, Cartier retired to the Manoir de Limoëlou, located outside St-Malo on the Cancale Road. Today, it is known as the **Musée Jacques Cartier**. Older kids may enjoy it.

Letting off steam

St-Malo has a number of gorgeous beaches. The most sheltered is the Plage du Môle.

The Lowdown

Map reference 3 A5
Address 35400 (Ille-et-Vilaine). Musée d'Histoire de St-Malo: Pl Chateaubriand; www.ville-saint-malo.fr. Musée du Long Cours Cap-Hornier: Rue du Dick; www.ville-saint-malo.fr. Demeure de Corsaire: 5 Rue d'Asfeld; www.demeure-de-corsaire.com. Musée Jacques Cartier: Rue David MacDonald Stewart; 02 99 40 97 73

Train from Rennes

Visitor information Esplanade St-Vincent, 35400; 08 25 13 52 00, www.saint-malo-tourisme.fr

Open Musée d'Histoire de St-Malo & Musée du Long-Cours Cap-Hornier: Apr–Sep: daily; Oct–Mar:

closed Mon. Demeure du Corsaire: guided tours only; Tue–Sun pm; Jul, Aug & school hols: daily; closed Dec & Jan. Musée Jacques Cartier: Jul–Aug: daily; Jun & Sep: Mon–Sat; Oct–May: Mon–Sat pm only

Eat and drink **Real meal** Crêperie Margaux (3 Pl Marché aux Légumes, 35400; 02 99 20 26 02; www.creperie-margaux.com); closed Jan) serves crêpes and salads. **Family treat** Restaurant Gilles (2 Rue de la Pie Qui Boit, 35400; 02 99 40 97 25; www.restaurant-gilles-saint-malo.com); closed Wed & Thu) is a reliable place for seafood and meat dishes.

Festival Route du Rock, music festival (Feb & Aug)

KIDS' CORNER

In St-Malo, find out...

- 1 Which animal was the symbol of the Dukes of Brittany? (Hint: You can find it on the gate of St-Vincent)
- 2 In Place des Champs-Vauvert is a statue of the "King of the Corsairs". What is his name?
- 3 What were the tunnels under the Demeure du Corsaire originally used for?



Answers at the bottom of the page.

LIONESS OF BRITTANY

When her husband was executed for reason by the French, Jeanne de Clisson (1300–59) took revenge by becoming a pirate and beheading any French aristocrats she captured in the English Channel.



King Arthur in Brittany

In 1135, when Geoffrey of Monmouth wrote his *History of the Kings of Britain*, he claimed that many of his stories about Arthur came from Brittany. It is believed that the Britons who had escaped from the invading Angles and Saxons to Brittany may have cherished the legend of a mighty king who would have been able to defeat the invaders. Medieval writers were soon adding to Geoffrey's tales, especially Chrétien de Troyes, who was the first to mention the Holy Grail.



Answers: 1 An ermine. 2 A corsair. 3 Smuggling. During the Revolution they were used as a prison.

5 Océanopolis, Brest

Shuffling penguins and dancing jellyfish

The city of Brest has always been closely linked to the ocean. A military port since the 17th century, it was flattened in a World War II siege but has now developed into an important centre for sea and polar research. This is reflected in its top attraction, Océanopolis, a magnificent ocean discovery park housed in a futuristic complex. An amazing 10,000 marine animals belonging to 1,000 species live in aquariums arranged in different pavilions, each with its own climate.

Key Features

1 Aquarium des Méduses

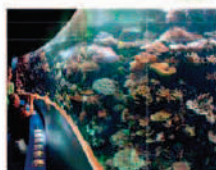
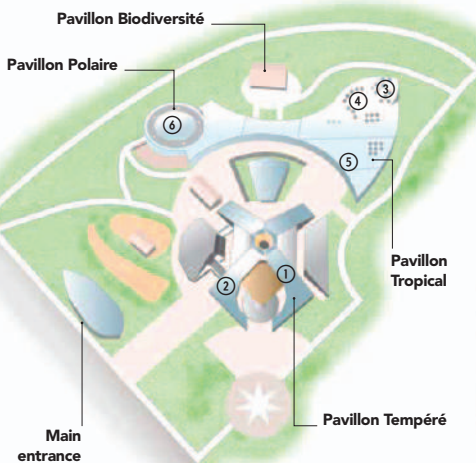
This huge cylindrical aquarium contains *aurelia aurita* jellyfish that seem to dance a ballet in the current. Nearby tanks contain baby jellyfish polyps.



2 Flaque de Démonstration

In an area that resembles a marine lab, visitors are invited to touch the scallops, starfish and sea urchins, or examine undersea flora and fauna through microscopes.

3 **Serre Tropical** Exotic hot weather trees, ferns and orchids collected in Guadeloupe make up this luxuriant Caribbean forest, with an aquarium full of fish from the Amazon.



4 Mur de Coraux Vivants

This tremendous 13-m (42-ft) tank evokes the world of Australia's Great Barrier Reef and the Indonesian archipelago, with 60 different colourful hard and soft corals.



A *Coelacanth* in the Pavillon Biodiversité



5 Bassin des Requins

This aquarium re-creates a Polynesian atoll, populated by four kinds of shark and many other fish. A glass-walled diving platform allows visitors to descend into their midst.



6 **La Manchotière** King, Gentoo and Rockhopper penguins make up what is Europe's biggest penguin colony, frolicking in a sub-Arctic wonderland of water, snow and cliffs.

The Lowdown

Map reference 2 E3
Address 29200 (Finistère).
Port de Plaisance du Moulin Blanc; 02 98 34 40 40; www.oceanopolis.com

Train from Rennes to Brest, then bus 15

Visitor information 8 Ave Georges Clemenceau, 29200; 02 98 44 24 96; www.brestetvous.fr

Open mid-Jan–mid-Apr & late Aug–Sep: 10am–5pm Tue–Sun; mid-Apr–mid-Jul: 10am–6pm daily; mid-Jul–late Aug: 9am–7pm daily; Oct–Dec: 10am–5pm Tue–Sun; school hols: 10am–6pm;

closed 25 Dec & 1–18 Jan. Last admn: 1 hour before closing

Prices €59–69; under-3s free. There are discounts for families with three or more children.

Skipping the queue Buy tickets online at the Brest tourist office or from any large FNAC, Géant Casino, Carrefour, Auchan, Leclerc or Virgin with a France Billets or Ticketnet counter. Arrive early to beat summer crowds.

Age range All ages

Activities Save used tickets for discounts on boat tours.

Allow 4–5 hours

Café Inside Océanopolis

Toilets In every pavilion

Festivals Jour de la St-Patrice, with Breton and Irish musicians in Brest (Mar). Les Jeudis du Port, huge Thursday night street parties along the Quai de la Douane (mid-Jul & Aug)

Good family value?

A fascinating and educational day out for people of all ages filled with hands-on activities that should keep even the youngest tot amused.

Letting off steam

Have a swim at the Plage du Moulin-Blanc, a big sandy beach within walking distance of Océanopolis. Head north to Milizac, 13 km (8 miles) from Brest, to **La Récré des Trois Cures** (www.larecresdes3cures.fr), with rides, a petting zoo, pirate ship and in summer, a water park to splash in.



Oscar with Ernie and Bernie in a still from the animated movie Shark Tale

Eat and drink

Picnic: under €20; Snacks: €20–45; Real meal: €45–90; Family treat: over €90 (based on a family of four)

PICNIC St-Louis (Rue des Halles St-Louis, 29200) and **St-Martin** (4 Rue Massillon, 29200) are covered markets in central Brest, great for picking up picnic supplies. Océanopolis has both an outdoor picnic area and playground, as well as a heated indoor picnic area.

SNACKS Atlantic Express, a self-service restaurant, and **Atoll** (both on site) offer ice creams, pastries, sandwiches and drinks to either eat in or take away. **Tour du Monde** (Port de Plaisance du Moulin Blanc, 29200; www.tourdum.fr) serves moules-frites (mussels and chips).

REAL MEAL Brasserie Vent d'Ouest (on site) serves a choice of seafood menus, including moules marinières (mussels with garlic and white wine) and a kids' menu.

FAMILY TREAT L'imaginaire (23 Rue Fautras, 29200; 02 98 43 30 13; www.imaginaire-restaurant.blogspot.com; closed Sun dinner, Wed dinner & Mon) combines surprising ingredients to great acclaim; kids' menus too.

Shopping

Océanopolis has two boutiques; Les Comptoirs de Océanopolis and Le Monde de Jonas, which are full of fun and educational maritime gifts, books, toys and DVDs. Many locals do their Christmas shopping here.

Find out more

DIGITAL Play the new Facebook game Oceanopolis – apps.facebook.com/oceanopolis/ – in which players have to survive on an island.

FILM Watch *Finding Nemo* (2003), the adventures of a clown fish, *Shark Tale* (2004) or *Happy Feet* (2006) and *Happy Feet 2* (2011), about a tap-dancing penguin.

Take cover

Visit the **Château de Brest** located near the Pont de Recouvrance. It occupies the same spot as a Roman fortress, first built to defend against barbarian attacks around AD 260. It has been refortified since, lastly by Louis XIV's great military engineer Vauban, who did a good job, as it was one of the few buildings in Brest to survive the bombs in 1945. Part of it now houses the **Musée National de la Marine** (www.musee-marine.fr) dedicated to the history of the French Navy, with beautiful model ships, paintings and sculptures.



Phare du Créac'h, île d'Ouessant's impressive lighthouse

Next step...

ÎLE D'OUessant Make an unforgettable voyage to France's westernmost territory, but not without a return ticket and hotel reservations for overnight stays. Two and a half hours from Brest by boat (www.pennarbed.fr), this UNESCO biosphere reserve is home to birds and miniature sheep. Shuttles link the port to Lampaul, the Île d'Ouessant's capital. Enjoy violently beautiful cliffs, rocks and waves at the Pointe de Pern and visit the **Phare du Créac'h**, France's most powerful lighthouse and its adjacent museum.

KIDS' CORNER

Find out more...

- 1 What do all types of penguins have in common?
- 2 What is the biggest fish on the planet and what does it eat?
- 3 In the Pavillon Tropical, find out which provides more oxygen – the Amazon rainforest or the ocean?

Answers at the bottom of the page.

Inside the hooked bills

Penguins' tongues have backward bristles to keep fish from sliding out of their mouths.



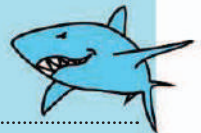
ISABELLINE PENGUINS

One out of every 50,000 penguins is born brown and white instead of black and white. They are called Isabelline penguins, after Isabella of Austria, an archduchess who is believed to have not changed her underwear for three years!



A new set of teeth

Sharks have the most powerful jaws on earth. Each species of shark has a different kind of tooth, and they are constantly being replaced from a huge reserve of waiting teeth under the shark's gums – a shark can go through 20,000 teeth in its lifetime!



Answers: 1 All use wings for swimming instead of flying; have blubber to stay warm; swim, waddle and toboggan on their bellies. 2 Whale sharks, which grow to 12 m (40 ft) long and eat over half of the earth's oxygen. 3 The ocean. It produces plankton.

6 Roscoff and the Pays du Léon

Pink onions and artichokes

Roscoff is the port of the Pays du Léon, a region blessed with such a warm micro-climate that it grows most of France's special pink onions, artichokes and cauliflowers. The **Maison des Johnnies et de l'Oignon Rosé** commemorates and explains the history of the pink Roscoff onion. Located high on a granite belvedere by the sea, the **Jardin Exotique de Roscoff** is filled with 3,500 colourful plants, mainly from the southern



The towering roofs and chimneys of the Château de Kerjean, St-Vougeay

hemisphere. The town's charming historic centre is dominated by the granite **Église Notre-Dame-de-Croaz-Batz**, decorated with ships, cannons, dragons and mermaids in high relief. Its Renaissance bell tower is unusual; some say it resembles a giant cactus.

Letting off steam

Head to the playground at the Quai d'Auxerre or take a 15-minute boat ride to the car-free Île de Batz. Explore its sandy beaches and the charming **Jardin Georges Delaselle** (www.jardin-georgesdelaselle.fr) planted in 1897. Drive or take a taxi to the village of St-Vougeay, 21 km (13 miles) southwest of Roscoff, to the 16th-century **Château de Kerjean** (www.cdp29.fr/kerjeanlechateauenbref.html), with gardens and a treasure hunt.

7 Paimpol

A steam train by the sea

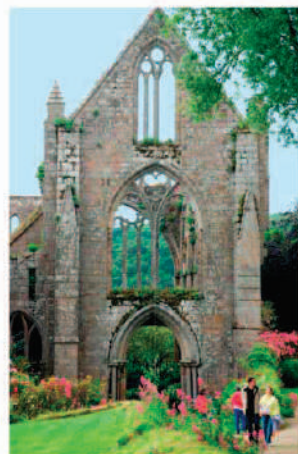
Paimpol is a pretty port where medieval pilgrims from Ireland, Cornwall and Scotland landed to begin the 1,520-km (946-mile)

walk to the shrine of Santiago de Compostela in northwest Spain. In those days, they were received at **L'Abbaye Maritime de Beauport**, founded in 1202; although partly ruined, the abbey is set in a large park on a wild stretch of the coast. In town, the **Musée de la Mer** recalls how local cod fishermen spent six months of the year in Iceland. Also pay a visit to the **Musée du Costume Breton**, which displays the local costumes and elaborate coifs.

From May to early September, take a ride on La Vapeur du Trieux, a steam train from Paimpol to Pontrieux. On Saturdays in July and August, there is a magician on board.

Letting off steam

Take a coastal walk along the GR34 towards Ploubazlanec. The coast west of Paimpol, known as Côte de Granit Rose, has fabulous beaches.



Visitors strolling in the gardens of L'Abbaye Maritime de Beauport

The Lowdown

Map reference 2 F2

Address 29680 (Finistère). Maison des Johnnies et de l'Oignon Rosé: 48 Rue Brizeux, 28680; 02 98 61 25 48. Jardin Exotique de Roscoff: Roc'h Hievec, 29682; 02 98 61 29 19; www.jardinexotiqueroscoff.com. Église Notre-Dame-de-Croaz-Batz: 10 Rue Albert de Mun, 29680

Train from Paris to Morlaix, then bus or local train

Visitor information Quai d'Auxerre, 29680; 02 98 61 12 13; www.roscoff-tourisme.com

Open Maison des Johnnies et de l'Oignon Rosé: mid-Jun–mid-Sep: 11am, 3pm & 5pm Mon, Tue & Fri, 3pm & 5pm Wed; mid-Sep–mid-Jun: 3pm Mon, Tue, Thu & Fri. Jardin Exotique de Roscoff: Mar–Nov: daily (Mar & Nov: pm)

Eat and drink *Real meal* La Moussaillonne (38 Rue Amiral Réveillère, 29680; 02 98 69 70 50 www.lamoussaillonne.com; closed Mon) serves crêpes and pizza. **Family treat** L'Écume des Jours (Quai d'Auxerre, 29680; 02 98 61 22 83) offers some of Roscoff's best seafood and meat dishes.

Festival Festival Place aux Mômes, child-oriented events every Wed evening (Jul–Aug)



Artichokes and other fresh produce in the local market, Roscoff

The Lowdown

Map reference 2 G2

Address 22500 (Côtes-d'Armor). L'Abbaye Maritime de Beauport: Chemin de l'Abbaye; 02 96 55 18 58; www.abbayebeauport.com. Musée de la Mer: Rue de Labenne; 02 96 22 02 19; www.museemerpaimpol.com. Musée du Costume Breton: Rue Raymond Pellier

Train from Brest or Rennes to St-Brieuc, then bus to Paimpol. TER (regional train) from Guingamp to Paimpol

Visitor information Pl de la République, 22500; 02 96 20 83 16; www.paimpol-goelo.com

Open L'Abbaye Maritime de Beauport: daily. Musée de la Mer: mid-Apr–mid-Jun & 1–15 Sep: daily pm; mid-Jun–Aug: daily. Musée du Costume Breton: early Jul–Aug: Tue–Sun; Sep: Tue–Sun pm

Eat and drink *Snacks* La Fournée Gallien Gérard (2 Ave Général de Gaulle, 22500; 02 96 20 84 25; closed Mon) is a good place to pick up sandwiches, ice creams and pastries for a picnic. *Real meal* Restaurant du Port (Quai Morand, 22500; www.paimpol-restaurant-du-port.com) has a terrace to watch the boats while feasting on seafood.



One of the pink-sand beaches of the Côte de Granit Rose, Paimpol

Paimpol's La Tossen beach has lifeguards in season. Kids aged 4 plus can have their first sailing lesson at the **Base de Poulafret** (www.pole-nautique-paimpol.com).

8 Douarnenez

The kingdom of sardines

South of Brest, the bustling sardine port of Douarnenez is home to the excellent **Port-Musée**. Installed in a former sardine cannery, the museum is dedicated to sailing traditions throughout the world, with a collection of boats to explore the water at Port-Rhu. Find out more about sardines along the Chemin de la Sardine, a walk dotted with French and English plaques on the fishery's history, and at **Penn Sardin**, a specialist sardine shop full of fishy memorabilia. Douarnenez is also famous for *kouign amann*, a buttery flaky cake. Watch them being made at the **Biscuiterie de Douarnenez**.

Letting off steam

Hire a taxi or a private car to explore the beaches – the Plage des Dames and Plage des Sables Blancs in town, or take the pretty walk to the Site



Men building a boat using traditional methods, Port-Musée, Douarnenez

Naturel des Plomarc'h with a play area. Drive west to the Presqu'île de Crozon where kids of all ages can ride on donkeys on coastal paths from the **Asinerie de Kéraël** donkey stable (www.oceane-crozon.net) in Lanvéoc. Get lost in a giant wooden maze in Crozon's **Peninsula Le Labyrinthe** (peninsulalabyrinthe.com).

The Lowdown

Map reference 2 E3
Address 29100 (Finistère).
 Port-Musée: Pl de l'Enfer; 02 98 92 65 20; www.port-musee.org.
 Penn Sardin: 7 Rue Le Breton; www.pennsardin.com. Biscuiterie de Douarnenez: 93 Ave de la Gare; 02 98 74 39 44

Train from Rennes and Vannes to Quimper, then bus

Visitor information 1 Rue du Docteur Mével, 29172; 02 98 92 13 35; www.douarnenez-tourisme.com

Open Port-Musée: Feb, Mar, Sep, Oct & school hols: Tue–Sun; Jul & Aug: daily. Penn Sardin: closed Tue & Sun. Biscuiterie de Douarnenez: 15 Jun–15 Sep; Wed & Fri

Eat and drink *Real meal* Au Régál (25 Rue des Professeurs Curie, 29100; 02 98 75 53 93; Tue–Sun & school hols) serves crêpes, soups and salads. *Family treat* Le Clos de Vallombreuse (7 Rue d'Estienne d'Orves, 29100; 02 98 92 84 98; www.closvallombreuse.com) serves creative cuisine with an excellent wine list. There is a petit gourmet menu for kids.

Festivals Carnaval des Gras, the weekend before Mardi Gras (Mar). Grande Fête des Bateaux, a huge gathering of boats, music and fun, once every two years (Jul). Festival du Cinéma (Aug)

KIDS' CORNER

In the Port-Musée, find out...

- 1 How were the very first boats made?
- 2 What kind of boats were used to fish for sardines?
- 3 What kind of fish were caught from the Taiwanese boat, the Tatarà?



Answers at the bottom of the page.

The city that drowned

King Gradlon of Cournouaille built a beautiful city for his daughter Dahut in the bay of Douarnenez. Called Ys, the city had a gate, which could only be opened for ships at low tide. But Dahut fell in love with a handsome man who was a devil in disguise. He asked her to steal the key of the gates from Gradlon. She did at high tide, and the waves engulfed Ys. They say bells of Ys can still be heard on a quiet night.

FISHY FACTS

If you are lucky you may see the big tails of a basking shark swimming off Brittany's coast. Measuring up to 12 m (40 ft), they are the world's second largest fish. Fortunately, in spite of their big mouths they are harmless filter feeders.



Brittany's "Johnnies"

In Roscoff in the 1820s, a local had the idea of weaving his pink onions into plaits and taking them to England to sell. By the 1930s there were over 1,000 bicycling onion sellers in England. They became known as "Onion Johnnies" because so many

Bretons are named Jean, French for John.



Answers: 1 They were carved out of tree trunks 2 Chaloupes 3 Flying fish

⑨ Standing Stones of Carnac

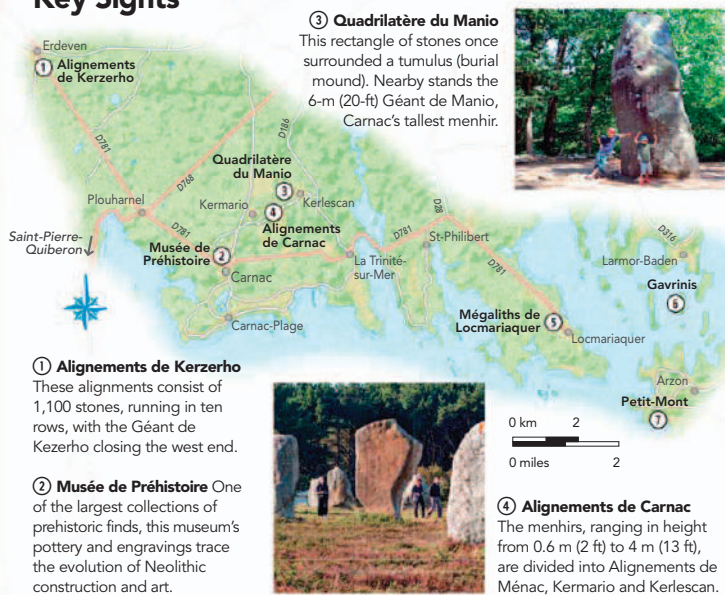
Obelix's playground

Situated on the Gulf of Morbihan, Carnac is France's Stonehenge, with the longest alignments of standing stones (menhirs) anywhere. There are some 3,000 in all, arranged in such straight lines people thought they were Roman legions turned into stone by Merlin the magician. Erected before Merlin or Obelix, between 5,000 and 3,000 BC, these World Heritage alignments make up only part of a vast concentration of megalithic sites, near some of Brittany's prettiest beaches.



Table des Marchand

Key Sights



The Lowdown



Map reference

2 G4
Address 56342 (Morbihan). Alignements de Kerzerho: D781, en route to Erdeven. Musée de Préhistoire: 10 Pl de la Chapelle, 56342 Carnac; www.musee.de.carnac.com. Alignements de Carnac: Maison des Mégalithes (interpretive centre), 56342 Le Ménac; www.carnac.monuments-nationaux.fr. Mégalithes de Locmariaquer: Route de Kerlogonan, 56740 Locmariaquer; 02 97 57 37 59. Gavrinis: Larmor-Baden dock, 56432; 02 97 57 19 38. Petit-Mont: 56432 Arzon; 06 03 95 90 78



Train from Rennes to Auray, then TIM bus 1 to Carnac. To go to Locmariaquer, change from TIM bus 1 to 1 bis at the Chat Noir

stop in St-Philibert. For Gavrinis, take TIM bus 1 to Auray, then bus 6 to Larmor-Baden, then boat. For Petit-Mont, take bus 7 from Vannes to Arzon, then walk



Visitor information 74 Ave des Druides, Carnac-Plage, 56432; 02 97 52 13 52; www.ot-carnac.fr. For the megalithic sites, see tinyurl.com/3bwsj3n



Open Alignements de Kerzerho: year round. Musée de Préhistoire: Apr–Jun & Sep: 10am–12:30pm & 2–6pm (Oct–Mar: till 5pm) Wed–Mon; Jul & Aug: 10am–6pm daily; closed most of Jan. Alignements de Carnac: May & Jun: 9am–6pm; Jul–Aug: 9:30am–7:30pm; Sep–Apr: 10am–5pm. Petit-Mont: Apr–Jun & Sep: 2:30–6pm: Thu–Tue; Jul–Aug:

11am–6:30pm: daily. Mégalithes de Locmariaquer: May–Jun: 10am–6pm (Jul–Aug: till 7pm), Sep–Apr: 10am–12:30pm & 2–5:15pm. Gavrinis: Apr, Jun–Sep: 9:30am–12:30pm, 1:30–6:30pm daily (until 7pm Jul–Aug); May: 1:30–6:30pm Mon–Fri, 9:30am–12:30pm, 1:30–6:30pm Sat & Sun. Mar & Oct: 1:30–5pm Thu–Tue (book ahead)



Prices Alignements de Carnac: €12–22; under 18s free. Musée de Préhistoire: €15–25. Petit-Mont: €18–28; under 8s free. Mégalithes de Locmariaquer: €11; under 18s free. Gavrinis: €68–81 (boat trip & guided tour)



Skipping the queue Pick up a Megalithic Pass: pay full price

Letting off steam

Hit Carnac's beaches or play in the **Parc Jeux Petit Delire** (www.parc-jeux-petit-delire.com) in the popular beach town of Ploemel, 9 km (6 miles) from Carnac. Take bus 1 to Quiberon on its peninsula to visit its rocky westerly Côte Sauvage. The east coast has kid-safe beaches such as **St-Pierre-Quiberon**.




Holidaymakers on one of Carnac's many sandy beaches


Eat and drink


Picnic: under €20; Snacks: €20–45; Real meal: €45–90; Family treat: over €90 (based on a family of four)


PICNIC Marché de Carnac (Pl de la Chapelle, 56340; on Wed & Sun) is an outdoor market held in the centre of Carnac. The Site Natural de Kervilhen (signposted between Carnac and La Trinité-sur-Mer) with sand dunes, ponds and trees is a good spot for a picnic. **SNACKS Chevillard** (2 Rue du Tumulus, 56340; 02 97 52 05 56) is a bakery that offers old-fashioned breads, pizzas, toasted sandwiches and delicious pastries.

for one of the five sites (Gavrins, Locmariaquer, Carnac, Petit-Mont or Musée de Préhistoire) and save money on other sites

 **Guided tours** Compulsory from Apr–Sep at the Alignements de Carnac

 **Age range** 4 plus

 **Allow** An hour for Carnac and a day for all the megalithic sites

 **Café** Near the Maison des Mégalithes car park

 **Toilets** In Maison des Mégalithes, Carnac

Good family value?

Kids have an affinity for dolmens and beautiful sandy beaches. Prices are kind, too.

REAL MEAL La Chaumière des Salines (Le Breno Chemin 40 Pieds, 56340; 02 97 52 17 20; Apr–mid-Sep) offers simple dishes that are likely to appeal to kids, such as crêpes and raclettes.

FAMILY TREAT Le Tumulus (Chemin de Tumulus, 56342; 02 97 52 08 21; www.hotel-tumulus.com) features well-prepared lobster and a kids' menu served with organic Carnac apple juice.

Shopping

Drop in to **Le Comptoir Florentin** (8 Rue St-Cornely, 56340 Carnac) and shop for Breton specialities such as biscuits, sea salt and cider.

Take cover

Take bus 1 that goes from Carnac to St-Pierre-Quiberon to visit the **Maison d'Armorine** (www.maison-armorine.com) where they make 49 different kinds of lollipops with all kinds of confectionery.



Fascinating iron sculptures at the Univers du Poète Ferrailleur, Lizio

Next step...

BEACHES, INSECTS AND SCULPTURES There are more beaches east of Carnac along the beautifully indented coastline of the Gulf de Morbihan, especially around the Presqu'île de Rhys (site of Petit-Mont). Take a boat tour of the Gulf and its islands with **Navix** (www.navix.fr), departing from Auray, Vannes or Locmariaquer. Take a taxi inland to the village of Lizio to the **Insectarium** (www.insectariumdelizio.fr) and see up to 100 species of insects. Or head for the **Univers du Poète Ferrailleur** (poeteferrailleur.com), the realm of the delightfully mad inventor Robert Courday, who created over 80 animated iron sculptures on his farm.

KIDS' CORNER

Look out for...

There are several recurring pictures on the stones such as the ones listed below. What do you think they represented?

- 1 The shield
- 2 The axe
- 3 The crook
- 4 Horns
- 5 Zigzags



Answers at the bottom of the page.

MENHIRS AND DOLMENS

Menhirs and dolmens are found all over the world, but nowhere are they as dense as on the Morbihan coast. The names of the stones are derived from the Breton language. For instance, *men* is stone, *hir* is long; *dole* is table – hence menhir and dolmen.



Finding lost axes

In the Musée de Préhistoire do not miss the green Petit Rohu axe heads, found by holidaymakers in 2007. The axes come from the Italian Alps, proof that the Neolithic people had travelled far. Near the Petit Rohu beach are stone alignments under water. In 5,000 years, the sea has risen 500 m (1,640 ft). What is now the Gulf of Morbihan was once covered with farms and villages.



Answers: 1 Scholars think the shield is a stylized 'mother goddess' figure. 2 Neolithic people were farmers and the axe symbolized power over plants. 3 Could be a shepherd's crook (they kept sheep, goats and cows). But some say it was a symbol of a ruler of people. 4 Bull horns probably bulls had a special status. 5 Snakes, which fascinated ancient people. Or they could just be zigzags.



The Moulin du Grand Poulguin restaurant, housed in a working mill, Pont-Aven

10 Vannes

Seahorses and butterflies

The lovely city of Vannes was hit by just one bomb in World War II, and it did not explode. The Morbihan department's finest artefacts are on display in the handsome interior of the splendid 15th-century Château Gaillard's **Musée de Préhistoire et d'Archéologie**. The medieval market houses the **Musée des Beaux Arts**, with Delacroix's *Christ on the Cross* and Breton paintings. Nearby looms the massive Cathédrale St-Pierre, first built in the 13th century and remodelled many times since.

A free summer shuttle bus goes to the Parc du Golfe, home to the **Aquarium du Golfe**, specializing in tropical fish, cuttlefish and seahorses; and the **Jardin des Papillons**, which is a greenhouse that houses exotic flora and butterflies.

Letting off steam

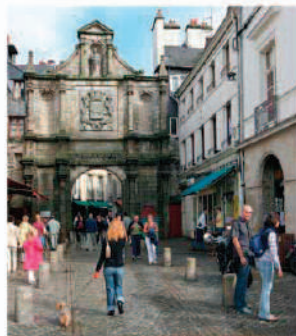
Take bus 7 to Questembert, just east of Vannes, and then a taxi to the **Parc Animalier et Botanique de Branféré**

(www.branfere.com), where animals roam free and birds perform aerial ballets, while kids can scamper on nets hanging from trees.

11 Lorient

Trawlers and sailing ships

France's second most important fishing port was founded by King Louis XIV to serve as the port of his Compagnie des Indes Orientales,



One of Vannes' two gateways, part of the old city wall

The Lowdown

- Map reference** 2 G4
Address 56100 (Morbihan). La Cité de la Voile Eric Tabarly: Base de Sous-Marins, 56323 Keroman; www.citevoile-tabarly.com. La Flore, Base de Sous-Marins, Rue Roland Morillot, 56100 Lorient; 02 97 65 52 87; www.la-flore.fr
- Train** from Paris, Vannes and Nantes
- Visitor information** Maison de la Mer, Quai de Rohan, 56100; 02 97 84 78 00; www.lorient-tourisme.fr
- Open** La Cité de la Voile Eric Tabarly & La Flore: daily during school hols, closed Mon other times & Jan
- Eat and drink** **Real meal** L'Éveil des Sens (11 Rue Fénelon, 56100; 02 97 84 05 79; closed Sun, Mon dinner & Sat lunch) has home-style cooking. **Family treat** Le Neptune (15 Ave de la Perrière, 56100; 02 97 37 04 56; www.facebook.com/LeNeptuneRestaurant; closed Wed pm & Sun) serves delicious fish and seafood.

which also gave the town its name. Badly bombed in World War II, Lorient has since developed an array of maritime attractions, which starts off with a child-friendly tour. The colossal Base de Sous-Marins Keroman houses **La Cité de la Voile Eric Tabarly**, where families can learn about sailing, followed by an excursion in Lorient's bay (Apr–Sep if weather permits) and also the submarine *La Flore*, with its interactive museum.

Letting off steam

Play in the Jardin Jules Ferry in Lorient's centre. Or take bus 50 to Pont-Scorff to visit **Odysseum** (www.odysseum.fr), which has a fresh-water aquarium by a salmon-filled river.

12 Pont-Aven

Crazy for art

Before 1886, the charming village of Pont-Aven was best known for its watermills, but that was before it found itself in the vanguard of French art, thanks to Paul Gauguin and a handful of like-minded artists who retreated here to work out a new theory they called Synthetism. Instead of just depicting a subject realistically, the artists painted their own emotional impression of it, in

The Lowdown

- Map reference** 2 H4
Address 56000 (Morbihan). Musée de Préhistoire et d'Archéologie: 2 Rue Noé; 02 97 42 59 80; www.mairie-vannes.fr. Musée des Beaux Arts: Pl St-Pierre; 02 97 01 63 00; www.mairie-vannes.fr. Aquarium du Golfe: 21 Rue Daniel Girard; www.aquarium-du-golfe.com. Jardin des Papillons: Rue Daniel Girard; www.jardinauxpapillons.com
- Train** from Rennes. **Bus** from Carnac
- Visitor information** Quai Tabarly, 56000; 02 97 47 24 34; www.tourisme-vannes.com
- Open** Musée de Préhistoire et d'Archéologie: Jun–Sep: daily.

Musée des Beaux Arts: Jun–Sep: daily; Oct–May: daily pm. Aquarium du Golfe: daily (Oct–Mar pm only, except during school hols). Jardin des Papillons: Apr & Sep: pm, May–Aug: daily

Eat and drink **Real meal** Au Pont Vert (40 Ave du Maréchal de Lattre de Tassigny, 56000; 02 97 40 80 13; Mon–Sat lunch only) serves dishes based around market produce. **Family treat** Le Boudoir (43 Rue de la Fontaine, 56000; 02 97 42 60 64) offers gourmet children's menus.

Festival Fêtes Historiques de Vannes, parades and street theatre relive various periods of Vannes' history (Jul).

bold colours and with strong outlines. To learn more, visit the **Musée des Beaux Arts**, which houses works by members of the Pont-Aven school. As for the village, it remains a beacon for artists: the **Chapelle de Trémalo**, mecca for Gauguin followers holds an exhibition of Gauguin reproductions every year during Jul and Aug.

Letting off steam

Take a kayak trip with **360 Kayak Discovery** on the Aven river. Or head inland by taxi to Locunolé's **Village de Loisirs de Ty Nadan** (www.tynadan-loisirs.fr), with ponies, quad bikes, tree acrobatics and paintball for kids aged 5 plus.

The Lowdown

- Map reference** 2 F4
Address 29930 (Finistère).
Musée des Beaux Arts: Pl de l'Hôtel-de-Ville; 02 98 06 14 43; www.museepontaven.fr.
Chapelle de Trémalo: Bois d'amour, Pont-Aven
- Train** from Rennes or Vannes to Quimper, then bus
- Visitor information** 5 Pl Hôtel de Ville, 29930; 02 98 06 04 70 www.pontaven.com
- Open** Musée des Beaux Arts: closed until 2015. Chapelle de Trémalo: 10am–5pm daily
- Eat and drink** **Real meal** Moulin du Grand Pouliquin (*Quai Botrel*, 29930; 02 98 06 02 67; moulin-pontaven.com; closed Nov) serves crêpes, pizzas and brasserie-style dishes. **Family treat** Sur Le Pont (11 pl Paul Gauguin; 02 98 06 16 16; www.surlepont-pontaven.fr; closed Sun, Tue pm except Jul–Aug & Wed) is an upmarket bistro serving grilled seafood.
- Festival** Festival des fleufs d'Ajonc, procession celebrating the Queen's arrival (Aug)

13 Quimper

Hand-painted pottery

Finistère's proud capital Quimper, or "Quimperon en Cornouaille" as it likes to be known, is where the legendary King Gradlon of Cornouaille relocated after his beautiful city of Ys, built for his unruly daughter Dahut, was drowned by waves (see p165). Gradlon's hermit friend Corentin became the city's first bishop and gave his name to the Gothic cathedral (the statue between its spires is Gradlon).



Traditional ceramics on display at a workshop in Quimper

Around it nestles a handsome art city, where the **Musée des Beaux Arts** has paintings by the Pont-Aven school and Breton Realist painters. The **Musée Départemental Breton** has artifacts showcasing 4,000 years of history as well as hand-painted faïence, a traditional craft which is Quimper's speciality. Watch faïence artists at work at **H.B. Henriot**.

Letting off steam

Take bus 16 to the beaches in the town of Bénodet, perhaps for a cruise with **Vedettes Odet** (www.vedettes-odet.com). Or take bus 14a to visit Concarneau's beaches (www.tourismeconcarneau.fr).

The Lowdown

- Map reference** 2 F3
Address 29000 (Finistère).
Musée des Beaux Arts: 40 Pl St-Corentin; www.mbaq.fr.
Musée Départemental Breton: 1 Rue du Roi-Gradlon; www.museedepartementalbreton.fr.
H.B. Henriot: Rue Haute; www.hb-henriot.com
- Train** from Paris, Rennes & Vannes
- Visitor information** Pl de la Résistance, 29000; 02 98 53 04 05; www.quimper-tourisme.com
- Open** Musée des Beaux Arts: timings vary, check before visit. Musée Départemental Breton: daily; Oct–May: closed Sun am & Mon. H.B. Henriot: tours in English and French (book in advance)
- Eat and drink** **Real meal** Le Globe (9 Blvd Amiral-Kerguelen, 29000; 02 98 95 09 10; closed Sat, Sun & Mon lunch) serves dishes from around the world. **Family treat** Le Cosy (2 Rue du Sallé, 29000; 02 98 95 23 65; www.lecosy-restaurant.fr; closed Tue & Sun lunch) is a little restaurant that serves perfectly prepared fish and meat dishes, and also has a kids' menu.

KIDS' CORNER

In the Musée des Beaux Arts in Pont-Aven, find out...

- 1** Why did so many artists come to Pont-Aven in the 19th century?
- 2** Most artists work alone in studios. How did they work in Pont-Aven?
- 3** What were their favourite subjects?
- 4** How did they make the forms stand out boldly?

Answers at the bottom of the page.

All in a name

Often when names sound the same, there's a good reason. In Roman times, Britons crossed over the channel, settling in Bretagne or "Little Britain". Others arrived in the 6th century, fleeing the Anglo-Saxon invasions. Britons and Bretons shared Arthurian legends, music, and language – Breton is closely related to Welsh

and Cornish. The area south of Quimper, for example, is called Cornouaille, which is almost the same as the French for Cornwall, *Cornouailles*.



SUBMARINES IN WAR

During World War II, the German troops that were safe in the submarine pens in Lorient refused to surrender. So the Allies bombed the city to choke off their supply routes. The Germans finally gave up in May 1945.



Answers: 1 The new railroads made it easy to reach from Paris. It was beautiful and picturesque, with its residents in their traditional costumes. It also had cheap hotels. 2 The artists stayed in the same hotels, painted together and discussed their work. 3 Landscapes. 4 The artists outlined them in black.

Where to Stay in Brittany

A top holiday region, Brittany offers everything from cheap and cheerful camp grounds by the sea to upmarket boutique hotels and luxurious B&Bs. Most accommodation is concentrated near the coasts and air conditioning is rare – but with the region's ocean breezes it is rarely needed.

AGENCIES

Brittany Travel

www.brittany.co.uk

This company lists villas and cottages throughout the region, ranging from high end to budget prices, with a selection of lodging for people with reduced mobility.

Brittany Cottages

www.brittanycottages.com

This website features self-catering properties in all price ranges and also cottages with private pools.



Pretty garden outside a cottage near Rennes, listed on Brittany Cottages

Brest

Map 2 E2

HOTELS

Hotel Center

4 Blvd Léon Blum, 29200; 02 98 80 78 07; www.hotelcenter.com

This modern hotel, near the airport shuttle and city center, is a good base for visiting Océanopolis and the beaches around the bay of Brest. Family rooms have mezzanines and are equipped with Wi-Fi and satellite TV. Restaurant on site.

P €€

Hôtel La Baie des Anjes

350 Route des Anjes, Port de l'Aber Wrac'h, 29870 Landeda; 02 98 04 90 04; www.baie-des-anges.com

A 20-minute drive north of Brest, this fashionable hotel, housed in a 20th-century mansion, has superb sea views. There are family rooms, suites and apartments with kitchenettes. Kids are catered for with DVDs and comic books; babysitting is provided.

P €€€

BED & BREAKFAST

Domaine de Moulin Mer

34 Route de Moulin Mer, 29460

Logonna-Daoulas; 02 98 07 24 45;

www.domaine-moulin-mer.com

In a village 26 km (18 miles) south of Brest, where the sheltered coast enjoys a lush micro-climate, this 19th-century mansion is set in a garden of palms and mimosas and has been restored by its owner. Fitted with Wi-Fi, it has two suites that can be used as a family room sleeping four.

P €€€

SELF-CATERING

Auberge de Kéringar

Lochrist, 29217 Le Conquet; 02 98

89 09 59; www.keringar.fr

Located 23 km (14 miles) west of Brest on the coast, this hotel offers three exceptional gîtes sleeping up to six, in thick-walled granite houses. The beach is a short walk away; the owners offer shuttles to the port for visits to Île d'Ouessant.

P €

CAMPING

Le Village Loisirs

29290 Milizac; 02 98 07 92 17; www.camping-village-loisirs-3cures.com

Linked to the La Récré des Trois Curés theme park, 8 km (5 miles) away, this small family camp ground has 50 pitches, bungalows, mobile homes and chalets. There are pedal boats, playgrounds, mini-golf and daily kids' activities in July and August.

P €

Carnac

Map 2 G4

HOTELS

Auberge du Petit Matelot

Penthièvre Plage, 56510 St-Pierre-

Quiberon; 02 97 52 31 21; www.auberge-du-petit-matelot.com

By a sandy beach midway down the beautiful Quiberon peninsula west of Carnac, this jolly little hotel has simple

rooms, with satellite TV. There is half-board arrangement with the adjacent restaurant, La Balise.

P €€

L'Hippocampe

Route de Carnac, Kerhueno, 56340

Plouharnel; 02 97 52 39 51; www.hotel-hippocampe.fr

In green countryside, just 3 km (2 miles) northwest of Carnac's sandy beaches, this little family-run hotel enjoys a garden setting. The family room has a mezzanine and balcony, flat screen TV and Wi-Fi. The owners cultivate oysters – try them in the hotel restaurant.

P €€

Hotel Celtique

82 Ave des Druides, Carnac Plage, 56340; 02 97 52 14 15; www.hotel-celtique.com

Colourful Celtic designs decorate this modern hotel, a 2-minute walk from the beach and a short drive from the standing stones. Family rooms have beds for up to three kids on the mezzanine and are equipped with Wi-Fi and satellite TV; grown-ups can indulge in the spa.

P €€

BED & BREAKFAST

Ker Kristal

12 Kerguéarec, 56340; 02 97 56

73 57; www.kerkristal.com

Jocelyne et Jürgen Heiligtag's modern yet traditionally styled house is set in beautiful gardens. It offers



Lush trees shading the charming lake in Le Village Loisirs, Brest

a handsome two-bedroom family suite with satellite TV, a kitchenette and private garden terrace. Games and baby facilities are available.

🚿 🚗 🏠 P €€

SELF-CATERING

Le Clos Saint Aubin

Le Hahon, 56340 Carnac; 02 97 52 33 38; www.clos-saintaubin.com
Set in a rural hamlet, this traditional, stone-built building has been tastefully renovated to provide a lovely gîte for five people. It is ideally located for visiting the Carnac beaches and the megaliths. Children's cots and high chairs provided.

🚿 🏠 P 🌳 €€

CAMPING

Camping La Grande Metairie

Route des Alignements de Kermario, 56342 Kerlescan; 02 97 52 24 01; www.lagrandemetairie.com

Located near the standing stones, this long-established camp ground offers pitches, mobile homes, tree houses and huts. A riding stable, tree-top adventure course and even a children's disco are on offer.

🏠 P 🌳 €

Concarneau

Map 2 F4

HOTEL

Hôtel de France et d'Europe

9 Ave de la Gare, 29900; 02 98 97 00 64; www.hotel-france-europe.com
This century-old hotel, with a friendly staff, is just outside Concarneau's Ville Close, a 5-minute walk from the beach. The cheerfully decorated rooms have comfortable beds, Wi-Fi and double-glazed windows. Buffet breakfast served at extra charge.

🚿 P €€

Côte de Granit Rose

Map 2 G2

HOTEL

Le Manoir de St Michel Map 3 A5
38 Rue de la Carquois, 22240 Frehel; 02 96 41 48 87; www.fournel.de

Just west of Cap Frehel, overlooking the Plage de Sables-d'Or-des-Pins, this hotel in a 16th-century granite manor offers excellent value for money. The "cottages" sleep up to six; other delights include the superb breakfast, a fishing lake and lawns.

🚿 P €€

SELF-CATERING

Stereden Village des Gîtes

Route du Radôme, 22560 Pleumeur-Bodou; 02 96 91 80 57; www.stereden.com

This car-free village of basic chalet-gîtes, sleeping up to five, is only 2 km (1 mile) from the beaches. There are large play areas, barbecues, as well as bikes to hire. Short stays are available.

🏠 P €

CAMPING

Tourony

Route de Poul Palud, 22730

Trégastel; 02 96 23 86 61; www.camping-tourony.com

Overlooking the port of Ploumanac'h between Perros-Guirec and Trégastel, this camp site offers pitches, chalets and mobile homes sleeping up to six. Playgrounds on site and beaches are close by; bikes can be rented.

🚿 🏠 P €

Dinan

Map 3 A6

HOTEL

Le Challenge

29 Pl Duguesclin, 22100; 02 96 87 16 30; www.hotel-dinan.fr

In the heart of Dinan, this hotel has spacious and cosy carpeted rooms, including two for families, with Wi-Fi, satellite TV and towel heaters. There is a brasserie-style restaurant. Pay street parking nearby.

🚿 €€

BED & BREAKFAST

La Motte

Beaumanoir

35720 Pleugueneuc-Plesder; 02 23 22 05 00

Located 15 km (9 miles) east of Dinan and midway between Rennes and St-Malo, this stately château is set in a park of woodlands, by a lake. All the renovated rooms are luxurious and boast modern furnishings. Babysitting available.

🚿 🚗 🏠 P 🌳 €€€

Pont-Aven

Map 2 F4

BED & BREAKFAST

Castel Braz

12 Rue du Bois d'Amour, 29930; 02 98 06 07 81; www.castelbraz.com

This handsome 19th-century white house with blue shutters on the banks of the Aven river has been artily transformed into a B&B by its owners.



Views of the lake at Le Manoir de St Michel, Côte de Granit Rose

Equipped with Wi-Fi, each room has a theme. The impressive Asian and African suites sleep four.

🚿 🚗 P €

Hotel Les Grandes Roches

Rue des Grandes Roches, 29910 Tregunc; 02 98 97 62 97; www.hotel-lesgrandesroches.com

The handsome granite buildings of this hotel sit in five hectares of lush countryside. The hotel is ideally located for watersports and visits to Brittany's attractive fishing ports.

🚿 P 🌳 🏠 €€€

CAMPING

Domaine de Kerlann

29930 Land Rosted; 05 56 07 90 17; www.siblu.fr

Spread around an indoor-outdoor water park, this camp ground has five playgrounds and free kids' clubs for all ages. There are pitches, motor homes and mobile homes to rent, spread out among the trees. Baby kits, sheets and towels can be hired.

🏠 P 🌳 €-€€

Presqu'île de Crozon

Map 2 E3

BED & BREAKFAST

Kastell Dinn

29160 Kerlouantec; 02 98 27 26 40; www.gite-rando-bretagne.com

Just south of Crozon, on the Cap de la Chèvre, this B&B has four themed rooms, sleeping four – sail, marine, beach and pebbles – along with two rooms in and under old boats in the garden.

🚿 P €€

Price Guide

The following price ranges are based on one night's accommodation in high season for a family of four, inclusive of service charges and any additional taxes.

€ Under €100 €€ €100–200 €€€ over €200

CAMPING

Trez Rouz

Route de Camaret à Roscanvel, 29160 Camaret-sur-Mer; 02 98 27 93 96; www.trezrouz.com

This basic little camp ground is set just back from a sandy beach on Brittany's westernmost coast, amidst the splendid Parc Naturel Régional d'Armorique. Chalets and mobile homes can be hired for a minimum of four days. There is a playground too. Nearby, regular boat services to Brest makes it easy to visit Océanopolis.

P

€



Stately exterior of the friendly Hôtel de l'Univers, St-Malo

Rennes

Map 7 B1

HOTEL

Le Victoria

35 Ave de Janvier, 35000; 02 99 31 69 11; www.hotel-levictoria.com

A stone's throw from the train station and within walking distance of the centre, this hotel's rooms are small, but comfortable, with Wi-Fi and satellite TV. The breakfast is good and there is a brasserie-style restaurant. The staff is friendly.

P

€€

BED & BREAKFAST

Symphonie des Sens

8 Rue du Chapitre, 35000; 02 99 79 30 30; www.symphoniedessens.com

Located in the centre of historic Rennes, this is a two-bedroom flat on the third floor of a timbered house of 1651, sympathetically restored with designer fabrics and modern furniture. The family apartment has Internet access and TV. Breakfast is served in the apartment or out on the terrace.

P

€€€

SELF-CATERING

Apartment City Rennes Ouest

7 Rue Pierre-Joseph Colin, 35000; 02 99 02 61 61; www.appartcity.com

These modern, clean, functional self-catering apartments are just west of the centre and linked by bus 53 and 30. They also make an easy base for families exploring Brittany by car. Buffet breakfast available.

P

€

Roscoff

Map 2 F2

HOTELS

Regina

1 Rue Ropartz Morvan, 29680; 02 98 61 23 55; www.hotel-regina.fr

Near the train station and the centre of Roscoff, this old, simple, but clean hotel offers good value for money. Rooms have satellite TV. There is no restaurant on site, but there are quite a few eateries within walking distance. The staff is helpful.

P

€€

Le Brittany

Blvd Ste-Barbe, 29681; 02 98 69 70 78; www.hotel-brittany.com

Housed in a 17th-century building, disassembled and rebuilt in Roscoff in 1974, this Relais & Châteaux hotel is a haven of peace in the busy port. The comfortable rooms have satellite TV and Wi-Fi; under 2s stay for free. Expect top service from the Chapalain family, who have been at the helm for years.

P

€€€

St-Malo

Map 3 A5

HOTELS

Aubade Hotel

8 Pl Duguesclin, 35400; 02 99 40 47 11; www.aubade-hotel.com

Located close to the beach and a short walk to historic St-Malo, this boutique hotel, decorated in shades of mint and chocolate, is comfortable and welcoming. Rooms have Wi-Fi and large flat-screen TVs. There is a library with books, comic books and DVDs about the area. Staff is helpful.

P

€€

Hôtel de l'Univers

Pl Châteaubriand, 35400; 02 99 40 89 52; www.hotel-univers-saintmalo.com

Located opposite St-Malo's château, this friendly hotel, a former local yacht club, is linked to a famous bar

packed full of memorabilia. Rooms have comfortable beds and there are countless restaurants nearby; the beach is just a stroll away.

P

€€

Hôtel Le Nautilus

9 Rue de la Corne de Cerf, 35400; 02 99 40 42 27; www.lenautilus.com

This cheerful little hotel, housed in a listed granite building, has bright yellow and orange rooms equipped with Wi-Fi and satellite TV. The owners are helpful; the breakfast, with home-made bread, is delicious and good value for money.

P

€

BED & BREAKFAST

Château Richeux

Map 3 B5

St Méloir des Ondes, 35350 Cancale; 02 99 89 64 76; www.maisons-de-bricourt.com

East of St-Malo, in the beach village of Cancale, this château is a lovely granite villa from the 1920s, set in a park, with splendid sea views. The beautiful rooms are furnished with antiques, while the ground floor has a magnificent restaurant, La Coquillage. They also offer four very comfortable self-catering gîtes.

P

€€€

CAMPING

Domaine des Ormes

Map 3 B6

Epiac, 35120 Dol de Bretagne; 02 99 73 53 00; www.lesormes.com

This huge, top-rated holiday resort is a half hour's drive from St-Malo. There are 800 pitches for campers and tree houses, apartment hotels, Russian dachas and thatched lodges. An 18-hole golf course, horse and pony riding, water park, playground and cultural events are also on offer.

P

€-€€€

Vannes

Map 2 G4

SELF-CATERING

Port du Crouesty

D780, 56640 Arzon; 01 58 21 55 50; www.pv-holidays.com

Set around a pleasant port on the gulf of Morbihan, south of Vannes, these handsome family apartments are spread over four buildings in a pedestrian zone, just a short distance from Fogoé beach. There are kids' clubs, a sailing school and a thalassotherapy spa for grown-ups. Bike hire available.

P

€€

The Loire Valley

For many, the broad green valley of the Loire is the real heart of France. The valley is known for its Renaissance châteaux – Amboise, Chambord and Blois among others – filled with history and culture. Between the châteaux are cities: Orléans and Chartres have great cathedrals, while Nantes offers maritime history and the futuristic Les Machines de l'Île.

Below *The magnificent central lantern tower of the Château de Chambord*

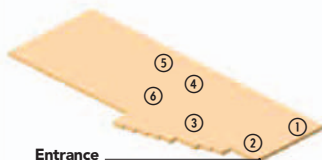


① Les Machines de l'Île, Nantes

The factory of imaginary machines

When the shipyards closed on the Île de Nantes in 1987, the vast industrial zone situated on the banks of the Loire seemed like a hole in the heart of Nantes – until two theatre experts, François Delarozzière and Pierre Orefice, came up with a plan to re-use the workshops. Inspired by the sketches in Leonardo da Vinci's *Notebooks* and the imagination of Nantes native Jules Verne, the workshops were used to build things no one had seen before.

Key Features



Entrance



① **The buildings** Dating from around 1900, these enormous structures were built for the Chantiers de la Loire shipyards. They found a new life as home to all the prototypes of Les Machines de l'Île when they opened to the public in 2007.



② **Le Grand Eléphant** The articulated 45-ton (40-tonne) 12-m (39-ft) tall wooden elephant takes visitors on a 30-minute stroll around the former shipyards.



③ **La Galerie des Machines** Scale models of current and future projects are displayed here, as well as completed, working sections of machines to ride.



④ **L'Atelier de la Machine** Prototypes such as Le Manège des Mondes Marins and L'Arbre aux Hérons are brought to life in this workshop, using wood, custom metal pieces and state-of-the-art high-tech. The workers demonstrate their current projects.

⑤ **Terraces** Walk along terraces above the workshops to get an overview of ongoing projects. A film on the west terrace explains the stages of creating a machine from the drawing board to the finished product.

⑥ **Le Centre Européen d'Essai en Vol** This is Europe's only simulated high-speed wind tunnel, designed to test the air worthiness of the machines. Some lucky visitors may be invited to experience it.

Letting off steam

Take a 5-minute taxi ride to the town of Bouguenais, site of the **Labyrinth de Nantes-Bouguenais** (www.labyrinththe.fr). It is one of the world's biggest hedge mazes, specially designed for kids.

Eat and drink

Picnic: under €20; Snacks: €20–45; Real meal: €45–90; Family treat: over €90 (based on a family of four)

PICNIC **Marché de Talensac** (*Rue de Talensa, 44000 Nantes*) is a good place for supplies. Picnic at Le Parc du Crapa, on the eastern tip of Île de Nantes, with tables and playgrounds. **SNACKS** **Café de la Branche** (*on-site*) offers drinks, cakes and snacks in the mid and high season; it is also a great place to see Le Grand Eléphant trumpet past.

Prices given are for a family of four

REAL MEAL **Pirates!** (*13 Blvd de Stalingrad, 44000 Nantes; 02 40 74 05 15; closed Sat lunch, Sun dinner & Mon*) serves traditional and French cuisine in a fun atmosphere.

FAMILY TREAT **Le Manoir de la Régate** (*155 Route de Gachet, 44300 Nantes; 02 40 18 02 97; www.lesfreresperou.fr; closed Sun dinner*)



A children's maze at the Labyrinth de Nantes-Bouguenais, Bouguenais

is an elegant restaurant housed in a 19th-century mansion, offering a wide choice of Breton and Loire specialities, as well as a kids' menu.

Shopping

For a variety of creative and scientific games, visit **Têtatoto** (*1 Rue du Château, 44000; 06 60 41 85 52*). **Chocolat Gautier-Debotté** (*9 Rue de la Fosse, 44000; 02 40 48 23 19; www.patisserie-debotté.com*) has lovely decorated chocolates and pastries.

Find out more

DIGITAL Play Around the World in 80 Days, a Game Boy Advance video game. Kids can also opt for Voyage, a computer game that is inspired by the works of Jules Verne.

The Lowdown

Map reference 7 B2
Address 44000 (Loire-Atlantique).
 Les Chantiers, Blvd Léon Bureau,
 44200 Nantes; 08 10 12 12 25;
www.lesmachines-nantes.fr

Train from Paris to Nantes,
 then Tramway 1

Open timings vary; check
 website for details

Prices €31; under 4s free. Le
 Grand Éléphant: €29–39; under
 4s free (buy tickets at the
 entrance). Carrousel: €27–37

Skipping the queue Go on a
 weekday, when it is less crowded
 and all the workers will be busy
 in the workshops. Select rides
 can be booked online (check
 website for details).

Guided tours No
Age range 2 plus

Allow 3–4 hours

Wheelchair access La Galerie
 des Machines: Yes. Le Grand
 Éléphant: 1 place per ride

Café on site (see p174)

Shops La Boutique des
 Machines (on site) stocks
 an array of imaginative gifts.
 The E-Boutique (check website)
 offers books, stationery, DVDs
 and more.

Toilets By the café

Festivals Carnaval des
 Nantes (Apr). Christmas
 events at La Galerie des
 Machines

Good family value?

Les Machines de l'île offers a
 unique experience and is inspiring
 fun for all ages.



Le Carrousel des Mondes Marins A giant squid,
 manta ray and lantern fish are among the
 wonderful, articulated creatures that circle in
 an aquatic ballet on the three levels of this
 amazing carousel. Kids will love this wonderfully
 absorbing and educational display.



L'Arbre aux Hérons This
 hanging garden will feature
 rides under the wings of two
 giant herons. A scale model
 is currently on display.

FILM There are dozens of films
 based on the stories of Jules Verne.
 Classic versions include *Around the
 World in 80 Days* (1956) with David
 Niven and Cantinflas; *20,000
 Leagues Under the Sea* (1954) with
 James Mason and Kirk Douglas.

Next step...

NANTES Visit Nantes' historic centre,
 clustered beneath the 15th-century
Château des Ducs de Bretagne
 (Rue du Château, 44000; 02 51 17
 49 48; www.chateau-nantes.fr). Its
 Renaissance core holds a fascinating
 multimedia museum of the city. The
Jardin des Plantes (Rue Stanislas
 Baudry, 44000) has 7 ha (17 acres) of
 botanical gardens in the centre of
 Nantes, and they hold over 12,000
 species of plants, as well as tropical
 greenhouses. An 18-m (59-ft)



The solid ramparts of the Château des
 Ducs de Bretagne, Nantes

skeleton of a fin whale that got hit
 by a boat is in the **Musée d'Histoire
 Naturelle** (Pl de la Monnaie, 44000;
 02 40 41 55 00; [www.museum.
 nantes.fr](http://www.museum.

 nantes.fr)). The **Musée Jules-Verne**
 (3 Rue de l'Hermitage, 44000; 02
 40 69 72 52; [www.nantes.fr/
 julesverne](http://www.nantes.fr/

 julesverne)) is dedicated to the
 author's life and works, with 98 of
 his original manuscripts.

KIDS' CORNER

In Les Machines de l'Île, find out...

- 1 How many sea creatures go around on the carousel?
- 2 What kind of wood do they use to make the machines?
- 3 What will be at the top of L'Arbre aux Hérons when it is finally completed?

Answers at the
 bottom of the page.



Predicting the future

Nantes native Jules Verne, one of
 the fathers of science fiction, had
 a knack for predicting the future
 in his novels. One of his most
 astonishing books, *Paris in the
 20th century*, written in 1862 –
 and set a hundred years in
 the future – was put away in a
 drawer because his publisher
 judged it as too unbelievable.
 The manuscript, rediscovered by
 his great-grandson in 1989,
 accurately predicted glass
 skyscrapers, computers,
 petrol-powered cars and also
 a communications system
 comparable to
 the Internet.



MAKING SHIP BISCUITS

One of Nantes' most striking
 landmarks is the Lefèvre-Utile
 (LU) biscuit tower. But even before
 the company was founded in 1846,
 Nantes made ship biscuits, which
 were ideal for long sea voyages
 because they were baked twice,
 contained no water and could last
 a long time.



Answers: 1 35 2 American tulipwood.
 3 Two giant herons. They have baskets
 under their wings for people to ride in.



A field gun at the exterior of Le Grand Blockhaus-Musée de la Poche, Batz

② St-Nazaire

The city of ocean liners

Located on the Loire estuary, by its namesake landmark bridge and the magnificent beaches of the Côte d'Amour, with its pale golden sands, St-Nazaire remembers its history with guided audio tours of the submarine **Espadon** and also the **Escal'Atlantique**, a unique museum designed like an ocean liner. It evokes the glamour of great ships, including the last operating ocean liner, the *Queen Mary II*, built in St-Nazaire. The **Ecomusée de St-Nazaire** houses exhibits on the history of the port and estuary.

The Lowdown

Map reference 2 H5

Address 44600 (Loire-Atlantique). Escal'Atlantique & Espadon: Blvd de la Legion d'Honneur; 08 10 88 84 44. Ecomusée de St-Nazaire: Ave St-Hubert; 08 10 88 84 44

Train from Nantes and Paris

Visitor information Blvd de la Légion d'Honneur, Base Sous-marine Ville-Port, 44600; 02 40 22 40 65; www.saint-nazaire-tourisme.com. There is a central ticket office for all the sites next to the tourist office.

Open Espadon, Escal'Atlantique & Ecomusée de St-Nazaire: Apr–Sep: daily; Mar: closed Mon & Tue; Oct: closed Mon; Nov–Dec: closed Mon, Tue, Thu & Fri; closed Jan, Feb & school hols

Eat and drink **Real meal** Le Sabayon (7 Rue de la Paix, 44600; 02 40 01 88 21; closed Sun & Mon) has tasty home-made dishes and excellent desserts. **Family treat** La Grillandine (20 Rue de la Trinité, 44600; 02 40 70 09 30) serves succulent *entrecôtes* (rib steaks) and seafood dishes.

Festival Les Escales, a festival of world music (Aug)

Letting off steam

STRAN buses 40 or 45 go to Plage de Monsieur Hulot, 4 km (6 miles) west, in St-Marc-sur-Mer, where the classic French comedy, *Les Vacances de Monsieur Hulot* (1953) was filmed by Jacques Tati – his statue overlooks the beach. Further west, play on the sands of Côte d'Amour at La Baule or at Pornichet, which offers roller skating on the Boulevard des Océanides on Wednesdays.

③ Batz-sur-Mer

On the peninsula of salt

A pretty port with a Breton feel, Batz-sur-Mer boasts the 15th-century **Église St-Guéno**. Climb its granite tower for a view of the Guérandaise peninsula. On the edge of town is **Le Grand Blockhaus-Musée de la Poche**, a German command post that was disguised as a hotel during World War II to deter bombs. Today, it is a museum that tells the story of the St-Nazaire "Pocket" and how it held out against the Allies for so long.



Visitors surrounded by marine life in the Océarium, Le Croisic

The Lowdown

Map reference 2 H5

Address 44740 (Loire-Atlantique). Église St-Guéno: Pl du Garnal; 02 40 23 92 36. Le Grand Blockhaus-Musée de la Poche: 12 Route du Dervin; www.grand-blockhaus.com. Musée des Marais Salants: 29 bis Rue Pasteur; 02 40 23 82 79

Train from Nantes or St-Nazaire

Visitor information 25 Rue de la Plage, 44740; 02 40 23 92 36; www.ot-batzsummer.fr

Open Tower of Église St-Guéno: Apr–mid-Sep: daily. Le Grand

Since at least the 14th century, this area has been producing France's gourmet salt, *sel de Guérande*, a story told in the **Musée des Marais Salants**. Salt marshes surround the town of Guérande, just inland.

Letting off steam

There are beaches in Batz or take Bus E west to Le Croisic, France's prime pink prawn port. The **Océarium** in Le Croisic (www.ocearium-croisic.fr) has an aquarium and a marine tunnel.

④ Les Sables d'Olonne

France's most famous boat race

Once a cod fishing port, and a resort since the mid-19th century, the seaside town of Les Sables is named for its superb long sandy beaches. It is the base for the prestigious round-the-world Vendée Globe, a sailing race that takes place every four years. It has a pretty 19th-century covered market and grand villas lining Le Remblai promenade.

The town's 17th-century abbey houses the **Musée de l'Abbaye Ste-Croix**, featuring whimsical, often humorous Art Brut works by Gaston Chaissac and Victor Brauner, which appeal to children, as well as a marine history section with ships' models. Situated by the fishing port, the **Muséum du Coquillage** showcases a stunning seashell collection. Tour Les Salines (www.lessalines.fr), the local salt marshes, by boat, canoe or on foot.

Letting off steam

Les Sables has a little **Zoo** (www.zoodessables.fr) dedicated to endangered species. Take bus 168

The Lowdown

Map reference 2 H5

Address 44740 (Loire-Atlantique). Église St-Guéno: Pl du Garnal; 02 40 23 92 36. Le Grand Blockhaus-Musée de la Poche: 12 Route du Dervin; www.grand-blockhaus.com. Musée des Marais Salants: 29 bis Rue Pasteur; 02 40 23 82 79

Train from Nantes or St-Nazaire

Visitor information 25 Rue de la Plage, 44740; 02 40 23 92 36; www.ot-batzsummer.fr

Open Tower of Église St-Guéno: Apr–mid-Sep: daily. Le Grand

Blockhaus-Musée de la Poche: Apr–11 Nov: daily; Feb school hols. Musée des Marais Salants: phone to check

Eat and drink **Real meal** Derwin (Baie du Dervin, 44740; 02 40 23 90 06; closed Tue) serves both crêpes and seafood platters. **Family treat** Le Neptune (11 Ave Port Val, Le Croisic; 02 40 23 02 59; www.restaurant-lenephte.fr) is perfect for dining on Breton-style seafood with the kids.

Festival Les Celtiques de Guérande, five days of Celtic music and games (Aug)



A spectacular pirate show in progress, Grand Parc Puy du Fou

The Lowdown

Map reference 7 A4
Address 85100 (Vendée).
 Musée de l'Abbaye Ste-Croix:
 Rue de Verdun; 02 51 32 01 16;
www.lemasc.fr. Muséum du
 Coquillage: 8 Rue du Maréchal
 Leclerc; 02 51 23 50 00; www.museum-du-coquillage.com

Train from Nantes

Visitor information 1 Prom Joffre,
 85100; 02 51 96 85 85; www.lesablescolonne-tourisme.com

Open Musée de l'Abbaye Ste-Croix: closed Mon. Muséum du Coquillage: daily; Sep–Apr: closed Sun am

Eat and drink **Snacks** Delis House (3 Rue de la Tour, 85100; 02 51 96 98 40; www.delishouse.fr; open daily) offers salads, pizzas and desserts to eat on the spot or take to the beach. **Real meal** Don Rico (6 Rue des Ecoliers, 85100; 02 51 32 79 46; closed Wed, Sat & Sun lunch) serves excellent pizzas.

Festival Les Sables en Fête, includes jazz concerts and outdoor events (Jul & Aug)

to **St-Jean-de-Monts**, in the northern Vendée, where kids 8 plus can learn to sand-yacht at the **Base Nautique** (www.saint-jean-de-monts.com).

5 Grand Parc Puy du Fou

Gladiators, vikings and musketeers

In 1977, the ruined 15th-century castle of Guy de Puy du Fou was made the centrepiece for a summer night pageant called the Cinéscénie. A torch-lit spectacle retracing the history of a local family, from the Middle Ages to World War II, it featured a cast of 1,200 local

volunteers. It was so popular that, in 1989, the Grand Parc Puy du Fou was created. It is the fourth most-visited theme park in France – and without a single ride. The park re-creates historic settings and spectacles in full costume: Viking attacks, sword-fighting Musketeers, a show with 150 birds of prey and more.

Take cover

Head for Cholet, 20 km (12 miles) north of Le Puy du Fou, to visit its two unusual museums. The **Musée du Textile** (www.museedutextile.com) covers how Cholet once made its famous red handkerchiefs and the **Musée des Metiers de la Chaussure** (www.museechaussure.fr) is devoted to the local craft of shoe making that still employs 10,000 workers.

The Lowdown

Map reference 7 C3
Address 85504 (Vendée).
 BP 25, 85590 Les Epesses; 08 20 09 10 10; www.puydufou.com

Train to Angers, then shuttle bus

Visitor information 2 Grande-Rue St-Blaise, 85500 Les Herbiers; 02 44 40 20 20; www.ot-lesherbiers.fr

Open mid-Apr–Aug: daily; closed Mon & Tue in Sep. When reserving online, book headphones for English translations. An extra ticket is required to see the Cinéscénie on Fri and Sat nights. During most French school hols, admission includes evening fireworks and water spectacle.

Price Grand Parc: €106–116. Grand Parc & Cinéscénie: €146–156; under 5s free

Eat and drink **Picnic** LeClerc (Rue des Chauvières, 85500 Les Herbiers; 02 51 92 93 13) stocks supplies for picnics in the park. **Real meal** Halle Renaissance (on site; 08 20 09 10 10) offers dishes such as salads, grilled chicken and almond and pear tarts.

Picnic under €20; Snacks €20–45; Real meal €45–90; Family treat over €90 (based on a family of four)

KIDS' CORNER

Make your own crystals

Using *sel de Guérande* (or any uniodized salt) and distilled water, you can make a perfectly cubic salt crystal at home.

- 1 Find a small glass jar and tie a string to a pencil.
- 2 Boil a little water, then add salt until no more will dissolve.



- 3 Pour it into the jar, and balance the pencil over the top so the string dangles inside.
- 4 "Seed" crystals will form on the string.

- 5 When you have a big enough seed crystal, tie it to the pencil with a piece of fishing line.

- 6 Get a perfectly clean bigger jar, and boil distilled water and salt to make another saline solution.

- 7 Allow it to cool, pour it in the jar, and dangle the seed crystal inside.

- 8 Cover it with a coffee filter to keep and don't move it for a few days, and see what you get!

NARROWEST STREET IN THE WORLD

According to the Guinness Book of World Records, Les Sables d'Olonne's Rue de l'Enfer is the narrowest street in the world. The street is only 40 cm (15 in) wide!



Time-tested strength

The submarine bases in St-Nazaire, Brest, Lorient and Bordeaux were so essential to the Germans' Atlantic defences during World War II that they were built of reinforced concrete, with roofs up to 5 m (16 ft) thick. This is why the bases were the last places to surrender at the end of the war and survive to this day.

6 Abbaye Royale de Fontevraud

Richard the Lionheart lay here

In 1101, Robert d'Arbrissel founded the Abbaye Royale de Fontevraud and rather unusually created a monastery for men and women. The Plantagenets took special interest in it when Matilda d'Anjou, aunt of Henry II of England, became the abbess. With their donations, it soon became one of Europe's major abbeys, ruled by powerful abbesses. The tombs of Henry II and Eleanor of Aquitaine hold pride of place inside the church, along with those of his son Richard the Lionheart and daughter-in-law Isabelle d'Angoulême, although they are almost certainly empty, since the bodies were probably removed during the French Revolution. Visit the huge cloister, 16th-century paintings in the *Salle Capulaire* and the impressive medieval kitchen, which is the oldest in France.

The Lowdown

Map reference 7 D3
Address 49590 (Maine-et-Loire). Rue St Jean de L'Habit BP 14; 02 41 51 73 52; www.abbaye.defontevraud.com

Bus 1 from Saumur

Visitor information Fontevraud l'Abbaye, Pl St-Michel, 49590; www.fontevraud-abbaye.fr

Open Daily; mid-Nov–Mar closed Mon

Eat and drink *Real meal* L'Amuse Bouche (512 Route de Montsoreau, 49400 Dampierre-sur-Loire; 02 41 67 79 63; closed Sun & Tue dinner and Wed) serves delicate chestnut soup and great desserts. *Family treat* Le Plantagenêt (7 Pl des Plantagenêts, 49400; 02 41 51 71 11; open daily) offers fine cuisine.

Letting off steam

There is plenty of room to run about at the abbey. Take a taxi 10 km (6 miles) west to the **Château de Brézé** (www.chateaubreze.com) with the deepest moat in Europe and a spectacular underground labyrinth.

7 Saumur

Mushrooms and cavaliers

On the banks of the Loire river, Saumur basks beneath the pointy towers of the dramatic **Château de**

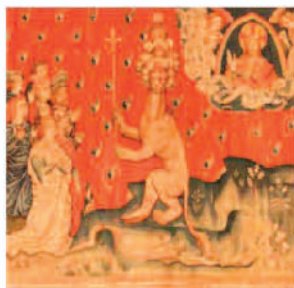


The fairy-tale turrets of the Château de Saumur

Saumur, founded by the counts of Blois in the 10th century to defend the Loire Valley from the Normans. Inside there are displays on its history and sculpture, while the gardens enjoy splendid views over the Loire river. St-Hilaire-St-Florent, a Saumur suburb, is famous for its tufa, a limestone formed over millions of years by mineral deposits left by the river. The stone itself was used to build castles; the cavities left are great for storing the local sparkling wine and mushroom farming. Since 1771, Saumur has been the seat of the **École Nationale d'Équitation**, the French Army's riding school, whose guided tours are offered along with occasional demonstrations of riding prowess. The **Musée des Blindés** focuses on more up-to-date methods of warfare; it is filled with historic tanks from around the world.

Letting off steam

In Saumur, take a ride on the Loire with the **Bateaux Nantais** (www.bateaux-nantais.fr), or take bus 23 to the town of Doué-la-Fontaine, where a former quarry shelters the **Bioparc Zoo de Doué** (www.zoodoue.fr).



Detail of the Tapeiserie de l'Apocalypse in the Château d'Angers

The Lowdown

Map reference 7 D2
Address 49400 (Maine-et-Loire). Château de Saumur: 6 Rue de Lorraine, 49400; 02 41 40 24 40. École Nationale d'Équitation: St-Hilaire-St-Florent, 49411; www.cadrenoir.fr. Musée des Blindés: 1043 Route de Fontevraud; 02 41 83 69 95; www.museedesblindes.fr

Train from Paris, Tours and Angers

Visitor information Pl de la Bilange, 49400; 02 41 40 20 60; www.ot-saumur.fr

Open Château de Saumur: Apr–mid-Jun & mid-Sep–Oct: Tue–Sun; mid-Jun–mid-Sep: daily; Jul & Aug: Thu–Sat pm (Son et Spectacle show). École Nationale d'Équitation: mid-Feb–early Nov: closed Sun, Mon am and Sat pm. Musée des Blindés: daily

Eat and drink *Real meal* Le Chianti (65 r St Nicolas, 49400; 02 41 51 15 05; closed Wed & Sun) serves pizzas, salads and grilled meats. Enjoy the terrace on sunny days. *Family treat* Le Gambetta (12 Rue Gambetta, 49400; 02 41 67 66 66; restaurant legambetta.com; closed Sun dinner, Mon & Wed) has a special gourmet menu for under 10s.

8 Angers

The city of the Apocalypse

The capital of the powerful Counts d'Anjou, Angers has their formidable medieval **Château d'Angers**, built of the city's black schist. Inside, elegance prevails; look for the rare masterpiece commissioned by Count Louis I in 1375 – the 100-m (328-ft) *Tapisserie de l'Apocalypse*, illustrating scenes from the Bible's Book of the Apocalypse. Although cut up in the 18th century, 67 of the original 84

The Lowdown

Map reference 7 C2
Address 49000 (Maine-et-Loire).
 Château d'Angers: Prom du Bout du Monde, 49100; 02 41 86 48 77 94; angers.monuments-nationaux.fr. Musée Jean-Lurçat et Tapisserie Contemporaine: 4 Blvd Arago, 49100; www.musees.angers.fr

Train from Nantes

Visitor information 7 Pl Kennedy, 49100; 02 41 23 50 00; www.angersloiretourisme.com

Open Château d'Angers: daily. Musée Jean-Lurçat et Tapisserie Contemporaine: Jun–Sep: daily; Oct–May: closed Mon

Eat and drink Snacks Crêperie du Château (21 Rue Saint Aignan, 49000; 02 41 88 53 87; www.creperieduchateau.fr) serves excellent crêpes. **Family treat** Au Restau-Théâtre (14 Rue Garnier, 49000; 02 41 72 84 26; www.au-restau-theatre.com; closed Wed & Tue, and Sun eve) is popular for its delicious modern cuisine.

scenes were recovered and restored in the 19th century. Angers' 12th-century Cathédrale St-Maurice has an interior supported by the graceful Angevin vaulting; original stained glass lines the left side of the nave.

The Apocalypse tapestry inspired 20th-century artist Jean Lurçat to create his own masterpiece called the *Chant du Monde* (Song of the World), displayed in the **Musée Jean-Lurçat et Tapisserie Contemporaine** in the Gothic hospital, built in 1175.

Letting off steam

Head for the **Jardin des Plantes** (Blvd Carnot), or take bus 5, 3 km (2 miles) to the north, to **Terra Botanica** (www.terrabotanica.fr), a park with the flora of six continents and interactive attractions such as a 4D journey to the centre of a plant.

Le Mans

The noisiest and fastest 24 hours in Europe

Often used as a film set, evocative old Le Mans is still partly enclosed by its 3rd-century Roman walls. Begun in 1060, the Cathédrale St-Julien is one of the wonders of France, with its intricate web of flying buttresses, 11th-century stained glass and late-14th-century musical angels frescoed on the ceiling. Historical finds such as a



Uniquely designed cars on display at the Musée des 24 Heures, Le Mans

Gaulish drinking horn and the Plantagenet enamel of 1151, the oldest and biggest piece of its kind, fill the **Carré Plantagenêt**. Other treasures – including the reconstruction of two Egyptian tombs – are in the **Musée de Tessé**. Le Mans is, however, best known for its 24-hour endurance motor race, held every year on the Circuit de la Sarthe. The interactive **Musée des 24 Heures** covers its history with rare racing cars on display.

Letting off steam

Near the cathedral, the **Jardin d'Horticulture** (Rue Premartine, 72000), has a charming children's garden, or take the tram to the **Arche de la Nature** (www.arche-nature.org) for walks in the woods, visits to a farm and children's activities.

The Lowdown

Map reference 7 D1
Address 72000 (Sarthe). Carré Plantagenêt: Rue Claude-Blondeau. Musée de Tessé: 2 Ave Paderborn. Musée des 24 Heures: Circuit des 24 Heures du Mans, Pl Luigi Chinetti

Train from Nantes, Angers & Paris

Visitor information 16 Rue de l'Etoile, 72000; 02 43 28 17 22; www.lemans-tourisme.com

Open Carré Plantagenêt & Musée de Tessé: closed Mon. Musée des 24 Heures: Jan: Fri–Sun; Feb–Mar & Oct–Dec: closed Tue; Apr–Sep: open daily

Eat and drink Real meal Le Jardin sur le Pouce (83 Blvd Marie et Alexandre Oyon, 72000; 02 43 86 11 20; www.jardin-pouce-restaurant.com; closed Sat lunch, Sun & Aug) offers exotic cuisine and salads. **Family treat** La Table d'Owen (4 Rue du Vert Galant, 72000; 02 43 20 57 24; latable.dowen.canalblog.com; closed Sun dinner & Mon) has classic French dishes, with a good kids' menu.

Festival 24 Heures du Mans (Jun)

KIDS' CORNER

Family trees

To keep track of who's who in the Plantagenet and other royal families, historians often make family trees. It is especially useful when so many kings have the same name – think of all the Louis in France! Make your own family tree by downloading a template going back six generations at www.genealogybeginner.com. Start with your own name and see how far back you can go. Perhaps your name will also appear many times in your tree – if so, what Roman numeral would you add to yours?



FRENCH FUNGUS

Known as *champignons de Paris*, French white mushrooms were first grown in tunnels under the capital. But the farms had to go when the Métro was built, as the moisture would have damaged the tracks. Today, over 75 per cent of them are grown in caves around Saumur.



Racing's worst crash

When Le Mans's 24-hour Grand Prix of Endurance began in 1923, the highest speeds attained on the track were 97 kmph (60 mph). Thirty years later, cars were going over 310 kmph (190 mph), but with the same safety precautions: drivers did not even wear seat belts! That is, until 1955, when Pierre Levegh's Mercedes 300 SLR somersaulted into the crowd, breaking into pieces and instantly killing Levegh and 83 spectators, and injuring 120 others. It was the worst disaster in the history of motor racing. Ever since, both cars and tracks have been made much safer.



10 Tours

The Loire's historic capital

The metropolis of the Loire Valley, Tours is a lively university city with a history that dates back to Roman times. St Martin of Tours made the city a religious centre, and for a while in the turbulent 15th century it was the capital of France. Tours' modern economy co-exists with a lovely historic centre. The city lives up to its status as a laid-back place, full of gardens, open-air markets, and choral singers; it is the site of the annual European Choral Singing championship.



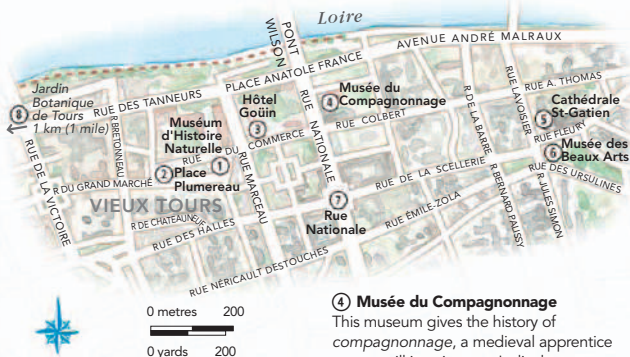
Half-timbered buildings in Place Plumereau

Key Sights

1 Muséum d'Histoire Naturelle Begun in 1780, this museum is housed in the 18th-century Ancien Présidial de Tours. It features animals from the Touraine region and from around the world.



2 Place Plumereau Popularly known as "Place Plum", this charming café-filled square is the centre of action in Vieux Tours, lined with medieval half-timbered houses.



3 Hôtel Gouin One of the town's finest buildings, this ornate 15th-century palace of a silk merchant has an Italian Renaissance façade. It now holds regular art exhibitions.

4 Musée du Compagnonnage This museum gives the history of *compagnonnage*, a medieval apprentice system still in existence. It displays some of the *compagnons'* masterpieces.



5 Cathédrale St-Gatien Flamboyant-Gothic in style, it has lofty towers and exceptional stained glass. It is hard to believe it has caught fire eight times.

6 Musée des Beaux Arts This museum houses an impressive collection, featuring Old Masters such as Rubens, Rembrandt and works from other periods.

7 Rue Nationale This busy main street and its stately commercial buildings look historic, but were redesigned and rebuilt after the Nazis bombed it in June 1940.



8 Jardin Botanique de Tours Created in 1843, this is the city's oldest park, with huge trees, a herb garden, greenhouses, an orangery and two winsome wallabies.

The Lowdown

Map reference 8 E2
Address 37000 (Indre-et-Loire).
 Muséum d'Histoire Naturelle: 3 Rue du Président Merville; www.museum.tours.fr. Hôtel Gouin: 25 Rue du Commerce; www.musee-gouin.fr. Musée du Compagnonnage: 8 Rue Nationale; 02 47 21 62 20. Musée des Beaux Arts: 18 Pl François-Sicard; 02 47 05 68 73. Cathédrale St-Gatien: Pl de la Cathédrale; 02 47 70 21 00. Jardin Botanique de Tours: 33 Blvd Tonnellé; 02 47 70 37 37

Train from Paris and Orléans

Visitor information 78 Rue Bernard Palissy, 37000; 02 47 70 37 37; www.tours-tourisme.fr

Open Muséum d'Histoire Naturelle: 10am–noon & 2–6pm Tue–Fri, 2–6pm Sat & Sun, 2–6pm hols. Musée du Compagnonnage: mid-Jun–mid-Sep: 9am–12:30pm & 2–6pm daily; mid-Jun–mid-Sep:

9am–12:30pm & 2–6pm Wed–Mon. Musée des Beaux Arts: 9am–12:45pm & 2–6pm Wed–Mon

Prices Muséum d'Histoire Naturelle: €6–60; under 12s free. Musée du Compagnonnage: €18.20–10.60; under 12s free. Musée des Beaux Arts: €10–15

Skipping the queue Buy a Carte Multivisite (€8) from any state-owned museum in Tours for admission to the museums. The pass is valid for one year.

Guided tours Contact the tourist office for details.

Age range 5 plus

Allow A day and a half

Festival Festival de la Bande Dessinée, a comic book fest (Sep)

Good family value?

Tours is a big lively city full of interest, especially for the culturally inclined, but a bit expensive.

Letting off steam

Go canoeing or kayaking on the Loire river at the **Pôle Nautique du Cher** (5 Ave de Florence, 37000; 02 47 63 13 98), suitable for kids aged 7 plus. Head for a swim to the indoor and outdoor pools of **Centre Aquatique du Lac** (275 Ave Granmont, 37000; 02 47 80 78 10).



Cheese stall in the covered market of Les Halles

Eat and drink

Picnic: under €20; Snacks: €20–45; Real meal: €45–90; Family treat: over €90 (based on a family of four)

PICNIC Aux Trois Petits Cochons (142, Ave de la Tranchée, 37100) is famous for its pâtés. Les Halles (Pl Gaston-Paillhou, 37000), a covered market south of Place Plumereau, is great for picnic supplies. Picnic in the parks on the Île Simon or the Île Aucard in the Loire.

SNACKS Hansel et Gretel (107 Rue Colbert, 37000; 02 47 05 58 65) is a tea room with ice cream, cakes and sweets. Brunch at weekends.

REAL MEAL La Souris Gourmande (100 Rue Colbert, 37000; 02 47 04 80; lasourisgourmande.com; closed Sun & Mon) is partially located in a vaulted cellar. This friendly restaurant serves cheesy *tartiflettes*

(a dish made of potatoes, bacon and cheese) and omelettes, as well as salads and meat dishes.

FAMILY TREAT L'Estrade (123 Rue Colbert, 37000; 02 47 20 80 20; www.restaurant-lestrade.fr; closed Sat & Mon lunch, Sun) serves market cuisine and a superb choice of fish, with a great selection of Loire wines.

Shopping

Radio Commande 2000 (32 Rue des Tanneurs, 37000; 02 47 39 42 97) specializes in model boats, trains and planes. **America Latina** (68 Rue Colbert, 37000; 02 47 64 57 45) has interesting imports from South America. Head for **La Chocolatière** (6 Rue de la Scellerie, 37000; www.la-chocolatiere.com) for gorgeous chocolates and cakes.

Next stop...

CHÂTEAUX AND CAVE HOUSES

Two of the Loire's great Renaissance gems are just west of Tours. Take the bus (www.tourainefilvert.com) west to Villandry to the **Château de Villandry** (www.chateauvillandry.com). It is full of art and its gardens include a garden for children, a maze of 1,200 beech trees and a greenhouse. Take the same bus to Azay-le-Rideau, just south of Villandry, to see the **Château d'Azay-le-Rideau** (www.azay-le-rideau.monuments-nationaux.fr). With its lace-like façade and pointy towers mirrored in its lagoons, it is one of the prettiest.

The nearby **Vallée Troglodytes des Goupillières** (www.troglodytedesgoupillieres.fr) is a village of cave-houses that has been restored to evoke the life of 19th-century farmers.



The jewel-box-like Château d'Azay-le-Rideau, surrounded by its moat

KIDS' CORNER

In the Musée du Compagnonnage, find out...

- 1 What is the *maquette* (a scale model of a large project) of the Hôtel-Dieu de Beaune made of?
- 2 What was the trade of the *compagnon* (an apprentice) who made the airplane out of copper tubes?
- 3 What did the roofer *compagnon* use to make his *maquette* of the Eiffel Tower?



Answers at the bottom of the page.

COLD SUMMER

Although the Loire Valley is famous for its châteaux, the people who lived in its cave villages, such as the **Vallée Troglodytique des Goupillières** near Azay-le-Rideau, were perhaps more comfortable, especially in winter. Naturally well insulated with a constant temperature of 10°C (50°F), the caves were easier to heat in winter and cool in summer.



Learning a trade

The *compagnonnage* system is a unique survivor from medieval France. After taking a two-year course, apprentices in several trades – bakers, carpenters, shoemakers – can spend more time travelling the country in a *Tour de France* to learn skills from different masters, just like they did in the Middle Ages. They lodge, eat together and present a *maquette* to be accepted as a *compagnon*. They are given a name, walking stick and the secret passwords of the brotherhood. What trade would you want to learn?



Answers: 1 20 kg (44 lb) of pasta dough, 2 Plumbing, 3 Slate.

11 Chinon

The Loire's most war-like castle

The Chinonais like to refer to Chinon as a "little town of great renown". This lovely medieval town, with its blue slate roofs and towers, is the place where noted Renaissance writer François Rabelais was born, King Henry II of England died and Joan of Arc met Charles VII. High on a rocky spur, the enormous, partly ruined **Fortresse Royale de Chinon** dominates the town. It was mostly built by Henry II of England in the 12th century. In 1308, the Grand Master of the Knights Templar, Jacques de Molay, and many of his top men were imprisoned in this fort, before de Molay was burnt at the stake in Paris. After years of restoration, eight rooms in the fortress's Logis Royaux were reopened in 2010, with films and interactive displays on Chinon's eventful history and historical figures.

Visit the **Musée d'Art et d'Histoire**, in the handsome 15th-century Hôtel des États-Généraux, where highlights include a famous portrait of Rabelais, a plume in hand



The majestic walls of Chinon's castle rising above the Vienne river

and a beautiful piece of medieval Arabian silk embroidered with leopards. The charming **Musée Animé du Vin** has hand-crafted automated figures that explain everything about wine-making.

Letting off steam

Chinon has a covered and an open pool on Quai Danton. Or take a taxi to St-Benoît-la-Forêt, located 4 km (3 miles) north, to visit **St-Benoît Aventure** (www.saintbenoitaventure.com), an adventure park where kids aged 4 plus can swing through the trees like Tarzan in perfect safety.

12 Château d'Ussé

Sleeping Beauty's castle

Ever since the 6th century, a fort has controlled the river traffic on the Loire and Indre at Rigny-Ussé. The fort was known to the Romans as Renacium. Its first recorded lord,



The pretty chapel set in the grounds of the Château d'Ussé, Rigny-Ussé

The Lowdown

- **Map reference** 7 D2
- Address** 37420 (Indre-et-Loire). 37420 Rigny-Ussé; 02 47 95 54 05; www.chateaudusse.fr
- 🚗 **Train** from Tours to Chinon, then a 15-min drive by car or taxi
- i **Visitor information** BP 5, 37190 Azay-le-Rideau; 02 47 45 44 40
- 🕒 **Open** mid-Feb–mid-Nov: daily
- 💰 **Price** €36–46; under 8s free
- 🍴 **Eat and drink** **Picnic** Intermarché (Route de Tours, 37420 Chinon; 02 47 98 11 37) stocks supplies. The surrounding Forêt de Chinon is good for picnics. **Family treat** Le Moulin Bleu (7 Rue du Moulin Bleu, 37140 Bourgueil; 02 47 97 73 13; www.lemoulinbleu.com) offers refined traditional cuisine.

in 1004, was the Viking Gueldon I, better known as "Gueldon the Devil". The construction of the majestic Château d'Ussé was begun in the 15th century. The rooms contain period furnishings, wax figures in period costume, and include an exceptional ensemble of Flemish tapestries showing extraordinarily detailed scenes of village life.

Outside, there are stables, with a collection of antique carriages, and a beautiful Renaissance chapel, as well as formal gardens designed by the greatest known French landscape architect, Andre Le Nôtre, who also created the gardens at Versailles. Ussé's real glory came when writer Charles Perrault, supposedly inspired by its beauty, wrote down the tale of *La Belle au Bois Dormant* – otherwise known as *Sleeping Beauty* – a story retold by life-size figures in the château.

The Lowdown

- **Map reference** 7 D3
- Address** 37500 (Indre-et-Loire). Fortresse Royale de Chinon: Rue de la Fontaine; 02 47 93 13 45; www.fortressechinon.fr. Musée d'Art et d'Histoire: 44 Rue Haute-St-Maurice. Musée Animé du Vin: 12 Rue Voltaire; 02 47 93 25 63
- 🚗 **Train** from Tours
- i **Visitor information** 1 Pl d'Hofheim, 37500; 02 47 93 17 85; www.chinon-valdeloire.com
- 🕒 **Open** Fortresse Royale de Chinon: daily. Musée d'Art et d'Histoire: mid-Feb–Apr & Oct–mid-Nov: Fri–Mon pm; May–Sep: Wed–Mon pm. Musée Animé du Vin: Easter–Sep daily
- 🍴 **Eat and drink** **Snacks** Jadis Salon de Thé (23 Pl de l'Hôtel de Ville, 37500; 02 47 93 35 23) serves pies and simple lunches and great hot chocolate. **Real meal** Côte Jardin (30 Rue du Commerce, 37500; 02 47 93 10 97; closed Mon) specializes in local favourites such as *coq au vin* (cock stewed in wine) and succulent meats; good list of Loire wines.
- 🎪 **Festival** **Marché** Medieval, street market with troubadours, dancers and medieval entertainment (Aug)

Letting off steam

There is plenty of room to scamper about in the château's gardens. For playgrounds, mini-golf and an artificial lake, take a 20-minute taxi ride north to the **Parc Capitaine de Bourgueil** (www.bourgueil.fr), set in the vine-clad landscapes of Pays de Bourgueil.

13 Château de Chenonceau

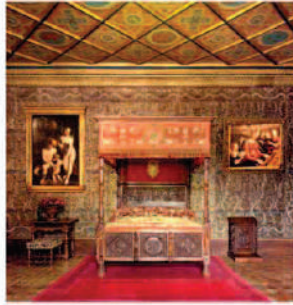
Palace of many intrigues

The most romantic and the most-visited of all the Loire châteaux, the Château de Chenonceau stretches across the Cher river on a row of graceful arches. It was spared during the Revolution thanks to the wise Madame Dupin who had made it a salon for writers and philosophers.

It is famous for the six women who lived here, beginning with Diane de Poitiers, the mistress of Henri II, who gave it to her. But, after his sudden death in 1559, his wife Catherine de Medici expelled Diane from the château and grabbed it for herself. Beautifully restored, the grounds include glorious formal gardens, flower and vegetable gardens, a 16th-century farm, a maze designed by Catherine de Medici, a tea room, and a play area for kids.

Letting off steam

Hire canoes from **Canoe Company** (www.canoe-company.fr) or take a cruise on the Cher river with **La Bélandre** (www.labelandre.com), passing underneath the château. Take a taxi to the town of St-Martin-le-Beau, located halfway between Chenonceau and Tours, where



Catherine de Medici's richly decorated bedroom in Château de Chenonceau

The Lowdown

Map reference 8 E2
Address 37150 (Indre-et-Loire).
Pl de la Mairie; 08 20 20 90 90;
www.chenonceau.com

Train from Tours

i Visitor information 1 Rue Docteur Bretonneau, 37150; 02 47 23 94 45; www.chenonceaux-blere-tourisme.com

Open daily

Price €39–49; under 7s free

Eat and drink **Snacks** Self Service Restaurant (in the old royal stables of the château, 37150; 02 47 23 91 97; Mar–mid-Nov) serves salads, hamburgers and simple lunches. **Real meal** Hostel du Roy (9 Rue Docteur Bretonneau, 37150 Chenonceaux; 02 47 23 90 17; www.hostelduroy.com) is a local favourite with a good kids' menu and also vegetarian dishes.

Festival Promenade Nocturnes, a sound and light show (Jun–Aug)

Family Park (www.familypark37.com) offers a water park and games, 37 tree sports, pony rides, bouncy castles and more to entertain kids.



Boating on the Cher river by the magnificent Château de Chenonceau

Picnic under €20; Snacks €20–45; Real meal €45–90; Family treat over €90 (based on a family of four)

KIDS' CORNER

Find out more...

- 1 If you got lost in a maze, such as the one at the Château de Chenonceau, is there a sure way of getting out?
- 2 The big trees by Château d'Ussé's chapel come from Lebanon in the Middle East. One is pictured on Lebanon's flag. What tree is it?
- 3 Chenonceau's kitchens are full of pots and pans. What are most of them made of?



Answers at the bottom of the page.

WINDOW FISHING

During World War I, the Château de Chenonceau was used as a military hospital; the patients in the gallery over the Cher river were allowed to fish out of the windows.



Tales over the ages

Stories go on forever. Charles Perrault, who wrote *Sleeping Beauty*, also gave us *Little Red Riding Hood* and many other fairy tales. He did not invent them though – they were all popular folktales. There are other versions of the *Sleeping Beauty* story from at least 15 countries. You can enjoy this story in Tchaikovsky's ballet, a Disney cartoon (1959), or in comic books (Art Spiegelman's *Little Lit* series), and also see reflections of it in a Japanese manga card game (*Cardcaptor*).



Answers: 1 Yes, put your hand – right or left – on the side of the passage and keep it there. Eventually you will get out, though you will have to go through every passage between you and the exit, and in and out of many dead ends. 2 The cedar. 3 Copper.

14 Château Royal de Blois

Royal splendour and royal murder

One of the most splendid of the Loire Valley châteaux, the 13th- to 17th-century Château Royal de Blois was home to seven kings, ten queens and one famous assassination. Its regal residents left behind a stunning complex that offers a one-stop architectural tour of France. Inside are 564 rooms and over 35,000 works of art. In 1845 it was the first royal palace in France to be restored. The town of Blois itself is full of interest – especially the Maison de la Magie Robert-Houdin.



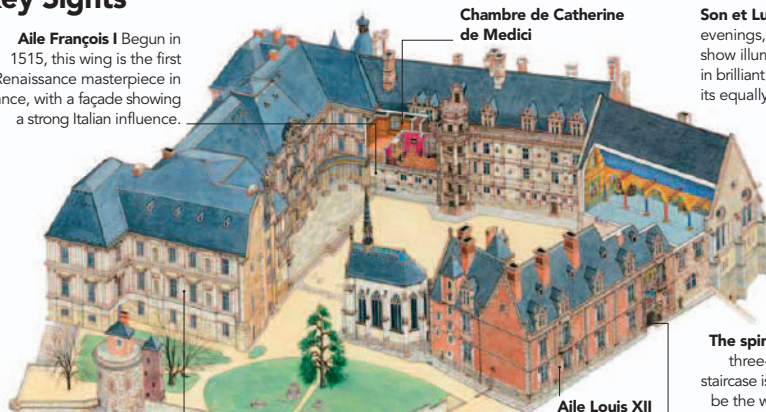
Equestrian statue of King Louis XII

Key Sights

Aile François I Begun in 1515, this wing is the first Renaissance masterpiece in France, with a façade showing a strong Italian influence.

Chambre de Catherine de Medici

Son et Lumière On summer evenings, a sound and light show illuminates the château in brilliant colours while tracing its equally colourful history.



Aile Gaston d'Orléans In 1626, Louis XIII gave the château to his brother, the Duke of Orléans. Architect François Mansart completed the extension, using three Classical orders of columns.

Aile Louis XII The wing of Louis XII (born here in 1462) shows the beginnings of Renaissance architecture in France, mixed with traditional Gothic.

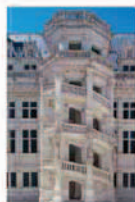


Musée des Beaux Arts This museum, in the Louis XII wing, houses a rich collection of paintings that was gathered by generations of royalty.

Chambre de Catherine de Medici The queen had 237 little cabinets built into the wall of her study. She is said to have used poisons, but no one knows for sure what she stored here.



The spiral stair This splendid three-storey external spiral staircase is believed by some to be the work of King François' friend Leonardo da Vinci.



The Lowdown

Map reference 8 F2
Address 41000 (Loir-et-Cher), Pl du Château; 02 54 90 33 33; www.chateaudeblois.fr

Train from Tours and Orléans
Visitor information 23 Pl du Château, 41000; 02 54 90 41 41; www.bloischambord.com

Open Jan–Mar & Nov–Dec: 9am–12:30pm & 1:30–5:30pm daily; Apr–Jun & Sep: 9am–6:30pm daily; Jul–Aug: 9am–7pm daily; Oct: 9am–6pm daily. Son et Lumière: Apr–Sep: 10:30pm Wed (in English)

Price €27–37; Chateau & light show: €42–52; under 6s free

Skipping the queue Buy a joint ticket (€58–68) for the château, the Maison de la Magie Robert Houdin and also the *son et lumière* show.

Guided tours There is a range of themed tours – consult the website for the programme and call ahead to book.

Age range 4 plus

Activities See Blois from a horse and carriage (€26 plus tip) from Apr–Sep. Trips begin in Place du Château. From May–Aug, book trips for €32 (family ticket) on a *futreau* (traditional wooden river boat

with a sail) at the tourist office to see the city. The guide will point out waterfowl along the way and may also stop outside town to look for beavers.

Allow Half a day for the château; a day or more to see all of Blois

Café La Duchesse Anne on Place Victor Hugo just outside the château.

Toilets Near château entrance

Good family value?

Blois and its surroundings balance fun and culture nicely, with plenty of inexpensive activities.

Letting off steam

Scamper in the gardens of **Hôtel de Ville** in Blois. The château-laden countryside around Blois is ideal for cycling. Rent one at **Traineurs de Loire** (www.traineursdeloire.com) that also has kids' bikes and tandems.



Outdoor café and Maison de la Magie Robert Houdin on Place du Château

Eat and drink

Picnic: under €20; *Snacks:* €20–45; *Real meal:* €45–90; *Family treat:* over €90 (based on a family of four)

PICNIC Au Croissant d'or (4 Pl, Victor Hugo, 41000; 02 54 74 77 10) sells a wide range of hot snacks, salads and sandwiches.

SNACKS Le Bistrot de Léonard (8 Rue du Maréchal de Lattre de Tassigny, 41000; 02 54 74 83 04; www.lebistrotdeleonard.com) does takeaway versions of its classic French dishes. There are picnic tables in the Jardin du Roi, just opposite the château.

REAL MEAL Le Castelet (40 Rue St-Lubin, 41000; 02 54 74 66 09) is an attractive family-run restaurant serving traditional dishes, with menus for kids and vegetarians as well.

FAMILY TREAT Au Rendez-vous des Pêcheurs (27 Rue du Foix, 41000; 02 54 74 67 48; www.rendezvousdespecheurs.com) is not just for seafood, but also for other delectable dishes. An extensive wine list and a kids' menu are available too.



The grand Château de Chambord with its roof full of chimneys, spires and turrets

Shopping

For fancy chocolates and pralines, visit **Max Vauché** (50 Rue du Commerce, 41000; 02 54 78 23 55). Head for **Au Paradis des Enfants** (24 Rue Porte Chartraine, 41000; 02 54 51 98 86), a toy shop started in 1930. The **Maison de la Magie Robert-Houdin** (see below) has a gift shop with magic tricks and DVDs.

Take cover

Located next to the château, the **Maison de la Magie Robert-Houdin** (Pl du Château, 41000; www.maison.delamagie.fr) is not to be missed. This museum of magic is dedicated to the first great stage magician. Robot magicians introduce visitors to a world of illusions, special effects, automata and curiosities from the early days of magic to the present.

Next stop...

MORE STATELY CHÂTEAUX

A shuttle bus Navette des Châteaux links Blois to **Château de Chambord** (www.chambord.org), the "Mini Paris on the Loire" begun by François I and finished by Louis XIV. The château contains a double helix staircase, designed by Leonardo da Vinci. Visit **Les Ecuries de Chambord** (www.chambord.org) in the château stables for a carriage ride around the château or to watch the equestrian show in historical costume from May to September.

The same bus continues to the **Château de Cheverny** (www.chateau-cheverny.com), the model for "Marlinspike Hall", the home of Captain Haddock in the Tintin series. Check out the expo on Tintin, watch hunting dogs being fed, visit the gardens, or tour the grounds in an electric car and on canal boats.

KIDS' CORNER

Porcupines vs salamanders

The porcupine was the emblem of Louis XII, a popular king who kept the dreadful English out of France and made a hobby of invading Italy. Louis's prickly motto was, "who scratches me gets stung". François I, a learned and poetically minded monarch, chose the salamander for his emblem. Philosophers believed that it could live in fire without burning.

While touring the Château de Blois, divide into two teams, one looking for porcupines and the other for salamanders. Each team counts how many it can find in both the building and its works of art. The team that finds the most wins!



A PLUM JOB

Claude, the daughter of Louis XII and Anne of Brittany, was married to François I, to mark Brittany's takeover by France. In the gardens of Blois, Claude grew orchards of greengage plums – known ever since in France as Reine-Claudes.

A bloodthirsty tale

The French spent much of the 16th century killing each other over religion. The fanatical Catholic Duc de Guise started the infamous St Bartholomew's Day Massacre in 1572, when around 30,000 Protestants were killed. He also meddled a lot in selecting who would be next on the throne. In 1588, tired of being



bossed around, King Henry III lured Guise to Blois, and had him assassinated in the royal chambers. The following year the king himself was murdered by a monk.



Above Gardens in bloom outside the *Château de Clos Lucé*, Amboise
Below An ornately furnished salon in the *Château de Clos Lucé*, Amboise



A later Italian visitor to the chateau was Leonardo da Vinci, who spent the rest of his life in the town and died in the arms of François I, his patron, at the nearby **Château de Clos Lucé**. This is the chateau where Leonardo da Vinci stayed as a guest; it displays exhibits on his life and life-size models of his flying machine and other inventions.

Letting off steam

There is an adventure playground by the *Château de Clos Lucé*, or head to **Pagode de Chateloup** (Route de Bléré, 37400; 02 47 57 20 97; www.pagode-chanteloup.com) and climb its 44-m (144-ft) stone pagoda overlooking a lake. There are old-fashioned wooden games for kids, such as skittles, tops and *jeu de la grenouille* (an early form of pinball).

16 Bourges

A medieval mastermind

The former capital of the wealthy province of Berry, Bourges is an elegant city. Its centre is full of

The Lowdown

- Map reference** 8 G3
Address 18000 (Cher). Palais de Jacques Coeur: 10 bis Rue Jacques-Coeur; 02 48 24 79 42; palais-jacques-coeur.monuments-nationaux.fr. Musée du Berry: 4 Rue des Arènes; 02 48 70 41 92; www.ville-bourges.fr. Musée des Arts Décoratifs: 6 Rue Bourbonnoux; 02 48 70 23 57; www.ville-bourges.fr

- Train** from Tours, Orléans and Paris
- Visitor information** 21 Rue Victor Hugo, 18000; 02 48 23 02 60; www.bourges-tourisme.com

- Open** Palais de Jacques Coeur: guided tours daily. Musée du Berry: closed Tue & Sun am. Musée des Arts Décoratifs: closed Mon & Sun am

- Eat and drink** **Snacks** Les Remparts (59 Rue Bourbonnoux, 18000; 02 48 24 55 44) has a good choice of sweet and savoury crêpes and a pretty courtyard for outdoor eating. **Real meal** La Pasta (6 Rue Littre, 18000; 02 48 65 60 30; closed Sun & Mon) serves the city's best pizzas and other Italian dishes, which make this a firm family favourite.

- Festivals** Le Printemps à Bourges, a week of all kinds of French music in the streets (Apr). Un Été à Bourges, concerts and animations in a different location almost every night (21 Jun–21 Sep)

15 Château d'Amboise

Leonardo da Vinci's last home

Another lovely chateau overlooking the Loire river, *Château d'Amboise* became a royal residence when Charles VIII went off to invade Italy (1494–8) and brought back artists and architects to rebuild it in the Renaissance style. The chateau has been restored; there are beautiful gardens and a 15th-century chapel.

half-timbered buildings from the 15th century, arranged around one of France's greatest Gothic works, the *Cathédrale de St-Étienne*. A treasure house of medieval sculpture and 13th-century stained glass, it contains an astronomical clock. Climb the 396 steps of the *Tour de Beurre*, the "butter tower" that was paid for like Rouen's (see pp144–5), for a view over the city. Other sights include the magnificent 15th-century **Palais de Jacques Coeur**, named after the richest businessman of medieval France, the master of the mint

The Lowdown

- Map reference** 8 E2
Address 37400 (Indre-et-Loire). *Château d'Amboise*: 60 Rue de la Concorde; 02 47 57 00 98; www.chateau-amboise.com. *Château de Clos Lucé*: 2 Rue du Clos Lucé; 02 47 57 00 73; www.vinci-closlucé.com

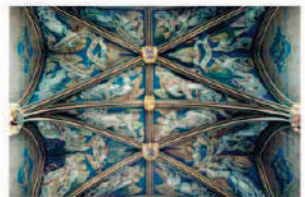
- Train** from Tours and Blois

- Visitor information** Quai Général de Gaulle, 37400 Amboise; 02 47 57 09 28; www.amboise-valde-loire.com

- Open** *Château d'Amboise* & *Château de Clos Lucé*: daily

- Eat and drink** **Real meal** La Trattoria (2 Rue Jean Jacques Rousseau, 37400; 02 47 57 67 57) is popular for its fresh pasta dishes and quick service. There is a play area. **Family treat** Les Remparts (2 Rue Paul Louis Courier, 37400; 02 47 57 20 43) serves refined fish and meat dishes. Desserts are works of art and there is a menu for kids.

- Festival** A la Cour du Roy François, 350 actors put on a Renaissance *son et lumière* (sound & light) show with fireworks (Jul & Aug)



Intricately painted ceiling in the *Palais de Jacques Coeur*, Bourges

under Charles VII and ambassador to sultans and popes. Bourges has excellent museums such as the **Musée du Berry**, with a rich history and archaeological collection, and the evocative **Musée des Arts Décoratifs**, with a fine *belle époque* toy collection among the furnishings. The museum is housed in a striking mansion, the Hôtel Lallemand, dating from 1500.

Letting off steam

Head for the **Centre Nautique** (Ave du 11 Novembre, 18000), which has two covered pools, a wading pool and an outdoor summer pool.

17 Orléans

The city of Joan of Arc

It was from Orléans that Joan of Arc saved France from the English in 1429. She is remembered in a statue on the cathedral, while the half-timbered **Maison de Jeanne d'Arc** has multimedia displays telling her story. The **Musée des**



Statue of Joan of Arc on the Cathédrale Ste-Croix, Orléans



Participants in medieval costumes during Les Fêtes Jeanne d'Arc, Orléans

Beaux Arts has an impressive collection of art from the 16th–20th centuries. The Renaissance Hôtel Cabu houses the **Musée Historique et Archéologique**, with remarkable Celtic bronzes and medieval relics.

Take a bus or train to the **Château de la Ferté**, located 20 km (12 miles) away, in the village of La Ferté-St-Aubin. There are indoor and outdoor games, working kitchens and stables that re-create the 18th century, as well as a rail museum with restored Orient Express carriages.

Letting off steam

Head for the **Parc Floral de La Source** (Ave du Parc Floral, 45000; www.parcfloraldelasource.com), an enormous botanical garden with a butterfly conservatory and a menagerie of animals.

KIDS' CORNER

In Bourges' Cathédrale de St-Étienne, look out for...

- 1 A pelican. It sits on top of the north tower (a copy; the original is on display in the cathedral).
- 2 A sleeping bear. It is at the feet of Duke Jean de Berry, on his alabaster tomb in the crypt (most tomb effigies have a dog at the feet, as a sign of loyalty, but the Duke kept a private zoo and was fond of his bear).
- 3 The meridian line in copper that runs north to south across the nave. A mathematical monk added it in the 1750s. At exactly noon, three openings in the stained glass allow sunbeams to fall directly on it.
- 4 A toad. There are a few of them in the scene of the *Last*



Judgement on the main portal. Yet another is in the scene of St-Michael

weighing souls – the naughty thing is hopping on the scale to tip the balance against us.

WATCH OUT!

Tell the adults to watch their heads when touring the Château d'Amboise. In 1498, King Charles VIII banged his head on a door lintel so hard that he died – at the age of only 28.



A Rolling Stone?

If you see someone who looks like Mick Jagger in Amboise, it probably is. He has his own château called La Fourchette in the nearby village of Poce-sur-Cisse.

The Lowdown

Map reference 8 G1
Address 45000 (Loiret).
 Maison de Jeanne d'Arc: 3 Pl de Gaulle, 45000; 02 38 52 99 89; www.jeannedarc.com.fr. Musée des Beaux Arts: Pl Ste-Croix, 45000; 02 38 79 21 55; www.orleans.fr. Musée Historique et Archéologique: Pl de l'Abbé Desnoyers, 45000; 02 38 79 25 60; www.orleans.fr. Château de la Ferté: Route d'Orléans, 45240 La Ferté St Aubin; 02 38 76 52 72; www.chateau-ferte-st-aubin.com

Train from Paris

Visitor information 2 Pl de l'Étape, 45000; 02 38 24 05 05; www.tourisme-orleans.com

Open Maison de Jeanne d'Arc: Oct–Mar: Tue–Sun pm; Apr–Sep:

Tue–Sun. Musée des Beaux Arts: Tue–Sun. Musée Historique et Archéologique: Tue–Sat, Sun am. Château de la Ferté: Easter–Sep: daily; Feb–Easter & Oct–mid-Nov: daily pm; closed mid-Nov & Jan

Eat and drink **Real meal** Les Fagots (32 Rue du Poirier, 45000; 02 38 62 22 79) is a local favourite for grilled meats. **Family treat** La Parenthèse (26 Pl du Châtelet, 45000; 02 38 62 07 50; www.restaurant-la-parenthese.com; closed Sun & Mon) offers excellent cuisine in a cheerful setting.

Festival Les Fêtes Jeanne d'Arc is marked by military parades, historical re-enactments, concerts, medieval market (29 Apr–9 May)

18 Chartres Cathedral

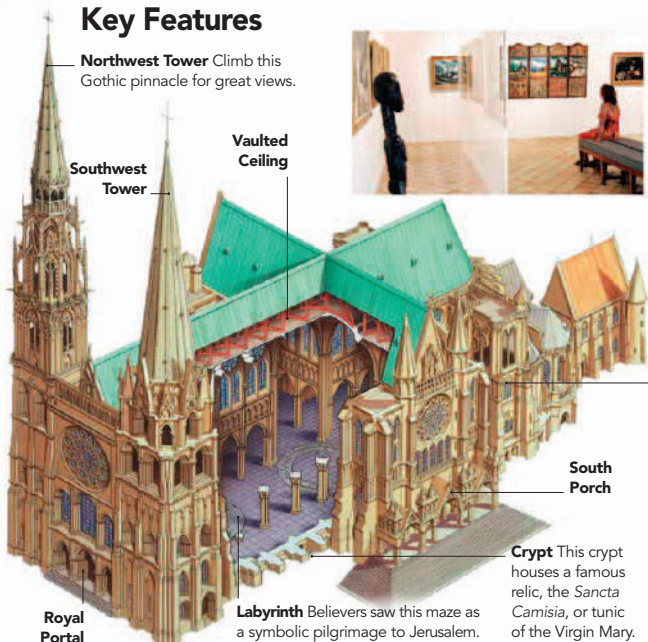
The most perfect Gothic cathedral

An important pilgrimage site and a great centre of medieval learning, Chartres' pride and joy is the Cathédrale Notre Dame – the most perfect Gothic cathedral in France – completed in AD 1260 after an earlier Romanesque church was damaged by fire. Spared by the ravages of war, its sculpted portals and colour-drenched stained glass depict over 5,000 figures. There is more to Chartres than the cathedral, including attractive old quarters and museums of art and stained glass.



Statues on the Royal Portal

Key Features



Northwest Tower Climb this Gothic pinnacle for great views.

Southwest Tower

Vaulted Ceiling

South Porch

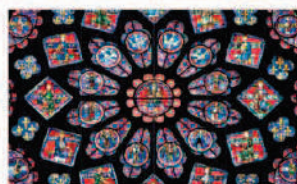
Royal Portal

Labyrinth Believers saw this maze as a symbolic pilgrimage to Jerusalem.

Crypt This crypt houses a famous relic, the *Sancta Camisia*, or tunic of the Virgin Mary.



Musée des Beaux-Arts Housed in the former bishops' palace, near the cathedral, it has on show French paintings and art from Oceania.



Rose windows There are three spectacular flowers, one over each portal. The West and North roses depict scenes of saints.

Stained glass Surviving for over 800 years, these windows have never been replaced.



Royal (West) Portal Begun in 1145, it shows Christ at the Last Judgement and the statues of Old Testament kings.

The Lowdown

Map reference 4 F6
Address 28000 (Eure-et-Loire).

Cathedral: 24 Cloître Notre-Dame; www.cathedrale-chartres.org. Crypt: Pl de la Cathédrale: www.chartres-tourisme.com. Musée des Beaux-Arts: 29 Cloître Notre Dame; www.chartres.fr

Train from Paris Montparnasse and Le Mans

Visitor information 8 Rue de la Poissonnerie, 28000; 02 37 18 26 26; www.chartres-tourisme.com

Open Cathedral and crypt: 8:30am–7:30pm daily, no visits during Mass. Northwest Tower: Sep–Apr: 9:30am–12:30pm &

2–5pm Mon–Sat, 2–5pm Sun; May–Aug: 9:30am–12:30pm & 2–6pm Mon–Sat, 2–6pm Sun. Musée des Beaux-Arts: Nov–Apr: 10am–noon & 2–5pm Wed–Sat & Mon, 2–5pm Sun; May–Oct: 10am–noon & 2–6pm Wed–Mon, 2–6pm Sun

Price Cathedral: free. Crypt: €12. Northwest Tower: €15; under 18s free. Musée des Beaux-Arts: €7; under 18s free

Skipping the queue Buy the Chartres Pass at the tourist office to see a number of sights.

Guided tours Contact the tourist office for details.

Age range 4 plus

Activities Walk the labyrinth of the cathedral on Fridays, between Lent and mid-October, when it is not covered by chairs.

Allow a day

Café Le Serpente, just across the road from the cathedral, has ice creams and milkshakes.

Toilets No

Festivals Festival de Pâques features a children's book fair (Apr). Chartres en Lumières (May–Sep)

Good family value?

This is one of the world's great sights and it is free. Children will especially enjoy the labyrinth.

Letting off steam

Rent a canoe or pedal boat at **La Petite Venise** (50 Blvd de la Courtille, 28000; 02 37 91 03 65; Apr–Oct) for a ride on the Eure through the centre of the city. For year-round fun, visit **Odysée** (Rue du Médecin Général Beyne, 28000; 02 37 25 33 33; www.vert-marine.com) – the largest pool complex in France, which has Europe's biggest indoor river, wave pool, wading pool and slides, as well as an ice-skating rink.



Family fun at the indoor wading pool at Odysée

Eat and drink

Picnic: under €20; Snacks: €25–45; Real meal: €45–90; Family treat: over €90 (based on a family of four)

PICNIC Monoprix (21 Rue Noël Ballay, 28000; closed Sun), a 15-minute walk from the cathedral, stocks ingredients for picnics that can be enjoyed just behind the cathedral, in the Jardins de l'Évêché, overlooking the Eure.

SNACKS La Mie Caline (36 Rue Bois Merrain, 28000; 02 37 21 95 24; closed Sun) offers a good choice of sandwiches, cakes and pastries, and ice cream to eat in or take away.

REAL MEAL La Picoterie (36 Rue des Changes, 28000; 02 37 36 14 54; www.picoterie.com; open daily) is a cheerful place that serves soups, families, omelettes and salads.

FAMILY TREAT Les Feuillantines (4 Rue du Bourg, 28000; 02 37 30 22 21; closed Sun) offers

well-prepared French classics, served with the Loire's wines. There is a pretty terrace and an excellent set price menu.

Shopping

Visit the **Galerie du Vitrail** (17 Cloître Notre-Dame, 28000; 02 37 36 10 03), the specialists in stained glass, who have a collection of historic works and modern pieces that are small enough to take home. For dolls, toys, antiques and miniatures of all kinds, go to **Tuvache et Fils** (34 Rue des Changes, 28000; 02 37 21 60 43).

Find out more

DIGITAL Go to www.labyrinthos.net/chartresfaq.html for the real story behind the cathedral's labyrinth. For more detail on every aspect of the cathedral, visit www.tinyurl.com/3vapoq.

Next step...

FARMING AND ART Chartres has another masterpiece made by a single man: **La Maison Picassiette** (22 Rue du Repos, 28000; 02 37 34 10 78). Born in 1900, Raymond Isidore was a street sweeper, who spent 26 years (1938–64) covering his house, gardens and furniture and even his wife's sewing machine with bizarre, colourful mosaics of broken tiles and crockery. Visitors can also take a look at the **Conservatoire de l'Agriculture** (Pont de Mainvilliers, 28000; 02 37 84 15 00; www.lecompa.fr), an interactive museum on the history of farming. The **Musée du Vitrail** (Rue Cardinal Pie, 28000; 02 37 21 65 72; www.centre-vitrail.org) has stained glass from all periods and various exhibits on the history of the art; they also provide live demonstrations.



Unique courtyard of La Maison Picassiette, covered with multi-coloured mosaics

KIDS' CORNER

Chance or miracle?

In 1194, a fire in Chartres burnt everything except the Southwest Tower, façade and crypt. The people were in despair, until three days later the bishop discovered that the *Sancta Camisia* had survived. He declared it was a sign from the Virgin Mary that the previous cathedral had not been grand enough and they had to make her a bigger and better one.



HOW GOD SEES IT

It can seem as if the builders of Chartres aimed to impress God rather than people.

Bring binoculars and be amazed by the hidden detail, up high and in shadows.



Labours of the Months

The Labours of the Months were a common theme in medieval art; at Chartres, they are in a stained-glass window in the left ambulatory. Can you spot the Zodiac signs and the "Labours" for each month?

- Aquarius** (January): vine pruning.
- Pisces** (February): man by the fire.
- Aries** (March): farmer in his fields.
- Taurus** (April): picking flowers.
- Gemini** (May): knight and horse.
- Cancer** (June): mowing grass (mislabelled July on window).
- Leo** (July): cutting hay (mislabelled June).
- Virgo** (August): threshing grain.
- Libra** (September): grape harvest.
- Scorpio** (October): storing wine in barrels.
- Sagittarius** (November): slaughtering a pig.
- Capricorn** (December): Christmas feasting.



Where to Stay in the Loire Valley

With hotels and B&Bs in elegant châteaux, traditional gîtes (cottage rentals), city hotels, seaside apartments and fully equipped camp sites – some open year-round – the Loire Valley has something to suit every family's need and budget.

AGENCIES

Experience Loire

www.experience Loire.com

The directory lists gîtes, B&Bs, self-catering cottages and other types of accommodation in all price ranges, with websites of owners.

Pays de la Loire

www.paysdelaloire.co.uk

This site lists nearly all the available places to stay for all budgets on the Atlantic side of the Loire.

Angers


Map 7 C2

HOTELS

Hôtel du Mail

8 Rue des Ursules, 49100; 02 41 25 05 25; www.hoteldumail.fr


A short walk from the city centre, this hotel, with a massive iron gate draped in wisteria, was once an 18th-century town mansion. It retains a lot of its original character, including high ceilings that keep it cool in summer.

 P €€

Hotel L'Océane

RN 23, 49140 Villeveque; 02 41 32 93 34; www.hotelaloceane.com

This is a friendly three-star motel in the suburbs, convenient for families touring by car. Pleasant rooms come with Wi-Fi. There is a small garden, playground and also a restaurant specializing in grilled dishes.

 P * €€



The entrance of centrally located Le Christina, Bourges



CAMPING

Camping Port Caroline

Rue du Pont Caroline, 49800

Brain-sur-l'Authion; 02 41 80 42 18; www.campingduportcaroline.fr

One of the nicest camp grounds in the region, Port Caroline is set by the river under big trees. Besides pitches, they offer a wide range of tents, wood chalets and mobile homes. Apart from games such as table tennis, they also rent bikes.

 P   €

Blois


Map 8 F2

HOTEL

Côté Loire

2 Pl de la Grève, 41000; 02 54 78 07 86; www.coteloire.com

This is an unpretentious budget choice by the river, a short walk from the Château Royal de Blois. The Wi-Fi-equipped rooms are simple, but comfortable enough for a day or two. The excellent courtyard restaurant is a local favourite and has a good kids' menu.




 P €€

CAMPING

La Grande Tortue

3 Route de Pontevey, 41120 Candé-sur-Beauvron; 02 54 44 15 20; www.la-grande-tortue.com

A large complex, 12 km (7 miles) southwest of Blois, it offers a wide choice of chalets and mobile homes with a playground and other games for kids. In summer, there are staff to organize activities and bikes, as well as pedal karts to rent.

 P   €–€€

Bourges

Map 8 G3

HOTEL

Le Christina

5 Rue de la Halle, 18000; 02 48 70 58 13; www.le-christina.com

Centrally located, this hotel has stylish black and grey rooms equipped with Wi-Fi. There is

no restaurant, but there are quite a few at walking distance. The staff is friendly and helpful.

 P * €€

Chambord

Map 8 F2

CAMPING

Château des Marais

27 Rue de Chambord, 41500 Muides-sur-Loire; 02 54 87 05 42; www.chateau-des-marais.com

This château offers chalet and mobile-home accommodation in its grounds. There is a giant water-park playground for kids, as well as games such as mini-golf. Bikes, kayaks and canoes are also available to rent.

P  €–€€



Basket of assorted bread with jam for breakfast at Diderot, Chinon

Chinon


Map 7 D3

HOTEL

Diderot

4 Rue du Buffon, 37500; 02 47 93 18 87; www.hoteldiderot.com

This family-run hotel is set in a lovely 15th-century building with a pretty courtyard and rooms furnished with antiques. There are 65 different flavours of home-made jams on offer at breakfast. Babysitting available.

 P €€

Le Mans

Map 7 D1

HOTEL

Hotel Green7

447 Ave Georges Durand, 72100; 02 43 40 30 30; www.hotelgreen7.com

On the edge of town, this is a great place to stay on race days as it is

located close to the start and finish points. The hotel has bright modern rooms. The restaurant is good and has a decent kids' menu.

P €€

Les Espesses

Map 7 C3

HOTEL

Le Puy du Fou

85590 Grand Parc Puy du Fou; 08 20 09 10 10; www.puydufou.com

The park has three different wonderfully tacky theme hotels on the Îles de Clovis grounds in re-created Dark Ages huts on stilts over a lagoon, a Roman villa, and an 18th-century house, the Logis de Lesclure. See website for offers.

P €€

Les Sables d'Olonne

Map 7 A4

HOTEL

Arc en Ciel

13 Rue Chanzy, 85100; 02 51 96 92 50; www.arcencielhotel.com

Near the beach, this hotel has a grim exterior but the rooms, some with balconies, are comfortable and colourful. The breakfast room is a surprising *belle époque* fantasy.

P €€

Nantes

Map 7 B2

HOTELS

Hotel Cholet

10 Rue Grasset, 44000; 02 40 73 31 04; www.hotelcholet-nantes.com

Centrally located near the Musée d'Histoire Naturelle, the hotel has elegant red and black rooms and an unusual Indo-Chinese touch to the decor. Rooms are equipped with Wi-Fi and free cots are available for kids under two. Buffet breakfast is served, but there is no restaurant.

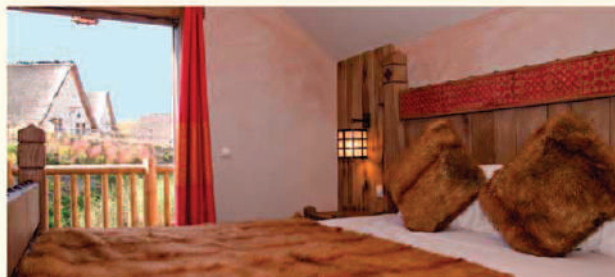
€€

Hotel de la Régate

155 Route de Gachet, 44300; 02 40 50 22 22; www.hotel-nantes-laregate.com

Located 15 minutes from the city centre, this modern eco-friendly hotel has spacious, airy rooms with all conveniences. The restaurant is good for seafood. There are special offers during off-season months and weekends; see their website for details.

P €€



A themed room in Un Coin Chez Vous, Nantes

SELF-CATERING Un Coin Chez Vous

Various locations, Nantes, 44000; 06 64 20 31 09; www.uncoinchezsoi.com

This organization offers unique city-centre flats. The themed accommodation ranges from "childhood memories" and "cuisine" to "Jules Verne". All flats can be rented by the week or for one night only. Some of the flats can accommodate four and most are inexpensive; breakfast is included.

€€

Orléans

Map 8 G1

HOTEL

Hôtel de l'Abeille

64 Rue Alsace-Lorraine, 45000; 02 38 53 54 87; www.hoteldelabeille.com

This well-maintained hotel has been in the same family for almost a century. It offers well-appointed rooms and a small garden terrace with fine views. Wi-Fi available.

€€€

Saumur

Map 7 D2

BED AND BREAKFAST

Château de la Coutancière

Route de la Coutancière, 49650 Brain-sur-Allonnes; 02 41 40 37 13; www.chateaudelacoutanciere.com

This serene early 19th-century chateau, 10 km (6 miles) from Saumur, is set in a huge park. The spacious rooms are furnished with antiques. There is a giant outdoor chess set.

P €€

Château de Beaulieu

Route de Montsoreau, 49400; 02 41 50 83 52; www.chateaudebeaulieu.fr

Located 2 km (1 mile) from the city centre, the chateau was built in 1727 and boasts exquisite grounds and a terraces. The amiable Irish owners

will help arrange horse-riding, boating and other activities.

P €€€

Tours

Map 8 E2

BED AND BREAKFAST La Héraudière

60 Rue Ronsard, 37100; 02 47 72 94 47; www.la-heraudiere.fr

This handsome family mansion is 10 minutes by bus north of the centre. Rooms have Wi-Fi. There is a playground and games for kids. A babysitting service is provided, as are *table d'hôte* (communal dining) dinners on weekdays.

P €€

HOTEL

Hotel Trianon

57 Ave de Grammont, 37000; 02 47 05 35 27; www.hoteltrianontours.com

Just south of the centre near the train station, this hotel is basic but has well-kept rooms with Wi-Fi and satellite TV. The pleasant terrace is suited for breakfast and lounging in the afternoon. The staff are helpful.

P €€

CAMPING

Camping Les Acacia's

Rue Berthe Morisot, 37700 La Ville-aux-Dames; 02 47 44 08 16; www.campvad.com

The leafy camp site is set on the eastern edge of Tours, but close enough to take bus 50 into the town. It offers accommodation in heated mobile homes. A playground, laundry and Wi-Fi are available.

P €

Price Guide

The following price ranges are based on one night's accommodation in high season for a family of four, inclusive of service charges and any additional taxes.

€ Under €100 €€ €100–200 €€€ over €200



AU DOCTEUR MICHEL GABRIEL ACCARD
VAINQUEUR DU MONT-BLANC
AVEC JACQUES BALMAT
8 AOÛT 1786
CHAMONIX ET SES AMIS RECONNAISSANTS
SOCIÉTÉ ANONYME FONDÉE EN 1865

Central France and the Alps

This vast area in the heart of France is bursting with historical and cultural gems, the heritage of the Romans and the powerful Dukes of Burgundy, and of its location at a pilgrimage route crossroads. It is also a magnificent land of wide, open spaces, with forests, river gorges, the volcanic mountains of the Massif Central and the snowy Alps – a perfect blend of art and history surrounded by the great outdoors.



Highlights

Dijon

Explore the splendid capital of the Dukes of Burgundy and discover its gastronomic heritage (see pp200–201).

Parc Naturel Régional du Morvan

The splendid outdoors for all the family – hiking, watersports, along with stirring tales of the French Resistance in World War II (see pp206–207).

Gorges du Tarn

Explore these craggy gorges in a canoe to see some of the most beautiful scenery and varied wildlife in the area (see p242).

Le Puy-en-Velay

Visit this spectacular town set in rolling country, where religious monuments perch on jagged volcanic outcrops (see pp244–5).

Chamonix

Take the world's highest vertical ascent cable car up the Aiguille du Midi for a close-up look at Mont Blanc, as well as hiking and skiing (see pp224–5).

Gorges de l'Ardèche

Starting at the natural arch at Pont d'Arc, kayak down a long stretch of the Ardèche river beneath towering 300-m (1,000-ft) limestone cliffs (see pp232–3).

Left Monument to Dr Michel Paccard, who first climbed Mont Blanc, Chamonix
Above left Grazing cows at Les Hautes-Combes, Parc Régional Naturel du Haut-Jura

The Best of Central France and the Alps

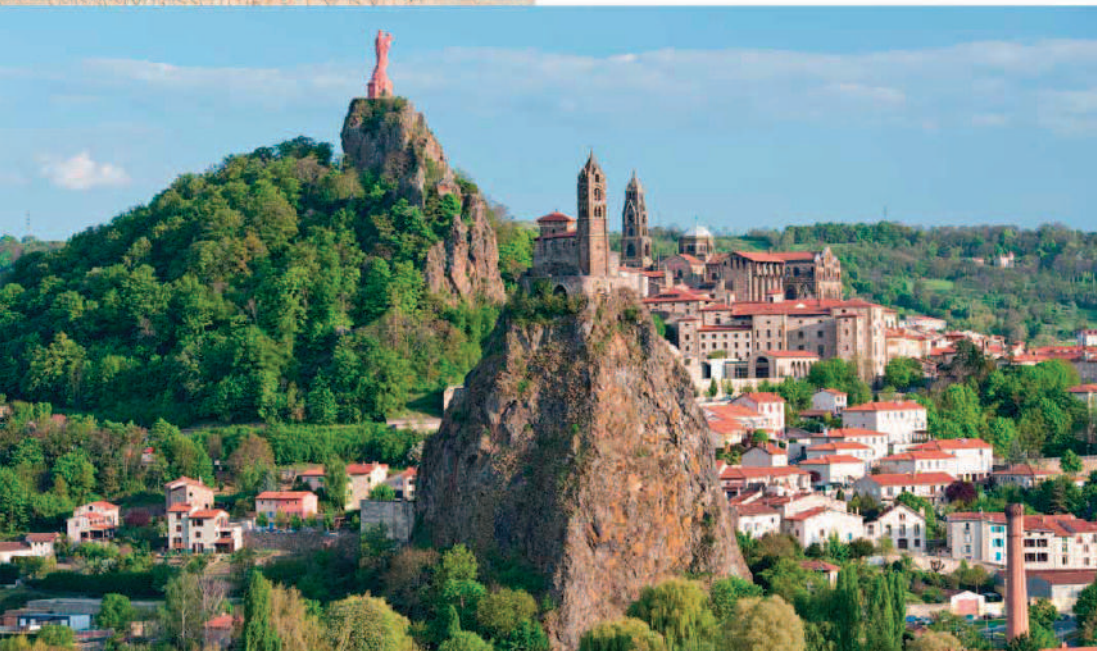
Central France has diverse landscapes and cultural attractions to explore. The Alps, the Auvergne and the Gorges de l'Ardèche make for superb outdoor adventures, while the museums of Dijon and Lyon and the churches and châteaux of Burgundy and the Massif Central delight young and old with their cultural treasures. The cuisine varies from the rich dishes and wines of Burgundy and the Rhône to cheeses of the Massif Central.



Culture vultures

Savour the heritage of the Dukes of Burgundy in the palaces of **Dijon** (see pp200–201) and **Beaune** (see p202) and learn the story of crusaders and pilgrims in **Vézelay** (see pp204–205). In **Cluny** (see pp208–209), discover how the ruins of the abbey, set in a backwater, were once the home of Europe's most powerful monastic order. Watch the world's first film and learn about the history of film-making at the Musée Lumière in **Lyon** (see pp220–21), along with puppet shows at the Théâtre de La Maison de Guignol. The Musée d'Art Moderne in **St-Étienne** (see p222) houses a fine art collection. The Romanesque Abbaye de Ste-Foy in **Conques** (see pp246–7) has a treasury museum where

Left The carved tympanum of the Abbaye de Ste Foy, Conques
Below The extraordinary hilltop chapels of Le-Puy-en-Velay





Above Canoeists paddling in the river at the beach by the Pont d'Arc, the Gorges de l'Ardèche

St Foy's relics are kept in a dazzling gold statue. A display of the world's oldest cave paintings, from the Grotte Chauvet, is held at Vallon-Pont-d'Arc in the **Gorges de l'Ardèche** (see pp232–3).

In a week

In Burgundy and Franche-Comté, spend a couple of days in **Dijon** and **Beaune**, then see a farmers' market in action in **Louhans** (see p211). Explore the abbey in **Cluny** and then head north to hike by the **Lac des Settons** (see p207) in the Morvan and see the Romanesque pilgrims' church, the Basilique Ste-Madeleine, in **Vézelay**.

During a week in the Rhône Valley and Alps, soak up the atmosphere of **Lyon** in the quarters of Vieux Lyon, Croix-Rousse and Fourvière Hill. See the **Gorges de l'Ardèche** by car or kayak. Alpine adventures await in **Chamonix** (see pp224–5), from hikes to rides up the Aiguille du Midi in a cable car and to the glaciers of the Mer de Glace in the Train du Montanvers.

In the Massif Central, tour the volcanoes of the picturesque **Parc Naturel Régional des Volcans d'Auvergne** (see p250) and have fun at

Vulcania (see p250). Head south to **Le Puy-en-Velay** (see pp244–5) to see churches perched on rocky peaks and the pilgrims' Cathédrale de Notre-Dame. Get active with a day's rafting down the **Gorges du Tarn** (see p242). Go underground amid stalagmites and stalactites in the **Aven Armand** (see pp240–41) cavern.

Outdoor action

Chamonix is at the heart of one of the world's great outdoor playgrounds – perfect for winter sports, and walking or climbing in summer. The **Parc National de la Vanoise** (see p230) is a quieter option for fun in the snow; in summer, hike across the Col d'Iséran, Europe's highest mountain pass. In Burgundy, walk, cycle and canoe among the forest trails, hills and lakes of the **Parc Naturel Régional du Morvan** (see pp206–207), or hire bikes and pedal around châteaux and vineyards on the car-free paths of the *Voie Verte*. Stay in St Claude or Les Rousses in the **Parc Régional Naturel du Haut-Jura** (see pp212–13) and hike around its waterfalls, valleys and peaks.

Gastronomic delights

Turn the kids into budding foodies with top-class dining and wine in Burgundy's heartland, home to *boeuf bourguignon* (Burgundy beef stew), *coq au vin* (cockered cooked in wine) and Dijon's gingerbread. Kids can learn how to cook at Le Chabichou in Courchevel, in **Les Trois Vallées** (see pp230–31). See how cheese is made at Beaufort des Montagnes in **Moutiers** (see p230). Try the famous walnuts of **Grenoble** (see p231) in a yummy cake called *L'Olympique* at the Pâtisserie Les Ecrins. Enjoy the tour of Musée du Nougat in **Montélimar** (see pp234–5), to taste some fine nougats.



Left A scrumptious selection of the region's finest gourmet cheeses in a shop in Chamonix

Central France and the Alps

Splendid, contrasting scenery lies in the heart of France. The lush winelands of Burgundy and the Rhône are crisscrossed by placid canals and dotted with historic treasures. The old towns of Dijon, Beaune and Lyon have narrow, mysterious alleys. Around them are dramatic mountains: the Jura, the Massif Central and the Alps.

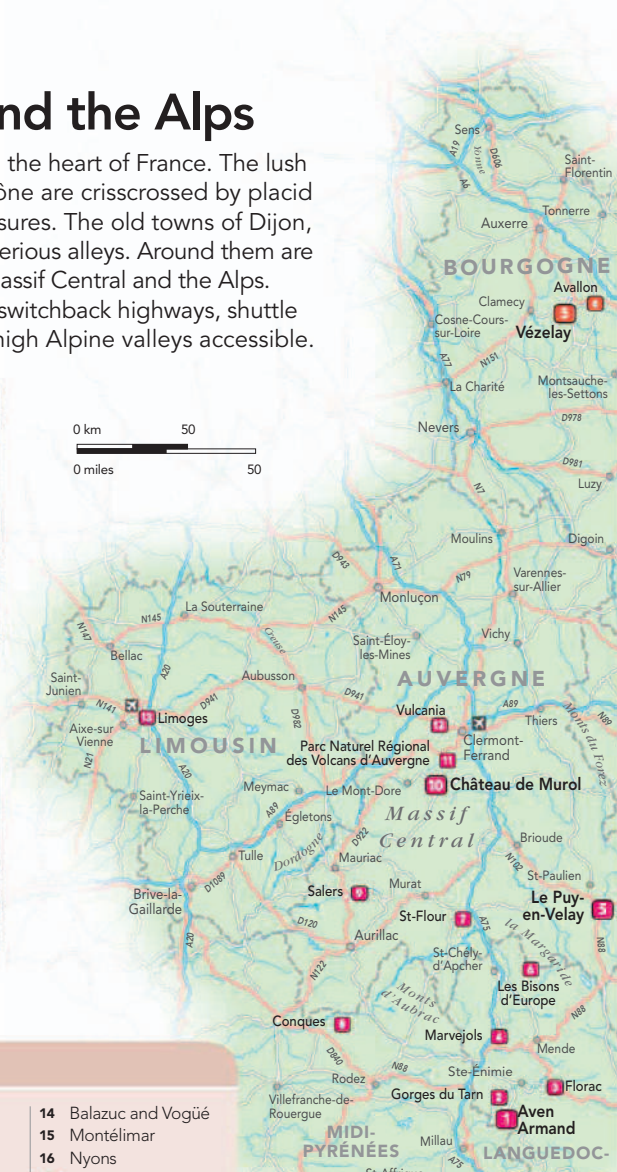
Superb transport facilities, whether switchback highways, shuttle buses or mountain railways, make high Alpine valleys accessible.



Giraffes at the massive Parc de la Tête d'Or, Lyon



Haunting ruins of the Château de Muro



Places of interest

BURGUNDY AND FRANCHE-COMTÉ

- 1 Dijon
- 2 Beaune
- 3 Vallée d'Ouche
Steam Railway,
Bligny-sur-Ouche
- 4 Flavigny-sur-Ozerain
- 5 Vézelay
- 6 Avallon
- 7 Parc Naturel
Régional du Morvan
- 8 Autun
- 9 Cluny
- 10 Mâcon
- 11 Tournus
- 12 Louhans
- 13 Parc Régional
Naturel du Haut-Jura
- 14 Arc-et-Senans

THE RHÔNE VALLEY AND FRENCH ALPS

- 1 Lyon
- 2 St-Étienne
- 3 Vienne
- 4 Les Dombes
- 5 Chamonix
- 6 Samoëns
- 7 Yvoire
- 8 Lac d'Annecy
- 9 Briançon
- 10 Parc National de
la Vanoise
- 11 Les Trois Vallées
- 12 Grenoble
- 13 Gorges de
l'Ardeche

- 14 Balazuc and Vogüé
- 15 Montélimar
- 16 Nyons

THE MASSIF CENTRAL

- 1 Aven Armand
- 2 Gorges du Tarn
- 3 Florac
- 4 Marvejols
- 5 Le Puy-en-Velay
- 6 Les Bisons d'Europe
- 7 St-Flour
- 8 Conques
- 9 Salers
- 10 Château de Muro
- 11 Parc Naturel
Régional des
Volcans d'Auvergne
- 12 Vulcania
- 13 Limoges



The unique bubble-shaped cable car in transit, Grenoble

The Lowdown



Getting there and around

Air (see p198). **Train** TGV high-speed trains from Paris or Lille to Dijon, Grenoble, Lyon, Chambéry, Bourg St-Maurice and Geneva. Slower Intercité trains run from Paris to the Massif Central, especially Limoges and Clermont Ferrand. Each region has TER local train lines (www.ter-sncf.com) with services to many small towns.

Bus Contact tourist offices for local bus services and local buses running from main towns to nearby villages. Lyon has superb public transport, with metro lines, trams, hillside funiculars and buses (www.tcl.fr). Grenoble and Clermont Ferrand have local trams. **Car** Europcar (www.europcar.com) has offices across France; Rentacar (www.rentacar.fr) offers rentals at low prices.



Supermarkets Essentials can be bought from Intermarché, Carrefour, Super U and Leclerc. In the countryside, there is at least one supermarket in the main town of each district.

Markets Many cities and large towns have a main market, often indoors, except most of the week except Monday. Tourist offices have details of local market days.



Opening hours Large stores and supermarkets are open Mon–Sat. Many small shops, mostly in small towns and villages, still close for lunch (noon–2pm). Very few shops and petrol stations away from tourist areas open on Sundays, except some supermarkets (often Sunday mornings only) and pâtisseries, as well as *boulangeries* (bread shops).



Pharmacies There is at least one pharmacy, identified by a green cross outside, in each town and many villages. A list in the window will give details of the nearest *pharmacie de garde* open outside normal hours (on Sundays and at night). They are also listed in local newspapers and on www.pharmaciesdegarde.com.



Toilets Large supermarkets, shopping centres and some markets have public toilets. Cities have pay or free street toilets that clean themselves after every use.



A brightly painted merry-go-round in a town square, Beaune

Central France and the Alps

Regional Airports

Lyon's St-Exupéry airport is the main air gateway to central France, with its own TGV rail station and excellent rail and road links to Lyon and every part of the region. Alpine winter sports enthusiasts often prefer Chambéry or Grenoble, which have many low-cost flights from the UK and other parts of Europe, especially in winter. Dijon airport has limited international flights.

Dijon-Bourgogne

Dijon's small airport, 6 km (4 miles) south of the city, has low-cost flights with Eastern Airways as well as charter flights to Toulouse and Bordeaux. Rental cars or taxis (€20) are the main transport; buses are fairly infrequent. A restaurant and ATM are on site.

Lyon-St-Exupéry

Lyon's airport is located 20 km (13 miles) east of the city. It has Air France services to many French and European destinations, as well as flights with British Airways from London, with Aer Lingus from Dublin, and from all parts of Europe and North Africa with a range of other airlines. There is also a seasonal service from Montréal. Low-cost services include easyJet flights from London (Gatwick or Stansted), Edinburgh and other European cities.

The airport has its own station on the Paris-Marseille TGV high-speed rail line, which also offers direct connections to Chambéry, Annecy and Grenoble. Altibus (www.altibus.com) operates regular bus shuttle services to these and other Alpine resorts. The best way to get into Lyon is the Rhônexpress tram (www.rhonexpress.fr), which reaches the city centre in 25 minutes, with services daily every 15 minutes (see



Inside the departure terminal of Chambéry-Savoie airport

website for timings and fares). Taxis (€40) are plentiful and there are car rental desks in the Arrivals terminal.

The airport has been extensively renovated and has a wide range of restaurants, from smart brasseries to cafés and pizza restaurants. There is a wide range of hotels and several shops, including a pharmacy.

Chambéry-Savoie

Chambéry-Savoie airport, located 8 km (5 miles) from Chambéry, has low-cost flights with Flybe and Jet2 from many UK airports; British Airways flights from London-City and charter flights from the UK, as well as several other European cities. Most services only operate during the ski season. There is a taxi (€20) rank and car rental desks, and in winter, Trans'Neige provides shuttle buses to the town and other ski resorts. It has fairly limited facilities, with a café-restaurant, snack-bar and shop.

Grenoble-Isère

Located 45 km (29 miles) northwest of Grenoble city, Grenoble-Isère airport mainly has low-cost flights in the winter season from UK, Irish and northern European airports, particularly with easyJet (from Bristol, Birmingham, Edinburgh, Liverpool

and different London airports) and Ryanair (from London Stansted). There is a bus service (€12.50) to the train and bus station in Grenoble. In winter, Altibus and other companies run shuttle buses to alpine resorts. Local taxi companies provide transfers all over the area. It has a café-restaurant and a few shops.

Limoges

Situated 6 km (4 miles) northwest of the town, Limoges is a popular airport for low-cost airlines like Flybe (from Newcastle and Southampton) and Ryanair (from Leeds-Bradford, East Midlands, Bristol, Liverpool and Stansted), and domestic flights like Twinjet and Hop!. More destinations can be visited in summer. Taxis (€20) are available to the train station and there are several car rental desks. The airport has been modernized, with a restaurant and an on-site hotel.

Rodez-Marcillac

Located 11 km (7 miles) from Rodez town, the airport is largely served by Ryanair, with low-cost flights from Stansted, Porto and Dublin (seasonal only), but also has French domestic flights. Taxis (€25 to Rodez) are the only form of public transport, but there are car rental desks.

The Lowdown

Chambéry-Savoie 04 79 54 49 54;
www.chambery-airport.com

Dijon-Bourgogne 03 80 67 67 67;
www.dijon.aeroport.fr

Grenoble-Isère 04 76 65 48 48;
www.grenoble-airport.com

Limoges 05 55 43 30 30;
www.aeroportlimoges.com

Lyon-St-Exupéry 08 26 80 08 26;
www.lyonaeroports.com

Rodez-Marcillac 05 65 42 20 30;
www.aeroport-rodez.fr



The futuristic TGV station adjacent to Lyon-St-Exupéry airport

Burgundy and Franche-Comté

Rich in landscape, history, art and good living, Burgundy has rolling gold-and-green hills that produce world-famous wines and also many of France's most celebrated foods. Towns and countryside boast a range of historic buildings, from the giant abbey at Vézelay to Beaune's amazing Hôtel-Dieu. Franche-Comté has the Jura mountains, ideal for active exploration.

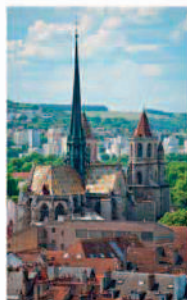
Below Patchwork of rolling fields, Vézelay



1 Dijon

Gothic gargoyles and gingerbread

The city of Dijon had its golden age in the 14th and 15th centuries, thanks to the powerful Dukes of Burgundy, who left behind plenty of medieval art treasures and splendid architecture such as the Palais des Ducs, whose Gothic halls and towers are concealed behind 18th-century Classical columns. Dijon has surged into the 21st century as a vibrant centre of culture and top-class food and wine. The compact historic centre with cobbled streets is made for exploring on foot or by bike, and it has beautiful parks and squares.



View of the city from the tower in Palais des Ducs

Key Sight

Notre-Dame The façade of this 13th-century Gothic church is richly decorated with gargoyles.

When the hour chimes, the Jacquemart family of mechanical figures come out of the clock on the right-hand steeple.

Hôtel de Vogüé This 17th-century mansion showcases a colourful tiled roof and fancy Renaissance decoration of carved fruit garlands.



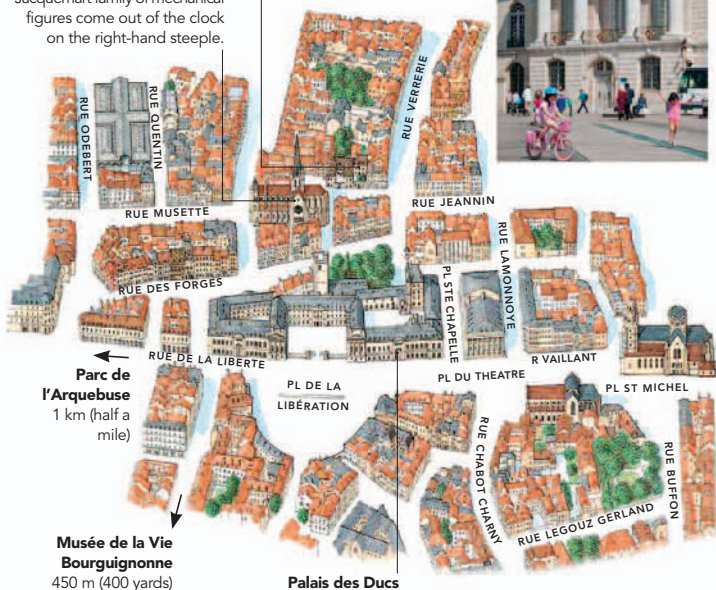
Palais des Ducs The palace of the Dukes of Burgundy houses the Musée des Beaux Arts, with the sculpted tomb of Phillip the Bold in the Salle des Gardes. Climb for impressive views from its Tour de Philippe-le-Bon.



Musée de la Vie Bourguignonne The museum has re-created a 19th-century street, including a beauty salon whose equipment looks more like instruments of torture.



Parc de l'Arquebuse These botanical gardens have two shallow pools for paddling and a Musée d'Histoire Naturelle.



The Lowdown

Map reference 9 D2
Address 21000 (Côte d'Or).
 Notre-Dame: 9 Pl Notre Dame; 03 80 30 40 42. Hôtel de Vogüé: 8 Rue de la Chouette; 03 80 74 51 51. Musée de la Vie Bourguignonne: Monastère des Bernardines, 17 Rue Ste-Anne; 03 80 48 80 90. Palais des Ducs: Pl de la Libération; 03 80 74 51 51. Musée des Beaux Arts: 03 80 74 52 09. Tour de Philippe-le-Bon: call tourist office. Parc de

l'Arquebuse: Ave Albert 1er; 03 80 48 82 00

Train TGV from Paris

Visitor information 11 Rue des Forges, 21000; 08 92 70 05 58; www.visitdijon.com

Open Musée de la Vie Bourguignonne: May–Sep: 9am–12:30pm & 1:30–6pm; rest of the year: 9am–noon & 2–6pm; closed Tue. Tour de Philippe-le-Bon: 10:30am–noon; 1:45–5:30pm; closed Mon; Dec–Mar:

11am & 1:30pm–3:30pm Sat & Sun; 1:30pm–3:30pm Tue. Musée des Beaux Arts: May–Oct: 9:30am–6pm; 10am–5pm rest of the year; closed Tue. Parc de l'Arquebuse: Muséum d'Histoire Naturelle: due to reopen mid-2013

Prices Tour de Philippe-le-Bon: €6. Museums: free

Skipping the queue The Dijon Côte de Nuits pass (€32–40; under 12s free) gives access to a selection of attractions and tours.

Letting off steam

Head for the **Parc de la Colombière** (156 Rue de Longvic, 21000; 03 80 65 42 33), where kids can try their skill at ropes and zip lines high in the trees. For strolling, swimming and canoeing, take bus 30 to Lac Kir, a summertime "beach" located 11 minutes west of Dijon.



La Causerie des Mondes, a café-restaurant on Rue Vauban

Eat and drink

Picnic: under €20; Snacks: €20–45; Real meal: €45–90; Family treat: over €90 (based on a family of four)

PICNIC Marché Central (Pl des Halles, 21000; closed Sun) is a 19th-century ironwork and glass market hall that is the best place to stock up on local goodies such as cheese, ham and bread. Go for an open-air feast in one of the leafy parks or on the pedestrianized Place de la Libération, where the pavement fountains are a magnet for kids on warm summer days.

SNACKS La Causerie des Mondes (16 Rue Vauban, 21000; 03 80 49 96 59; www.facebook.com/lacauserie-desmondess; closed Sun & Mon) is a cosy tea room that serves dozens of

exotic teas, coffees and chocolates to sip, as well as light meals and cakes.

REAL MEAL Le Bistrot des Halles (10 Rue Bannelier, 21000; 03 80 49 94 15; closed Sun & Mon) is a stylish modern bistro which serves modern cuisine prepared with local ingredients. It is popular among the locals for its fair prices, generous portions and scrumptious dishes such as braised pork with lentils flavoured with balsamic vinegar.

FAMILY TREAT Le Pré aux Clercs (13 Pl de la Libération, 21000; 03 80 38 05 05; www.jeanpierrebilloux.com; closed Sun dinner & Mon) is Burgundian super-chef Jean-Pierre Billoux's flagship restaurant offering top-class dining with an al fresco terrace facing the Palais des Ducs.

Shopping

Go to **Mulot & Petitjean** (13 Pl Bossuet, 21000; 03 80 30 07 10; www.mulotpetitjean.fr), a palatial timbered shop selling gingerbread, one of Dijon's unmissable treats. The

Maille Mustard (32 Rue de la Liberté, 21000; 03 80 30 41 02; www.maille.com) has over 30 exotic flavours of mustard. Old-fashioned toys can be bought at the **Musée de la Vie Bourguignonne** museum shop.



A walkway fringed by trees along the Ouche river, Canal de Bourgogne

Next stop...

CANAL DE BOURGOGNE Head for the Canal de Bourgogne (www.burgundy-canal.com) located 14 km (9 miles) from Dijon, which is part of France's huge interconnecting network of waterways that allows boats to travel between the Atlantic and Mediterranean. Hire a boat from **Locaboat** (www.locaboat.com).

KIDS' CORNER

Things to do...

- 1 Can you see the gargoyles on the façade of the Notre-Dame? Try to mimic their expressions!
- 2 Find the little figure of the *chouette* (owl) on the Notre-Dame façade. If you stroke it with your left hand and make a wish, it is supposed to bring good luck.
- 3 Call in at the chocolatier Maison Carbillet (www.chocolat-carbillet.com), and take home a box of dark, milk and white chocolate *escargots* (snails) as a souvenir of Dijon.




GINGERBREAD FAME


Ever wondered why Dijon is famous for gingerbread? Its French name, *pain d'épice* (spice bread), is a clue. The town was on the historic spice route from Asia to Europe.





Robot family

Look at the clock on top of Notre-Dame. The mechanical man who strikes the bell is named Jacquemart and he arrived in 1500. After he had spent a hundred years on his own, the people of Dijon felt sorry for him and gave him a wife in 1610. A hundred years later, they added a son, Jacquelinet, who strikes the bell for the half-hours. Finally, in 1881, a daughter named Jacquelinette came along to strike the quarter hours.

 **Guided tours** Contact tourist office for details

 **Age range** 5 plus

 **Allow** 2 days

 **Toilets** Near Les Halles and the Darcy, Grangier, Condorcet and Ste-Anne car parks

Good family value?

Dijon's atmospheric old town, kid-friendly museums and leafy parks make it a superb family destination.

2 Beaune

Roof-eating monsters and rampart walks

Flanked by the beautiful vineyards in Burgundy, the ancient centre of Beaune is a rewarding place to explore on foot. Its highlight is the palatial hospice known as the **Hôtel-Dieu**, which was founded in 1443 by the Duke of Burgundy's chancellor Nicolas Rolin to help Beaune's suffering citizens after the Hundred Years' War. The intact medieval gem is roofed with colourful geometric glazed tile mosaics. The Great Hall of the Poor has a carved and painted roof with beams held in monsters' mouths. An amazing nine-panelled painting of the *Last Judgement* by Flemish artist Rogier van der Weyden reminded the poor of what would happen to them if they did not lead good lives.

Continue the Middle Ages mood with a wall walk around parts of the ramparts above the cobbled streets. Finish by learning what makes a true Burgundy mustard at the **Moutarderie Fallot**, a mustard mill that has been in business since 1840 and is one of the last independent manufacturers.

Letting off steam

Head for the **Parc de la Bouzaise** (*Rue du Docteur Bouley, 21200; 03 80 24 57 23*) on the edge of town, in a lovely spot at the foot of the vineyards. It has a small zoo, a kids' playground and boating lake. Pick up a brochure of marked trails at the tourist office for hikes into the hills of the Montagne de Beaune.



The stunning glazed-tile roof of the Hôtel-Dieu, Beaune

3 Vallée d'Ouche Steam Railway, Bligny-sur-Ouche

Steam trains and canal boats

Steam and diesel trains of the Vallée d'Ouche steam railway run on a section of the Épinac to Dijon line, which is one of France's oldest railway routes. The trip runs for 9 km (6 miles), through a valley of wooded hillsides and meadows, from Bligny-sur-Ouche to Pont d'Ouche, where the Ouche river and the Burgundy Canal meet. Take bicycles – it is possible to rent them from the tourist office in Bligny – and do a one-way trip on the train, returning by bike from Pont d'Ouche. Take a break in the little riverside café that is popular with boaters on the canal

The Lowdown

- Map reference** 9 C3
- Address** 21360 (Côte d'Or). Chemin de Fer de la Vallée d'Ouche; 06 30 01 48 29; www.thetouristrailwayoftheouchevalley.blogspot.com
- Bus** Transco bus 47 from Dijon and bus 72 from Beaune
- Visitor information** 21 Pl de l'Hôtel de Ville, 23160; 03 80 20 16 51; www.ot-cantondebligny-surouche.fr
- Open** May–Sep: 2:45pm & 4:30pm (departs Bligny) and 3:15pm & 5pm (departs Pont d'Ouche) Sun & bank hols; extra trains in Jul–Aug; also 3:30pm Mon–Sat (diesel trains)
- Prices** Round trip: €21–30; one-way: €14–25; under 3s free
- Eat and drink** **Real meal** Auberge du Val d'Ouche (*Pl de l'Hôtel de Ville, 21360 Bligny; 03 80 20 12 06; www.auberge-val-ouche.com*; daily) is a simple restaurant that offers *coq au vin* (cockerel cooked in wine) and pizzas. **Family treat** Abbaye de la Bussière (33 *Route Departementale, 21360 La Bussière-sur-Ouche; 03 80 49 02 29; www.abbayedelabussiere.fr/en*); open daily) is a 12th-century Cistercian abbey turned country hotel that serves gourmet lunch in its bistro.

who moor up for a drink and to eat. Alternatively, cycle along the canal towpath to the pretty village of La Bussière-sur-Ouche, 13 km (8 miles) north of Bligny, to see the barges moored on the canal and have lunch in its posh abbey hotel.

Take cover

Head for the **Château du Clos de Vougeot** (www.closdevougeot.fr), 22 km (14 miles) east of Bligny, to learn about how wine has been made on the Côte d'Or since Cistercian

The Lowdown

- Map reference** 9 C3
- Address** 21203 (Côte d'Or). Hôtel-Dieu: Rue de l'Hôtel Dieu; 03 80 24 45 00; www.hospices-de-beaune.com. Moutarderie Fallot: 31 Rue du Faubourg-Brettonnière; 03 80 22 10 02; www.fallot.com
- Train** TGV (www.ter-sncf.com/bourgogne) & local express trains from Dijon. **Bus** 44 from Dijon
- Visitor information** 6 Blvd Perpreuil, 21203; 03 80 26 21 30; www.ot-beaune.fr
- Open** Hôtel-Dieu: daily. Moutarderie Fallot: guided visits only. Mar–Nov: 10am & 11:30am Mon–Sat (Jun–Aug also 3:30pm & 5pm)
- Eat and drink** **Picnic** Charcuterie Raillard (4 Rue Monge, 21203; 03 80 22 23 04) stocks picnic supplies such as *jambon persillé* (jellied ham with parsley), quiches and slabs of *pâté en croûte* (pâté in a pastry crust). Enjoy the picnic in the Jardin Anglais across the road. **Real meal** Caveau des Arches (10 Blvd de Perpreuil, 21203; 03 80 22 10 37; www.caveau-des-arches.com; closed Sun & Mon) serves classic Burgundy dishes such as snails and *boeuf bourguignon* (beef casserole cooked in red wine) in a vaulted dining room.



A Vallée d'Ouche steam railway train arriving at the station, Bligny-sur-Ouche



Above Flavigny-sur-Ozerain, surrounded by fields and trees

Below Attractively packaged tins of aniseed sweets, Flavigny-sur-Ozerain



monks started cultivating vines here in the 12th century. It is now home to the **Confrérie des Chevaliers du Tastevin** (www.tastevin-bourgogne.com) who organize prestigious wine tasting events. The château is surrounded by huge vineyards.

4 Flavigny-sur-Ozerain

Aniseed sweets and *Chocolat*

Everyone in France knows the pretty little oval tins of aniseed sweets from Flavigny. France's famous pea-sized aniseed balls have been made in the former Benedictine Abbaye de St-Pierre, set in ancient tiny streets of stone houses, since 1591. The abbey was founded in the 8th century and has an eerie Carolingian **crypt** to visit, as well as the Troubat family's tiny **factory**, where visitors can take a short peek at the workshop and breathe in the lovely fragrances of orange blossom, rose petals and liquorice used to flavour the sweets. Afterwards, wandering around Flavigny is a step back to another age. The fortress

village perches on a rocky spur above the vineyards and has winding cobbled streets of well-preserved and restored medieval houses – featured in the movie *Chocolat* (2000). Look out for the shop where Vianne opened her chocolate boutique on the Place de l'Église.

Letting off steam

Explore the defences with a walk round the remaining ramparts. Visit the **Parc de l'Auxois** (www.parc-auxois.com), 8 km (5 miles) south of Flavigny, in the town of Arnay-Vitteaux, with exotic animals, swimming pools and water slides, as well as jungle adventure activities.

The Lowdown

● **Map reference** 9 C2

Address 21150 (Côte d'Or).
Factory: Rue Abbaye; 03 80 90 20 88; www.anis-flavigny.com.
Crypt: within the factory

🚆 **Train** SNCF from Les Laumes-Alesia and TGV from Montbard

i Visitor information Pl Bingerbrück, 21150 Venarey-les-Laumes; 03 80 96 89 13; www.alesia-tourisme.net

🕒 **Open** Factory: Mon–Fri.
Crypt: daily

🍷 **Eat and drink** **Snacks** La Grange (Pl de l'Église, 21150; 03 80 96 20 62; closed Mon) serves home-made terrines or rabbit in mustard sauce. **Real meal** Le Relais de Flavigny (Pl des Anciennes Halles, 21150; 03 80 96 27 77; open daily) offers local specialities, such as *oeufs en meurette* (eggs in red wine sauce) or frogs' legs.

Picnic under €20; **Snacks** €20–45; **Real meal** €45–90; **Family treat** over €90 (based on a family of four)

KIDS' CORNER

Find out more...

- 1 What ingredients are a must for genuine Burgundy mustard?
- 2 How many flavours of sweets can you find in Flavigny?
- 3 Which countries do the aniseeds used in Flavigny's sweets come from?
- 4 How long does it take to turn an aniseed into a sweet?



Answers at the bottom of the page.

THE PAUPER'S PALACE

Back in the 15th century, the poor had little chance of medical care and so the sumptuously decorated Hôtel-Dieu hospice in Beaune became known as the "pauper's palace". Lucky patients were cared for in four-poster beds, but they often had to share them with several others!



Peek inside the pots

There are weird medicines in the porcelain pots of the pharmacy in Beaune's Hôtel-Dieu. See if you can find:

- 1 Woodlouse powder (*Poudre de cloportes*)
- 2 Vomit nut powder (*Poudre de nux vomica*)
- 3 Crayfish eyes (*Yeux d'écrevisses*)



Answers: 1 Mustard seeds grown in Burgundy and white *aligote* wine from the same region. 2 Nixes/blackcurrant, lemon, orange blossom, mint, liquorice, rose, water, ginger and mandarin in the organic range. 3 Spain, Tunisia, Turkey and Syria. 4 15 days.

5 Vézelay

Crusaders, pilgrims and holy relics

Since the 11th century, pilgrims have travelled to Vézelay's Basilique Ste-Madeleine to pay respects to the relics of St Mary Magdalene before setting off on the scallop-signed route to Santiago de Compostela in Spain. St Bernard of Clairvaux preached the Second Crusade here, and Richard the Lionheart came to meet French king Philippe-Auguste before embarking on the Third Crusade. Today this UNESCO World Heritage Site is thronged with tourists and pilgrims, attracted by its history and the medieval atmosphere of its streets.



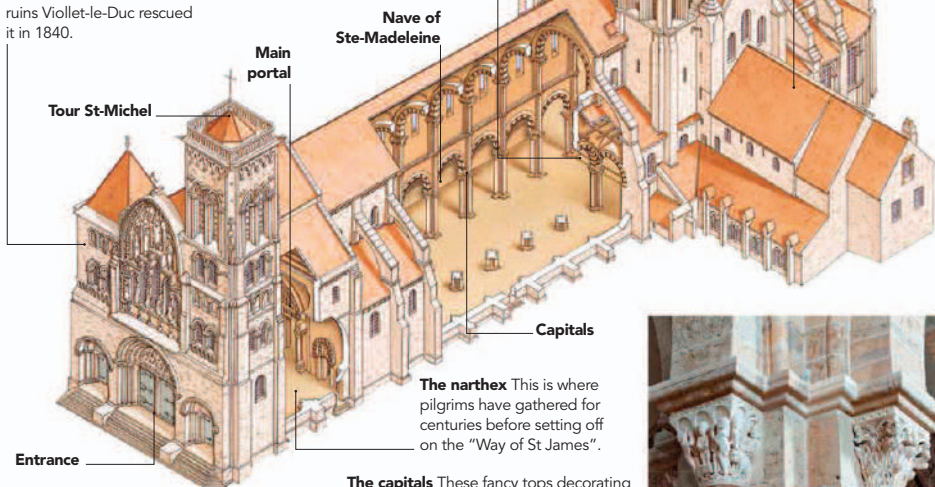
The lofty ceiling of Basilique Ste-Madeleine

Key Features

The façade Built in 1150, this Romanesque and Gothic masterpiece was on the point of collapse when architect and master restorer of medieval ruins Viollet-le-Duc rescued it in 1840.

The crypt Located beneath the basilica, it was reputed to house the remains of Mary Magdalene. Then in the 13th century, belief spread that the true relics were in St Maximin (in Provence) and Vézelay's fame faded.

Musée de l'Oeuvre Viollet-le-Duc



Tour St-Michel

Main portal

Nave of Ste-Madeleine

Capitals

Entrance

The narthex This is where pilgrims have gathered for centuries before setting off on the "Way of St James".

The capitals These fancy tops decorating the columns inside the nave and narthex have carvings of monsters. Use binoculars to spot David chopping off Goliath's head.



The main portal The beautiful sculpture on top of the door, called a tympanum, shows Christ with the apostles, the zodiac and a mythical menagerie of men with dogs' heads and feathered bodies.



Musée de l'Oeuvre Viollet-le-Duc Named after the architect Eugène Emmanuel Viollet-le-Duc, the museum displays original medieval carvings preserved during the 19th-century restoration work.

Prices given are for a family of four

The Lowdown

Map reference 9 B2
Address 89450 (Yonne). Basilique Ste-Madeleine: Presbytère; www.basiliquedevezelay.org. Musée de l'Oeuvre Viollet-le-Duc: Pl du Cloître; 03 86 33 24 62

Train TGV from Paris to Montbard, then bus to Vézelay via Avallon.
Bus from Avallon and Clamecy

Visitor information Rue St-Étienne, 89450; 03 86 33 23 69; www.vezelaytourisme.com

Letting off steam

Follow the 30-minute trail around the old town ramparts – the **Promenade des Fossés** – for grand views over the valleys of the densely forested region of Morvan. Look out for the gold scallop shells marking the pilgrimage trail to Compostela. From the southern ramparts, a lovely path leads to the village of **St-Père**, located 2 km (1 mile) from Vézelay.



One of the quaint, steep streets in the old town of Vézelay

Eat and drink

Picnic: under €20; **Snacks:** €20–45; **Real meal:** €45–90; **Family treat:** over €90 (based on a family of four)

PICNIC Au Tastevin (28 Rue St-Étienne, 89450; 03 86 33 22 08) offers picnic supplies such as sausages, charcuterie, pâtés and cheese. There are also plenty of places on Rue St-Étienne and Rue St-Pierre that sell local delicacies.

SNACKS Cabalus (Rue St-Pierre, 89450; 03 86 33 20 66; www.cabalus.com/hotellerie/hotellerie.html; closed Tue) is an arty tea shop that serves cakes and light snacks in the vaulted rooms of an ancient pilgrims' hostelry.

REAL MEAL Le Bougainville (26 Rue St-Étienne, 89450; 03 86 33 27 57; closed Tue & Wed), a charming old

house on the high street, is where diners can sit down for a proper meal of local dishes.

FAMILY TREAT L'Espérance (25 Grande Rue, 89450 St-Père-sous-Vézelay; 03 86 33 39 10) offers serious gastronomy from legendary chef Marc Meneau.

Find out more

DIGITAL Take a closer look at the Basilique Ste-Madeleine on whc.unesco.org/en/list/84, which has photos and videos of the basilica.

Next stop...

CHÂTEAU DE BAZOCHES Zip off to the 12th-century Château de Bazoches (www.chateau-bazoches.com/accueil.htm), 13 km (8 miles) south of Vézelay, once home to Louis XIV's military architect and fort builder Vauban. The château is an atmospheric place where visitors can imagine Vauban at work, designing his fortresses in the Grand Gallery. He also designed the citadel of Besançon (see p214), which is now a UNESCO World Heritage Site.



Le Bougainville, an elegant restaurant in a lovely old house on Rue St-Étienne

Open Basilique Ste-Madeleine: 8am–8pm daily; winter 8am–dusk. Musée de l'Oeuvre Viollet-le-Duc: Jul & Aug: 2–6pm daily; Easter–Jun & Sep: 2–6pm Sat & Sun

Prices Basilique Ste-Madeleine: free. Musée de l'Oeuvre Viollet-le-Duc: €6–8; under 12s free

Skipping the queue Visit early morning or late afternoon after tour groups have left.

Guided tours Contact the Basilica for 1-hour tours of the

basilica (adults €3.60) and also of the village in English (groups only).

Age range 5 plus

Allow A day

Café Many along Rue St-Étienne

Toilets In the tourist office

Good family value?

A great place to learn about crusaders and the pilgrimage to Santiago de Compostela.

KIDS' CORNER

Discover...

1 How many signs of the zodiac can you see on the tympanum above the main portal?

2 In the Middle Ages, Christians set off on a pilgrimage route from Vézelay to Santiago de Compostela in Spain. Imagine them walking all that way, sometimes barefoot, starting on the cobbled street here.

3 What is the emblem of St James (Santiago in Spanish) that marked the way for the pilgrims?

Try drawing one.



Answers at the bottom of the page.



BUSINESS OF BONES

Holy relics are bones or items of clothing that are claimed to have belonged to saints and sacred figures, such as Christ's burial shroud (the Turin Shroud) or the Holy Grail, which held Christ's blood. Faked to draw pilgrims to shrines, they were big business in the Middle Ages.



The legend of St James

Legend has it that James the Great, one of the apostles, went to Spain from the Holy Land to spread the Gospel. On his return to Judeaea, he was beheaded by Herod Agrippa. His body made its way back to Spain on a miraculous journey involving angels and a rudderless boat.

Answers: **1** There are 12, on the outer frame – they are mixed with symbols showing activities of the year such as grape harvest and pig slaughter. **2** A scallop shell symbol. The scallop is called Coquille de St Jacques in French – you will see them on many menus too!

6 Avallon

Battlement walks and Roman mosaics

Perched on a rocky spur above the Vallée du Cousin, the tranquil fortified town of Avallon is encircled by ancient ramparts. The ramparts make for a fine walk back through time, along with streets of houses dating from the 15th century. But remember that the defensive walls are there for a reason: things were not always this peaceful in the Middle Ages, when Avallon was the scene of many a battle. The main sight is the 12th-century Romanesque Église St-Lazare, where signs of the zodiac, images of the apocalypse and the labours of the months are carved



Horses grazing freely in the fields of the Morvan

The Lowdown

Map reference 9 B2

Address 89200 (Yonne).

Musée de l'Avallonnais: 4 Rue du Collège

Train TGV from Paris to Montbard & Dijon, then bus to Avallon and Saulieu

Visitor information 6 Rue Bocquillot, 89200; 03 86 34 14 19; www.avallon-tourisme.com

Open Musée de l'Avallonnais: Apr–Sep: 2–6pm Wed–Mon; open during school hols; closed Tue

Eat and drink Snacks Dame Jeanne (59 Grande Rue, 89200; 03 86 34 58 71; damejeanne.fr; closed Thu), a palatial *salon de thé* in a grand 17th-century house, serves 27 types of tea and tasty snacks such as snail tarts. **Real meal** Hostellerie de la Poste (3 Pl Vauban, 89200; 03 86 34 16 16; www.hostellerieiedelaposte.com; closed Mon & Sun) is the best table in town with snails, Morvan trout in a creamy wine sauce; includes a kids' menu.



The 12th-century Romanesque Église St-Lazare, Avallon

Prices given are for a family of four

into the beautiful doorway. Admire the fine old mansion next door, the Maison des Sires de Domecy, and visit the **Musée de l'Avallonnais** to see a Roman mosaic of Venus, and the dramatic 20th-century art by the French Fauvist and Expressionist artist Georges Rouault.

Letting off steam

Take a taxi or drive 6 km (4 miles) to **Parc Aventure des Châtellaines** (www.loisirsenmorvan.com/index.htm), an adventure park for kids aged 5 plus with tree-top trails, ropes, climbing, canoeing, rafting and more.

7 Parc Naturel Régional du Morvan

Wartime heroes and outdoor action in a nature park

A vast hilly wilderness of forest and lakes, the Morvan region is perfect for walking, cycling, swimming, fishing

and watersports. But life in this densely forested heart of Burgundy has not always been about fun and leisure. The local people once had a hard life trying to make a living as woodcutters and cowherds. During World War II, the deep woodland and sparse population of the Morvan made it a perfect place for the French Resistance movement, known as the *maquis*, to hide out in isolated farms and carry out operations against the Nazi war machine. The **Musée de la Résistance en Morvan** in the park's information centre tells the moving story of the wartime occupation and resistance. The British parachuted in supplies, weapons and radios to help the *maquis*, while the local population suffered terribly at the hands of the Germans, who arrested and executed people and burnt down farms and villages. In the same building, the **Maison des Hommes et des Paysages** has exhibits on the region's traditional way of life in the days when men cut trees down and floated them away

The Lowdown

Map reference 9 B3

Address 58000 (Nièvre), 21000 (Côte-d'Or), 71000 (Saône-et-Loire) & 89000 (Yonne). Musée de la

Résistance en Morvan & Maison des Hommes et des Paysages: in Maison du Parc, 58230 St-Brisson; www.museeresistancemorvan.fr

Train TGV to Montbard and Dijon, then bus to Salulieu, then car to St-Brisson

Visitor information Maison du Parc, 58230 St-Brisson; 03 86 78 79 00; www.parcdumorvan.org

Open Musée de la Résistance en Morvan & Maison des Hommes et

des Paysages: Easter–Sep: closed Tue & Sat am. Jul & Aug: daily

Eat and drink *Picnic* Marché du Samedi Matin (Pl Monge, 21210 Saulieu) is a superb place from where excellent Morvan charcuterie, cheese and bread can be picked for a picnic in the clear air of the Morvan. **Real meal** L'Auberge Ensoleillée (Route du Vieux Dun, 58230 Dun-les-Places; 03 86 84 62 76; open daily) is a pretty family-run country inn serving local dishes such as *crapiaux* (thick pancakes with bacon) or *oeufs en meurette* (poached eggs in red wine sauce).

along lakes and rivers all the way to Paris or joined seasonal cattle drives to market, while local women were in demand as wet nurses.

Letting off steam

The Morvan is one big outdoor adventure playground. The Maison du Parc, in the park information centre of St-Brisson, offers walking trails in the Regional Nature Park. Head for the **Lac des Settons** (www.club-omnisports-des-settons.fr/le_club/acceuil.html), 9 km (6 miles) south, in the town of Montsauche-les-Settons. The **Base Nautique des Settons** here offers watersports, walking and cycling trails around the lake.



Exhibits in the Maison des Hommes et des Paysages, St-Brisson

8 Autun

Medieval treasures and a visit to a Roman theatre

With a superb cathedral and one of Burgundy's best museums, Autun is a cultural gem. The town's name comes from Augustodunum, which is a clue to its illustrious past back in Roman times. It was also an important city in the Middle Ages, when Nicolas Rolin, Chancellor to the Duke of Burgundy, Philip the Good, made sure his hometown did well from his prestige. His son Cardinal Jean Rolin also put his weight behind the city's fortunes, turning it into an important centre of religion and learning, and adding Gothic grandeur to the Romanesque Cathédrale St-Lazare.

Autun's fortunes took a turn for the worse during the French Revolution, when the cathedral was damaged. Luckily, its Romanesque sculptures by the 12th-century artist Gislebertus got off lightly – the tympanum over the main doorway depicting the *Last Judgement* is a masterpiece. His *Temptation of Eve*

The Lowdown

Map reference 9 C3
Address 71400 (Saône-et-Loire).
Musée Rolin: 5 Rue des Bancs;
03 85 52 09 76

Train TGV to Le Creusot, then bus to Autun. **Bus** from Chalon-sur-Saône

Visitor information 13 Rue Général Demetz, 71400; 03 85 86 80 38; www.autun-tourisme.com

Open Musée Rolin: 1 Mar–30 Sep: closed Tue; mid-Dec–Feb; timings vary rest of the year

Eat and drink **Snacks** Café des Tilleuls (6 Rue du Général-Demetz, 71400; 03 85 52 51 44; open daily) offers good local cooking and live music in the evening. **Real meal** Hotel Les Ursulines (14 Rue de Rivault, 71400; 03 85 86 58 58; www.hotelursulines.fr; dinner daily, Sat & Sun lunch) is a classy restaurant in a former convent by the ramparts.

Festival Free cultural events in the evening, including music, poetry and art, in the Cathédrale St-Lazare (Jul & Aug)

also survived and is a highlight of the great collection of medieval art in the **Musée Rolin**.

Stroll the cobbled streets around the cathedral and Place Terreau in the upper town. The Roman remains are a bit scattered, but Autun has the ruins of the biggest Roman theatre in Gaul; it is a short drive from the lower town's main square, the Place du Champ de Mars.

Letting off steam

Drive along the D978 towards Mont Beuvray to pick up the forest trail near St-Prix, 17 km (10 miles) west of Autun. Climb to the top of Haut-Folin, the highest point in the Morvan at 900 m (3,000 ft).



The awe-inspiring curve of Autun's Roman theatre

KIDS' CORNER

In Autun's Cathedral St-Lazare, look out for...

- 1 Devils. They are on the right hand of the tympanum above the main doorway, catching sinners with their claws.
- 2 An artist's signature. Under Christ, in the centre of the tympanum, it says *Gislebertus hoc fecit*. Can you guess what it means?
- 3 The steps leading to the top of the bell tower. How many are there?



Answers at the bottom of the page.

THE ASTERIX OF GAUL

While cartoon character Asterix held out in Brittany, real life Gallic chieftain Vercingetorix gathered his army at Bibracte in Morvan, in a last attempt to stop the Romans from taking Gaul. He was defeated by Julius Caesar in the battle of Alesia in 52 BC.

Military magnificence

A statue of Vauban stands in the Place Vauban in Avallon. Do you know who he was? A Marshal of France and a military engineer, Vauban was born in a Burgundian village just 10 km (6 miles) from Avallon called St-Léger-de-Fourcheret. It was renamed St-Léger-Vauban in his honour.

An expert in building and destroying fortifications, he designed hundreds of citadels and defences all over France for Louis XIV, the Sun King.



Answers: 2 It is Latin for 'Gislebertus did this'; 3 230 steps.

9 Cluny

The church that disappeared

Founded in 910, the now ruined Ancienne Abbaye de Cluny was once the most powerful monastery in Europe, and its church was Europe's biggest until St Peter's Basilica in Rome was built in the 16th century. The abbots of Cluny were bigwigs of the Middle Ages, as important as kings and popes. Learn about them, the abbey and what went wrong in the Musée d'Art et d'Archéologie, and by exploring the old town.



A display outside the abbey, Cluny

Key Features

① **Musée d'Art et d'Archéologie** Housed in a 15th-century palace are medieval sculptures and decorations from the abbey, as well as audio-visual displays and a 3D reconstruction of the abbey in the 13th century.



② **Tour des Fromages** Climb to the top of the oddly named 11th-century "Cheese Tower" for the best view over the town and to get an idea of how huge the abbey once was. A superb display here shows what the streets looked like before the abbey was destroyed.



③ **Abbey church ruins** Walk around to spot bits and pieces of the church appearing among the later buildings, including the south transept. Their size gives an idea of how enormous the church was, before it was demolished after the French Revolution.

④ **Clocher de l'Eau-Bénite** Of the five towers that once crowned the south transept, only the imposing octagonal Belfry of the Holy Water and a smaller clock tower remain.



⑤ **Farnier** This flour store, beneath a splendid oak roof dating from the 13th century, displays the beautifully carved stone capitals – the crowns on top of columns – salvaged from the abbey church.

The Lowdown

📍 **Map reference** 9 C4
Address 71250 (Saône-et-Loire).
 Pl de l'Abbaye; www.cluny-monuments-nationaux.fr.
 Musée d'Art et d'Archéologie:
 Palais Jean de Bourbon; 03 85 59 12 79; www.cluny-tourisme.com

🚗 **Train** TGV from Paris to Mâcon Loché or regular train to Mâcon Ville, then bus 7 (Mâcon to Chalon-sur-Saône via Cluny) or bus 9 (Mâcon to Digoin via Cluny)

📄 **Visitor information** Tour des Fromages, 6 Rue Mercière, 71250; 03 85 59 05 34

🕒 **Open** Abbey & Musée d'Art et d'Archéologie: Apr–Jun & Sep: 9:30am–6pm; Jul–Aug: 9:30am–7pm (till 5pm Oct–Mar) (ticket office shuts 30 mins before closing time for the museum).
 Tour des Fromages: Jan–Apr & Nov–Dec: Mon–Sat; May–Oct: daily

💰 **Prices** Abbey & Musée d'Art et d'Archéologie: €19 (combined ticket); EU residents under 26 free. Tour des Fromages: €4–7; under 6s free

🕒 **Skipping the queue** Early morning or late afternoon are the best times to visit.

🗺️ **Guided tours** In French and German only

👤 **Age range** 5 plus

🕒 **Allow** Half a day

☕ **Café** Café du Centre "Chez Sissis" near the Tour des Fromages

🚻 **Toilets** By the tourist office on the Place de l'Abbaye

Good family value?

The ruined abbey Abbaye de Cluny is a fascinating and educational visit for kids aged 5 plus.



Cyclists on the picturesque Voie Verte trail near Cluny

Letting off steam

Pick up the “follow the lamb” leaflet from the tourist office and walk the route marked with bronze lamb symbols through the town. Hire bicycles from **Ludisport** (www.ludisport.com), located by the old railway station, and ride on the Voie Verte (Green Lane) trail from Cluny to the village of Cormatin, which is 13 km (8 miles) north of Cluny to visit the **Musée de Velo** (www.enviesdevelo.com), a bicycle museum.



Organic bread and croissants displayed at Le Pain sur la Table

Eat and drink

Picnic: under €20; **Snacks:** €20–45; **Real meal:** €45–90; **Family treat:** over €90 (based on a family of four)

PICNIC Le Pain sur la Table (Pont de l'Étang, 71250; 03 85 59 24 50; lepainsurlatable.fr; bakery: open daily & café: noon–2pm daily) is a riverside bakery and café near the Voie Verte trail, with organic bread, croissants and pain au chocolat. Picnic along the Voie Verte.

SNACKS Germain (25 Rue Lamartine, 71250; 03 85 59 11 21; closed Mon) is a pâtisserie-tea shop that serves great cakes and quiches.

REAL MEAL Auberge du Cheval Blanc (1 Rue Porte de Mâcon, 71250; 03 85 59 01 13; www.chevalblanc-auberge.com; open daily) is a classic auberge (inn) that cooks up excellent Burgundian dishes.

FAMILY TREAT Hôtel de

Bourgogne (Pl de l'Abbaye, 71250; 03 85 59 00 58; www.hotel-cluny.com; closed Tue & Wed) offers Burgundian heritage cuisine, such as Charolais beef in Mâcon red wine sauce, in the traditional dining room of the hotel.

Find out more

DIGITAL Go to www.cluny.monuments-nationaux.fr not only to read more on the abbey, but also to watch an excerpt from a 3D film featuring the abbey.

Next stop...

LE HARAS NATIONAL Visit **Le Haras National** (2 Rue Porte des Frés, 71250; www.haras-nationaux.fr), the National Stud Farm, to see magnificent thoroughbred stallions. Built with stone from the ruined Ancienne Abbaye de Cluny, the farm was founded by Napoleon in 1806 to breed horses for his military campaigns. The farm offers guided visits of the stables and there are various displays of the stallions through the year, as well as show-jumping competitions.



Thoroughbred stallions at Le Haras National, Cluny

KIDS' CORNER

Can you discover?

- 1 Why was the abbey at Cluny destroyed?
- 2 What is left of the medieval part of Cluny?
- 3 Was the octagonal Belfry of the Holy Water the abbey's tallest tower? Find one of the models and work it out.
- 4 What metal are the lamb symbols made of along



the “follow the lamb” route?

Answers at the bottom of the page.

BLOWN TO PIECES

After the French Revolution, the Ancienne Abbaye de Cluny was demolished in 1810 by blowing it up with gunpowder. The people of Cluny helped themselves to the stones to build their own houses.

Spot the monk

There are several types of Catholic monks in the abbeys of the world. The most common are Benedictines, Cistercians, Franciscans and Dominicans. Did you know that they can be identified by the clothes they wear? Benedictines wear black robes; Cistercians wear white or greyish robes; Franciscans wear brown robes (or grey) and Dominicans wear black cloaks over white habits.



Answers: 1 The abbey lost its power since it was deemed a part of the old regime. 2 The Belfry of Holy Water. 3 The Tour des Fromages, Jean de Bourdon's palace that houses Musée d'Art et d'Archéologie, the Farmher, walls, towers and gateways. 4 Bronze.



An old-fashioned carousel facing the Saône riverfront in Mâcon



Antiques and ceramic pots for sale at a shop in Tournus

10 Mâcon

Waterside walks and hunting cavemen

Sandwiched between the Saône river and hillsides carpeted with vineyards lies the town of Mâcon. Start exploring along the café terraces of the riverfront promenade, Quai Lamartine, and enjoy the view of the town from the Pont St-Laurent.

A great market is hosted Tuesday to Saturday mornings, on the Place aux Herbes. While here, take time to admire the weird animals and

characters sculpted into the fantastic Renaissance façade of the Maison de Bois. Take a look at the ruins of Cathédrale St-Vincent, then visit the **Musée des Ursulines** to learn about the prehistoric finds from the Roche de Solutré, where skeletons of 100,000 horses were discovered. Finish in the apothecary's shop in the **Hôtel-Dieu** to see an old-style pharmacy that is more like a magician's laboratory. Inside its 18th-century walnut cabinets are delicate ceramic pots of lotions and potions, including opium, powdered ivory and adderwort.

The Lowdown

Map reference 9 D4
Address 71000 (Saône-et-Loire). Musée des Ursulines: 5 Rue des Ursulines; 03 85 39 30 98. Hôtel-Dieu: 34 Rue des Épinoches; 03 85 39 90 38

Train from Dijon, Beaune, Chalon-sur-Saône and Lyon. **Bus** 7 & 9 from Cluny

Visitor information 1 Pl St-Pierre, 71000; 03 85 21 07 07; www.macon-tourism.com

Open Musée des Ursulines: Tue–Sat, Sun pm. Hôtel-Dieu: Jun–Sep: Tue–Sun pm

Eat and drink **Snacks** Le 88 (39 Pl aux Herbes, 71000; 03 85 38 00 06; closed Wed & Sun and Tue dinner) offers good-value traditional brasserie dining. **Real meal** Le Poisson d'Or (Allée du Parc, Port de Plaisance, 71000; 03 85 38 00 88; www.lepoissondor.com; closed Wed & Sun and Tue dinner) serves fresh fish and frogs' legs on a riverside terrace.

Festival L'été frappé, free concerts and events (mid-Jun & Aug)

Letting off steam

Drive 17 km (10 miles) northwest of Mâcon to explore the caverns of the **Grottes d'Azé** (03 85 33 32 23), where bears and lions once lived 300,000 years ago. Burgundy's largest cave system, it has limestone formations and an underground river.

11 Tournus

A monk's life and a special nature ramble

Located on the Saône river between Mâcon and Chalon, Tournus is a lovely riverside town. The star of the town is the **Abbaye de St-Philibert**, one of the oldest Romanesque buildings in Burgundy, founded in the 9th century, where children will enjoy learning what life was like for the monks 1,000 years ago. They brought with them the relics of their patron saint, Philibert; pay respects to him in the choir. The old town around the abbey is a charming place with antiques and art galleries, made for gentle browsing. On the first Sunday

The Lowdown

Map reference 9 D4
Address 71700 (Saône-et-Loire). Abbaye de St-Philibert: Pl de l'Hôtel de Ville. Hôtel-Dieu & Musée Greuze: 21 Rue de l'Hôpital; 03 85 51 23 50

Train Tournus is on the main SNCF Paris-Lyon train line and served by TER Dijon-Lyon trains. TGV from Mâcon-Loché and Le Creusot. **Bus** from Chalon-sur-Saône, Mâcon, Cluny and Louhans

Visitor information 2 Pl de l'Abbaye, 71700; 03 85 27 00 20; www.tournugeois.fr

Open Hôtel-Dieu & Musée Greuze: Apr–Oct: Wed–Mon

Eat and drink **Picnic** Fromagerie Giroud (63 Rue du Docteur-Privy, 71700; closed Mon) stocks goodies for a gourmet riverside picnic. **Family treat** Aux Terrasses (18 Ave du 23 Janvier, 71700; 03 85 51 01 74; www.aux-terrasses.com; closed Mon & Sun dinner and Tue lunch) is a well-known restaurant in an old roadside inn that serves traditional Bourguignon cuisine and has a kids' menu.

Festival Saint Philibert's firework display on the Saône quays (third weekend in Aug)

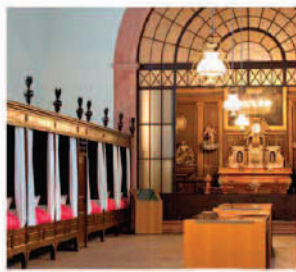
of the month, a lively flea market takes over the quays along the Saône river. Visit the **Hôtel-Dieu**, a hospice with an apothecary and a garden of medicinal plants. Move about the hospice building, which houses the **Musée Greuze**, dedicated to artist Jean-Baptiste Greuze.



The garden of medicinal plants in the Hôtel-Dieu, Tournus

Letting off steam

Drive 6 km (4 miles) south of Tournus to the **Réserve de la Truchère** (Pont de Seille, 71290 Truchère; 03 85 51 35 79), situated at the confluence of the Saône and Seille rivers. A magical nature reserve, it has walking and cycling trails around its lake, dunes, peat marshes and oak forest.



Interior of the 17th-century Hôtel-Dieu with its beautifully lit chapel, Tournus

12 Louhans

Blue-footed chickens at a special country market

The Bresse region, located south of Burgundy, is poultry country. Louhans's livestock market on Mondays is the place to see the Bresse chickens, considered the best in the world, not just by the French. It is a sight that seems to belong to medieval times, with the arched high street, Grande Rue, lined with stalls selling chickens, ducks and geese, and the country folk buying them. The 157 archways lining the street date from the 15th century and help to keep the sun and rain off shoppers while they browse their way along the market and the shops. Around town, visit

the landmark Église St-Pierre, with its pretty tiled steeple. See the workshop where the town's local newspaper *L'Indépendant* was printed for a century until it closed in 1984. It is preserved as the **Musée de l'Imprimerie** and its ancient rotary presses still work. The **Hôtel-Dieu**, a former hospital and now a museum, is especially atmospheric, with its grand wards of curtained beds and the beautiful curvy Hispano-Moorish jars in the apothecary. They contain things that are not seen on prescriptions these days, such as billy goat's dried blood.

Letting off steam

Set off from the river port of Louhans for pleasant strolls along the towpaths of the Seille river where pleasure boats chug along and anglers fish for carp. About 5 km (3 miles) west is the lock at Branges, a lovely village. Visit the **Maison de la Volaille de Bresse** (www.pouletbresse.com), a poultry house, in the Bois de Chize à Branges to learn about the chickens.



Signage outside a poultry house indicating free entry in Louhans

The Lowdown

-  **Map reference** 9 D4
- Address** 71500 (Saône-et-Loire). Musée de l'Imprimerie: 29 Rue des Dodânes; 03 85 76 27 16. Hôtel-Dieu: Rue du Capitaine Vic; 03 85 75 54 32
-  **Train** TGV and regional train to Mâcon, then bus 14 to Tournus, followed by bus 11 to Louhans
-  **Visitor information** Pl St-Jean, 71500; 03 85 75 05 02; www.bresse-bourguignonne.com
-  **Open** Musée de l'Imprimerie: 6 Jan–14 May & 1 Oct–19 Dec: Mon–Fri (pm only); 15 May–30 Sep: daily (pm only). Hôtel-Dieu: guided visits (in French) 1 Feb–31 Mar &

1 Nov–15 Dec: 2:30pm & 4pm; 1 Apr–15 June & 16 Sep–31 Oct: 10:30am, 2:30pm, 4pm; 16 Jun–15 Sep: 10:30am, 2:30pm, 4pm, 5:30pm, closed Tue

-  **Eat and drink** **Picnic** The Grande Rue has plenty of shops selling local organic produce. Picnic by the Seille river. Try the local cake speciality *corniottes* (a cheese pastry) from one of the pâtisseries. **Real meal** La Mère Jouvenceaux (26 Rue Lucien Guillemaut, 71500; 03 85 75 00 51; closed Tue & Wed) serves Bresse chicken, fresh *sandre* (pike-perch) and frogs' legs.

KIDS' CORNER

Look out for...

- 1** Roman columns. They were recycled to support the roof of the crypt in the Abbaye St-Philibert in Tournus.
- 2** The arches along the Grande Rue in Louhans. How many can you count?
- 3** The strange contents in the jars in the Hôtel-Dieu in Louhans. Make a gory shopping list.



Answer at the bottom of the page.

LONG-HAUL FLIGHTS

From 1937 to 1939, the seaplanes of Britain's Imperial Airways used to land on the Saône river in Mâcon, opposite the Hôtel d'Europe et d'Angleterre, to refuel on the long flights from Southampton to Africa and even as far as Australia!



How to spot a genuine Bresse chicken

How can you tell when a chicken is a pure Bresse chicken? While it is still clucking and pecking in the fields, it has white feathers, blue feet, a bright red cockscomb crest on its head and wattles beneath its beak. The chickens can be seen with a ring on their left legs with the farmer's details when they are for sale at the butcher's.

With their red, white and blue colours to match the French flag, Bresse chickens have become the emblem of France.



Answer: 2 There are 157 arches, made of stone, bricks and wood.

13 Parc Régional Naturel du Haut-Jura

Nature's splendour and a gem of a train ride

Just a stone's throw from Switzerland, near Geneva and Lac Léman, the Parc Régional Naturel du Haut-Jura is an exciting playground for year-round outdoor action. Hike and mountain bike its trails along rocky crests, through forests and up to its high peaks and plateaux. In winter, put on snow shoes or zip off on a dog sleigh adventure. There is plenty of artisan heritage in its stonecutting workshops and cheese-makers' cooperatives.



Pungent cheeses at Les Rousses

Key Sights



1 St Claude The town is known for its craftsmen, who created its famous pipes. Visit the Musée de la Pipe et du Diamant whose collection is from the 18th century.

2 Ligne des Hironnelles This picturesque 123-km (77-mile) long track from St Claude to Dole passes through 36 tunnels and 18 viaducts, through the Forêt de Chauv and vineyards of Arbois.



3 Les Hautes-Combes This 1,000-m (3,300-ft) high plateau offers jaw-dropping views over the Jura's highest peaks. Head for the Coopérative Fromagère du Haut-Jura to see how local cheeses are made.



4 Maison du Haut-Jura Work out the lie of the land and stock up leaflets for hikes and things to see and do in the park information centre, with interactive displays for kids to learn more about the region.



5 Les Rousses Four villages – Les Rousses, Prémanon, Bois d'Amont and Lamoura – make up this ski resort. In summer, the Lac des Rousses is perfect for swimming and watersports.



6 Le Fort des Rousses Learn about Comté cheeses as 50,000 of them mature in the caves of Jurafoire inside this old military fort. Follow a trail of zip wires, assault course and tree-top trails.



The Lowdown

Map reference 10 E4
Address 39140 (Jura), 25300 (Doubs) and 01000 (Ain). Musée de la Pipe et du Diamant: 1 Pl Jacques Faizant, 39200 St Claude; 03 84 45 17 00. Coopérative Fromagère du Haut-Jura: 39310 Les Moussières; 03 84 41 60 96; www.fromagerie-haut-jura.fr. Maison du Haut-Jura: 39310 Lajoux; 03 84 34 12 27; www.parc-haut-jura.fr. Le Fort des Rousses: 39220 Les Rousses; 03 84 60 02 55; fort-des-rousses.com

Train TGV from Paris to Besançon, then SNCF to St Claude. SNCF

from Dole to Morez, then bus to Les Rousses (www.jurabus.fr)

Visitor information Office du Tourisme Haut-Jura: 1 Ave de Belfort, 39200 St Claude; 03 84 45 34 24; ot-saint-claude.com. Office du Tourisme Les Rousses: 495 Rue Pasteur, 39220; 03 84 60 02 55; www.lesrousses.com

Open Musée de la Pipe et du Diamant: May–Sep: 9:30am–noon & 2–6:30pm daily; 2–6pm rest of year, closed Sun. Coopérative Fromagère du Haut-Jura: daily. Maison du Haut-Jura: Jul & Aug:

Letting off steam

From St Claude, head for the nearby village of Chaumont for a hike to the Cascade de la Queue de Cheval, the "horse's tail" waterfall. It is about an hour's walk to the waterfall and back from Chaumont.



The Swiss-French themed Hôtel Arbez Franco-Suisse

Eat and drink

Picnic: under €20; **Snacks:** €20–45; **Real meal:** €45–90; **Family treat:** over €90 (based on a family of four)

PICNIC Le Marché du Jeudi Matin (39200 St Claude; 7am–1pm Thu) has Bresse chickens roasting on the spit and splendid displays of cheese and other local goodies for a picnic near the Cascade de la Queue de Cheval.

SNACKS Pâtisserie Jérôme Simon (33 Rue de Pré, 39200 St Claude; 03 84 45 00 55) has a tea room that serves scrumptious sweet treats.

REAL MEAL Ferme-Auberge La Combe aux Bisons (L'Embossieux, 30370 La Pesse; 03 84 42 71 60; closed Mon & Tue) is 12 km (7 miles) south of St Claude. It raises Canadian bisons that are served as *pierrade* (steaks and kebabs cooked on a hot stone) and cheesy treats such as *fondue* as well as *raclette* (made

of thick slices of melted cheese with potatoes, gherkins, pickled onions and dried meat).

FAMILY TREAT Hôtel Arbez Franco-Suisse (77 Rue Ferme La Cure, 39220; 03 84 60 02 20; www.arbez-hotel.com; open daily) is a border-straddling restaurant, located 2 km (1 mile) to the south of Les Rousses, with a brasserie in France and wood-panelled restaurant in Switzerland.

Next stop...

CASCADES DU HÉRISSON The village of Doucier, located 31 km (19 miles) north of St Claude, is the starting point for the valley of the Hérisson river. Head out for Doucier to check out the spectacular fall of the Cascades du Hérisson, a 15-km (9-mile) long trail of waterfalls. Leave the car at the park by the Moulin Jacquand, then pick up the woody trail to visit the 65-m (220-ft) high waterfall Cascade de l'Éventail and walk behind the curtain of water at the nearby 60-m (200-ft) high Cascade du Grand Saut.



The 65-m (220-ft) high, breathtaking waterfall of Cascade de l'Éventail

KIDS' CORNER

Find out more...

1 Apart from its pipe-makers and diamond-cutters, what else is St Claude famous for?

(Hint: see illustration)

2 Can you name the highest peak in the Haut-Jura Regional Nature Park?

3 Which species of birds, butterflies and insects can you find in the park?



Answers at the bottom of the page.

Challenging rail line

The Hironnelles train route is so demanding that the SNCF uses it to test new trains.

NATURE TALK

The Haut-Jura Regional Nature Park is home to over a hundred types of birds, 200 species of insects and butterflies, as well as 30 types of trees.



The pipe-makers' den

Since the 12th century, St Claude was well known for its wood-turners and stonecutters. When the abbey brought pilgrims flocking in the Middle Ages, they made a living from carving religious figures and souvenirs. In later years, they began to carve briar pipes and toys and cut gemstones.



Answers: **1** His rugby team, which is la Neige, **1** 720 m (5 730 ft). **2** L'Anx, one of the best in France. **3** C'est de charmois antilopes, roe deer, owls, falcons and capercaillie.

10am–1pm & 2–7pm Tue–Fri, 2–7pm Sat & Sun; timings vary rest of year. Le Fort des Rousses: Contact tourist office for information on visits.

Prices Musée de la Pipe et du Diamant: €20–30; under 6s free. Ligne des Hironnelles: €19 (one-way ticket – St Claude to Dole)

Skipping the queue The Juramusées Pass (juramusees.fr/le-pass.html) offers admission to 29 sites in the area at a discount.

Guided tours Contact tourist office for details.

Age range 5 plus

Activities Take a train ride on the Ligne des Hironnelles (lignedeshironnelles.fr).

Allow 2 or 3 days

Toilets In St Claude, Les Rousses and Maison du Haut-Jura in Lajoux and by the Lac des Rousses

Good family value?

The park offers top-class outdoor fun for active families and also activities of local cultural interest.

14 Arc-et-Senans

A salty story

In 1773, Louis XV's government decided to build the **Saline Royale**, or royal saltworks, and appointed the architect Claude-Nicolas Ledoux to do the job at Arc-et-Senans. The idea was to pump out the salty water 24 km (15 miles) from the mineral springs at Salins-les-Bains to the factory at Arc-et-Senans and extract salt by evaporating it, using wood from the Chaux forest. But the saltworks were closed in 1895 as it never made as much salt as was planned. Ledoux's visionary plans for a futuristic town built in circles around the central works led it to be declared a UNESCO World Heritage Site. Inspired by advances of the Industrial Revolution, this was to have been a utopian model town



The grand central building of the saltworks at Arc-et-Senans

for the workers. Housed in the Saline Royale, the Musée Claude Nicolas Ledoux explains it all in the old Coopers' workshop.

Letting off steam

Drive 14 km (9 miles) north to the **Forêt de Chaux**, France's second largest forest, to walk on its vast network of marked trails. It is home to deer, wild boar, foxes and weasels.

15 Besançon

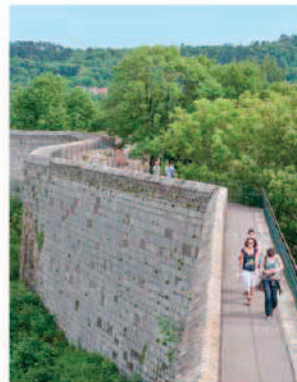
Clocks and ramparts

The city of Besançon sits in a loop of the Doubs river beneath a rocky spur crowned by the fortification expert Vauban's mighty 17th-century **Citadelle**. This historic fortress contains museums, including quirky local arts and crafts in the Musée Comtois, as well as a zoo and the best views over the town. The charming old St-Jean quarter at the foot of the citadel is pedestrianized,

which makes for relaxed wandering around its grand stone townhouse mansions and inviting cafés. Look up to see the fantastic **Horloge Astronomique**, an astronomical clock in the 12th-century Cathédrale St-Jean; when it chimes the hour, mechanical figures come out to dance. Continue along the Grande Rue, where writer Victor Hugo was born at No.140, to the Renaissance Palais Granvelle, which has the family-friendly **Musée du Temps**, with a superb collection of clocks and timepieces.

Letting off steam

Take a walk along the ramparts of the Chemins de Ronde, or take a scenic boat trip on the Doubs river with **Vedettes Panoramiques** (www.vedettes-panoramiques.com) to the Saut du Doubs waterfall.



Walking along the ramparts of the 17th-century Citadelle, Besançon

The Lowdown

- Map reference** 10 E3
- Address** 25610 (Doubs).
Saline Royale: Ave de la Saline;
03 81 54 45 45; www.salineroyale.com
- Train** Ligne des Hirondelles from St Claude. TGV from Mouchard
- Visitor information** Saline Royale, 25610; 03 81 57 43 21; www.ot-arcetsenans.fr
- Open** Saline Royale: year round; timings vary throughout the year
- Eat and drink** **Snacks** Bar-Restaurant de la Saline (35 Grande-Rue, 25610; 03 81 57 49 49) does *plats du jour* (daily special) and sandwiches. **Real meal** Relais d'Arc-et-Senans (9 Pl de l'Église, 25610; 03 81 57 40 60; www.le-relais-darc-et-senans.com; closed Sun & Mon) offers good-value dining; includes a kids' menu.



The elegant Renaissance courtyard of the Musée du Temps, Besançon

The Lowdown

- Map reference** 10 E2
- Address** 25000 (Doubs).
Citadelle: 99 Rue des Fusillés;
www.citadelle.com. Horloge
Astronomique: Rue de la
Convention; 03 81 81 12 76.
Musée du Temps: Palais
Granvelle, 96 Grand Rue;
03 81 87 81 50
- Train** from Dijon, Lyon, Dole, Belfort and Lons-le-Saunier. **Bus** (www.montsjura-autocars.fr) from Pontarlier, Vesoul, Montbéliard, Gray and Omans
- Visitor information** Parc Micaud, Pl de la Première Armée Française, 25000; 03 81 80 92 55; www.besancon-tourisme.com
- Open** Citadelle: Mar–end Oct: daily (Jul & Aug: till 7pm); timings vary rest of the year. Horloge Astronomique: Apr–Sep: Wed–Mon; winter: Thu–Mon; last entry 10 mins before closing (9:50–11:50am, 2:50–5:50pm); closed Jan. Musée du Temps: Tue–Sun
- Eat and drink** **Snacks** Traiteur Courbet (71 Rue de Dole, 25000; 03 81 52 02 16; www.courbet-traiteur.com) offers two categories of gourmet food platters to take away. **Real meal** Brasserie du Commerce (31 Rue des Granges, 25000; 03 81 81 33 11; www.brasserie-du-commerce.com) serves brasserie classics and also has a kids' menu.
- Festival** Festival International de Musique de Besançon, Besançon's biggest cultural event (Sep)



Bartholdi's massive lion sculpture below the Citadelle de Belfort

16 Belfort

Underground tunnels and a giant lion

The history of Belfort has been shaped by its position between the valleys of the Rhine and the Rhône, a natural route for invading armies. Louis XIV ordered Vauban to build the impregnable **Citadelle de Belfort**, which withstood many sieges, including the big one in 1870, when 40,000 Germans besieged Belfort for months. Commemorating this, is a colossal red sandstone lion, by the famous sculptor Frédéric Bartholdi, who later built New York's Statue of Liberty. A visit to the citadel is essential to experience what it must have been like for the defenders living in the underground world of the **Grand Souterrain** – a maze of huge tunnels, as Prussian shells rained down. Follow it up with a view from the **Terrasse du Lion**, a walk round the moats and walls of the fortress, and then enter the colourful old town through the Porte de Brisach to browse through the restaurants, shops and cafés.

Take a bus from Belfort to the town of Ronchamp, located 18 km (11 miles) to the west, which boasts







Cannons outside the Citadelle de Belfort, the history museum

the white and curvy **Chapelle Notre-Dame-du-Haut**, designed by the architect Le Corbusier in 1955. A peaceful spot, it looks more like a modern sculpture than a building.

Letting off steam

Get back to nature by following the excellent nature trail around the **Étang des Forges** lake, 2 km (1 mile) northeast of Belfort.

The Lowdown

-  **Map reference** 10 F1
- Address** 90000 (Territoire de Belfort). Citadelle de Belfort: Le Château, 90000. Grand Souterrain & Terrasse du Lion: inside Citadelle de Belfort. Chapelle Notre-Dame-du-Haut: 13 Rue Chapelle, 70250 Ronchamp; www.chapellede-ronchamp.fr
-  **Train** from Lyon, Mulhouse, Strasbourg, Montbéliard, Nancy, Besançon and Épinal. **Bus** (www.optymo.fr) from Montbéliard, Mulhouse and Strasbourg
- i** **Visitor information** 2 Rue Clemenceau, 90000; 03 84 55 90 90; www.belfort-tourisme.com
-  **Open** Citadelle de Belfort: daily. Grand Souterrain: Jul & Aug: daily, timings vary rest of year. Terrasse du Lion: Jun–Sep: 9am–7pm; timings vary rest of year
-  **Eat and drink** **Picnic** Marché Fréry (Rue Fréry, 90000), a covered market, stocks local produce for a perfect picnic. **Real meal** Le Pot au Feu (27 bis Grand Rue, 90000; 03 84 28 57 84; closed three weeks in Aug; Sat, Sun & Mon lunch) is a cosy stone-vaulted restaurant in the old town that offers refined regional cooking, including a hearty **pot au feu** stew made with Montbéliard sausage.

Picnic under €20; Snacks €20–45; Real meal €45–90; Family treat over €90 (based on a family of four)

KIDS' CORNER

The wonder clock

Besançon's Horloge Astronomique was built around 1860. It has 30,000 moving parts and is accurate to one second each day. The clock has 57 dials telling the time in 16 countries, the tides in 8 ports, time of sunrise and sunset and the movement of the planets. It also tells the time in Besançon!



A horsey tale

Up to 250 horses lived in the Grand Souterrain tunnels of the Citadelle de Belfort. They were kept beneath the soldiers' quarters to help keep the men warm!

INVALUABLE SALT

In the 18th century, salt was of great value: it was essential for preserving food and in tanning leather, glassmaking and medicine. To raise money for the crown, a tax called the *gabelle* forced everyone aged 8 plus to buy a certain amount of salt every year at a price set by the government.



The artist in you

Look carefully at the Belfort Lion and you will see that he is built from blocks of sandstone, rather than carved from a single piece. The lion is 22 m (72 ft) long and 11 m (36 ft) tall and took four years to finish. Bartholdi had travelled down the Nile in Egypt and you can see how he was inspired by the Sphinx when he designed the Lion.

Draw your own version of the Belfort Lion, or the strongest fortress ever, or of the most unusual church in Ronchamp, in the shape of a mushroom.

Where to Stay in Burgundy and Franche-Comté

The lush abundance of the Burgundy countryside provides an ideal setting for much of its most enjoyable accommodation. In towns, many hotels are in magnificent historic buildings, full of period details, while around the villages, gorgeous B&Bs and camp grounds can be found amidst woods and vineyards.

AGENCIES

Gîtes de France

www.gites-de-france.com

The website lists a vast selection of self-catering properties, from simple country cottages to villas with pools and historic châteaux.

Bienvenue à la Ferme

www.bienvenue-a-la-ferme.com

This is a huge network of farms across the country, offering B&B, self-catering and camping options.

Arbois

Map 10 E3

HOTEL

Hôtel des Messageries

2 Rue de Courcelles, 39600;

03 84 66 15 45;

www.hoteldesmessageries.com

This characterful old coaching house has a creeper-clad stone façade and spacious, newly renovated bedrooms, including connecting rooms that are great for families.

€ P

CAMPING

Camping Les Vignes

Ave du Général Leclerc, 39600; 03 84 25 26 19; www.arbois.fr/camping.htm

This pleasant camp site has shaded pitches arranged in terraces at the edge of the vineyards that produce the grapes for the renowned Arbois *vin jaune*. There is a bar, a snack bar and shops. There are walking and biking trails through the vineyards.

€ P

Avallon

Map 9 B2

HOTEL

Le Relais Fleuri

1 La Cerce, 89200 Avallon, 03 86 34 02 85; www.relais-fleuri.com

Just a 5-minute drive from Avallon, this charming traditional hotel sits in vast, fabulous gardens in glorious countryside. Three-and four-bed

family rooms are on offer. Tennis courts and swimming pool on site. Try the beamed restaurant.

€ P *

SELF-CATERING

Domaine Le Grand Bois

Magny-Cours

Map 9 A3

Route de Fertot, 58470 Gimouille;

03 86 21 09 21; www.grand-bois.eu

Near Nevers and the Magny-Cours racing circuit, this expansive complex offers 66 fully equipped cottages spread around a green and leafy area with its own lake and adventure park. The wooden cottages are newly built and eco-friendly. Watersports, tennis, go-karting and bike rental available.

€ P

CAMPING

Camping du Lac

Map 9 C2

58230 St-Agnan; 03 86 78 73 70;

www.campingbourgogne.fr

Located by the lake of St Agnan in the Parc Naturel Régional du Morvan, this is suited for active family holidays spent walking, cycling, kayaking and windsurfing. Besides tents and caravans, the 18th-century château, restored by the British owners, offers simple rooms with tiled floors and marble fireplaces.

€ P

Beaune

Map 9 C3

HOTEL

Hotel des Remparts

48 Rue Thiers, 21200; 03 80 24 94 94;

www.hotel-remparts-beaune.com

Just a short stroll from the Hôtel-Dieu and the city centre, this is a stylish 17th-century mansion. Rooms retain original features – terracotta-tiled or parquet floors, marble fireplaces and stone walls – and look out over the flowery courtyard or the rampart walkway. Babysitting service can be provided.

€ P *



A delicious breakfast spread at Nuits d'Étape, Beaune

BED & BREAKFAST

Nuits d'Étape

21 Rue Paul Cabet, 21700 Nuits-St-

Georges; 03 80 61 18 26; www.nuits-detape.com

In the centre of a famous wine-producing village, this is a lovely self-contained two-bedroom *gîte*. Cafés, shops and restaurants are nearby. Its location midway between Dijon and Beaune makes it a great base for exploring the Côte d'Or.

€ P

Belfort

Map 10 F1

HOTEL

Hôtel Vauban

4 Rue du Magasin, 90000 Belfort; 03

84 21 41 67; www.hotel-vauban.com

Just across the Savoureuse river from Belfort's old town and citadel, this peaceful small hotel has a lovely riverside garden and colourful, well-maintained rooms. The hands-on owner lends the place the feel of a friendly guesthouse.

€ P

CAMPING

Camping L'Étang des

Forges

Rue du Général Béthouart, 90000;

03 84 22 54 92; www.camping-belfort.com

Located on the outskirts of town and by the side of a lake, this camp

site offers pitches, chalets and mobile homes, as well as bungalows to rent. Bar, snack bar and grocery on site. Activities for kids include basketball, canoeing, hiking and biking trails. Visitors need to bring their own gear.

P €

Besançon

Map 10 E2

HOTEL

Hôtel du Nord

8 Rue Moncey, 25000; 03 81 81 34 56;

www.hotel-du-nord-besancon.com

Comfortable, well-kept and great-value family rooms, right in the heart of the historic quarter, make this a perfect base for exploring Besançon.

P €

Cluny

Map 9 C4

HOTEL

Hôtel de Bourgogne

Pl de l'Abbaye, 71250; 03 85 59

00 58; www.hotel-cluny.com

Formerly a 19th-century mansion where poet Alphonse de Lamartine stayed, this is now a classy hotel. It has a lounge adorned with antiques, a tranquil patio and an excellent restaurant. The three apartments are perfect for families.

P * €€

BED & BREAKFAST Ferme Auberge des Collines

Le Bourg, 71800 Amanzé; 03 85 70

66 34; www.fermeaubergedescollines.com

Set in rolling Brionnais countryside just 34 km (21 miles) from Cluny, this is a real working farm where several generations of the Paperin family have bred Charolais cattle. The simple rustic bedrooms sleep up to four. The grand farm buildings now consist of a *ferme-auberge* restaurant serving the farm's produce.

P €

La Maison des Gardes

18 Ave Charles de Gaulle, 71250;

03 85 59 19 46; www.lamaisondesgardes.com

This ancient house in the medieval heart of Cluny offers a fully equipped family-sized *gîte* and charming B&B rooms. It has been in the family of Hélène (who speaks English) since 1703. It has exposed beams, stone walls and expansive leafy grounds.

P €€

CAMPING

Camping Saint-Vital

30 Rue des Griottots, 71250;

03 85 59 08 34; camping-cluny.

blogspot.com

Shaded by trees, this site has a free swimming pool. Cluny is a short stroll away and the *Voie Verte* (Green Lane) trail passes right by the camp site.

P €

Dijon

Map 9 D2

HOTELS

Hotel le Sauvage

61 Rue Monge, 21000; 03 80 41

31 21; www.hotellesauvage.com

A 10-minute walk from the Palais des Ducs, this 15th-century coaching house is a peaceful bolthole with a delightful vine-shaded courtyard. Rooms are colourful with many period features.

P €

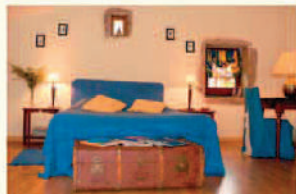
Hotel Wilson

Pl Wilson, 21000; 03 80 66 82 50;

www.wilson-hotel.com

A short stroll from the old centre, this smart 17th-century post house has plenty of character. Bright rooms are arranged around a central courtyard.

P * €€



An aesthetically furnished room in La Maison des Gardes, Cluny

BED & BREAKFAST

Chambres d'Hôtes des Marcs d'Or

9 Rue des Marcs d'Or, 21000; 03 80

43 30 44; chambre-hote-dijon.com

A short walk from the heart of Dijon, the old stables of this 19th-century winemaker's house have been converted into stylish guest rooms, with tasteful colour schemes, wooden floors and antiques.

P €€

CAMPING

Camping du Lac Kir

3 Blvd Chanoine-Kir, 21000; 03 80 43

54 72; www.camping-du-lac-dijon.com

This lovely camp site boasts a great location by Kir lake, the Ouche river



Flowers adorning the balconies of Hotel Wilson, Dijon

and the Burgundy Canal. Campers need to bring their own gear or book one of the eight self-catering cabins with their private lawned area and car parking. On offer are canoes, pedalos, swimming in the lake and great walking and biking trails.

P €

Camping La Grappe d'Or

Map 9 C3

2 Route de Volnay, 21190 Meursault;

03 80 21 22 48; www.camping-meursault.com

Set amidst verdant Burgundy vineyards, this friendly family-run camp site is 42 km (26 miles) from Dijon. Mobile homes are available and there is also a *gîte* sleeping up to seven, just outside the camp site.

P €

Flavigny-sur- Ozerain

Map 9 C2

HOTEL

Gîtes de la Licorne Bleue

Rue de la Poterie, 21150; 03 80 96

20 59; www.licorne-bleue.net

Two options here in the heart of the time-warp village of Flavigny where the film *Chocolat* was shot: the "Maison du Vigneron", an old wine producer's house converted in a tasteful contemporary rustic-chic style with exposed oak beams, and the Jean Dampart apartment above the Licorne Bleue art gallery. Perfect peace, and rolling Burgundian landscapes all around.

P €

Price Guide

The following price ranges are based on one night's accommodation in high season for a family of four, inclusive of service charges and any additional taxes.

€ Under €100 €€ €100–200 €€€ over €200

Haut-Jura

Map 10 E4

HOTEL

Hotel du Commerce

01410 Chézery-Forens; 04 50 56 90 67; www.hotelducommerce-blanc.fr

An old-school hotel in the Valserine valley south of St-Claude that has been run by five generations of the Blanc family, it offers good-value accommodation, with eight charming, traditional bedrooms. The outdoor terrace looks over the Valserine river. There is a lovely beamed restaurant with an open fireplace.

P €€

SELF-CATERING

Les Eterlous

Haut-Crêt, 39200 St-Claude; 03 84 45 08 63; www.grand-gite-haut-jura.fr

A family-run auberge 3 km (2 miles) from Lamoura, this property sits at an altitude of over 1,000 m (3,281 ft) on the old stagecoach route from Paris to Geneva. Rooms are simple and spotless. Restaurant on site. A great base for hiking and biking in the Parc Régional Naturel du Haut-Jura.

P €

Lac des Settons

Map 9 B2

CAMPING

Camping La Plage des Settons

Rive Gauche, 58230 Les Settons; 03 86 84 51 99; www.settons-tourisme.com

This camp ground offers leafy, shaded pitches and wooden cabins for hire on the shores of the Lac des Settons in the Parc Naturel Régional du Morvan. Good site for watersports and exploring the great outdoors.

P €

Les Hautes-Combes

Map 10 E4

BED & BREAKFAST

La Pourvoirie

Sous-La-Joux, 39310 Les Moussières; 03 84 41 64 91; www.gite-la-pourvoirie.com

This farm up on a wild mountain plateau in the Parc Régional Naturel du Haut-Jura has log-cabin rooms, with all modern facilities. Donkeys, reindeer and dog-sledding on offer for kids. The independent "Kota" is a superb octagonal-shaped Nordic pine cabin suited for a family. Rates are half-board as it is a remote spot.

P €€€

Les Rousses

Map 10 E4

HOTEL

Hôtel Le Lodge

309 Rue Pasteur, 39220; 03 84 60 50 64; www.hotellelodge.com

Built of stone and wood, this 150-year-old mountain-style hotel sits at the heart of Les Rousses, near all the restaurants and slopes. Comfortable rustic-chic bedrooms. Geneva is 40 minutes away by bus or car, making this a great base to explore the Jura.

P €€

BED & BREAKFAST

Gîte d'Étape Le Grand Tétrás

705 Route des Rousses d'Amont, 39220; 03 84 60 51 13; www.grand-tetras.com

This friendly, family-run gîte lies a few minutes outside the town centre. It has simple rustic pine-clad rooms and a self-contained apartment sleeping four to six. Half-board and full-board options available.

P €

Louhans

Map 9 D3

BED & BREAKFAST

La Ferme des Fourneaux

Les Chizes, 71500 St-Usuge; 03 85 72 18 12; www.fermedesfourneaux.com

This idyllic red brick and timber Bressane farmhouse, 6 km (4 miles) west of Louhans, dates from 1785. Rooms are spacious and done up in a rustic style, with cheerful fabrics and summery colour schemes. Breakfast is a treat for lovers of local cheeses.

P €€

Mâcon

Map 9 D4

HOTEL

Hotel d'Europe et d'Angleterre

92-109 Quai Jean-Jaurès, 71000; 03 85 38 27 94; www.hotel-europe-angleterre-macon.com

An 18th-century former convent, this splendid old dame of the Saône river quays has been renovated to high standards. It has a grand staircase and public rooms, as well as bedrooms in all shapes and sizes.

P €€

Tournus

Map 9 D4

CAMPING

Domaine de l'Épervière

9 Domaine du Château de l'Épervière, 71240 Gigny-sur-Saône; 03 85 94 16 90; www.domaine-eperviere.com

Set in the wooded grounds of a 16th-18th-century château, with its own lake, the camp site offers mobile homes, cabins and three spacious apartments to rent in a side wing of the château. It has a superb restaurant and activities for kids.

P €

Vézelay

Map 9 B2

HOTEL

Hotel Poste et Lion d'Or

Pl du Champ-de-Foire, 89450; 03 86 33 21 23; www.hoteldelaposte-etduliondor.com

This grand old coaching house has connecting rooms, triples and family suites, all catering for family groups. The rooms are big, with views of either the Basilique Ste-Madeleine or the lush valley. Great restaurant with a panoramic terrace.

P €€



The impressive façade of the Hotel Poste et Lion d'Or, Vézelay

The Rhône Valley and French Alps

Two natural features dominate the area: mountains and water. From the snowy heights of Mont Blanc to the watery depths of Lac d'Annecy, there are plenty of perfect spots for outdoor activities in winter and summer. Its cultural gems, Lyon and Briançon, are the proud caretakers of UNESCO World Heritage Sites. It also boasts some of France's finest regional produce.

Below Hikers trekking uphill, the Alps towering majestically in the background, Mont Blanc



① Lyon

Film, food and football

France's second city after Paris, Lyon was founded by the Romans; the remains of their settlement on Fourvière hill include an amphitheatre. The city was built around the Rhône and Saône rivers, which helped make it a major centre for business and trading, notably silk-making. Today, Lyon is best known for its famous chefs, excellent restaurants and a successful football team. The world's first film was made here in 1895 by the Lumière brothers.



The "Flower Tree" at the entrance to Lyon

Key Sights



① **Place Bellecour** This vast square with an equestrian statue of Louis XIV in its centre is on the Presqu'île, which was an island in Roman times.

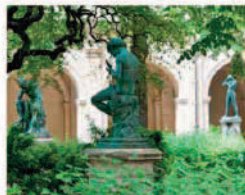


② **Basilique Notre-Dame de Fourvière** This 19th-century basilica stands at Fourvière hill, the site where Romans settled in 43 BC. Nearby is the amphitheatre and a museum of Gallo-Roman art and objects.



③ **Musée Gadagne** This fascinating museum housed in a 16th-century mansion traces the history of Lyon and also houses puppets from around the world.

⑦ **Musée Lumière** This museum occupies the Lumière brothers' former home, where visitors can watch their films and see the camera they invented.



④ **Musée des Beaux Arts** This museum, housed in a 17th-century abbey, takes visitors on a tour of fine arts from antiquity to modern times. The ancient Egyptian exhibits are always popular with families.

⑤ **Opéra Nouvel** Named after French architect Jean Nouvel, the grand opera house was redesigned by him in the late 1980s.

⑥ **Maison des Canuts** The 19th-century former silkworker's house in the hilly Croix-Rouge district is now a museum. Visitors can learn about the industry and see how silk was woven on antique looms.

Letting off steam

Take Métro Line A to Masséna, then bus C1 to Lyon's **Parc de la Tête d'Or** (*Blvd Stalingrad, 69000; www.loisirs-parcdeletetedor.com*), an urban park with a zoo, pony rides and pedalos, or walk along the left bank of the Rhône, a *Voie Verte* (Green Lane) for walking and cycling.

Eat and drink

Picnic: under €20; Snacks: €20–45; Real meal: €45–90; Family treat: over €90 (based on a family of four)

PICNIC Les Halles Paul Bocuse (102 Cours Lafayette, 69003; 04 78 62 39 33; closed Sun pm & Mon), Lyon's magnificent market is named after a

famous chef and sells top-quality regional food. Enjoy a picnic with a view on Place Abbé-Larue.



Giraffes and wild cattle in the zoo in Parc de la Tête d'Or

SNACKS La Crêperie du Major (12 Rue du Major Martin, 69001; 04 78 39 98 33; closed Sun, Mon & Tue lunch) is colourfully decorated and offers a good choice of savoury and delicious pancakes.

REAL MEAL Le Bouchon de l'Opéra (11 Rue des Capucins, 69001; 04 78 28 49 47; *bouchonde lopera.com; dinner only; closed Sun*) is a family-friendly restaurant specializing in traditional regional dishes such as *quenelles de brochet* (pike dumplings) and *andouillette au St Marcellin* (tripe sausage with cheese).

FAMILY TREAT L'Est (*Gare des Brotteaux, 14 Pl Jules Ferry, 69006; 04 37 24 25 26;*

The Lowdown

Map reference 9 D5
Address 69000 (Rhône).
 Basilique Notre-Dame de
 Fourvière: 8 Pl de Fourvière,
 69005; 04 78 25 13 01. Musée
 Gadagne: 1 Pl du Petit Collège,
 69005; www.gadagne.musees.lyon.fr. Musée des Beaux Arts:
 20 Pl des Terreaux, 69001; www.mba-lyon.fr. Opéra Nouvel: Pl de
 la Comédie, 69000; www.opera-lyon.com. Maison des Canuts:
 10–12 Rue d'Ivry, 69004; www.maisondescanuts.com. Musée
 Lumière: Pl Ambroise Courtois,
 69008; www.institut-lumiere.org

Train TGV from Paris

Visitor information Pl Bellecour,
 69002; 04 72 77 69 69; www.lyon-france.com

Open Musée Gadagne: 11am–
 6:30pm Wed–Sun. Musée des
 Beaux Arts: closed Tue. Opéra
 Nouvel: box office noon–7pm
 Tue–Sat, timings vary Sun & Mon.
 Maison des Canuts: 10am–
 6:30pm Mon–Sat, guided tours
 11am & 3:30pm, closed public
 hols. Musée Lumière: 10am–
 6:30pm Tue–Sun

Prices Musée Gadagne: €14;
 under 26s free. Musée des
 Beaux Arts: €14; under 18s free.
 Maison des Canuts: €22; under
 11s free; guided tours €20–30.
 Musée Lumière: €21

www.norsudbrasseries.com) is a
 lovely brasserie set in the old 19th-
 century Brotteaux train station. The
 extensive menu includes classic meat
 and fish dishes and a children's menu.



Tempting desserts on sale at Les Halles
 Paul Bocuse

Shopping

Drop in to **Village des Créateurs**
 (Passage Thiaffait, 19 Rue René
 Leynaud, 69001; 04 78 27 37 21;
www.villagedescreateurs.com;
 closed Sun & Mon) for clothes and
 accessories for all the family by local
 upcoming designers.

Skipping the queue The Lyon
 City Card (€65–125) is available
 for 1–3 days and includes trips
 on public transport, entry
 to museums, guided tours
 and activities.

Guided tours With the tourist
 office and local greeters (www.lyoncitygreeter.com) in English

Age range All ages

Activities The left bank of the
 Rhone river has been turned
 into a Voie Verte (Green Lane)
 for cycling and walking. Go for
 puppet shows at the Théâtre
 de la Maison de Guignol
 (www.lamaisondeguignol.fr).

Allow 2 days

Toilets By the flower stalls in
 Place Bellecour and in
 the car park in the Place
 de la République

Festivals Les Nuits de
 Fourvière, a theatre, music and
 dance festival held in the
 amphitheatre (Jun–Jul). La Fête
 des Lumières, the festival of
 lights (Dec)

Good family value?

Lyon has indoor and outdoor
 activities to suit all ages, with
 superb restaurants and a sensory
 market to get fussy eaters
 interested in food.

Find out more

DIGITAL Go to www.soierie-vivante.asso.fr to know more about Lyon's
 silk industry. Learn about puppetry
 at www.gadagne.musees.lyon.fr, the
 website of Lyon's puppet museum.

Next step...

A PALACE AND A WINE VILLAGE

Hop on to a train to the town of
 St-Vallier-sur-Rhône, then a bus to
 Hauterives to visit the **Palais Idéal**
 (www.facteurcheval.com). It is an
 amazing 19th-century folly built in a
 range of exotic styles by a postman,
 Ferdinand Cheval. The "palace"
 took 33 years to build as Cheval
 worked on the project alone. The
 building is now regarded as a superb
 example of Naïve art. Take a train to
 Romanèche-Thorins, 49 km (24 miles)
 northwest of Lyon, to see how wine
 is made and to explore Beaujolais
 vineyards in **Le Hameau du Vin**
 (www.hameaudeauvin.com).

KIDS' CORNER

Look out for....

1 A statue of a horse
 in the middle of Place
 Bellecour. Do you
 know which French
 king is riding it?

2 Lion sculptures.
 There are lots of them,
 including outside the
 Part-Dieu train station.

3 A metal structure on the top
 of Fourvière hill. What does its
 shape remind you of?

Answers at the bottom of the page.



Puppet power

Guignol, a puppet, was
 invented by a Lyonnais
 dentist in the 1790s to
 attract patients and
 distract them from the
 pain. Dentists did not
 need to have training or
 be qualified in those days.



THE MIND'S EYE

Lyon is known for its *trompe l'oeil* artworks: wall murals that
 create an optical illusion. A good
 example is the "Lyonnais" mural
 on the Quai Saint Vincent, which
 depicts 31 of Lyon's
 most famous
 personalities.



The world's first film

The world's first film was made
 in Lyon by the Lumière brothers
 in 1895. It shows workers leaving
 the family's factory. You can see
 the factory and the film at their
 former home that looks a bit like
 the house of the Addams Family.
 It is now the Institut Lumière.

Answers: 1 Louis XIV 2 There are
 currently 13. 3 It looks a bit like the
 Eiffel Tower in Paris.



A sculpture at the entrance of the Parc de l'Europe, St-Étienne

② St-Étienne

From arms to art

Located 60 km (37 miles) southwest of Lyon, the town of St-Étienne was at the forefront of France's Industrial Revolution in the 19th century. It all started in the 16th century when the city became the country's centre for arms manufacturing; the abundant coal in the area was heated to create coke, which was used to smelt iron to make the arms. It was the need to transport coal that led to France's first military line being built here in 1823. The city was also well known for producing ribbons and bicycles. To find out more about the town's industrial heritage, head to the **Musée d'Art et d'Industrie** and visit the **Musée de la Mine** to explore the world of miners. The **Musée d'Art Moderne** houses the second-largest collection of contemporary art in France.

Letting off steam

Take bus 4 or 6 and head to the **Parc de l'Europe** (Rue de Coventry, 42100) in St-Étienne. The park has a merry-go-round, a little train and various play areas set amongst lots of greenery. It is also a popular place for picnics on fine days.

③ Vienne

Roman around the Rhône

Like Lyon, Vienne has well-preserved Roman remains. The town was founded by the Gauls next to the Rhône, but it did not really become a major settlement until Julius Caesar came here in 47 BC. The most impressive remnants are Le Temple d'Auguste et de Livie and La Pyramide du Cirque Romain de Vienne. The circus was used for chariot races and other sporting events and La Pyramide was a copy of the Egyptian pyramids erected in the major circuses of the Roman Empire. The town's Roman theatre, the **Théâtre Antique**, dates back to the time of ancient Gaul and is still



An exhibition of bicycles at the Musée d'Art et d'Industrie, St-Étienne

The Lowdown

- 📍 **Map reference** 9 D6
- 📍 **Address** 38200 (Vienne).
Théâtre Antique: Rue du Cirque, 04 74 85 39 23. Musée Gallo Romain: Route départementale 502, 69560 St-Roman-en-Gal; 04 74 53 74 01; www.musees-gallo-romains.com
- 🚆 **Train** from Lyon. **Bus** 101 from Lyon
- 📍 **Visitor information** Cours Brillier, 38200; 04 74 53 80 30; www.vienne-tourisme.com
- 🕒 **Open** Musée Gallo Romain: Tue–Sun
- 🍷 **Eat and drink Snacks** Pick up supplies from one of the daily morning markets. Picnic in the nearby Jardin du 8 mai 1945. **Real meal** Le Dos de la Cuillère (18 Pl St-Maurice, 38200; 04 74 85 43 18; www.ledos-delacuillere.com; closed Sun, Mon & Tue dinner) is a stylish place for spit-roast chicken and meat skewers.
- 🎪 **Festival** Jazz à Vienne (Jun & Jul)

used for concerts. Across the river from Vienne is St-Roman-en-Gal, an impressive archaeological site, which houses the **Musée Gallo Romain**. Showcasing the remains of an ancient Roman town, the site provides a snapshot of daily life and includes mosaics, outlines of houses and a granite road.

Letting off steam

Vienne's public garden, located behind the tourist office, has a play area for young children. Take bus 51 from Vienne 14 km (9 miles) east to **Cimes Aventures** (www.cimes-aventures.com), an adventure park



Fun on a treetop at Cimes Aventures in Septème, Vienne

The Lowdown

- 📍 **Map reference** 9 C6
- 📍 **Address** 42000 (St-Étienne).
Musée d'Art et d'Industrie: 2 Pl Louis Comte; 04 77 49 73 06.
Musée de la Mine: 3 Blvd Maréchal Franchet d'Esperey; 04 77 43 83 23; www.musee-mine.saint-etienne.fr.
Musée d'Art Moderne: Rue Fernand Léger, 42270 St-Priest-en-Jarez; 04 77 79 52 52; www.mam-st-etienne.fr
- 🚆 **Train** from Lyon
- 📍 **Visitor information:** 16 Ave de la Libération, 42000; 04 77 49 39 00; www.tourisme-st-etienne.com
- 🕒 **Open** Musée d'Art et d'Industrie: Wed–Mon. Musée de la Mine & Musée d'Art Moderne: Wed–Mon
- 🍷 **Eat and drink Snacks** Maison Farinier (168 Cours Fauriel, 42000; 04 77 46 79 35; open daily) is known for their organic bread, quiches, cakes and tarts. **Real meal** Restaurant du Musée (Musée d'Art Moderne, Quartier 504, 42270 St-Priest-en-Jarez; 04 77 79 24 52; www.restaurantmusee.fr; closed Tue & Sun dinner) specializes in French cuisine by one of the city's best chefs in diner-style surroundings.
- 🎪 **Festival** Zestivales, a collective name for over 200 festivals and events in the areas ranging from music to street art (Jul & Aug)



Humboldt penguins sunbathing in their enclosure at the Parc des Oiseaux, Les Dombes

in the village of Septème. The park offers tree-top activities to families, for kids aged 3 plus. The rope bridges, nets and death slides will keep everyone entertained for half a day. Or hire mountain bikes and enjoy exploring the forest.

4 Les Dombes

Something fishy, something "fowl"

The Dombes plateau extends north of Lyon towards Bourg-en-Bresse, a town well known for the quality of its chickens, the Poulets de Bresse (see p211). These chickens can be found on the menus of many top restaurants. In fact, Les Dombes also produces some of the best game bird meat in the world and is a leading centre for hunting. The **Parc des Oiseaux** in Villars-les-Dombes is a large ornithological park, which houses more than 400 species (2,000 birds) from around

the world; the baby bird nursery and the "birds in flight" show are popular with kids.

The plateau has more than 1,000 lakes and is France's main region for the breeding of freshwater fish and frogs. It is also the perfect place to go horse-riding, as there are many riding schools; the area is France's second centre for horse breeding. The well-preserved medieval village of Pérouges is well worth a visit, especially in June, when it hosts La Fête Médiévale.

Take cover

Take bus 181 from Villars to Belleville-sur-Saône, then bus 113 to the **Château de Fléchères** (www.chateauflecheres.com) in the village of Fareins. Swoon over the countess' pink dream of a bedroom, find Hercules and study interesting perspectives among the famous 17th-century frescoes. Play hide and seek in the park and maze.

The Lowdown

Map reference 9 D5

Address 01330 (Villars-les-Dombes). Parc des Oiseaux: RD 1083, Villars-les-Dombes; 04 74 98 05 54; www.parcdesoiseaux.com

Train from Lyon to Meximieux and Villars-les-Dombes. **Bus** 132 from Lyon to Pérouges or bus 102 from Lyon to Villars-les-Dombes

Visitor information 3 Pl de l'Hotel de Ville, 01330; 04 74 98 06 29; www.villars-les-dombes.com; www.ain-tourisme.com; www.perouges.org

Open Parc des Oiseaux: Mar–Nov: daily

Eat and drink *Real meal* Le Petit Carpe (RD 1083, 01330 Villars-les-Dombes, 04 74 98 05 54; www.parcdesoiseaux.com) serves traditional dishes in a shady setting, which overlooks the largest lake of the Parc des Oiseaux. *Real meal* La Grenouille (135 Rue du Commerce, 01330 Villars-les-Dombes; 04 74 98 05 10; closed Mon) specializes in local produce, including frogs' legs, carp and game. There is a play area for kids as well.

Festival Fête des Dombes celebrates local life through activities and displays (Oct)

KIDS' CORNER

Discover...

1 Vienne's ancient Roman theatre is now used for music concerts. What shape is it?

2 The Parc des Oiseaux has about 400 species of birds from around the world. How can you spot the Asian hornbill?

3 The Musée de la Mine in St-Étienne gives you a glimpse into the life of a miner. What mode of transport was used to take the miners underground?



Answers at the bottom of the page.

MAKING A LIVING FROM EMBROIDERY

St-Étienne was known for the production of *passementerie* (trimmings) such as braid, fringing, embroidery or beading used on material for clothing or furnishings. At the beginning of the 20th century, over 100 families made their living from this craft.



Home sweet home

Floors in the houses of wealthier Romans were mosaics – images made with small coloured tiles. Gods and athletes were popular subject choices.

Things to do...

- 1 Read the Asterix comic books to learn more about the Gauls and the Romans – in a fun way.
- 2 At the archaeological site in St-Roman-en-Gal, try to find similarities between life in Roman times and life today.
- 3 Eat some frogs' legs and try to describe their taste.
- 4 Draw your own versions of the paintings in the Musée



d'Art Moderne in St-Étienne.

Answers: 1 A semi-circle. 2 By a horn. 3 They were transported by train.

5 Chamonix

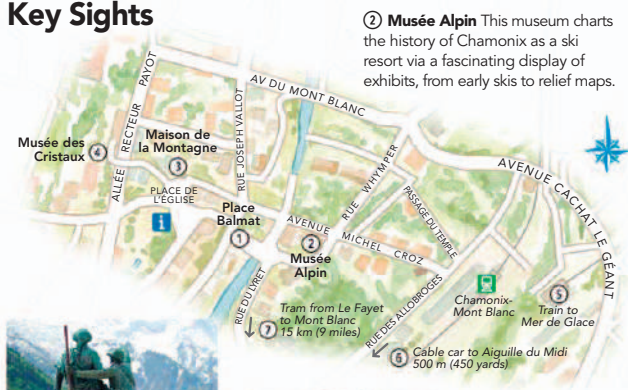
Home of the first Winter Olympics

The most famous ski resort in the French Alps and with a strong claim to be the home of winter sports, Chamonix sits in a valley at the foot of Mont Blanc, the highest peak in Western Europe at 4,808 m (15,774 ft). The town first became known internationally when two Englishmen, Richard Pococke and William Windham, came here to see the glaciers in 1741. Chamonix hosted the first Winter Olympics in 1924, and now combines its spectacular location with the facilities of a mountain resort.



Town centre with Mont Blanc in the backdrop

Key Sights



1 Place Balmat The bronze sculpture of Horace Saussure, the renowned Swiss climber, the founder of "alpinism", and Jacques Balmat, the first man to climb Mont Blanc, is the main attraction of this square.



3 Maison de la Montagne This is the headquarters of around 200 highly qualified mountain guides whose services include taking small groups on an ascent of Mont Blanc.

2 Musée Alpin This museum charts the history of Chamonix as a ski resort via a fascinating display of exhibits, from early skis to relief maps.

4 Musée des Cristaux Colourful crystals found in the Mont Blanc area, as well as in other parts of the world, are on display in this museum.



5 Mer de Glace Admire the "Sea of Ice", France's longest glacier at 14 km (9 miles), aboard the Train du Montanvers.

6 Aiguille du Midi The ascent to the top of this peak, the "Needle of Midday", is made via the world's highest vertical ascent cable car.

7 Mont Blanc Western Europe's highest mountain was first conquered by two local men, Jacques Balmat and Dr Michel Paccard, in 1786.

0 metres 200
0 yards 200

The Lowdown

- Map reference** 10 F5
Address 74400 (Haute-Savoie). Musée des Cristaux: Esplanade St-Michel, 615 Allée du Recteur Payot; 04 50 55 53 93. Maison de la Montagne: by the tourist office; www.ohm-chamonix.com. Musée Alpin: Ave Michel Croz; 04 50 53 25 93
- Visitor information** 85 Pl du Triangle de l'Amitié, 74400; 04 50 53 00 24; www.chamonix.com
- Train** from St-Gervais-les-Bains to and from Chamonix. It is best to use a car to explore this area.
- Open** Musée des Cristaux: Jul-Aug: 10am–1pm, 2–7pm; Musée

Alpin: mid-Dec–mid-May: 2–7pm Wed–Mon; school hols 10am–noon & 2–7pm. Maison de la Montagne: 9am–noon & 3–6pm Mon–Sat

- Price** Musée des Cristaux & Musée Alpin: €11; under 18s free
- Skipping the queue** In summer, a free *carte d'hôte* (guest card) is available from hotels and other accommodation providers, allowing free local bus travel and discounts on attractions and activities. In winter, a family ski pass gives a 50 per cent reduction (to ski lifts)

to the first child and the other kids go free.

Guided tours Tours of the town arranged by the tourist office and of the mountains by specialist guides (in English). Kids can go for mountain walks, but Mont Blanc climbs are suited for those aged 16 plus

Age range 3 plus. High-altitude walks are not suitable for younger children.

Activities Hop on to the Train du Montanvers (35 Pl de la Mer de Glace, 74400; www.compagniedumontblanc.fr;

Letting off steam

Children aged 8 plus can try tandem paragliding from one of the lower peaks. However, all kids will love spending time with the huskies of **Husky Dalen** (74 Chemin des Falette, 74400; 06 84 99 34 67; www.huskydalen.com) – try sledging in winter or hiking with the dogs in summer. **The Centre Sportif Richard Bozon** (214 Ave de la Plage, 74400; 04 50 53 23 70; *timings vary*) is a sports centre with an indoor and outdoor ice rink, a swimming pool and a climbing wall.



The sign for Boulangerie Pâtisserie St-Hubert, Place de l'Église

Eat and drink

Picnic: under €20; Snacks: €20–45; Real meal: €45–90; Family treat: over €90 (based on a family of four)

PICNIC Boulangerie Pâtisserie St-Hubert (31 Pl de l'Église, 74400; 04 50 53 01 46; *open daily*) is an artisan bakery offering sandwiches and cakes. Take a gondola from La Tour up to La Balme for stunning views over Switzerland to enjoy a good picnic.

SNACKS Aux Petits Gourmands (168 Rue du Docteur Paccard, 74400; 04 50 53 01 59; *open daily*) serves superb hot chocolate and cakes in a treasure trove of cocoa-based concoctions.

€50–91 family ticket), which offers scenic views. In winter, visit the ice grotto to see ice sculptures and a display of mountain animals.



Allow 2 days or longer



Toilets At the tourist office and on the Rue du Lyret



Festival Fête des Guides features parades, dinners, music and a mass (Aug)

Good family value?

Chamonix is an excellent year-round destination for outdoor families as it offers activities to suit all ages, tastes and budgets.

REAL MEAL La Bergerie de Planpraz (232 Ave Michel Croz, 74400; 04 50 53 05 42; *daily lunch in season*) can be reached by the Planpraz gondola, a ski lift. Local cuisine, including *tartiflette* (a dish made of potatoes, cheese, cream and bacon), are served on a terrace with great views over mountain tops. There is a special menu for *petits bergers* (little shepherds).

FAMILY TREAT Le Bistrot Hotel Le Morgane (151 Ave Aiguille du Midi, 74400; 04 50 53 57 64; www.lebistrotchamonix.com; *open daily*) serves Michelin-starred food in stylish yet unstuffy surroundings. Kids can enjoy a main course and dessert at an affordable price.

Shopping

Le Refuge Payot (166 Rue Joseph Vallot, 74400; 04 50 53 18 71; www.refugepayot.com) is the place to go for local gourmet specialities, including cooked meats, sweets, liqueurs and cheese.



Sausages and champagne for sale at Le Refuge Payot at Rue Joseph Vallot

Find out more

FILM The mountain scenes in the James Bond adventure *The World Is Not Enough* (1999) were filmed in the nearby village of Argentière. A documentary *Touching the Void* (2003), based on a book about a man's survival in the Andes, was also shot around Chamonix.

Next stop...

OUTDOOR FUN Head for the **Parc de Loisirs** (351 Chemin du Pied du Grépon, 74400; www.chamonixparc.com), with more than 15 activities such as luge, trampolines and electric motorbikes. Animal lovers should visit the **Parc de Merlet** (www.parcdeemerlet.com) in the village of Les Houches, located 14 km (8 miles) from Chamonix, to see Alpine animals.

KIDS' CORNER

Find out more...

- 1 The Train du Monteverve is a cog-wheel train. How does it work? (Hint: look underneath the train)
- 2 The Mer de Glace is France's longest glacier. Do you know what a glacier is?
- 3 Mont Blanc is flanked by other mountains. What feature of the mountain makes it stand out among the rest?
- 4 How many different colour crystals can you find in the Musée des Cristaux? Make a list of their names and colours.



Answers at the bottom of the page.

WHAT LIES BENEATH

A road tunnel runs underneath the Mont Blanc linking France with Italy. Opened in 1965, the tunnel is 12 km (7 miles) long and took eight years to construct.

Skiing basics

There are three main types of skiing: Alpine, also known as downhill, is the most popular; Nordic, or cross-country, in which skiers use thin skis to move quickly over flat land; and Telemark, or "free heel skiing", where, just like in Nordic skiing, only the toe of the boot is attached to the ski. This allows the skier to kneel when turning, which makes for smooth and wider turns.



Answers: 1 The cog wheels underneath grip a rack between the rails to pull the train uphill. **2** It is a river or sea of ice moving very slowly. **3** It is domed whereas the others are pointed.



The old-fashioned fishing village of Yvoire on the shore of Lac Léman

6 Samoëns

Stonemasons, Alpine plants and summer waterfalls

The pretty mountain village of Samoëns, about 60 km (37 miles) north of Chamonix, is best known for the legacy of its stonemasons. The Giffre valley, in which Samoëns is located, is made up of limestone, and local farmers eventually took to stone cutting to supplement their income. Their skills were renowned throughout France and many were employed by the celebrated 17th-century military engineer Vauban to build fortifications. Not everything here is about stone though. **La Jaÿsinia**, a botanical garden, has more than 5,000 species of mountain plants from around the world.

Samoëns is a great resort for families in both summer and winter. No summer visit would be complete without a trip to the Cirque du Fer à Cheval, a limestone corrie (a horseshoe-shaped rock formation

at the head of a valley caused by glacial erosion) renowned for its waterfalls. Nearby is Sixt-Fer-à-Cheval, a picturesque village, with the largest nature reserve in Haute-Savoie. Samoëns and Sixt-Fer-à-Cheval are part of the Grand Massif ski area: a good place for beginners.

Letting off steam

Take a helicopter ride (*Mont Blanc Hélicoptères*; www.mbh.fr) to enjoy splendid aerial views of the Alps. In winter, hurtle down a slope in a toboggan. The **Base de Loisirs des Lacs aux Dames** (74340 Samoëns; 04 50 34 40 28) offers a host of fun activities such as paragliding, golf, football and fishing.

7 Yvoire

An old-fashioned fishing village

This beautiful 14th-century former fishing port is the perfect place to mess about in water. Yvoire stands on the banks of Lac Léman (Lake

The Lowdown

-  **Map reference** 10 E4
- Address** 74140 (Haute-Savoie). Jardin des Cinq Sens: Rue du Lac; 04 50 72 88 80; www.jardin5sens.net
-  **Train** from Anney and Cluses to Thonon-les-Bains, then bus 152
-  **Visitor information** Pl de la Mairie, 74140; 04 50 72 80 21; www.yvoiretourism.com
-  **Open** Jardin des Cinq Sens: mid-Apr–mid-Oct: daily (times vary)
-  **Eat and drink Snacks** Le Chardon (Rue des Boulangers, 74140; 04 50 72 81 71; open daily) is a little stone house that serves sandwiches, ice creams and cakes. **Real meal** Restaurant des Pêcheurs (Rue Principale, 74140; 04 50 72 80 26; closed Tue), a lively bar-restaurant, is known for its delicious lake-caught perch served with a lemon and butter sauce.
-  **Festival** Fête des Anes presents different species of donkeys along with donkey rides (Oct)








Kids playing in the sand at one of the beaches, Lac d'Anney

Geneva), almost 60 per cent of which is in southern Switzerland. Boat trips across the lake are a must-do. Along with regular cruisers, small solar-powered boats can be hired from Helionaute (www.helionaute.com) for 30-minute guided tours.

Wander around the ancient streets and admire the flower-bedecked houses before taking the Voie Verte (Green Lane) to picturesque Le Domaine de Rovorée for lakeside walks beneath the age-old chestnut trees. The **Jardin des Cinq Sens**, once the kitchen garden of the village's privately owned castle, has been transformed into a medieval garden. Families can play hide and seek among the hedges and follow a trail designed to awaken the five

The Lowdown

-  **Map reference** 10 F5
- Address** 74340 (Haute-Savoie). La Jaÿsinia: 04 50 34 49 86
-  **Train** from Anney and Thonon to Cluses, then bus 94. **Bus** 91 from Thonon to Cluses or bus 82 from Chamonix to Cluses, then bus 94
-  **Visitor information** Pl de L'autogare, 74340; 04 50 34 40 28; www.samoens.com
-  **Open** La Jaÿsinia: year round (Nov–Apr: till 4:30pm), closed in snowy weather
-  **Eat and drink Snacks** Boulangerie Tiffanie (Ave du Giffre, 74340; 04 50 34 42 62) is an artisan bakery

known for great baguettes, biscuits and fruit tarts. Enjoy them on the terrace overlooking the river. **Real meal** Le Monde à l'Envers (Pl du Criou, 74340; 04 50 34 19 36; closed Tue) serves inventive cuisine, using local and seasonal produce, as well as value-for-money lunch and "proper food" for kids.

-  **Festivals** Festi'Nordic, free trial sessions of winter sports, including dog sledding (Feb). Samoëns American Festival, a celebration of the Wild West with country music, horse rides, equestrian displays and a mechanical bull (Jul)



The shore of Lac d'Annecy, popular with swimmers and picnickers

senses. A film and written information about the garden are also available in English.

Letting off steam

Head for Excenevex, a sandy beach about 3 km (2 miles) southeast of Yvoire. The beach is safe for kids and has activities for 6 to 16-year-olds in July and August.

8 Lac d'Annecy

Europe's cleanest lake

Renowned for its beauty as well as its exceptionally clean water, Lac d'Annecy is a perfect summer holiday kind of place, with great watersports opportunities. Its banks are dotted with beaches; the ones at Annecy-le-Vieux and Talloires are the most popular with families who have children. The second largest lake in France, it is 14 km (9 miles) long and 3 km (2 miles) wide and has an average depth of 41 m (134 ft).

A cycle path runs along the left bank, passing through traditional villages. Rent bikes from Rou'l ma

poule (www.annecy-location-velo.com). The main town around the lake is Annecy, which is the capital of the Haute-Savoie *département*. The town's turbulent history saw it being part of the Kingdom of Sardinia, whose Italian influence is still evident in the architecture, especially in Rue Ste-Claire with its arcades. The main sights in town are the **Musée-Château d'Annecy**, a 16th-century castle transformed into a museum, which houses the Observatoire Régional des Lacs Alps and the Musée d'Art Populaire Alpin, and the **Palais de l'Île**, a 12th-century former prison, built on an islet in the centre of the Thiou canal.

Take cover

Take bus 61 to Menthon to visit the **Château de Menthon** (www.chateau-de-menthon.com), a fairy-tale castle, seated high above Lac d'Annecy. It was the birthplace of St Bernard, who lent his name to the brandy-carrying dogs. Costumed guides welcome visitors during weekends from May to September.

The Lowdown

1 **Map reference** 10 E5
Address 74000 (Haute-Savoie). Musée-Château d'Annecy: Pl du Château; 04 50 33 87 30; www.musees.agglo-annecy.fr. Palais de l'Île: 3 Passage de l'Île; 04 50 65 08 14

2 **Train** from Chamonix, Thonon-les-Bains and Cluses

3 **Visitor information** 1 Rue Jean Jaurès, 74000; 04 50 45 00 33; www.lac-annecy.com

4 **Open** Musée-Château d'Annecy & Palais de l'Île: Jun–Sep: daily; Oct–May: Wed–Mon

5 **Eat and drink** **Real meal** Café Brunet (18 Pl Gabriel Fauré, 74940 Annecy-le-Vieux; 04 50 27 65 65; www.closdessens.com; *closed Sun & Mon*) serves traditional French fare in the 14th-century house or on its lovely terrace. **Family treat** Auberge du Père Bise (*Route du Port*, 74290 Talloires; 04 50 60 72 01; www.perebise.com; *opening days and timings vary according to season*) is a luxury hotel and restaurant that offers Michelin-starred food.

6 **Festival** La Fête du Lac, a fireworks extravaganza (Aug)

KIDS' CORNER

Find out more...

- 1 La Jaÿsinia specializes in plants from Alpine environments around the world. Can you identify the six continents?
- 2 What is the name of a traditional French sweet treat that is a candied chestnut?
- 3 The Cirque du Fer à Cheval is famous for its waterfalls in summer. Why do you think there are no waterfalls in winter?



Answers at the bottom of the page.

Something fishy

Both Lac Léman and Lac d'Annecy are renowned for their freshwater fish: perch, carp and roach. They are found on the menus of many lakeside restaurants.

FURRY RESCUERS

Saint Bernard dogs are named after St Bernard of Menthon who was born in the castle overlooking Lac d'Annecy. The dogs were initially guard dogs at the hospital Bernard founded. In the 17th century, they were trained to search for and rescue people trapped in avalanches.



Things to do...

- 1 Cycle along the left bank of Lac d'Annecy.
- 2 See how many plants you can identify in La Jaÿsinia.
- 3 Count the arches in Annecy's Rue Ste-Claire.
- 4 Explore the five senses at the Jardin des Cinq Sens.



Answers: 1 Africa, America, Antarctica, Asia, Australia/Oceania and Europe. 2 Marlon glass. 3 The water is frozen.

9 Briançon

A fortress frontier town

At 1,326 m (4,300 ft) it may be the highest town in the European Union, but Briançon is also the lowest resort in the Serre Chevalier ski area. Located on the Italian border near the Col de Montgenèvre mountain pass, it is a UNESCO World Heritage Site for its 18th-century fortification built by Vauban, the famous military engineer of Louis XIV. The surrounding area is great for skiing, rafting and walking.



The sundial on the Collégiale Notre Dame

Key Sights



① **Collégiale Notre-Dame** The design and building of this early 18th-century parish church was overseen by Vauban. One of the four sundials in the fortified upper town is in front of this church.

② **Centre d'Art Contemporain** This contemporary art gallery is housed in La Maison du Roi, a 17th-century building, which also accommodates the law courts. The art gallery holds temporary art exhibitions.

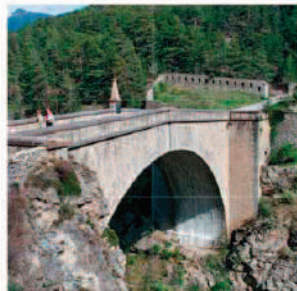


③ **Fort du Château** Briançon's medieval castle, which was fortified between 1835 and 1845, dominates the upper town, also known as Cité Vauban. It offers scenic views across the area.

④ **Place d'Armes** The square has always been a popular meeting place for locals, but in the 18th century it was used as a parade ground for soldiers.

⑤ **Église de Cordeliers** This church, noted for its 15th-century frescoes, is the only medieval building left in Briançon as all the others were destroyed by fire.

⑥ **Parc de la Schappe** This pleasant park in Ste-Catherine, the lower town, was created on the site of a 19th-century silk factory.



⑦ **Pont d'Asfeld** Completed in four months in 1731, this stone bridge crosses the Durance river and links the upper town with Fort des Têtes, which is one and a half times the size of Briançon's upper town.

The Lowdown

- Map reference** 14 F1
- Address** 05100 (Hautes Alpes). Collégiale Notre-Dame: Ave Vauban. Centre d'Art Contemporain: Pl d'Armes; 04 92 20 33 14. Fort du Château: via Chemin de la Ronde; 04 92 21 08 50. Église de Cordeliers: Rue de l'Aspirant-Jan. Parc de la Schappe: 1 Chemin Schappe; 04 92 46 16 91
- Train** from Paris, local train from Turin, Grenoble or Lyon.
- Bus** from Oulx and Grenoble.
- Visitor information** 1 Pl du Temple, 05100; www.ot-briancon.fr
- Open** Collégiale Notre-Dame: daily. Centre d'Art Contemporain: 3–7pm Tue–Sun. Fort du Château: check opening times on www.ville-briancon.fr. Église de Cordeliers: ring for guided tour. Parc de la Schappe: daily

- Prices** Fort du Château: €20–30; under 12s free
- Guided tours** In English. Service du Patrimoine (Porte de Pignerol, 05100; 04 92 20 29 49) offers guided tours of the Fort du Château (ring ahead).
- Age range** 4 plus
- Activities** Go kayaking and white-water rafting on the Durance river south of the town, with Eaurigine (www.eaurigine.net).
- Allow** A day to explore the town, but more for exploring the surrounding area.
- Toilets** In the two car parks at Champ de Mars and Avenue de la Libération.

Good family value?

Briançon is historically interesting and has plenty of summer and winter activities for all ages.

Letting off steam

Head for the **Parc 1326** (37 Rue Bermon-Gonnet, 05100; 04 92 20 04 04), a leisure centre with an Olympic-sized skating rink and outdoor and indoor swimming pools. There is also a 65-m (213-ft) long waterslide.



Playing in one of the many pools at Parc 1326

Eat and drink

Picnic: under €20; Snacks: €20–45; Real meal: €45–90; Family treat: over €90 (based on a family of four)

PICNIC Letinturier (1 Chemin Vieux, lower town, 05100; 04 92 21 13 21; closed Tue & Sun pm) is the place to buy cakes and sandwiches made with woodfire-baked bread. Head to the Parc de la Schappe for an al fresco lunch next to the Durance river with views up to the old town.

SNACKS L'Étage (35 Grande Rue, upper town, 05100; 04 92 23 09 22; open daily) is a characterful crêperie in the heart of the upper town where savoury and sweet pancakes revive weary visitors.

REAL MEAL La Caponnaière (12 Rue Commandant Carlhan, upper town, 05100; 04 92 20 36 77; closed Tue & Wed) has costumed staff serving up authentic regional dishes, featuring pigeon and trout. The recipes on the Menu Vauban date from the 17th century. Try the nutty Gâteau de Voyage for dessert.



Magnificent snow-capped peaks in the Parc National des Ecrins

FAMILY TREAT Le Pêché

Gourmand (2 Route de Gap, 05100; 04 92 21 33 21; closed Tue & Wed), a child-friendly restaurant, is located in an old mill opposite the lower town. Long been regarded as one of the best in the region, the restaurant serves beautifully presented dishes such as scallops with meat gravy and a tobacco-flavoured dessert.

Shopping

Visit **Les Poteries de Virginie** (51 Rue des Tabellions, Centre Activités Sud, 05100; 06 80 51 37 65; www.poterievirginie.com) to see Virginie at work in her pottery studio. Choose from a wide variety of styles and designs; those from the fir tree collection make perfect Christmas presents. Ring ahead of visit.

Find out more

DIGITAL Older kids can browse through www.sites-vauban.org for more information (in English) about Marshal Vauban, France's celebrated 17th-century military engineer.

Next stop...

PARC NATIONAL DES ECRINS Head west of Briançon to France's largest national park in the Massif des Ecrins (www.ecrins-parcnational.fr). The park is noted for its glaciers, as well as its diverse wildflowers. With more than 100 peaks over 3,000 m (9,842 ft) high, it is a year-round destination attracting skiers, walkers and climbers. Drop in to the **Maison du Parc** (Pl Général Blanchard, 05100; 04 92 21 42 15), the park's discovery centre in Briançon, to learn about the heritage of the area, including skiing.

KIDS' CORNER

Look out for...

- 1 The sundials in Briançon's upper town. How many are there?
- 2 The 15th-century Église des Cordeliers is the oldest building in Briançon. What does its doorway look like?
- 3 The sundial in front of the Collégiale Notre-Dame church. Check the time against the clocks on the two clocktowers (or your watch). Do they agree?
- 4 Fort des Têtes. How did it get its name and what does Tête mean in French?



Answers at the bottom of the page.

CLASSIC SUNDIALS

A sundial is a kind of clock, which tells the time by the position of the sun in the sky. As the earth moves around the sun, a gnomon (rod) casts a shadow on the dial that lands on the corresponding hour.



Extreme terrain

Thanks to its challenging geography, Briançon has regularly been a stage in the Tour de France. Launched in 1903, the Tour de France is the world's most famous cycle race. It lasts for three weeks, covers around 3,600 km (2,200 miles) and takes riders through the length and breadth of France.



Answers: 1 Four 2 It is arched with French, Tête means head the rocky plateau on which it is built. In the wooden door 4 It is named after several narrow columns either side of

10 Parc National de la Vanoise

Rare animals

This beautifully rugged national park of Vanoise was created in 1963. Located east of Les Trois Vallées, it was France's first national park and its purpose was to protect the region's few remaining Alpine ibex (*capra ibex*), which were being wiped out by hunters; there are now about 2,000 of them. The area is popular among hikers and climbers of all abilities who come for its glaciers, mountain lakes, protected plants and flowers, and to perhaps glimpse one of the 20 pairs of golden eagles.

Most visitors base themselves in Pralognan-la-Vanoise nearby, which has an Olympic-sized skating rink. In 1992, the village hosted the curling competition in the Winter Olympics. An alternative is the village of Champagny-en-Vanoise, where **Espace Glacialis** tells visitors all that they need to know about glaciers. Tourist offices in both villages advise on the best walks for families and beginners' climbing courses. On



Skiing in Les Trois Vallées, the largest ski area in the world



Adult male Alpine ibex in the Parc National de la Vanoise

the eastern edge of the park is Bonneval-sur-Arc, a pretty village of rustic stone chalets nesting at the foot of Col d'Iséran. This pass, which is Europe's highest at 2,770 m (9,088 ft), is open to cars from July to September.

Take cover

Beaufort cheese is a speciality of this region. Head to the milk co-operative **Beaufort des Montagnes** (www.beaufortdesmontagnes.com) in the town of Moûtiers on weekday mornings to see how the cheese is made and of course to taste some. There is an informative film with English subtitles and also a shop.

11 Les Trois Vallées

Family-friendly outdoor fun

Spread over 600 km (373 miles) and made up of eight resorts, Les Trois Vallées is the world's largest ski area. The best resorts for families are

The Lowdown

- **Map reference** 10 F6
Address Savoie
- 🚗 **Train** from Grenoble and Modane to Moûtiers, then bus from Moûtiers to Les Trois Vallées see www.altibus.com for details
- i **Visitor information** Visit www.les3vallees.com for details
- ✔ **Eat and drink** **Real meal** La Ferme (Reberby Village, 73440 Les Menuires; 04 79 00 77 01) is a traditional restaurant that offers a good-value kids' menu. **Family treat** Le Chabichou (Rue des Chenus, 73121 Courchevel 1850; 04 79 08 00 55; www.chabichou-courchevel.com; daily) is a Michelin-starred restaurant. Kids are welcomed in the dining room and on the cookery courses.
- 🎆 **Festival** International Fireworks Festival in Courchevel (Feb & Mar)

Courchevel, Les Menuires and Val Thorens, of which Courchevel is the best known and comprises four villages. One of them is the traditional hamlet of Le Praz, which was the site of ski jumping in the 1992 Winter Olympics. Another one is the super-glitzy Courchevel 1850, a favourite with billionaires and celebrities. Watch the private planes landing and taking off from its "altiport". For beginners and kids, the modern Les Menuires is a good place. The sports centre here has a swimming pool and a fun park with bouncy castles. At 2,300 m (75,456 ft), Val Thorens, Europe's highest ski resort, offers skiing from November to May and has one of France's longest toboggan runs.

The Lowdown

- **Map reference** 10 F6
Address 73320 (Tignes). Espace Glacialis: 73350 Champagny-en-Vanoise; 04 79 01 40 28; www.espace-glacialis.fr
- 🚗 **Train** from Grenoble and Modane to the park and Moûtiers. **Bus** from Moûtiers to Pralognan and Champagny and from Modane to Bonneval-sur-Arc
- i **Visitor information** See www.parcnational-vanoise.fr for details
- 🕒 **Open** Espace Glacialis: Sun–Thu pm
- ✔ **Eat and drink** **Snacks** Le Criou (Top of Vallonnet chairlift; 73480 Bonneval-sur-Arc; 04 79 05 97 11;

winter: lunch daily; Jul & Aug timings vary) is a mountain restaurant that serves tasty *planche du criou* (a platter of local cheese and charcuterie). **Real meal** Les Glières (Lotissement de Planchamp, 73350 Champagny-en-Vanoise; 04 79 55 05 52; www.hotel-glieres.com; open daily) offers traditional Savoyard wine and food such as *clots* (sausages) served with *crozets* (small pasta squares) in a cheese sauce.

- 🎆 **Festivals** La Grande Odyssée, a dog sled race in Bonneval (Jan). Special "children's weeks" of fun activities in Pralognan (Jul & Aug)

Take cover

Take bus T3 from Moutiers to the village of St-Martin-de-Belleville near Les Menuires, to visit the **Musée St-Martin** (www.st-martin-belleville.com), which traces the village's history from its farming origins to the creation of the ski resorts.

12 Grenoble**The capital of the Alps**

Located at the confluence of the Drac and Isère rivers, Grenoble is the perfect place to combine a city break with time spent in the great outdoors: the Parc National du Vercors to the west and Les Trois Vallées, Parc National de la Vanoise and Serre Chevalier to the east. The two rivers were responsible for the city's industrial growth, including glove making, cement production



Grand view of the town from the bubble-shaped cable car, Grenoble



Children's play area in the Jardin des Dauphins, Grenoble

and paper mills. Today, the city is an important centre for science and technology.

On arrival, the first thing that visitors notice are *Les Bulles* (bubbles), the unusual bubble-shaped cable cars that take passengers up to **La Bastille**, a series of fortifications built on a mountaintop overlooking the city. Here, the **Musée des Troupes de Montagne** focuses on the history of mountain troops. Head back down on foot via the Parc Guy-Pape and Jardin des Dauphins, where kids can dash off to the play area. Also worth visiting is the **Musée de Grenoble** for its important collection of 16th- to 20th-century artworks.

Letting off steam

Make sandcastles or play beach sports such as volleyball at **La Plage de Grenoble** (2 Rue Gustave Flaubert; 04 76 23 57 16; www.plagedegrenoble.com), a very urban piece of sand. On Saturday mornings, from May to September, the beach hosts special sessions for families, with sand sports and picnics.

KIDS' CORNER**Look out for...**

- 1 Beaufort cheese. What is the name of the dish in which it is melted?
- 2 The Alpine ibex. How many live in the park?
- 3 A beach in the middle of the Alps. Where can you find one?
- 4 The funny-looking form of transport that you hop on to go up to La Bastille in Grenoble. What is it called?

Answers at the bottom of the page.

**A WILD WONDER**

The Alpine ibex is a kind of wild goat. It is an excellent climber and usually lives at an altitude above 2,000 m (6,500 ft). The males often have beards and are bigger than the females. Both have reddish-brown coats and long, curved horns.

**Certified authentic and local**

Beaufort cheese is produced in and around Les Trois Vallées and Parc National de la Vanoise. It is made with milk from two native breeds of cow. The cheese has the label Appellation d'Origine Protégée (AOP) meaning that it is a high-quality regional food, produced in a certain way in a certain area.



Answers: 1 Fontus. 2 There are only about 2,000 left in the Vanoise national park. 3 In Grenoble, but it is not a real beach. 4 Les Bulles, meaning 'the bubbles'.

The Lowdown**11 Map reference** 10 E6

Address 38000 (Isère).

La Bastille: reached by cable car at Quai Stéphane Jay; 04 76 44 33 65; www.bastille-grenoble.fr. **Musée des Troupes de Montagne:** 19 Rue Hébert; 04 76 00 93 41. **Musée de Grenoble:** 5 Pl de Lavalette; 04 76 63 44 44; www.museedegrenoble.fr

Train from Moutiers and Modane; TGV from Paris. **Bus** LER bus 35 from Briançon

Visitor information 14 Rue de la République, 38000; 04 76 42 41 41; www.grenoble-tourisme.com

Open La Bastille: days and timings vary throughout the year; cable car:

closed Jan. Musée des Troupes de Montagne: Tue–Sun; closed Jan. Musée de Grenoble: Wed–Mon

Eat and drink **Snacks** Pâtisserie les Ecrins (11 Rue de Bonne, 38000; 04 76 46 48 22; www.patisserie-lesecrins.com; open daily) serves fabulous chocolates, ice creams and cakes to eat indoors or take away. **Real meal** La Ferme à Dédé (1 Pl aux Herbes, 38000; 04 76 54 00 33; www.restaurantlafermeade.com; open daily) is renowned for its regional specialities – try the green salad with walnut, accompanied by charcuterie and cheesy ravioli.

Festival Le Grenoble Jazz Fest (Mar)

13 Gorges de l'Ardèche

Paddle down a river and explore a huge cave

The Ardèche gorges are a meandering part of the Ardèche river, stretching for about 30 km (19 miles) southeast of Vallon-Pont-d'Arc to St-Martin-d'Ardèche. This wild, protected site offers activities such as caving and climbing, but most visitors come here to descend the river by canoe, whether accompanied or self-guided. Visit the Cité de la Préhistoire, one of the world's largest underground caverns, and don't miss the reproduction cave paintings in Vallon-Pont-d'Arc.



Signposts to attractions in a town in the Ardèche

Key Sight



② **Pont d'Arc** This natural arch spans the river near Vallon. The adjacent beach is a good place to relax.



④ **Le Rocher de la Cathédrale** Overlooking the river, this pointed rock formation resembles a cathedral – hence the name.

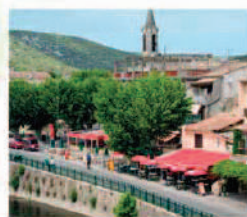


⑤ **La Cirque de la Madeleine** The ruins of a Templar hospital can be seen at this horseshoe-shaped bend in the river. It is best viewed from the Balcon des Templiers.

① **Vallon-Pont-d'Arc** This village is the start and end point for descents of the river. The Caverne du Pont d'Arc here is a spectacular replica of the Grotte Chauvet, where the world's earliest known cave paintings were discovered in 1994. The Grotte Chauvet is closed to the public.



③ **Cité de la Préhistoire** Explore this vast cave complex before venturing to the on-site Musée de Préhistoire to find out about early man's life here.



⑥ **St-Martin-d'Ardèche** The southernmost point of the gorges, this village hosts lively morning and evening markets.



The fortified Château des Roure, Labastide-de-Virac

Take cover

Drive to the village of Labastide-de-Virac to visit the 14th-century **Château des Roure** (www.chateau-desroure.com), a fortified manor. It played a major role during the Wars of Religion in the 16th century, as it was owned by a Protestant nobleman. There are great views of the countryside from the round tower, a "ghost" to scare kids and a reconstructed 17th-century silk workshop, where visitors can work the looms and see wriggly silk worms.

Eat and drink

*Picnic: under €20; Snacks: €20–45
Real meal: €45–90; Family treat:
over €90 (based on a family of four)*

PICNIC Boulangerie Lichière (*Rue des Maquisards, 07150 Vallon-Pont-d'Arc; 04 75 88 03 52; closed Wed*) stocks sandwiches, quiches and cakes, including *Lou Pisadou*, a crisp, flat cake made with chestnut cream. Picnic at a nearby beach.

SNACKS Le 14 (*14 Blvd Peschaire Alizon, 07150 Vallon-Pont-d'Arc; 04 75 94 78 55; open daily*), housed

The Lowdown

-  **Map reference** 13 C2
- Address** 07150 (Ardèche).
Caverne du Pont d'Arc,
Plateau du Razal, Vallon
Pont d'Arc, 07150; www.caverne.dupontdarc.fr
Cité de la Préhistoire: Orgnac
l'Aven; www.orgnac.com
-  **Train** TER from Paris to
Montélimar, then bus to Vallon.
Bus 15 from Avignon, Balazuc
and Vogüé
-  **Visitor information** Pl de la Gare,
07150 Vallon-Pont-d'Arc; www.vallon-pont-darc.com
-  **Open** Caverne du Pont
d'Arc & Cité de la Préhistoire:
timings vary. St-Martin-d'Ardèche
(markets): Jul-Aug: Fri pm, Sun
am; Jun-Sep: Wed am; all year:
Thu am
-  **Prices** Caverne du Pont d'Arc:
€26-39; under 10s free. Cité de

la Préhistoire: €25-42;
under 6s free

-  **Skipping the queue** Visit in Sep
when it is not so crowded.
-  **Guided tours** Tour the cave
complex of Aven d'Orgnac;
walking or canoeing
-  **Age range** 4 plus
-  **Activities** Opt for canoeing,
caving, horse-riding, canyoning
& *Via ferrata* (mountain climbing
using iron ladders fixed into the
rockface; suitable for grownups).
-  **Allow** At least 3 days
-  **Toilets** In the car park in the
Grand Plage, behind the Mairie.

Good family value?

The area is good for families who
enjoy outdoor activities and offers
a glimpse into prehistoric art too.

in a renovated 19th-century building,
this café serves salads, crêpes,
waffles and ice cream. There is
also free Wi-Fi.

REAL MEAL **Le Domaine des
Dames** (*Quartier le Colombier, 07150
Valon Pont d'Arc; 04 75 37 53 20;*
daily in season) is a stone-built
farmhouse that serves traditional
food; good children's menu.

Shopping

Visit **Moulin des Gorges** (*Rond point
des Gorges, 07150; 04 75 88 07 46;*
www.moulindesgorges.com) where
they sell their own olive oil and
other regional produce, including
tasty chestnut goodies.

Find out more

DIGITAL Go to earlyhumans.mrdonn.org/caveart.html to learn about cave
paintings and [www.kinderart.com/
arthistory/cavepainting.shtml](http://www.kinderart.com/arthistory/cavepainting.shtml) for
how to make one.



Signboard showing hiking trails in the
Bois de Païolive forest of Ardèche



Delicious desserts at Boulangerie
Lichière, Vallon-du-Pont-d'Arc

Next step...

EXPLORE THE OUTDOORS The
Ardèche is famous for its chestnuts,
which have been awarded the AOP
label of quality. Drive to the town of
Joyeuse, 27 km (17 miles) north
of Vallon-Pont-d'Arc, to visit the
Musée de la Châtaignerie (www.musee-chataignerie.fr) to learn
more about the fruit. From Joyeuse,
drive 15 km (9 miles) southwest to
the forest of Bois de Païolive, near
the village of Les Vans. This is a
wood of petrified trees, eroded into
unusual shapes such as a lion and a
bear fighting. Several footpaths run
through this protected area. From Les
Vans, head 20 km (12 miles) west to
the village of St-Alban-Auriolles to
explore the gorges on horseback
with **Chavetourte** (04 75 39 66 73).
They offer treks ranging from an
hour to a week, which include river
crossings and beach breaks.

KIDS' CORNER

Find out more...

- 1** What shape does Cirque de
la Madeleine remind you of?
- 2** Silk used to be one of the
main industries in this area.
Where does it come from?
- 3** You can explore the Ardèche
river by boat, on foot or by car.
What kind of boats do people
use in this area?

Answers at the bottom
of the page.



A gorge is born

A gorge is formed over millions
of years by a river eroding down
through the rock. As a result, the
gorge is long and thin with high
sides. France has two other
famous gorges: the Gorges du
Tarn (*see p242*) and the Gorges
du Verdon (*see p361*), both in
the south of the country.

WORLD'S OLDEST ART?

The cave paintings in the Grotte
Chauvet are around 32,000 years
old. Said to be the "birthplace
of art", they are the
first known to use
perspective and
shading, and
depict more
than 14 species
of animals.



Crystallized chestnuts

The Ardèche is famous for its
chestnuts. Around 5,511 tons
(5,000 tonnes) are harvested each
autumn and used in sweet and
savoury dishes. The most popular
are *marrons glacés* (crystallized
chestnuts). Also
try *crème de
marrons* on
crêpes or waffles.



Answers: **1** Most people see it as a
horse shoe **2** Coconuts spun by
silkworms **3** Canoes

14 Balazuc and Vogüé

Castles and knights

Balazuc and Vogüé have been officially declared two of *Les Plus Beaux Villages de France*. Balazuc slopes down to the Ardèche river, where there is a small beach that is suitable for paddling on hot days. Wander around the narrow, cobbled streets, through vaulted passages, and imagine what it must have been like to be a knight in the medieval days of the Lords of Balazuc. For the best view of the village, walk across the bridge over the river and look back; then follow the river for 15 minutes to the once-abandoned silk workers' hamlet of **Le Viel Audon** – visitors can volunteer with the eco-friendly restoration work or simply check out the animals and browse local produce in the shop.

Vogüé, 6 km (4 miles) north by car, is built into the side of a cliff, which rises up from the Ardèche river. Its main feature is the **Château de Vogüé** whose current form with four round towers dates from the 17th



Above The village of Balazuc
Below Enjoying the summer at the beach in Balazuc

century. The castle, privately owned by the Marquis Pierre de Vogüé, regularly hosts art exhibitions. Visitors can also admire the wonderful views from its “hanging gardens”. In July and August, a Monday morning market takes place in the village.

Letting off steam

Head to *Isla Cool Douce* (www.islacooldouce.fr; Jul–Aug: daily), a leisure centre located just 8 km (5 miles) south of Balazuc. Bask on the sandy beach, bathe in the river or hire a canoe or a pedalo. There are also swimming pools for smaller children and a snack bar.



The Lowdown

Map reference 13 C2
Address 07120, 07200 (Ardèche).
Le Viel Audon: 07120 Balazuc; vielaudon.free.fr. Château de Vogüé: 07200 Vogüé; www.chateaudevogue.net

Train to Vallon, then SNCF bus to Balazuc & Vogüé **Bus** 15 from Vallon to Balazuc & Vogüé

i Visitor information Balazuc: Rue Alphonse Daudet, 07120 Ruoms; 04 75 93 91 90; www.ot-pays-ruoms.com. Vogüé: Pl de Heyd, 07200; 04 75 37 01 17; www.ot-vogue.fr

Open Château de Vogüé: mid-Jun–mid-Sep: daily; Easter–Nov: Wed–Sun

Eat and drink **Snacks** Chez Paulette (*Rue Pons*, 07120 Balazuc; 04 75 87 17 40) is an authentic *bistro du pays* (regional bistro) offering crêpes, pizzas and regional specialities. **Real meal** Le Mas de Mon Père (*off RN 102*, 07580 St-Jean-le-Centenier; 04 75 36 71 23; www.lemasdemonpere.com) has a *menu du terroir* (regional menu) offering trout, goat's cheese and chestnuts, with a good selection of local wines.

15 Montélimar

Nougat and fighter jets

Located northeast of the Gorges de l'Ardèche, Montélimar is named after the aristocratic Adhémar de Monteil family who used to live in the 12th-century **Château des Adhémar** overlooking the town; the castle now houses a contemporary art

centre. Montélimar is best known as the capital of nougat, a chewy sweet made from egg whites, almonds, honey and pistachios. To see how this treat is made and to taste some, head over to the **Musée du Nougat Arnaud Soubeyran**; the company has been making nougat since 1837. That is not the only speciality in Montélimar: the fields around this

The Lowdown

Map reference 13 D2
Address 26200 (Drôme).
Château des Adhémar: Plateau de Narbonne; 04 75 00 62 30. Musée du Nougat Arnaud Soubeyran: ZC Sud, off RN7, 26204; www.nougat-soubeyran.com. Musée Européen de l'Aviation de Chasse: Chemin Aérodrome Montélimar; www.meacmtl.com

Train from Vallon, Balazuc & Vogüé

i Visitor information Allées Provençales, 26200 Montélimar-St-Martin; 04 75 01 00 20; www.montelimar-tourisme.com

Open Château des Adhémar: daily; Nov–Mar: afternoons, closed Tue.

Musée du Nougat Arnaud Soubeyran & Musée Européen de l'Aviation de Chasse: daily

Eat and drink **Snacks** Goutez-y (34 Rue Quatre Alliées, 26200; 09 50 02 10 66) offers over 50 ice cream flavours including balsamic vinegar, lavender, cactus and nougat to eat in or take away. **Family treat** Aux Gourmands (14 Pl du Marché, 26200; 04 75 01 16 21; www.aux-gourmands.fr; closed Sun & Mon) serves local dishes made with seasonal produce, accompanied by a good wine list.

Festival Couleur Lavande, lavender festival (Jul)

town are filled with lavender from mid-June to September. The tourist office provides details of driving routes where visitors can see some fine examples. On the edge of town is the **Musée Européen de l'Aviation de Chasse (MEAC)**, where visitors can take a look at some of the world's most famous fighter jets including Mirages and MiGs.

Letting off steam

Fly in a micro-light aircraft with a pilot instructor to see Gorges de l'Ardèche and the lavender fields from above. **ULM Montélimar (Aérodrome, 26200; 04 75 53 76 73; www.ulmaero.com)** offers flights ranging from 10 minutes to a couple of hours. On the ground, families can visit **Mistral Kart (Route du Teil, 26200; 04 75 01 46 33; open daily)**, a fun place for kids aged 3 plus. It is good for go-karting.



Honey pots on display at the Musée du Nougat Arnaud Soubeyran, Montélimar

16 Nyons

Famous for its black olives

Medieval Nyons is known throughout France for its black olives, which have an AOP label of quality; in fact, the town is a *site remarquable du goût*, a French town or area that produces a superior foodstuff. The olives are harvested in December and January and turned into oil or *tapenade* (a paste spread on bread). To find out more about olives and their uses, pay a visit to the **Musée de l'Olivier**, then head to the **Moulin Ramade** to watch how the oil is extracted and taste the products.

The most impressive sight in town is the 18-m (59-ft) high 14th-century stone bridge that straddles the Eygues river for 43 m (141 ft). The Place des Arcades is a charming medieval square, which hosts the Thursday morning market and is a popular place to stop for a coffee.

The Lowdown

- **Map reference** 13 D2
- Address** 26110 (Drôme). Musée de l'Olivier: Pl Olivier-de-Serres; 04 75 26 95 00; www.vignolis.fr. Moulin Ramade: 7 Impasse du Moulin; 04 75 26 08 18; www.moulinramade.com
- 🚌 **Bus** 36 from Montélimar
- 📍 **Visitor information** Pl de la Libération, 26110; 04 75 26 10 35; www.paysdenyons.com
- 🕒 **Open** Musée de l'Olivier: daily. Moulin Ramade: Mon–Sat
- 🍴 **Eat and drink** **Snacks** Miss Maple (8 Pl Buffave, 26110; 04 75 27 64 56; open daily) is a quirky tea room that serves home-made cakes, snacks, smoothies and, of course, a variety of teas. **Real meal** La Farigoule (26 Rue des Déportés, 26110; 04 75 26 07 01; www.lafarigoule-nyons.com; closed Tue, Wed & Thu dinner) is a small restaurant where diners can sample the local olives in a variety of dishes, including omelettes, and as accompaniment to goat's cheese. Book in advance.
- 🎉 **Festivals** Les Olivades celebrates black olive oil through guided walks, markets and tastings (Jul). Festival l'Alicoque celebrates the new season's oil (Feb).

Letting off steam

The countryside around Nyons offers plenty of opportunities to get back to nature. Climb through the trees along rope bridges at **Les Barons Perchés (Col de la Croix, 26110; www.les-barons-perches.com)** that is suitable for kids aged 5–12 years. Take bus 36 to **Camp Anes (www.taulignanes.e-monsite.com)**, 6 km (4 miles) north of Nyons, in the village of Les Echirons. Here, families can explore olive fields on a donkey.



A model of the olive oil making process at Musée de l'Olivier, Nyons

KIDS' CORNER

Find out more...

- 1** Have a look at the hanging gardens of Château de Vogüé. Why are they so called – are they actually hanging?
- 2** What is made with egg whites, honey, almonds and pistachios?
- 3** Taste some *tapenade* – what do you think it is made from?
- 4** How many towers does the 17th-century Château de Vogüé have and what is their shape?



Answers at the bottom of the page.



Olives to olive oil

Nyons has around 220,000 olive trees. They annually produce 440 tons (400 tonnes) of black olives and 200 tonnes (220 tons) of olive oil. In 1995, the olives from Nyons were the first in France to receive an AOP label of quality.

WHAT DOES MACH MEAN?

Mach refers to the speed of an aircraft divided by the speed of sound. It is named after Ernest Mach, the physicist who invented it. The Musée Européen de l'Aviation de Chasse shows Mirage jets used by the French air force. The current 2,000C model has a speed of Mach 2.2 or 2,333 km/h (1,450 mph).



Answers: 1 No, they are planted on a terrace, high up above the ground (as if they were hanging from the sky). 2 Nougat, a speciality of Montélimar. 3 Olives, anchovies, olive oil and capers. 4 There are four cylindrical towers.

Where to Stay in The Rhône Valley and French Alps

From historic châteaux to riverside camp sites and from luxury spa hotels to traditional wooden chalets, the Rhône-Alpes region has something to suit all tastes and budgets. Farm stays allow visitors to get to know the countryside and its inhabitants – including furry ones.

AGENCIES

Gîtes Rhône-Alpes

www.gites-rhone-alpes.org

This website lists accommodation options, from big country houses to small camp sites on farmland.

Peak Retreats

www.peakretreats.co.uk

This award-winning British tour operator offers self-catering accommodation throughout the Alps in both winter and summer.

Anney

Map 10 E5

HOTEL Les Grillons

Angon, 74290 Talloires; 04 50 60 70 31; www.hotel-grillons.com

This 32-room, traditionally furnished three-star hotel (half-board only) on the right bank of Lac d'Anney offers views over the lakes and mountains. The restaurant has a kids' menu.

There is a large garden to run around in; babysitting service is provided.

€€

CAMPING

Camping de la Ravoire

Route de la Ravoire, 74210 Doussard; 04 50 44 37 80; www.camping-laravoire.com

Besides pitches for tents and caravans, this four-star camp site in a pretty location on the left bank of Lac d'Anney also has small, individual chalets. Bring bikes and race along the cycle path to Anney.

€-€€

Briançon

Map 14 F1

BED & BREAKFAST La Joie de Vivre

Hameau de Salé, 05100 Névache; 04 92 21 30 96; www.la-joie-de-vivre.fr
Stays at this attractive chalet 18 km (11 miles) from Briançon are on a half-board basis. The owner Claire

is a trained chef with a passion for alpine cuisine. Work up an appetite with a trek through the mountains accompanied by the family llamas.

€€€

SELF-CATERING

Résidence du Temple

3 Pl du Temple, 05100; 04 92 50

19 97; www.residencedutemple.com

In the heart of the Cité Vauban, these boutique-style apartments housed in a recently renovated building sleep up to eight people. The smallest apartments have a double and a sofa-bed, while those for six have added bunk beds.

Breakfast, lunch and dinner available at the restaurant.

€€

Chamonix

Map 10 F5

HOTEL

Auberge du Bois Prin

69 Chemin de l'Hermine, Les

Moussoux, 74400; 04 50 53 33 51;

www.boisprin.com

There are ten rooms and suites at this luxurious mountain retreat, with traditional timber decor. Balconies or terraces have wonderful views over Mont Blanc. Spa for adults, and a play area for kids. Guests can also visit the restaurant chef's organic vegetable garden in summer.

€€€

CHALET

Chalet in Chamonix

08 45 89 00 362 (UK); www.chalet-in-chamonix.co.uk

This British-run company offers catered and self-catering lodging in several chalets here. While Chalet Vincent is the more luxurious option with bunk rooms for kids, Chalet Les Pelerins is popular amongst eco-friendly families. There are four small chalets-cabins on the Île des Barrats.

€€-€€€



Contemporary-style interior of the salon in Les Grillons, Anney

Gorges de l'Ardèche

Map 13 C2

HOTEL

Le Clos des Bruyères

07150 Vallon-Pont-d'Arc; 04 75 37

18 85; www.closdesbruyeres.fr

Near the river, this Provençal-style modern hotel has rooms on the ground floor that open directly onto the garden, complete with kids' play area. Guests can tuck into local dishes on the shaded terrace. The owners can also arrange canoe hire.

€€

SELF-CATERING

Le Mas de la Bastide

Les Grads de Perret, 07260 Joyeuse;

04 75 39 49 60; www.masdela-bastide.com

These pretty stone gîtes, on an estate dotted with olive trees, sleep up to eight. Fresh bread and croissants are delivered direct to the door each morning. Organized kids' activities and themed meals in summer.

€€

CAMPING

Camping Beau Rivage

Les Mazes, 07150 Vallon-Pont-d'Arc;

04 75 88 03 54; www.beaurivage-camping.com

A family-oriented camp site next to the river, offering pitches and mobile homes for hire. Guests can hire canoes and learn how to paddle.

Sandy-floored play area for kids; both old and young can participate in the boules and karaoke competitions.



€-€€

Grenoble

Map 10 E6

HOTEL

Hotel Splendid

22 Rue Thiers, 38000; 04 76 46 33 12; www.splendid-hotel.com

This two-star hotel in the city centre is the ideal place for a short family break. There is an enclosed garden and table tennis for children, as well as hydro-massage showers for grown-ups. Room service is 24/7 and it is only a short walk from the tram stop.



€€

SELF-CATERING

Ferme de Namière

38120 Mont-St-Martin; 04 76 75 55 72; <http://ferme-de-namiere.fr>

Located in the heart of the Parc Naturel Régional de Chartreuse, this deer farm is about 20 minutes' drive from Grenoble. The gîte is an old stone outbuilding that has been restored in contemporary style. There are plenty of walks in the area. Be sure to try the venison for dinner.



€

Les Dombes

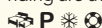
Map 9 D5

HOTEL

Hotel et Golf du Gouverneur

Château du Breuil, 01390 Monthieux; 04 72 26 42 00; www.golfgouverneur.fr

The remains of a 15th-century château houses this three-star hotel. The accommodation is attached to one of the finest golf courses in the region. Rooms are furnished in contemporary style. Swimming, tennis and horse-riding are available.



€€



The seating area in front of Hotel Manali, Les Trois Vallées



Enjoying a splash in the swimming pool at Camping Indigo, Lyon

BED & BREAKFAST

Ferme du Clos

01400 Neuville les Dames; 04 74 55 65 24; www.auclos.com

Kids will love feeding the animals on this former working farm in the heart of one of France's main agricultural areas. Rooms are basic, but the property is noted for its meals made with local produce.



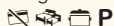
€

SELF-CATERING

Château de Joyeux

01800 Joyeux; 04 74 98 20 31; www.chateaudejoeux.net

One of Les Dombes' grand houses; this 19th-century pile can be rented by the week. Or opt for a more modest chambre d'hôtes stay or one of the self-catering gîtes in the château grounds, with views onto the gardens. There is a tennis court.



€€€

Les Trois Vallées

Map 10 F6

HOTEL

Hotel Manali

Rue de la Rosière, 73120 Courchevel 1650; 04 79 08 07 07; www.hotelmanali.com

One of the best family options in the area, this is the only five-star hotel and spa in Courchevel 1650, the slightly less pricey part of this ski resort. Family rooms come with bunk beds and colouring books, and the restaurant has a special kids' menu and dining area. Nursery for tots.



€€€

CHALET

Floralie St Martin de Belleville

St-Martin-de-Belleville; 0044 1 202 203 653 (US); www.skifloralie.com

Chalet Floralie combines the charm of a traditional Alpine lodge with a contemporary interior. The chalet has room for up to 18 guests and

boasts a sauna, jacuzzi and well-equipped games for children. Roaring fires and great views await.



€€€

Lyon

Map 9 D5

HOTELS

Hotel Kyriad Lyon Centre

26 Cours de Verdun, 69002; 04 78 71 17 47; www.hotel-central.fr

Behind Perrache railway station, this two-star hotel has had a makeover in recent years. Rooms are attractively decorated in a bright, contemporary style. Suited for late arrivals or early starts by train. Public car parks nearby.



€€

Hotel Lyon Metropole

85 Quai Joseph Gillet, 69004; 04 72 10 44 44; www.lyonmetropole.com

This four-star hotel, overlooking the Rhône just north of the city centre, is the perfect place for families seeking rest and relaxation. The hotel boasts France's largest urban spa and an outdoor Olympic-sized swimming pool. Welcome gifts and special buffet for kids.



€€

CAMPING

Camping Indigo

Allée du Camping-Porte de Lyon, 69570 Dardilly; 04 78 35 64 55; www.camping-indigo.com

In a wooded site on the outskirts of Lyon, this camp site is ideally situated for exploring the city and surrounding area. Wooden caravans, mobile homes and tents available. There are swings and arcade games for kids.



€-€€

Price Guide

The following price ranges are based on one night's accommodation in high season for a family of four, inclusive of service charges and any additional taxes.

€ Under €100 €€ €100-200 €€€ over €200

Montélimar

Map 13 D2

BED & BREAKFAST Domaine de Paissy

176 Route de Sauzet, 26200; 04 75 46 04 08; www.domainede-paissy.com

A charming B&B in a 15th-century manor house, on the outskirts of town, it is decorated with antiques and traditional furnishings. Fans of architecture will be impressed by the staircase and fireplace. There is a huge garden for kids to run around in.



€€

CAMPING

Camping de l'Île Blanc Map 9 C2
1205 Chemin de l'Île Blanc, 26200
Ancône; 04 75 51 20 05; www.camping-montelimar.com

A small camp site 3 km (2 miles) northwest of Montélimar with the Rhône on one side and plenty of greenery on the other, it offers 80 spaces for tents and caravans; it is possible to rent statics. There is plenty to amuse all ages, from table tennis and canoeing to live music and themed meals.



€

Nyons

Map 13 D2

HOTEL La Bastide des Monges

Route d'Orange, 26110; 04 75 26 99 69; www.bastidedes-monges.com

This traditional Provençal manor house in the heart of the Drôme countryside has eight individually furnished rooms. A perfect place to relax, there is a pool to lie by and a boules pitch. There are scenic views over the surrounding fields and Mont Ventoux.



€€

SELF-CATERING Camp'Anes

Quartier Les Echirons, 26110
Venterol; 04 75 26 37 09; www.taullignanes.e-monsite.com

Besides hiring out donkeys for walks, this peaceful farm just outside Nyons also does B&B in the main house and self-catering in a gîte or wooden caravan. Fine views from the terrace. Kids will enjoy petting the animals.



€

Parc National de la Vanoise

Map 10 F6

HOTEL

Le Grand Bec
Rue Aiguille du Mey, 73710

Pralognan-la-Vanoise; 04 79 08 71 10; www.hoteldugrandbec.fr

Located in the Vanoise's main village, this is a traditionally furnished chalet-style hotel. In winter, there is pool or board games and in summer there are swings, tennis and boules. The Jacuzzi is popular year round. Excellent regional cuisine in the rustic restaurant.



€€€

CAMPING

Camping Le Chenantier
73500 Sollières-Sardières; 04 79 56 73 30; www.camping-lechenantier.com

In a stunning location in the south of the Vanoise, this camp site offers yurts, tipis and pitches for families bringing their own tent or caravan. There is a lake for swimming and many outdoor activities in the area.



€



Outdoor activities at the Sixt Alpine Chalet, Sixt-Fer-à-Cheval

Samoëns and Sixt-Fer-à-Cheval

Map 10 F5

CHALETS

Sixt Alpine Chalet

L'Alpée, La Chaletaz, 74740 Sixt-Fer-à-Cheval; 04 50 89 06 18; www.sixtalpinechalet.com

A British-run chalet, which sleeps ten, it overlooks the pretty village of Sixt and offers catered or self-catering stays in cosy, rustic rooms. Special rates for activities, including white-water rafting, from a local provider.



€€€

Chalet La Source

La Combe, 74340 Samoëns; www.greenadventuretreats.com

This stylish eco-friendly chalet runs Family Adventure Weeks in July and August. The former 19th-century hay barn now has five bedrooms, a playroom and a wood-fired hot tub.



€€€

St-Étienne

Map 9 D6

HOTEL

Hotel Continental

10 Rue François Gillet, 42000; 04 77 32 58 43; www.hotelcontinental42.fr

A former coaching inn in the city centre has been transformed into an award-winning two-star "design hotel", with muted, minimalist rooms. Free Wi-Fi throughout.



€

Vienne

Map 9 D6

HOTEL

Grand Hotel de la Poste

47 Cours Romestang, 38200; 04 74 85 02 04; www.hoteldelapostevienne.com

This yellow-fronted two-star hotel on one of the town's busiest routes dates from the 18th century. Rooms overlooking the courtyard are quieter but all are brightly decorated and well kept. Free Wi-Fi.



€€

Yvoire

Map 10 F4

HOTEL

Château de Coudrée

74140 Sciez-Bonnatrait; 04 50 72 62 33; www.coudree.fr

On the banks of Lac Léman east of Yvoire, this ivy-clad four-star hotel dates from the 12th century and has been run by the same family for three generations. Best known for its excellent restaurant, it has a private beach, large garden and kids' games.



€€€

CAMPING

Camping La Pinède

74140 Excenevex Plage; 04 50 72 85 05; www.camping-lac-leman.info

This three-star camp site just outside Yvoire has direct access to the sandy beach on Lac Léman. Rent a tent or a mobile home or pitch up with a caravan. There is a playground.



€-€€

The Massif Central

An area of mountains, plateaus and fierce beauty, the Massif Central is one of France's least spoiled regions. The dramatic landscape is peppered with dormant volcanoes and pitted with gorges, as well as crater lakes. Besides canoeing or hiking, there are many fine Romanesque churches and medieval castles to visit, all with something to fire a child's imagination.

Below Dramatic view of the Puy de Dôme towering above the plateau of the Auvergne

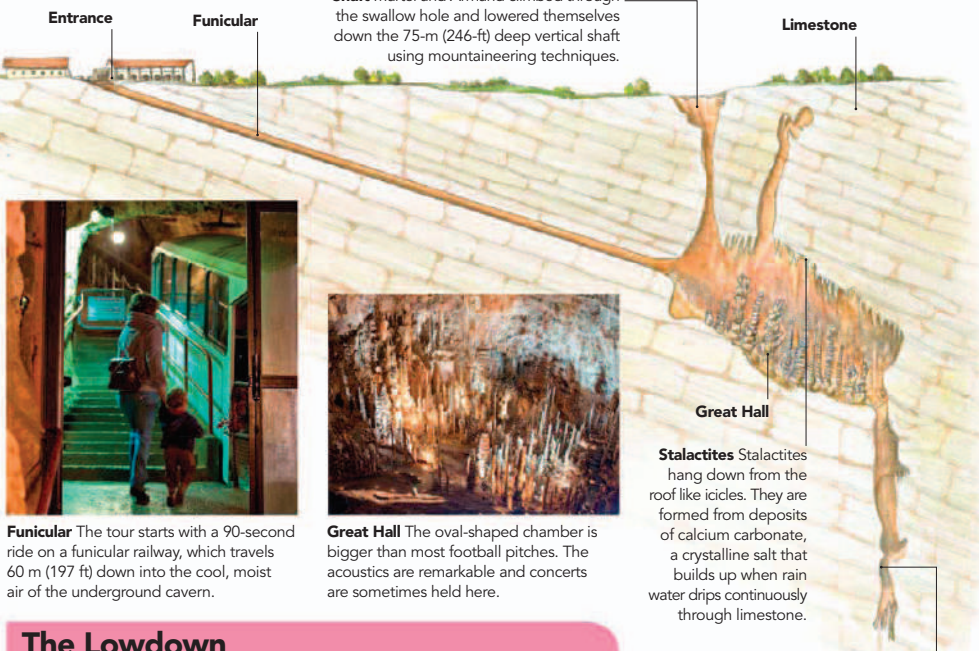


① Aven Armand

A journey into the earth

Beneath a meadow on the Jurassic limestone plateau known as the Causse Méjean, Aven Armand is an enormous cavern – so large that Notre-Dame (see pp90–91) in Paris could fit inside it. For years, sheep, goats and even some unfortunate travellers had disappeared into the gaping hole on the surface. The cave was eventually explored in 1897 by Edouard Alfred Martel and Louis Armand, who found a forest of towering shapes formed from 400 individual stalagmites.

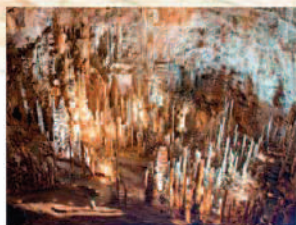
Key Features



Shaft Martel and Armand climbed through the swallow hole and lowered themselves down the 75-m (246-ft) deep vertical shaft using mountaineering techniques.



Funicular The tour starts with a 90-second ride on a funicular railway, which travels 60 m (197 ft) down into the cool, moist air of the underground cavern.



Great Hall The oval-shaped chamber is bigger than most football pitches. The acoustics are remarkable and concerts are sometimes held here.

Stalactites Stalactites hang down from the roof like icicles. They are formed from deposits of calcium carbonate, a crystalline salt that builds up when rain water drips continuously through limestone.

Lower shaft A build-up of stones and clay obstructs the entrance to this shaft, which plunges 87 m (285 ft) into the earth.



Stalagmites Growing like tree trunks from the cave floor, the stalagmites are known as the Forêt Vierge (Virgin Forest). Due to their unusual shapes, some have been given names such as Frog and Jellyfish.

The Lowdown



Map reference 13 B3
Address 48150 (Lozère).
Meyrueis; 04 66 45 61 31;
www.aven-armand.com



Bus D35 from Millau to Meyrueis, then a 15-min taxi ride



Visitor information Pl Sully, 48150 Meyrueis; 04 66 45 60 33; www.meyrueis-office-tourisme.com



Open Mar–mid-Jul & Sep–early-Nov: 10am–noon & 1:30–5pm daily; mid-Jul–Aug: 9:30am–6pm



Price €37–39



Skipping the queue The ticket to Aven Armand allows discounts to nine other sights.



Guided tours Obligatory; the tour leaves every 25 mins. On Fri in summer, by arrangement,

adults and kids aged 8 plus can descend through the shaft into the cave using ropes and accompanied by a speleologist.

Age range 5 plus

Activities Think of good names for the different stalagmites.

Allow 45 mins

Café Snack bar on site (see p241)

Toilets In the upper station building

Good family value?

A visit to this cave is educational and fun. The intriguing shapes formed over millennia will delight children and adults alike. Be sure to wear warm clothes as it is chilly and damp underground.



Shepherds herding sheep at Le Villaret d'Hures, near Aven Armand

Letting off steam

Go for a walk on the rugged Causse Méjean and look out for vultures, which have been reintroduced into the region. Or drive 10 minutes for a ramble around **Le Villaret d'Hures** (Le Villaret, 48150 Hures-la-Parade; 04 66 45 64 43), which is home to a herd of Przewalski horses. They were relocated here from zoos to roam and breed semi-free, in an attempt to preserve the last surviving species of wild horse, long since extinct in its native Mongolia.



Variety of cheese on sale at Le Fédou, Hures-la-Parade

Eat and drink

Picnic: under €20; Snacks: €20–45; Real meal: €45–90; Family treat: over €90 (based on a family of four)

PICNIC Le Fédou (Hyzelzas, 48150 Hures-la-Parade; 04 66 45 66 74; Sep–Jun: closed noon–2pm) offers sheep's cheese, charcuterie and other farm products from its shop attached to the cheese dairy. Buy bread from the next door **Boulangerie Pacaud** and picnic on the Causse Méjean or in the picnic area at Aven Armand. **SNACKS Aven Armand Café** (on site) is a good-value café-bar that serves pizzas, salads, ice creams and pastries.

REAL MEAL Mont Aigoual (34 Quai Barrière, 48150 Meyrueis; 04 66 45 65 61) is a hotel-restaurant that uses local ingredients to provide good value meals. Children's menu includes grilled fish or meat dishes.

FAMILY TREAT Château d'Ayres (Ayres, 48150 Meyrueis; 04 66 45 60 10; www.hotel-restaurant-meyrueis.com) is a fine château located in a wooded parkland, with a restaurant offering kids' menus. Table tennis, table football and a pool keep boredom at bay.

Find out more

DIGITAL Find photos, facts, puzzles, experiments, quizzes and art projects at www.cavernstours.com/KIDSPAGE_Home.html. For more information on stalactites and stalagmites go to www.howstuffworks.com/environmental/earth/geology/stalactite-stalagmite1.htm.

Next step...

A VIADUCT AND VULTURES

Head for Millau, but skirt the town and drive under the spectacular modern viaduct. At 343 m (1,125 ft) to the top of its highest mast and 2,460 m (8,070 ft) in length, it is the tallest and longest cable-stayed bridge in the world, and cost €400 million to build. In town, visit the **Musée de Millau** (www.museedemillau.fr) to discover how rough skins are turned into soft leather. Drive east from Aven Armand to the village of Hyzelzas to visit **Ferme Caussearde d'Autrefois** (www.ferme-caussearde.fr), a farm museum that offers an insight into how farmers lived years ago. Head to St-Pierre-des-Tripiers, which is a 25-minute drive from Hyzelzas, to visit **Le Belvédère des Vautours** (www.vautours-lozere.com). Perched high above the Jonte gorges, the building contains a vulture museum, observation terrace and also a live video stream from cameras located by the nests of the local vulture colony.

KIDS' CORNER

Stalactite or stalagmite?

When two explorers discovered a cave full of stalactites and stalagmites, they were awestruck by its size and beauty. One called out to his friend, who was moving around, "Mind that stalagmite". But forgetting which was which, the friend looked up and trod on the stalagmite. "A stalagmite stands on the ground, a stalactite hangs from the ceiling" will help you to remember the difference.



THE HELL HOLE



Centuries ago, herdsmen stored cheeses made from animals' milk in the rocky holes on the Causse Méjean. One hole seemed to swallow up entire flocks of their sheep and goats. The superstitious herdsmen thought it was the Devil's Throat, but it was the entrance to Aven Armand cave.

Find out more...

- 1 Where in Aven Armand cave might you hear music?
- 2 What is the difference between stalagmites and stalactites?
- 3 Many of the stalagmites in Aven Armand look like different animals. Which ones can you spot?



- 4 Which is the tallest stalagmite in the cave?

Answers: 1 The Great Hall – concerts are sometimes held there. 2 Stalagmites grow upwards and stalactites hang down. 3 There are at least four (frog, turkey, jellyfish, tiger) but try and find some more. 4 The one that looks like a stack of dinner plates at 30 m (98 ft) is one of the tallest in Europe.



A family enjoying the banks of the Tarn river, Ste-Enimie



A breathtaking view of the spectacular Gorges du Tarn

② Gorges du Tarn Cliffs, canyons and canoes

Formed by the Tarn river, these spectacular gorges cut through the limestone plateaux of the Cévennes. Plunging 500 m (1,640 ft) from the clifftop, they are some of the deepest canyons in Europe. For the most dramatic view, climb up to Point Sublime, perched high above the gorges, just west of the picturesque village of La Malène. Other pretty villages such as Castelbouc and St-Chély-du-Tarn dot the route.

A great way to enjoy the scenery is in a canoe or kayak. There are many placid stretches, particularly the one from Le Rozier to Peyrelade. Descents run from an hour to several days. The tourist office offers a list of companies who rent canoes (www.gorgesdutarn.net) or try **Aigue Vive** (www.canoekayakgorgesdutarn.com). If the kids are young, let the boatman

take the strain on the hour-long barge tour from La Malène offered by **Les Bateliers des Gorges du Tarn** (www.gorgesdutarn.com). An accompanied donkey ride with **Les Ânes du Causse** (www.bourricot.com), a 15-min drive from La Malène, is also an option.

Take cover

Among the unspoilt medieval buildings and steep cobbled alleys of Ste-Enimie, the central town of the gorges, **Le Vieux Logis** (www.gorgesdutarn.net/Museum-Le-Vieux-Logis; *mid-Jun–mid-Sep*) re-creates the interiors of a traditional dwelling before the arrival of modern amenities such as running water and electricity.

③ Florac

Travels with a donkey

Hugging the banks of the Tarnon river, Florac is a small town on the route followed by 19th-century writer Robert Louis Stevenson and his donkey, Modestine. Smitten with Florac's "quaint street-corners" and "handsome women", Stevenson spent the night at an inn before setting off the next afternoon. He also remarked on the town's castle,



The Ste-Enimie bridge and a grand view of the town

The Lowdown

- Map reference** 13 B2
- Address** 48400 (Lozère). Château de Florac (castle & information centre): 6 bis Pl du Palais, 48000 Florac; 04 66 49 53 00
- Train** to Alès. **Bus** from Spagnac
- Visitor information** 33 Ave J Monestier, 48400; 04 66 45 01 14; www.vacances-cevennes.com
- Open** Château de Florac: Easter–Nov: daily; Nov–Easter: Mon–Fri
- Eat and drink** **Picnic** Supermarché Carrefour (*Rue La Croix Blanche, 48400; 04 66 45 09 89*) has daily provisions; picnic at one of the tables in Parc Paul Arnal, close to the château. **Real meal** Chez les Paysans (*3 bis Rue Théophile Roussel, 48400; 04 66 31 22 07*) is a traditional restaurant serving seasonal local produce.
- Festival** Festival de la Soupe, an annual contest for the best soup, which also includes music and street theatre (late Oct)

Château de Florac, which was built in 1652 on the site of a 13th-century castle destroyed during the Wars of Religion. This castle was used for storing salt during the French Revolution – an essential and valuable commodity for preserving food in the time before people had refrigerators. In the early 19th century, it became a prison. Later, in 1976, it was taken over by the Parc National de Cévennes, whose information centre is now housed here.

Stroll through Le Planet, the town's old quarter of medieval lanes and plane-shaded avenues. A stream flows through its centre and opens out into several ponds. The stream is used for trout breeding, with the baby fish kept here until they are ready to be released into the wild.

The Lowdown

- Map reference** 13 A2
- Address** 48000 (Lozère).
- Train** to Alès, then bus to Spagnac and Florac
- Visitor information** Grands Causses, 48210 Ste-Enimie; www.gorgesdutarn.net
- Eat and drink** **Picnic** Alimentation Générale (*RN 107, 48210 Ste-Enimie; 04 66 48 56 91*) offers daily provisions. Picnic on the shingle beach by the river. **Family treat** La Caze (*Routes des Gorges du Tarn La Malène, 48210, Ste-Enimie; 04 66 48 51 01*) is a restaurant set in a fairy tale castle in the Gorges du Tarn. It serves local trout and other delicacies.
- Festival** Festival de la Bande Dessinée Médiévale, celebrating medieval-themed comics at Ste-Enimie (mid-Jun)



The brightly painted exterior of the pizzeria P'tit Loup, Marvejols

Letting off steam

Rent mountain bikes from **Cévennes Evasion** (www.cevennes-evasion.com) and cycle along the nearby footpaths and forest trails. A 45-min drive away is **Vallon du Villaret** (www.levallon.fr), a discovery park with a difference. The park is filled with sculptures by contemporary artists, all of them intended to be clambered over and explored.

4 Marvejols

Legacy of a bloodthirsty beast

Inside three medieval stone gates lies the pedestrian-only centre of this modest but attractive town, which keeps its bloodthirsty past under wraps. During the Wars of Religion, the Catholic and inappropriately named Admiral Joyeuse (French for joyful) employed his troops to ransack and burn the town in 1586, massacring many of its inhabitants as punishment for their Protestant faith. Look out for two statues by the noted local sculptor Emmanuel Auricoste (1908–55). The first statue, which is of Henri IV, celebrates the



Statue of Henri IV at the gate to the old town, Marvejols

king's role in rebuilding much of the town in 1601. The second statue, of an evil-looking wolf, crouched and ready to pounce, marks another bloodcurdling event. From 1764 to 1767, the town was terrorized by the so-called *Bête du Gévaudan* (Beast of Gévaudan) who was held responsible for slaughtering 99 people in the area, most of them children. Although never proven, the culprit was believed to be a wolf.

Letting off steam

Go for a splash in La Colagne river or take a 10-minute drive north to **Les Loups du Gévaudan** (www.loupsdugevaudan.com), a large wildlife park where more than 100 wolves live in semi-freedom. Wolves are shy by nature so the best chance of seeing them is on a guided tour. An exhibition demolishes many of the myths about them.



A wolf relaxing in the shade at Les Loups de Gévaudan, Marvejols

The Lowdown

Map reference 13 A2

Address 48100 (Lozère).

Train from Mende, Clermont-Ferrand and Millau. **Bus** from Mende and Rodez

i Visitor information Porte du Soubeyran, 48100 Marvejols; 04 66 32 02 14; www.ville-marvejols.fr

Eat and drink **Snacks** P'tit Loup Pizza (3 Pl du Soubeyran, 48100; 04 66 32 47 94; closed Sun lunch & Mon) offers a selection of pizzas. **Real meal** Les Rochers (27 Ave Pierre Semard, 48100; 04 66 32 10 58; www.contact-hotel.com) offers *steak haché* (ground steak), *frites* and a good-value *menu du terroir* (menu of the region) for children and parents.

Festivals Salon de Chasse Cheval et Pêche, horse show and fishing festival (Jun). Festival Henri IV, costume parades, night markets and games for children (Aug)

KIDS' CORNER

Modestine, the donkey



On 22 September, 1878, Robert Louis Stevenson, the author of *Treasure Island* and *The Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde*, set out on

a 12-day journey through the Cévennes. He had a lot to carry, so he paid 65 francs and a glass of brandy for a donkey called Modestine. She was exceedingly stubborn and would often refuse to move. Although frustrated by her wilfulness, Stevenson grew to love her and wept when he had to sell her. He described her in his journal: "She was elegant in form, the colour of an ideal mouse, and inimitably small!"



Things to do...

- 1 Draw your version of Marvejols's Beast of Gévaudan.
- 2 Follow author Robert Louis Stevenson's footsteps and go for a donkey ride near Florac.
- 3 Climb into, over and through sculptures in the Vallon du Villaret forest park in Florac.
- 4 Otters and beavers live in the Gorges du Tarn – look out for them and see if you can spot other animals here too.



DONKEYS DO REMEMBER!

The original beasts of burden, donkeys are both intelligent and strong. They have a phenomenal memory and can recognize donkeys they once knew after being separated from them for as long as 25 years!

The Lowdown

Map reference 13 B1
Address 43000 (Haute-Loire).
 Statue de Notre-Dame-de-France: Rocher Corneille.
 Cathédrale de Notre-Dame: 2 Rue Manécanterie; www.cathedraledupuy.org.
 Musée des Croyances Populaires: 26 Rue Raphaël; loieldela salamandre.com.
 Musée Crozatier: Jardin Henri Vinay
 Chapelle St-Michel d'Aiguilhe: 1 Rue Crozatier; www.rocher saintmichel.fr.

Train from Lyon and Clermont-Ferrand. **Bus** from Mende, Brioude and Craponne

Visitor information 2 Pl du Clauzel, 43000; 04 71 09 38 41; www.ot-lepuyenvelay.fr

Open Statue de Notre-Dame-de-France: mid-Feb–mid-Nov: daily. Musée des Croyances Populaires: May–Sep: Tue–Sun pm only. Musée Crozatier: call or check website for timings before visiting.

Prices Statue de Notre-Dame-de-France & Chapelle St-Michel d'Aiguilhe: €12–22; under 6s free. Cathédrale de Notre-Dame: free. Musée des Croyances Populaires: €14; free under 5s. Buy adult passes (€9.50 per person) to visit the cloister, chapel and statue at any of these sights or tourist office.

Skipping the queue The sights are not usually very crowded.

Guided tours In the cloister of the cathedral (in French)

Age range 5 plus

Activities Buy glove puppets at Le Chat Perché (*chat-perche.net*) or improvise with socks and put on a puppet show in the Jardin Henri Vinay.

Allow A day

Festival Roi de l'Oiseau, Festival of the Bird King, with jugglers, stilt-walkers, musicians, archery contests and parades of local people in costume (mid-Sep)

Good family value?

Le Puy has lots for families, from its Romanesque cathedral to the puppet shows staged at the Musée des Croyances Populaires.

5 Le Puy-en-Velay

Weary pilgrims and lofty pinnacles

The approach to Le Puy-en-Velay is an amazing sight: the town sits in a volcanic bowl with dark basalt spurs erupting from it, each topped with a building or statue. It looks rather like Middle Earth in *The Lord of the Rings*. Le Puy is famous as one of the starting points of a major pilgrimage route to the Spanish town of Santiago de Compostela and for producing lace, lentils and a sticky green liqueur called *verveine*, made from the herb verbena.

Key Sights



2 Cathédrale de Notre-Dame
 Decorated with striped stonework, this soaring medieval cathedral houses a black Madonna dressed in Le Puy lace. Almost hidden above the arches in the 12th-century cloister is a cornice, carved with monsters and mythical beasts.

3 Musée des Croyances Populaires
 Puppet shows are the highlight of this museum, even for non-French speakers. Three actor-musicians perform mime and plays based on local folklore.

4 Musée Crozatier The unique collection of exhibits includes samples of the finest lace, hand-made over five centuries, and some fascinating early lace-making machines.



1 Statue de Notre-Dame-de-France It is possible to climb up inside this colossal red statue of Mary and Jesus, perched on the pinnacle of Rocher Corneille. It was cast in 1860 from 213 cannons seized in Sevastopol during the Crimean War.



5 Chapelle St-Michel d'Aiguilhe A flight of 268 steps, carved out of rock, lead to this 10th-century chapel, balanced on a rocky 85-m (279-ft) high pinnacle.



Kite flying in the Jardin Henri Vinay in Le Puy-en-Velay

Letting off steam

Head to **Jardin Henri Vinay** (04 71 04 07 74) in Le Puy-en-Velay for wide open spaces, three playgrounds and an animal park. Or take bus 1 or 2 to **Planet'air** (Plaine d'Audinet, 43700 Brives-Charensac), a fun place for the whole family, with a mini-golf course and bouncy castles for tots. In St-Christophe Dolaison, a 10-minute drive, there is ten-pin bowling and laser game at **Complexe L'Odyssee** (www.bowlingodyssee.com).



Bread for sale at the busy **Marché du Samedi** on Place du Plot

Eat and drink

Picnic: under €20; **Snacks:** €20–45; **Real meal:** €45–90; **Family treat:** over €90 (based on a family of four)

PICNIC **Marché du Samedi** (Pl du Plot, 43000; Sat only) offers a choice of local farmers' produce. On other days, buy provisions at **Spar** (Pl Clauzel, 43000; 04 71 00 95 14). Picnic in the Jardin Henri Vinay. **SNACKS** **Au 3B** (8 Pl de la Halle, 43000; 04 71 02 01 48) has a terrace where a sandwich, cheese or a local dish can be sampled. The three Bs

of this restaurant's name stand for *Bonjour, Bienvenue* and *à Bientôt* (hello, welcome and see you soon).

REAL MEAL **Marco Polo** (46 Rue Raphaël, 43000; 04 71 02 83 11) is a friendly restaurant, with warm orange and red interiors. Large portions of tasty homecooked pasta are standard fare here.

FAMILY TREAT **Tourmayre** (12 Rue Chênebouterie, 43000; 04 71 09 58 94; www.restaurant-tourmayre.com; closed Jan & first week Sep) is housed in a 16th-century chapel, with stone walls, vaulted ceilings and frescoes. It serves superb regional and seasonal cuisine.

Find out more

DIGITAL The website www.learner.org/interactives/volcanoes provides answers to questions and excellent video clips related to volcanoes. Go to www.ready.gov/volcanoes for fascinating facts and figures, as well as an interactive game.

Next stop...

A FORTRESS AND A FRESCO

Take bus 9 from Le Puy to the atmospheric 12th-century fortress, **Château de Polignac** (04 71 04 06 04; Jul–mid-Sep) that once housed the most powerful family in the region. Hop on to a bus (www.ter-sncf.com) or drive 50 km (31 miles) northwest to the Gothic **Abbaye de la Chaise-Dieu** (www.abbaye-chaise-dieu.com). Check out the spine-chilling 15th-century fresco depicting a *Danse Macabre* (Dance of Death), a procession of figures, partnered by skeletons, which served to remind people of their mortality. Drive to **Parc Aquatique et Sportif des Portes d'Auvergne** (04 71 00 51 89; late Jun–Aug) at St-Paulien, 20 minutes by car, for thrills such as a 68-m (223-ft) slide, gushing waves and a waterfall.



Fresco portraying the *Danse Macabre* at *Abbaye de la Chaise-Dieu*

KIDS' CORNER

Look out for...

- 1 The black Madonna. What is she wearing and where was it made?
- 2 The cloister's secret. What can you see above the arches?
- 3 The rocky steps that lead to the Chapelle St-Michel d'Aiguilhe. How many are there?
- 4 The gigantic red statue of the Notre-Dame-de-France. What was it made from?
- 5 A spooky fresco in La Chaise-Dieu. What does it depict and why?



Answers at the bottom of the page.

THE HEAVENLY DREAM

A woman with fever had a vision to visit Mont Anis. She climbed the peak and fell asleep. She woke up to find herself cured and was astonished to see the Virgin Mary sitting on a stone. She told her to build a church on the spot marked out by a stag's hoof prints. The "fever stone" is still on display in the church.



Mystery of the black Madonnas

The explanations for why these statues are black vary – from African or Arabic origins to simply age. Le Puy's is a copy of the one destroyed during the Revolution. It is paraded through the town on L'Assomption de Marie on 15 August every year.



Answers: 1 Lace, made in Le Puy. 2 A cornice of carved monsters and figures. 3 268. 4 213 canons. 5 *Danse Macabre* (Dance of Death), to remind people of their mortality.



A horse-drawn carriage at Les Bisons d'Europe

6 Les Bisons d'Europe

A shaggy bison tale

The largest European mammal, the bison can weigh up to 1 ton (1 tonne), the same as an elephant, a hippo or a Formula 1 racing car. They run free in this wild, wooded reserve created as a breeding centre in 1991. Unlike their American cousins, who prefer plains, European bison favour forests. In summer, tour the reserve on foot or by a horse-drawn carriage along a 2-km (1-mile) long trail or in winter by sleigh. End up at the **Musée des Bisons d'Europe**, which investigates the origin and lifestyle of the bison through audio-visual displays and a reconstructed prehistoric cave.

Take cover

Take the entire family and head to **Espace Aquatique Atlantique (Bvd Péchaud, St Chély d'Apcher; 04 66**

31 32 33; open all year), where there is a 25 m (82 ft) pool for serious swimmers and a children's wading pool with slides. There is also a sauna and Jacuzzi.

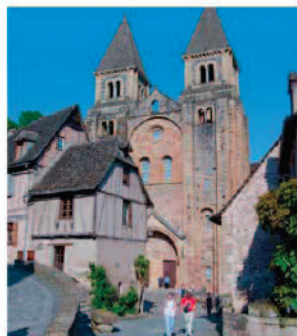
7 St-Flour

Ups and downs

Located on a crucial trade route, St-Flour once rivalled Aurillac as capital of the Auvergne. Today, it is a town divided into two parts: the high town climbs the abrupt volcanic outcrop of Planèze and the lower town hugs the banks of the Ander river. Climb up to the higher part to explore its charming huddle of old, narrow streets, and peek into the 14th-century **Cathédrale St-Pierre**. It has a life-sized statue of a black Christ inside and a terrific view from its cliff-edge terrace. The **Musée de la Haute-Auvergne** will captivate kids with its Gallo-Roman weapons, colourful ceremonial costumes, amazing headdresses and a 10th-century shrine made from bones.

Letting off steam

Go for a splash at the nearby **Le Centre Aqualudique (Route de Chaudes-Aigues, 15110; 04 71 60 76 86)**, a water park, or head for **Margeride Aventure (www.**



The imposing structure of the Abbaye de Ste Foy, Conques

The Lowdown

- Map reference** 13 A1
- Address** 15100 (Cantal). Cathédrale St-Pierre: Pl d'Armes; 04 71 60 61 90. Musée de la Haute-Auvergne: 1 Pl d'Armes; 04 71 60 22 32
- Train** from Mende, Millau and Clermont-Ferrand. **Bus** from Clermont-Ferrand, Massiac and St-Flour-Chaudes-Aigues station
- Visitor information** 17 bis Pl d'Armes, 15100; 04 71 60 22 50; www.saint-flour.com
- Open** Musée de la Haute-Auvergne: early May–Sep; daily; Oct–early May: Mon & Wed–Sat
- Eat and drink** **Picnic** Le Manoir des Saveurs (12 Av du Lioran Zone commerciale de Montplain, Saint-Flour – Ville haute, 15100; 04 71 60 15 43) is a delightful boulangerie and pâtisserie which stocks pastries and cakes. Picnic in the lower town or at Margeride Aventure. **Real meal** Les Iles du Cantal (61 Rue des Lacs, 15100; 04 71 60 76 70; www.lesilesducantal.com) is a modest restaurant with panoramic views that serves hearty regional dishes and crêpes.
- Festival** Christmas market (mid-Dec)

margeride-aventure.fr). A 15-minute drive away, this is a woodland adventure park for all ages, with fun activities such as tunnels to squeeze through and trampolines.

8 Conques

Bone rustling monks

In this medieval town of cobbled streets and half-timbered houses, the splendid **Abbaye de Ste-Foy** has origins that link Dadon, an 8th-century hermit, and Ste Foy, a 3rd-century teenage martyr. Dadon founded a community of monks, one of whom stole Ste Foy's remains from the town of Agen in a bid to put Conques on the map. With her remains stored in its abbey, Conques soon became an important stop on the Santiago pilgrimage route. Her relics are still here, in a 9th-century gold-encased statue in the Treasury Museum. Above the abbey doors, teeming with monstrous figures, the tympanum depicts the Last Judgement. Do not miss the creatures writhing in hell and the 15 tiny faces peeping out from the stonework above the arch.

The Lowdown

- Map reference** 13 A1
- Address** 48000 (Lozère) 48120 Ste-Eulalie-en-Margeride; 04 66 31 40 40; www.bison-europe.com
- Train** to St-Chély-d'Apcher, then a 20-min taxi ride
- Visitor information** 48 Rue Théophile Roussel, 48200 St-Chély d'Apcher; 04 66 31 03 67; www.monts-du-midi-tourisme.com
- Open year round**
- Prices** €20–24 on foot; €40–50 by carriage; €45–58 by sleigh; €14–16 for museum
- Eat and drink** **Picnic** Supermarché Champion (Bvd Guérin d'Apcher, 48200) in St-Chély d'Apcher, located 12 km (7 miles) from the reserve, stocks picnic supplies. Eat at the reserve's picnic area. **Snacks** Bisons d'Europe Bar (*on site*) sells sandwiches and fast food.

Letting off steam

Walk down to the river and join the well-signed GR 65, part of the pilgrims' route. Drive 8 km (5 miles) south to the village of St-Cyprien-sur-Dourdou and cool off at the pleasant aquatic centre, with a 25-m (82-ft) swimming pool and paddling pool for tots, surrounded by terraces and lawns.

The Lowdown

- Map reference** 12 G2
Address 12320 (Aveyron).
Abbaye de Ste-Foy: Pl de l'Église; 05 65 69 85 12
- Train** to St-Christophe, then shuttle bus. **Bus** from Rodez
- Visitor information** Conques, 12320; 05 65 72 85 00; www.tourisme-conques.fr
- Open** Abbaye de Ste-Foy: church & Treasury Museum: daily
- Eat and drink** **Snacks** Les Rives du Lot (Les Péliés, 12320 Grand-Vabre; 05 65 72 84 96; mid-Apr–Oct) is a simple riverside café, 10 minutes northwest of Conques, that serves salads, pizzas and *frites* (chips). **Real meal** Au Parvis (Le Bourg, 12320; 05 65 72 82 81) offers tasty regional dishes, crêpes and ice creams.

9 Salers

Cloak and dagger country

Dark volcanic stone buildings and lush surroundings have lent this mountain village the description, "a black diamond on a green carpet". Salers was an administrative centre in the 16th century, and although a small place, the town boasts grand architecture; intricate carvings decorate the large houses around Place Tyssandier d'Escous. Try and find demonic faces on the façade



The quaint-looking Au Parvis opposite the Abbaye de Ste-Foy, Conques



Witch dolls adorning a window at Place Tyssandier d'Escous, Salers

of the Musée Maison des Templiers. Look out for the turrets, each one fashioned like a giant pepper pot. The 16th-century Église St-Mathieu has carvings in stone of pairs of dogs, goats and birds huddling at the top of the porch pillars. Look inside at the eerily life-like *mise au tombeau*, a statue of Jesus lying on his shroud, surrounded by onlookers.

Letting off steam

Walk around the 15th-century ramparts of Salers or drive to Tournemire and go for a scramble above the knights and dragons-style **Château d'Anjony** (www.anjony.fr). Owned at different times by the feuding Tournemire and d'Anjony families, once when the d'Anjony sent a spy into the Tournemire camp, he was sent back with his ears cut off and sewn to his bottom!

The Lowdown

- Map reference** 12 G1
Address 15140 (Cantal).
- Train** to Aurillac, then bus from Aurillac to Les Quatre Routes (on the Borg-les-Orgues route) and then a 10-min taxi ride
- Visitor information** Pl Tyssandier-D'Escous, 15140; 04 71 40 58 08; www.salers-tourisme.fr
- Eat and drink** **Snacks** Chez La Préfète (Pl Tyssandier d'Escous, 15140; 04 71 40 70 55; closed Jan–mid-Feb & Mon in low season), located in the main square, is famous for its *tartines* (open sandwiches) and ordinary sandwiches. **Real meal** La Diligence (Rue de Beffroi, 15140; 04 71 40 75 39; www.ladiligence-salers.com) is a cosy restaurant, bar and crêperie rolled into one, which serves Auvergnat dishes and snacks, as well as salads; includes a kids' menu.

KIDS' CORNER

Things to do...

- 1** See if you can find any Salers cows. Large and shaggy, they graze in the countryside and their milk produces several famous cheeses.
- 2** Find the devil, busy weighing souls, in the carved panel above the entrance to the Abbaye de Ste-Foy in Conques.
- 3** In Les Bisons d'Europe, draw a picture of a bison.
- 4** Follow the treasure hunt, "The little curiosities of Conques", downloadable from the Conques tourist office website (tinyurl.com/4378n5s).



AS AGILE AS A BISON!

They might seem lumbering, but bison are much speedier than they look. They can run at up to 56 km (35 miles) per hour, jump 3 m (10 ft) from a standing start and turn around quickly, which helps when enemies attack from behind.



Bison's background

Bison used to roam about in central and southern Europe, feeding on grass, shoots and leaves. Their greatest threat to survival came from man, and by 1927 they had been hunted to extinction in the wild. Only 54 survived in European zoos. A programme of re-introduction to forests and reserves has successfully raised numbers to approximately 2,000.



10 Château de Murol

A knight's tale

In the Middle Ages, a lord's castle was not just his home but also a symbol of his power. It needed to protect him from foreign and religious enemies, unruly neighbours and rebellious peasants. The sturdy keep in Murol, with its multi-sided design to spot attackers from all directions, shows what was needed to stay safe in the 14th century. The sight is brought to life by costumed guides and actors.



Children playing with swords on a castle bastion

Key Features

Entrance



① **Chapels** A 568-year-old skeleton, thought to be that of Guillaume de Murol, who built the castle in 1380, was unearthed in a chapel crypt.

② **Spiral staircase** Set within the thickness of the wall, this 13th-century staircase is particularly cramped. Medieval builders had them built like this to stop an armed attacker from using his sword.



④ **Wall-walk** This fortified walkway at the top of the castle circles the top of the keep's inner curtain wall. It protected defenders as they shot arrows at attackers and dropped cannon balls or rocks on them.



⑥ **Living quarters** There is a kitchen with a fireplace and cooking pots, a room with coats of arms, where vassals came to swear loyalty, and a knight's bedroom.



③ **Keep** Designed to protect the castle's interior and repel cannon balls, the keep's massive inner curtain wall is 10-m (33-ft) high and 3-m (10-ft) thick in places.

⑤ **Guardroom** The guardroom protected three crucial areas: the cellars, where vital supplies for use during a long siege were kept; the armoury, which held stocks of spare weapons and arrows; and the access to the wall-walk, the castle's last defence.



The Lowdown

Map reference 9 A6
Address 63790 (Puy-de-Dôme).
Maison du Pré Long, Murol;
04 73 26 02 00; www.chateau-demurol.fr

Train to Clermont-Ferrand, then bus (Tue all year; Jul & Aug also Sat) or taxi

Open Apr–Jun & Sep: 10am–6pm daily; Jul & Aug: 10am–6:30pm daily; Oct–Mar: 10am–5pm Sat & Sun & school hols; Feb–Mar & Oct: themed visits at 2:30pm & 3:30pm Wed during school hols & Sun; Apr–Jun: 2:30pm & 3:30pm Sun; Jul & Aug: re-enactments 10:30am–6pm

Mon, Tue, Thu, & Fri. *Son et lumière*: Jul & Aug: 8:30pm Tue & Thu (reservations advised); unaccompanied visits possible if no other event is scheduled.

Prices €26; re-enactments €36–46. *son et lumière*: €48–58

Skipping the queue Buy tickets in advance, by e-mail, phone or at local supermarkets.

Guided tours Tours in French (Jul & Aug) every 30 mins on Sun; book ahead for other days. For groups of 15 plus, tours can be reserved Sep–Jun. Tours in other languages are also available.

Age range 4 plus

Activities Watch a re-enactment, then stand at the foot of the castle and plan an attack or climb up to the wall-walk to see how it can be best defended.

Allow 1–2 hours

Café Nearby, in the village of Murol

Toilets Below the castle near the car park

Good family value?

A visit that includes re-enactments or displays of falconry and jousting gives children an insight into life in the Middle Ages.



Strolling along one of Lac Chambon's sandy beaches

Letting off steam

Although there is plenty of space to run around the château, if the weather is fine, **Lac Chambon** is great for a visit. It was formed when the Tartaret volcano erupted and lava blocked the Couze river. The calm, shallow waters of the lake make it ideal for swimming and watersports. It has two beaches that are patrolled by lifeguards in July and August. Canoes, windsurfers and pedalos are available for rent.

Eat and drink

Picnic: under €20; Snacks: €20–45; Real meal: €45–90; Family treat: over €90 (based on a family of four)

PICNIC Petit Casino (*Rue Pierre Celeiroi, 63790; 04 73 88 80 13*), a supermarket in the village of Muroi, is a great place for food shopping. Picnic near the castle or on one of Lac Chambon's beaches.

SNACKS La Petite Plage (*63790 Chambon-sur-Lac; 04 73 88 67 25*) is a lakeside café with a panoramic terrace that serves snacks all day as well as more substantial dishes.



Picnicking on the lawns by Lac Chambon

REAL MEAL Le Chalet de la Plage (*Plage du Lac Chambon, 63790; 04 73 88 80 30*) offers fresh regional food on its menu. This chalet-style restaurant has a large terrace right on the beach.

FAMILY TREAT Aux 500 Diables (*63790 Chambon des Neiges; 04 73 88 81 71; www.500diables.com*) is an attractively rustic mountain restaurant with tables surrounding a central wood fire. A popular family choice, it offers a good-value kids' menu and superb pastries.

Find out more

DIGITAL Go to www.castles.org/Kids_Section/Castle_Story/index.htm for pages to print and colour and fun facts about castles and their inhabitants. Share stories on the creative and interactive website, www.kidsonthenet.org.uk/castle.

Take cover

If the weather turns nasty, visit the **Patinoire-Centre Sportif et Culturel** (www.sancy.com/activites/sport-loisir-interieur_259.cfm), 20 km (12 miles) away in Le Mont-Dore, where there are six bowling lanes and an ice rink.

Next step...

MONT-DORE AVENTURES

Drive 20 km (12 miles) west through the mountains to Le Mont-Dore spa and ski resort, where **Mont-Dore Aventures** (www.montdore-aventures.com) offers a host of forest activities such as crossing rope bridges and swinging through the trees on zip lines. Supervised courses range from those designed for kids aged 4 to the "super black" for kids who are good climbers. Safety is taken seriously here.

KIDS' CORNER

Find out more...

- 1 Why did the keep have so many sides?
- 2 Why was the guardroom important?
- 3 How did the spiral staircase help stop armed attackers?
- 4 What were the advantages of the wall-walk?
- 5 Whose skeleton was excavated in the chapel?



Answers at the bottom of the page.



COMBAT TRAINING

Training to become a knight was tough. Boys practised swordplay using wooden swords, and staged piggyback fights to gain the skills needed for fighting on horseback.

Naughty knights and public punishment

Public humiliation was part of medieval punishment. Minor criminals would have their heads and hands trapped in a pillory, and rotten food and dead rats thrown at them by passers-by. Medieval knights were bound by a strict code of chivalry, which obliged them to be honourable, brave, loyal, God-fearing and courteous to ladies. Knights who broke the rules would have their spurs (tools worn on the heel of a boot used to ride horses) cut off and shields hung upside down.



Answers: 1 So that attackers could be spotted from every direction. 2 It protected the cellars, armoury and access to the wall-walk. 3 By being too cramped for attackers to use their swords. 4 It protected defenders while they were repelling their enemies. 5 Guillaume de Muroi.

11 Parc Naturel Régional des Volcans d'Auvergne

Sleeping giants

France's largest regional nature park (3,950 sq km/1,525 sq miles) boasts one of Europe's highest volcanoes, Puy de Sancy. Crowning the Mont-Dore, the park rises up to 1,886 m (6,185 ft). Climb up the steps and boardwalks to the summit or cheat by taking the cable car from Le Mont-Dore town. Also in the park are Monts Dôme and Mont du Cantal, and the volcanic Plateau du Cézallier. It is a stiff hike on an old mule track to the vast green crater at the top of the 1,465-m (4,792-ft) high Puy de Dôme, but worth it for the view. The Auvergne volcanoes have not erupted for years, but are



Breathtaking view of the Puy de Dôme, Parc Naturel Régional des Volcans d'Auvergne

still active underground; experts have classified them dormant and not extinct. The park is a centre for outdoor activities ranging from mountain-biking to skiing. Rent mountain bikes from VTT Evasion (www.vtt-superbesse.com) and ski equipment from Bessac Sports (www.bessac-sports.fr). The park is also crisscrossed by walking trails.

Take cover

Head west to Lanobre for **Château de Val** (www.chateau-de-val.com), a 15th-century fairy-tale castle on the Borg-les-Orgues lake, which stood on a hilltop until the dam was built and the valley filled with water. Stop for a view of the 120-m (394-ft) high dam, before heading to the lake.

12 Vulcania

Shake, rattle and roll

Vulcania turns science into a pulsating adventure. Walk inside earth and experience its "hot spots"; recline on a revolving platform and learn the secrets of the solar system.



A dramatic caldera-shaped building in Vulcania

The Lowdown

- **Map reference** 8 H5
Address Rue de Mazayes, 63230 St-Ours-Les Roches; 08 20 82 78 28; www.vulcania.com
- 🚗 **Train** or bus to Clermont-Ferrand, then a shuttle bus (in summer) or a 25-min taxi ride
- 🕒 **Open** late Mar–Aug: daily & Sep–mid-Nov: Tue–Sun
- 👤 **Family ticket** €80–96; under 3s free
- 🍴 **Eat and drink** **Snacks** Snack du Cratère (*on site*) has a large terrace perfect for a speedy snack. **Real meal** Brasserie des Volcans (*on site*) has a decent menu, including *truffade* (a local speciality made with cheese and potatoes).

Feel the sensations of a tornado, an earthquake and volcanic eruptions, participate in experiments through games and hands-on activities that teach kids about earth sciences, including one where kids have to help save the town of Clermont-Ferrand from being engulfed in lava. Attractions such as "The Earth's Rage", "Mission Toba" and the "Dragon Ride" involve an imaginary journey on board a simulator through magma to the bowels of the earth, meeting 3D mythical monsters on the way. There are amusements and play areas for younger kids too.

Letting off steam

Whizz down the waterslide and cool off with a plunge in the wave pool at **Centre Aquatique à Chamalière**



The charming Château de Val on the Borg-les-Orgues lake

The Lowdown

- **Map reference** 8 H5
Address 63000 (Puy-de-Dôme) & 15000 (Cantal).
- 🚗 **Train** from Clermont-Ferrand to Le Mont-Dore. **Bus** from Clermont-Ferrand to Le Mont-Dore and other towns
- i **Visitor information** Montlosier 63970 Aydat; 04 73 65 64 00; www.parc-volcans-auvergne.com
- 🍴 **Eat and drink** **Picnic Market** St-Pierre (Pl St-Pierre, 63000 Clermont-Ferrand) is the best place to buy bread and Auvergne cheese. Picnic beside the crater lake, Lac Pavin. **Snacks** Crêperie le 1513 (3 Rue des Chaussetiers, 63000 Clermont-Ferrand; 04 73 92 37 46; www.le1513.com), in an ancient building with stone walls and bags of character, serves great savoury and sweet crêpes.
- 🎪 **Festival** Fête Médiévale de Montferrand (May–Jun)

(www.clermontcommunaute.net) in a Clermont-Ferrand suburb or head out to **Stade Nautique Pierre de Coubertin** (04 73 17 60 70), with a retractable roof over its lane pools. Both sights are 25 minutes by car.

13 Limoges

China, churches and chops

Start exploring at the Limoges station, Gare des Benedictins, with its splendid dome and stained-glass windows decorated with Limousin symbols. Head to the spooky 10th-century **Crypte St-Martial** – it is all that remains of an ancient abbey and contains the tombs of St Martial, Limoges' first bishop, and St Valerie, an early Christian martyr. Legend has it that St Valerie was beheaded for her faith and she carried her own head to the bishop.

The history of Limoges' butchers is on display in the tiny **Maison de la Boucherie**. Butchers formed a



A family interacting with a science exhibit in Vulcania



The splendid Gare des Benedictins, Limoges, from a well-manicured park

guild in the Middle Ages, and became so rich that aristocrats came to them for loans. Two museums are associated with the porcelain that made Limoges world famous – the **Musée des Beaux Arts** traces the history of porcelain production and the **Limoges Cité de la Céramique** displays some examples of the region's traditional works. The **Musée de la Résistance et de la Déportation** celebrates World War II courage through an exhibition of photos, documents and weapons. A fighter jet is one of the main highlights here.

Letting off steam

Take bus 1 to **Parc Victor Thuillat** (Rue Victor Thuillat, 87100; 05 55 34 46 87), which has a playground, plenty of lawns to run around and also duck ponds.

KIDS' CORNER

Things to do...

- 1 Count the number of other volcanoes you can spot from the top of Puy de Sancy.
- 2 Join in one of the experiments at Vulcania.
- 3 Sign up for a workshop at the Musée Adrien-Dubouché in Limoges and create your own stunning porcelain decorations.



MARCO'S PORCELAIN

Porcelain was discovered by the Chinese more than 1,000 years ago. The explorer Marco Polo saw it in his travels to China and named it "porcelain" because its fragile translucence reminded him of *porcellana* (old Italian word for a cowrie shell).



Violent volcanoes

Volcanoes form when fiercely hot magma or molten rock rises from deep under the ground. They erupt when the magma breaks through the crust in a massive explosion, along with gases and dust. The magma that escapes from a volcano is called lava, which can reach 1,200°C (2,192°F); the surface of the sun is only five times hotter. Not surprisingly, the word volcano comes from *Vulcan*, the Roman god of fire. Like most volcanoes, the ones in Auvergne took millions of years to form; occasionally a freak volcano may appear overnight (although not in Auvergne). There was one in Mexico, which grew to an amazing height of 46 m (150 ft) in just six days!



The Lowdown

Map reference 8 F5

Address 87000 (Haute-Vienne). Crypte St-Martial: Pl de la République. Maison de la Boucherie: Rue de la Boucherie; 05 55 34 46 87. Musée des Beaux Arts: Pl de l'Evêché; 05 55 45 98 10; www.museebal.fr. Limoges Cité de la Céramique: Pl Winston Churchill; 05 55 33 08 50; Musée de la Résistance et de la Déportation: Rue de la Règle, Jardin de l'Evêché; 05 55 45 84 44

Train from Paris, Lyon & Bordeaux.

Bus from St-Junien, Bellac, St-Yrieix-la-Perche & Treignac

Visitor information 12 Blvd de Fleurus; 05 55 34 46 87; www.limoges-tourisme.com

Open Crypte St-Martial: closed for restoration. Maison de la Boucherie: Jul–Sep. Musée des Beaux Arts: Apr–Sep: Wed–Mon; Oct–Mar: closed Tue, Sun am. Limoges Cité de la Céramique: Wed–Mon. Musée de la Résistance et de la Déportation: Wed–Mon

Eat and drink **Snacks** Le Glacier (12 Pl Denis Dussoubs, 87000; 05 55 77 23 81) is an ice cream parlour that serves omelettes and crêpes. **Real meal** Chez Alphonse (5 Pl de la Motte, 87000; 05 55 34 34 14; closed Sun), a Limousin institution, offers classic Limousin specialities.

Festival Fêtes des Ponts, festival of bridges, accompanied by a traditional cycle race (mid-Jun)

Where to Stay in the Massif Central

The practical, good-value accommodation typical of this unspoilt region suits families well, whether in châteaux, traditional family-run hotels and inns, B&Bs, farmhouse *chambres d'hôtes* or self-catering *gîtes*. For families who enjoy camping, there is an excellent choice of high-end sites.

AGENCIES

Chez Nous

www.cheznous.com

The website offers a good range of self-catering accommodation in the Auvergne. Visitors can book directly from the owners.

Gîtes de France

www.gites-de-france.com

This nationwide organization offers a wide choice of rural and village family *gîtes* in the Massif Central.

Aven Armand

Map 13 B2

BED & BREAKFAST

Auberge du Chanet

Nivolières, 48150 Hures-la-Parade; 04 66 45 65 12; www.aubergedu.chanet.com

Within easy reach of Aven Armand, this Causse Méjean inn has four vaulted rooms with wooden floors and exposed stone walls. The dining room is popular with walkers.

Donkeys can be hired for a day's hike.



€€

Florac

Map 13 B2

CAMPING

Camping Le Pont du Tarn

Route du Pont-de-Montvert, 48400; 04 66 45 18 26; www.camping-florac.com

This three-star camp site offers 153 pitches and enjoys the twin benefits of the Tarn with its beaches and the town of Florac. A snack bar, fridges, barbecues, Wi-Fi, a launderette and large-screen TV are available.



€

Gorges du Tarn

Map 13 B2

HOTEL

Château de la Caze

Route des Gorges du Tarn, La Malène, 48210 Ste-Enimie; 04 66 48 51 01; www.chateaudelacaze.com

This 15th-century stone castle, with turrets, moat and private chapel

has a relaxed atmosphere. It stands above the Tarn with a backdrop of towering cliffs and all the activities of the river on hand.



€€€

SELF-CATERING Village Gîtes de Blajoux

Quézac, 48320 Blajoux; 04 66 49 46 00; www.village-gite-blajoux.com

At the heart of the Gorges du Tarn, these 28 newly built, well-equipped *gîtes* offer fishing, donkey- and horse-riding, climbing and mountain-biking. A paddling pool adds appeal for families with toddlers.



€€

CAMPING

La Blaquièrre

Map 13 A2

48210 Les Vignes; 04 66 48 54 93; www.campinggorgesdutarn.fr

A bit isolated, 6 km (4 miles) from La Malène, beside a pebble beach along the Tarn, this small camp site offers pitches, mobile homes and a playground. Linen hire available.



€

Lanuéjols

Map 13 B3

CAMPING

Domaine de Pradines

Route de Millau, 30750; 04 67 82 73 85; www.domaine-de-pradines.com

This two-star camp site in pine woods on a former Templar site has 55 well-spaced pitches, as well as yurts, mobile homes, cabins and *gîtes* to rent. Playground, tennis courts, volleyball and *pétanque*.



€

La Salle Prunet

Map 13 B2

BED & BREAKFAST Ferme Auberge de la Borie

La Borie, 48400; 04 66 45 10 90; tinyurl.com/3vxcfpv

This is a working farm at the heart of the Parc National des Cévennes, with goats to milk, poultry to feed

and cheese to make. Families are encouraged to help. Accommodation is simple but tasteful. The home-produced organic food is superb.



€

Le Pont de Montvert

Map 13 B2

BED & BREAKFAST

Auberge des Cévennes

48220 Jean Camus; 04 66 45 80 01; www.auberge-des-cevennes.com

In 1878, Robert Louis Stevenson stopped for Sunday lunch and flirted with the waitress at this charming inn. Pretty, simply decorated bedrooms, with bunks for kids.



€€

Le Puy-en-Velay

Map 13 B1

HOTEL

Appart' Hôtel des Capucins

29 Rue des Capucins, 43000; 04 71 04 28 74; www.lescappucins.net

Housed in a modern terracotta building, this is a family-friendly hotel in central Le Puy. The airy duplex rooms are especially suitable. The style is all-white minimalism, but sticky fingerprints are easily wiped off.



€€



Children on an Easter egg hunt at Camping du Pré Bas, Muroi

BED & BREAKFAST**Les Jardins De Gisèle**

Le Bourg, 43510 St Jean Lachalm; 04 71 57 56 11; tinyurl.com/3vk6aa5
Surrounded by splendid countryside and less than 20 minutes from Le Puy, this is a rustic, beautifully restored 14th-century fairy-tale house. Inside, it bristles with beams and has three bedrooms with galleries. There are swings and two donkeys to befriend.



€

CAMPING**Camping Rochelambert**

Le Rochelambert, 43350 St-Paulien; 04 71 00 54 02; www.camping-rochelambert.com

Just outside Le Puy, this 80-pitch riverside site offers a range of terrific activities, such as kids' treasure hunts, painting workshops, archery and an open-air cinema, as well as football and video games. Library on site.



€

Limoges

Map 8 F5

BED & BREAKFAST
Hôtel Familia

18 Rue du Général du Bessol, 87100; 05 55 77 51 40; www.hotelfamilia.fr
A 2-minute walk from the station and handy for the main sights, this hotel has a warm atmosphere. The freshly decorated bedrooms are arranged around a central patio enveloped with plants and flowers.



€

Marchal

Map 8 H6

SELF-CATERING
Chalets de l'Eau Verte

Le Jagounet, 15270; 04 71 78 78 78; www.auvergne-chalets.fr
Dotted around a large clearing, these two-bedroom wooden chalets provide comfortable accommodation for a family of four. There are way-marked hikes and cycle rides, on-site fishing, and sailing and swimming.



€€

Murol

Map 8 H6

CAMPING
Camping du Pré Bas

Lac Chambon, 63790; 04 73 88 63 04; www.leprebas.com
This four-star camp site on the banks of Lac Chambon offers 80 pitches and four kinds of mobile homes.



A bright and attractive room in Saluces, Salers

There is an indoor soft play area for younger kids, a giant water slide for older ones and sauna for grown-ups.



€-€€

Orcines

Map 8 H5

HOTEL
Les Hirondelles

34 Route de Limoges, Orcines; 04 73 62 22 43; www.hotel-lehirondelles.com

This restored farmhouse with a friendly atmosphere has lovely gardens and exteriors to relax in.

The rooms are bright, spacious and well-decorated.



€€

Salers

Map 12 G1

HOTEL
Saluces

Rue de la Martille, 15140; 04 71 40 70 82; www.hotel-salers.fr

A delightful 16th-century townhouse, this hotel offers bright bedrooms. Delicious breakfast and tea are served in a snug room or the courtyard garden – do not miss the heavenly hot chocolate. No restaurant on site. Most of the staff only speak French.



€€

St-Flour

Map 12 H1

BED & BREAKFAST
Ferme Les Deux Vallées

Le Bourg, 15110 Fridefont; 04 71 23 56 10; www.deuxvallees.com

Located 20 minutes south of St-Flour, this friendly shuttered, stone house on a working farm is filled with toys, games and baby equipment. Special children's dishes are on offer. Rock climbing, fishing and sailing nearby.



€

St-Gervais d'Auvergne

Map 8 H5

HOTEL**Le Relais d'Auvergne**

Route de Châteauneuf, 63390; 04 73 85 70 10; www.relais-auvergne.com

A Logis de France for the 21st century, it has been run by the same family for almost two decades. The bedrooms, decorated with kids in mind, have splendid bathrooms with monsoon showers. Well-placed for a visit to Vulcania.



€

St-Martin**Terressus**

Map 8 F5

BED & BREAKFAST
Château Ribagnac

Lieu dit Ribagnac, 87400; 05 55 39 77 91; www.chateauribagnac.com

This stunning 16th-century château in expansive grounds is designed to cater to young families. Kids' teas are at 6pm to leave parents time to change before dinner; sterilizing equipment and highchairs available.



€€

Tauves

Map 8 H6

BED & BREAKFAST
Les Escladines

Escladines, 63690 Tauves; 04 73 21 13 02; www.escladines.fr

This restored farmhouse in the Sancy mountains has two interconnecting rooms for families. Book meals in advance (Mon–Fri).



€€



A family enjoying a meal at Ferme Les Deux Vallées, near St-Flour

Price Guide

The following price ranges are based on one night's accommodation in high season for a family of four, inclusive of service charges and any additional taxes.

€ Under €100 €€ €100–200 €€€ over €200



Southwest France

Southwest France offers sandy Atlantic beaches and lazy seaside days on the Île de Ré and Île d'Oléron. The Pyrenees are a fantastic summer and winter playground, while caves such as Lascaux and Niaux hold humanity's earliest artistic masterpieces. Historic cities – including Albi, Poitiers and Bayonne – boast museums and monuments, and many churches and castles date from the days of Eleanor of Aquitaine.



Highlights

Futuroscope

Dance with robots or take an augmented-reality safari with creatures of the future at this theme park (see pp282–3).

La Rochelle

Take a stroll through this lively 17th-century city and visit its excellent aquarium and sandy beaches (see pp286–7).

Lascaux II

Descend into a replica of the most beautiful prehistoric painted cave in the world. See modern descendants of the animals painted on the walls of Le Thot nearby (see pp262–3).

The Pyrenees

Ski, snowboard, sled in the snow or hike to the spectacular sheer-sided Cirque de Gavarnie. Take Le Petit Train d'Artouste in the Vallée d'Ossau or the cableway to the observatory on Pic du Midi (see pp302–313).

Rocamadour

Explore this remarkable medieval, cliffside pilgrimage site built high over a gorge (see pp268–9).

Dune de Pyla

Climb this immense sand dune to the south of Arcachon bay and soak in the views before cooling off in the sea (see p295).

Left Hot-air balloons above the striking pilgrimage town of Rocamadour
Above left The splendid medieval clocktower overlooking the harbour of La Rochelle

The Best of Southwest France

Framed by the Atlantic and the Pyrenees, where dozens of beautiful river valleys crisscross some of the prettiest, most unspoilt countryside in Europe, Southwest France is an ideal family destination. Combine outdoor activities with cultural forays, including visits to a stunning concentration of Palaeolithic caves, medieval towns and cathedrals, as well as cities packed full of interesting things to see and do.

Culture vultures

Start with **Lascaux II** (see pp262–3), a perfect replica of a 14,000-year old masterpiece. Pay a visit to nearby **Le Thot** (see p263), a discovery centre where kids can meet the animals

depicted on the cave walls. Near the **Grotte de Niaux** (see pp310–11), children can learn cave painting techniques in the **Parc de la Préhistoire** (see p311).

Many of the region's other great sites are medieval – the extraordinary pilgrimage town of **Rocamadour** (see pp268–9) built into a cliff, the spectacular Gothic brick cathedral of **Albi** (see pp274–5), or **Cahors** (see p271) with its beautiful towered Pont Valentre and secret devil. Children can spot the animals and monsters in the medieval carvings that adorn the great cathedrals of **Poitiers** (see p284) and **Toulouse** (see p276), or work out the stories at **St-Savin-sur-Gartempe** (see pp284–5), a World Heritage Site for its “comic strip” of 12th-century murals. They will also enjoy the Basque music and dance festival in **Bayonne** (see pp302–303).

Left Handsome buildings in Place de la Bourse, Bordeaux
Below The astronomical observatory on top of Pic du Midi





Above The futuristic Kinémax and Futuroscope Digital City theatres in the Futuroscope theme park, near Poitiers

The great outdoors

The Atlantic's sandy beaches and sheltered islands, the **Île de Ré** (see p287) and the **Île d'Oléron** (see p288), are great for lounging, while in **Biarritz** (see p303), kids as young as seven can take lessons with a surfbrood. Children adore scrambling over Europe's largest sand pile, the **Dune de Pyla** (see p295), and punting through the green waterways of the **Marais Poitevin** (see p285). In summer, families can take a steam train back to the 19th century at **Eco-musée de la Grande Lande** (see p297) or ride **Le Petit Train d'Artouste** (see p305) dizzily high up into the Pyrenees. Here, resorts offer many activities for families, including a thrilling cable car ride up to the summit of the **Pic du Midi** (see pp306–307).

In a week

Spend a couple of days in **Poitiers**, visiting its churches, the high-tech marvels of **Futuroscope** (see pp282–3) and waterways of the **Marais Poitevin**. Then head south, with a break at **Lascaux II**, before carrying on to the pretty Renaissance town of **Sarlat** (see p266), a great base for three days to visit the incredible terrace settlement of **La Roque St-Christophe** (see p266), **Beynac** (see p267) and the castles along the Dordogne, as well as **Rocamadour**. Be sure not to miss a superb boat journey on an underground river to **Gouffre de Padirac** (see p270). On the sixth day, head west to **Arcachon** (see p295) for relaxing on the beach, with perhaps an outing to **Bordeaux** (see pp294–5).

Right Spectacular cave paintings inside Lascaux II, part of the Vézère Valley UNESCO World Heritage Site

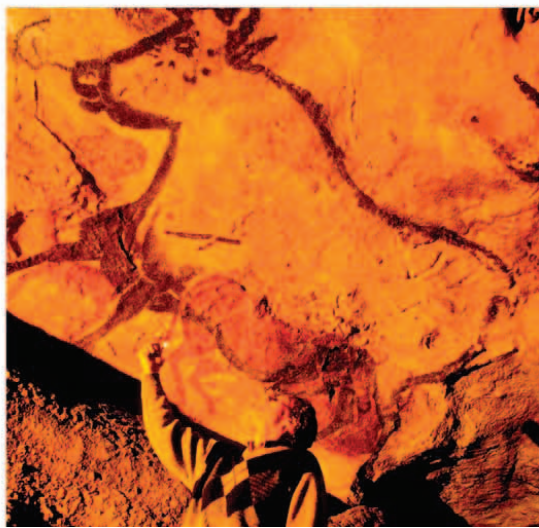
By season

In spring, spend the day outdoors exploring the Roman ruins at **Saintes** (see pp292–3) or solving the enigmas of the **Château d'Usson** (see p293).

Summer is ideal for leisurely journeys in a boat down the Charente, Dordogne, or Lot rivers, or for trips to the **Cirque de Gavarnie** (see p307). **La Rochelle** (see pp286–7) hosts Les Francofolies, a festival of French song for a week in July, while **Le Bournat** (see p266) offers great farm activities.

Autumn, when the vineyards and forests turn red, orange and yellow, is a lovely time to visit **Angoulême** (see pp290–91), with its comic book museum as a centerpiece.

In winter, the family-oriented ski resorts in the Pyrenees are in full gear. December and February are good times to visit **Futuroscope**.



Southwest France

With lazy rivers winding through landscapes dotted with châteaux, medieval villages, fields of maize, wheat, sunflowers and vineyards, Southwest France is full of charm. Its Atlantic beaches and coastal lakes offer both sheltered swimming and surfing, and the Marais Poitevin is superb for boat rides under tree canopies. South of Bordeaux, the Landes contain Europe's biggest pine forest, while the Pyrenees tower up to the Spanish frontier. The road network is excellent, as is public transport to the most popular destinations.



Fountains in Clémenceau Square, at the heart of Pau's town centre

The Lowdown



Getting there and around

Air (see p260). **Train** TGV from Paris to Futuroscope and Poitiers (with a branch to La Rochelle), Angoulême, Agen, Bordeaux and Toulouse. From Bordeaux, TGVs continue to Dax, Bayonne, Biarritz, Orthez, Pau, Lourdes and Tarbes. TER trains provide links to towns in Poitou-Charentes, Aquitaine and Midi-Pyrénées; www.ter-sncf.com (in French only) lists links to the regional networks. **Bus** Buses have replaced trains on some routes, but the service is not regular or visitor-friendly; although Poitiers (www.vitalis-poitiers.fr), La Rochelle (www.rtc.fr) and Bayonne (www.chrono-plus.eu) have good city bus services. Toulouse has a great network of métro, tram and bus lines (www.tisseo.fr); Bordeaux has a superb tram and bus system (www.infotbc.com). **Car** Hire cars to visit places beyond the main cities. Hertz (www.hertz.fr) has branches in most towns.



Supermarkets Major chains in this part of France include

Auchan, Intermarché, Carrefour, Leclerc and Casino.

Markets The bigger cities have *halles* (covered markets) daily except Monday. Many small towns and villages have markets on one set day each week. A list of such markets is available from the *Département* and local tourist offices.



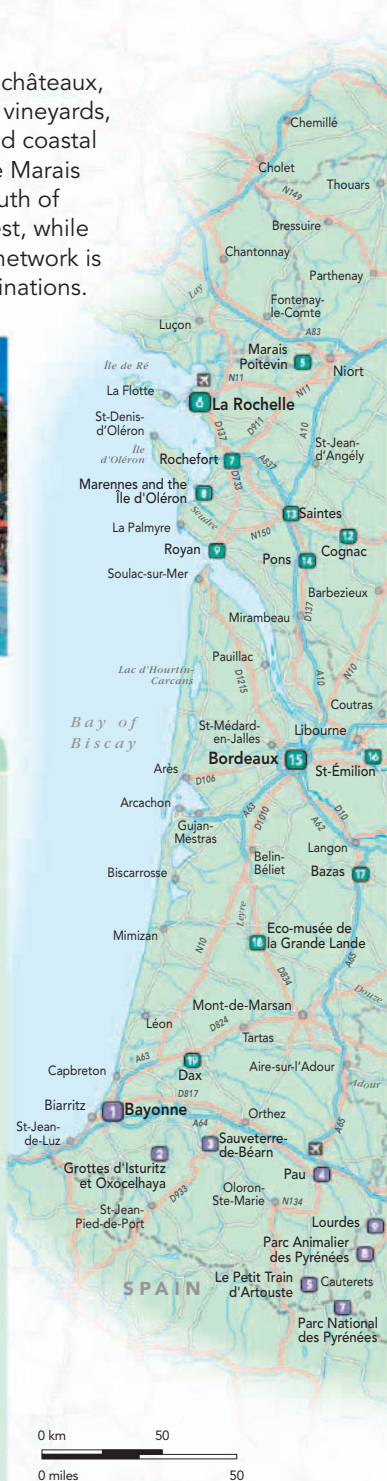
Opening hours Many shops are closed on Monday, but open on Sunday morning.



Pharmacies There is at least one pharmacy, identified by a green cross outside, in each town and many villages. A list in the window will give details of the nearest *pharmacie de garde* open outside normal hours (on Sundays and at night), and they are also listed in local newspapers, as well as on www.pharmaciesdegarde.com.



Toilets Towns have municipal public toilets, but be prepared for an emergency. Cities have pay or free street toilets that automatically clean themselves after every use.



A sandy beach on the Île d'Oléron



Ruins of the impressive Château de Bonaguil

Places of interest

■ PÉRIGORD, QUERCY AND GASCONY

- 1 Lascaux II
- 2 Château de Hautefort
- 3 Château de Jumilhac
- 4 Périgueux
- 5 La Roque St-Christophe
- 6 Le Boumat
- 7 Sarlat
- 8 Beynac
- 9 Rocamadour
- 10 Gouffre de Padirac
- 11 St-Cirq-Lapopie
- 12 Cahors
- 13 Château de Bonaguil
- 14 Villeréal
- 15 Latour-Marliac
- 16 Albi
- 17 Toulouse
- 18 Auch
- 19 Condom
- 20 Larressingle

■ POITOU AND AQUITAINE

- 1 Futuroscope
- 2 Poitiers
- 3 Angles-sur-l'Anglin
- 4 St-Savin-sur-Gartempe
- 5 Marais Poitevin
- 6 La Rochelle
- 7 Rochefort
- 8 Marennes and the Île d'Oléron
- 9 Royan
- 10 Angoulême
- 11 Château de La Rochefoucauld
- 12 Cognac
- 13 Saintes
- 14 Pons
- 15 Bordeaux
- 16 St-Émilien
- 17 Bazas
- 18 Eco-musée de la Grande Lande
- 19 Dax

■ THE PYRENEES

- 1 Bayonne
- 2 Grottes d'Isturitz et Oxocelhaya
- 3 Sauveterre-de-Béarn
- 4 Pau
- 5 Le Petit Train d'Artouste
- 6 Pic du Midi de Bigorre
- 7 Parc National des Pyrénées
- 8 Parc Animalier des Pyrénées
- 9 Lourdes
- 10 Château de Mauvezin
- 11 Grotte de Niaux
- 12 Réserve Nationale d'Orlu
- 13 Montségur
- 14 Grotte du Mas d'Azil
- 15 St Bertrand-de-Comminges



Southwest France Regional Airports

This part of France is well served by regional airports, many offering low-cost links to the UK, Ireland and cities in northern Europe, although often flights only operate from spring to autumn. For families arriving from outside Europe, the two largest airports in the region are Toulouse and Bordeaux, served by national airlines with direct links to the major international European air hubs.

Brive Vallée de la Dordogne

The airport is just off the A20, 21 km (13 miles) north of Souillac and 40 km (25 miles) east of Montignac. It is served by City Jet, Ryanair and Hop!. Taxis and hire cars are available. There is no restaurant.

Bergerac Dordogne Périgord

One of the busiest small airports in the southwest, it is located 3 km (2 miles) south of Bergerac. It has Ryanair, Jet2, Twin Jet and Flybe flights. There is a taxi stand and car hire is available. It has a café.

Toulouse-Blagnac

Situated 8 km (5 miles) northwest of Toulouse, off the A620, this airport is served by several airlines, including Air France, Alitalia, British Airways and easyJet. It is linked by a regular shuttle (€5.50) every 20–40 minutes to Toulouse's bus station, a short walk from the city's main train station.

The airport is medium-sized and well signposted, with lifts. It closes after the last flight. There is a good but expensive restaurant, 8ème Ciel (05 61 16 70 40), overlooking the runways. Holiday Inn Express (05 61 31 06 00, www.hiexpress.com) is located two minutes from the airport.

Poitiers-Biard

Poitiers-Biard is 3 km (2 miles) west of Poitiers, a 10-minute drive from Futuroscope. It is served by carriers such as Hop! and Ryanair. There are taxis and hire cars available at the airport. It is small and easy to get around, but closes after the last flight. There is a bar-restaurant.

La Rochelle-Île de Ré

La Rochelle-Île de Ré is 5 km (3 miles) northwest of La Rochelle, with EasyJet, Flybe, Ryanair, Hop! and Jet2 flights. Bus 7 and 47 (€1.50) provide links to the city centre. There is a café.



The entrance to La Rochelle-Île de Ré airport

Bordeaux

Bordeaux, the biggest airport in the southwest after Toulouse, is 10 km (6 miles) west of the centre of town in Mérignac, off the *rocade* (bypass) that surrounds the city. It is served by easyJet, British Airways, Flybe, Air Transat, Ryanair, Veuling, Air France, Chailair, Aer Lingus, Tunisair, Air Algeria, Air Transat, Iberia and TAP. The Jet' bus (€7.20) links the airport every 45 minutes to Bordeaux's St-Jean train station; The La Liane 1 city bus also runs every 10 minutes from the airport to central Bordeaux, connecting with Tram line A at Mérignac centre, and with Trams B and C at Bordeaux-Quinconces.

It is a medium-sized airport, with a 5-minute walk to the departure gates. It closes after the last flight until 5am. There is a brasserie, sandwich bar and café in the main terminal, as well as a snack bar/café in the Billi terminal (where low cost flights arrive). The Ibis Styles Bordeaux Aéroport hotel (05 56 55 93 42; www.accorhotels.com) is nearby.

Biarritz-Anglet-Bayonne

Only 2 km (1 mile) south of Biarritz, this airport is served by Air France, Ryanair, easyJet, Transavia, Hop!, Thomas Cook, SAS Scandinavian and Volotea. Chronoplus shuttles (€1) run to Biarritz, Anglet and Bayonne; ATCRB buses run to St-Jean-de-Luz.

Pau-Pyrénées

Pau-Pyrénées is a small airport 7 km (4 miles) north of Pau off the A64. It has Air France, City Jet and Twin Jet. It is linked to the centre of Pau and the train station by Idelis shuttle (€1).

Tarbes-Lourdes-Pyrénées

This airport is 10 km (6 miles) from both Tarbes and Lourdes. It is served by Ryanair, Hop!, Vueling, Thomas Cook and Jetairfly. Bus 2 (€2) links it to Tarbes, Lourdes, Argelès-Gazost, Luz St-Sauveur and Barèges. It has snack bars and a restaurant.

The Lowdown

Bergerac Dordogne Périgord
05 53 22 25 25; www.bergerac.aeroport.fr

Biarritz-Anglet-Bayonne 05 59 43 83 83; www.biarritz.aeroport.fr

Bordeaux 05 56 34 50 50;
www.bordeaux.aeroport.fr

Brive Vallée de la Dordogne
05 55 22 40 00; www.aeroport-brive-vallee-dordogne.com

La Rochelle-Île de Ré 05 46 42 30 26; www.larochelle.aeroport.fr

Pau-Pyrénées 05 59 33 33 00;
www.pau.aeroport.fr

Poitiers-Biard 05 49 30 04 40;
www.poitiers.aeroport.fr

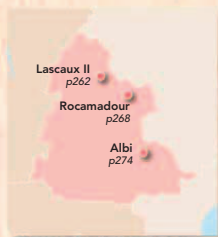
Tarbes-Lourdes-Pyrénées 05 62 32 98 79; www.tlp.aeroport.fr

Toulouse-Blagnac 08 25 38 00 00;
www.toulouse.aeroport.fr

Périgord, Quercy and Gascony

Together these three regions offer families the opportunity to experience some of France's most unspoilt countryside. There are gastronomic delights to sample and medieval discoveries to be made at every turn, with a slower pace of French life full of rustic charm. The area also has the Dordogne and Lot rivers, which provide extensive waterways to explore year round.

Below Soaring limestone walls of Gouffre de Padirac, an underground cave system

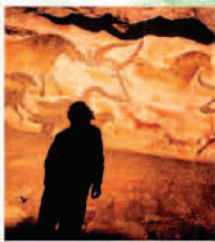
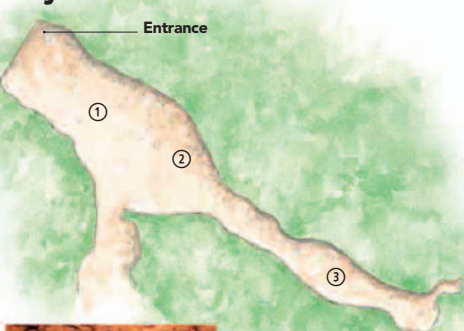


① Lascaux II

Arts and crafts, prehistoric-style

The original Lascaux caves with their amazing paintings date back 17,000 years, and were rediscovered in 1940 by four teenage boys roaming over the hills in search of adventure, when their dog Robot fell into the caves. Opened in 1948, the caves were closed 15 years later since the rising carbon dioxide levels from the breath of visitors caused the artworks to fade. After years of painstaking work, Lascaux II, an exact replica of two of the most famous chambers, the Great Hall of Bulls and the Painted Gallery, was opened in 1983. It took 11 years, cost over €73 million and involved over 20 sculptors and artists to re-create these chambers.

Key Features



① Salle des Taureaux

The Great Hall of Bulls is one of the most impressive examples of prehistoric art. Each animal was painted and drawn in countless shades of charcoal, yellow and red. Modern-day artists used the same techniques and materials as the Palaeolithic painters to re-create the paintings.



② **The largest prehistoric painting** This 5-m (16-ft) wide painting of the enormous "Bull" in the Great Hall of Bulls is believed to be the largest example of prehistoric art discovered. The centrepiece of the cave, it is Lascaux's most famous image.

③ **Diverticule Axial** The Painted Gallery, which has been termed the "Sistine Chapel of Prehistory", houses images including a falling cow and a frieze of ponies.



La Scène du Puits There is only one drawing of a human, in the Shaft of the Dead Man. Next to him looms a bison and under him a bird. This is in the original Lascaux caves, which are closed to visitors.

Letting off steam

Splash off the cave dust paddling along the Vézère river. **Canoe Vallée Vézère** (www.canoesvalleevezere.com) organizes canoeing trips. Four-seater family kayaks are available,



Canoe rental along the calm Vézère river, perfect for families

but kids aged under 12 years must be accompanied by an adult. Life jackets are provided. Or check out the bears at the **Site Préhistorique de Regourdou** (Regourdou, 24290 Montignac; 05 53 51 81 23; www.regourdou.fr), 450 m (1,476 ft) uphill from Lascaux. Discovered in 1954, it is said to have been the centre of a prehistoric bear cult. Today, 20 bears roam around in their natural habitat, but fenced off from humans.

Eat and drink

*Picnic: under €20; Snacks: €20–45
Real meal: €45–90; Family treat:
over €90 (based on a family of four)*

PICNIC Marché Samedi (Pl Quai Merilhou, 24290 Montignac; 8am–1pm), the local Saturday morning



A variety of produce on sale at the Saturday market, Montignac


market, sells regional cheeses and freshly baked breads, as well as locally grown fruit and vegetables. Picnic at the tables at Lascaux II or on the banks of the river in Montignac.

SNACKS La Dolce Vita (6 Pl de la Liberation, 24290 Montignac) serves delicious pizzas with a wide choice of toppings.

The Lowdown

-  **Map reference** 12 E1
- Address** Route de la Grotte de Lascaux II, 24290 Montignac; www.semitour.com
-  **Train** from Bordeaux to Condat-Le-Lardin, then taxi
-  **Visitor information** Mairie de Montignac, Pl Yvon Delbos, 24290 Montignac; 05 53 51 72 00; www.ville-montignac.com
-  **Open** Feb–Mar & Oct–Dec: 10am–12.30pm & 2–5.30pm Tue–Sun; Apr–Jun & Sep: 9am–6pm daily; Jul–Aug: 9am–7pm daily
-  **Price** €30–40; under-5s free
-  **Skipping the queue** Buy tickets ahead of time in Jul & Aug. In summer, tickets are only available at the tourist office in Montignac. Buy a combined ticket including Le Thot for €42–52. First visit

Le Thot and then go on to see Lascaux II.

-  **Guided tours** A 45-min tour is available in English. Contact the tourist office for details.
-  **Age range** 6 plus
-  **Activities** Children can learn cave painting and more about archaeological excavation at Le Thot's prehistoric park.
-  **Allow** An hour
-  **Café** Basic refreshments are available at a stand Jul–Aug.
-  **Toilets** On site; larger public toilets are available in the centre of Montignac nearby.

Good family value?

An affordable day out for the family, with numerous activities to engage and educate children.

REAL MEAL *Les Pilotis* (6 Rue Lafitte, 24290 Montignac; 05 53 50 88 15), a family-friendly restaurant located down by the Vézère river, serves simple, home-cooked fare.

FAMILY TREAT *La Chaumière* (53 Rue 4 Septembre, 24290 Montignac; 05 53 50 14 24) appears to be a small thatched cottage on the outside. But inside it is a thriving restaurant that serves an impressive array of regional dishes made with fresh local produce. The duck confit is highly recommended.

Shopping

Located next to Montignac's tourist office is an exhibition area with stalls selling goods produced in the region. Clothes and interesting knick-knacks – including Lascaux souvenirs for kids – can be bought here.

Find out more

DIGITAL Visit www.lascaux.culture.fr to find out more about Lascaux and take an interactive tour of the cave. Learn about the history of cave painting on www.historyworld.net.

Next stop...

AN ANIMAL PARK AND A CASTLE

Visit **Le Thot** (www.semitour.com), a prehistoric animal park at Thonac, just 7 km (4 miles) south of Lascaux II. Discover animals resembling those that would have lived in the region during the time of the cave painters. Go to **Maison Forte de Reignac** (www.maison-forte-reignac.com), 15 km (9 miles) south of Montignac, which is built into the rock itself. The most intact castle of its kind in France, it was ruled by a notorious tyrant. See over 60 medieval torture devices.

KIDS' CORNER

Creating a modern cave painting

- 1** Take a piece of cardboard and layer thick wax crayons onto its surface, repeating the process with different colours. With an old knitting needle – using the sharp end – scratch your drawing onto the cardboard.
- 2** Draw on a path or pavement with coloured chalks.
- 3** Find soil of different shades. Sift each one separately through a flour sieve. In the centre of each mound, make a hollow, pour in a little water and mix. Use this as your prehistoric painting palette.



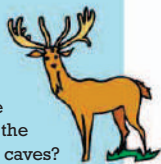
OLDER THAN WORDS

Cave paintings can be seen across Europe, and radiocarbon testing shows they were painted between 30,000 and 10,000 BC. This time period of 20,000 years is four times longer than the written history that exists today!



Find out more...

- 1** What is the name of the dog the four boys were looking for when they stumbled across the Lascaux caves?
- 2** Archaeologists have found a series of marks in the caves which suggest a popular kids' game was played here. Find the marks and name the game.
- 3** What are the nine animals painted on the walls of the Lascaux caves?



Answers: 1 Robot 2 Tic-Tac-Toe or noughts and crosses. 3 Horses, stags, cattle, bison, cats, birds, bears, bulls and a rhinoceros!



Replicas of the extinct woolly rhinoceros at Le Thot, Thonac



A beautiful topiary garden at the Château de Hautefort

② Château de Hautefort

A site for a Hollywood film

A listed historical monument, the Château de Hautefort was about to be destroyed in the Revolution, but was saved by villagers. It is grand in every sense and considered the most prestigious building in the Dordogne. Built in the 17th century, the castle fell into a state of disrepair before it was meticulously restored by the Baron and Baronesse de Bastard. The baron, however, died before the restoration was completed in 1968 and in a tragic turn of events, it was burnt to the ground shortly

after the work was finished. The baroness began the renovation process all over again. The end result is stunning with a splendid exterior and, inside, an impressive collection of 17th-century art and tapestries.

The château was a location for the Hollywood film *Ever After* (1998) starring Drew Barrymore.



Colonnade around the inner courtyard of the Château de Hautefort



The square and circular turrets of the Château de Jumilhac

Letting off steam

There is plenty of space for kids to scamper about in the grounds of the Château de Hautefort. There is a mix of well-manicured formal and informal gardens, with grasslands and wooded areas.

③ Château de Jumilhac

Ideal for a fairy tale

With its magnificent towers and turrets, the Château de Jumilhac resembles a castle out of a fairy tale. Originally built in the 12th century, it experienced a rebirth in the 17th century when new black tiled roofs were added, earning it the nickname of "Black Pearl" of the Green Périgord. Inside, visitors can peep into the legendary bedroom of the Lady of Jumilhac, who was also known as "the spinner". Imprisoned in her bedroom by her jealous husband who was away fighting, she spent 30 years with only a spinning wheel for company. She spun wool

The Lowdown

- 📍 **Map reference** 8 E6
Address 24390 (Dordogne).
Château de Hautefort: Le Bourg d'Hautefort; 05 53 50 51 23; www.chateau-hautefort.com
- 🚆 **Train** from Bordeaux to Périgueux, then 40 km (25 miles) by car
- 📄 **Visitor information** Pl Marquis Jacques François de Hautefort, 24390; 05 53 50 40 27; ot-hautefort.com
- 🕒 **Open** Château de Hautefort: Mar & first two weeks Nov: Sat–Sun pm; Apr–Oct: daily
- 💰 **Price** €29; under 7s free
- 🍷 **Eat and drink** Picnic Marché du Mercredi Matin (Pl Eugene Le Roy, 24390 Hautefort) offers fresh breads, local fruits, vegetables and regional delicacies. Picnic in the château grounds. **Real meal** La Table d'Erillac (Pl Eugene Le Roy, 23480; 05 53 51 61 49) serves regional specialities such as *foie gras* and duck.

The Lowdown

- 📍 **Map reference** 8 E6
Address 24630 (Dordogne).
Château de Jumilhac: Henry de La Tour du Pin; 06 09 61 78 40; www.jumilhac.net
- 🚆 **Train** from Limoges that connects with Paris, to La Coquille, then a 20-min taxi ride
- 📄 **Visitor information** Pl du Château, 24630 Jumilhac-le-Grand; 05 53 52 55 43; jumilhac.fr
- 🕒 **Open** Château de Jumilhac: spring & Nov school hols: daily pm; Jun–Sep: daily
- 💰 **Price** €29 (the ticket includes tours of both the château and the gardens); under 5s free
- 🍷 **Eat and drink** Picnic Marché de l'été (Pl du Château, 24630; Jul–Aug: 9am–1pm Sun) is a farmer's market ideal for supplies. Picnic by the water fountain in front of the château. **Snacks** Café de Sport (19 Pl du Château, 24630; 05 53 52 50 59) serves bar food and is also a pâtisserie.
- 🎉 **Festival** Jour de Bastille (14 Jul)

with hidden romantic messages to her lover who lived in the grounds as the castle shepherd.

Letting off steam

Head to the nearby **Galerie de l'Or** (Pl du Château, 24630; 05 53 52 55 43), which runs half-day gold panning lessons on the banks of the Isle river. After a run around, families can paddle and possibly find a nugget or two!

4 Périgueux

Architecture and visual tricks

Capital of the Périgord (or Dordogne) region, Périgueux was established in Neolithic times. Not much remains from its time as a Roman hub, but ruins of a Roman temple and an amphitheatre provide a fascinating insight into the beautiful French architecture through the centuries. A monumental entrance of the **Musée d'Art et d'Archéologie du Périgord** leads to the east and west galleries that are devoted to prehistoric, Gallo-Roman, medieval archaeology and non-European ethnography. There is also an impressive collection of 16th- to 20th-century fine art on display. The Musée Gallo-Romain de Vesunna, located in the heart of the ancient city, is also worth a visit. It houses the remains of a grand Gallo-Roman residence. The ruins have been enclosed within a large glass building, designed by award-winning architect Jean Nouvel.

Letting off steam

There are plenty of grassy areas along the river bank for stretching little legs. The **Voie Verte** (Green Lane), a safe trail along the river for

walkers and cyclists through idyllic scenery, is perfect for family cycling. It runs all the way to Bordeaux in the west and Limoges in the east.



Traditional crafts on offer in the canopied market stalls of Périgueux

The Lowdown

Map reference 11 C1

Address 24000 (Dordogne).
Musée d'Art et d'Archéologie du Périgord: 22 Cours Tourny; 05 53 06 40 70.

Train from Paris

Visitor information 26 Pl Francheville, 24000; 05 53 53 10 63; www.tourisme-perigueux.fr

Open Musée d'Art et d'Archéologie du Périgord: Wed–Mon

Eat and drink *Real meal* Bistrot de l'Isle Restaurant (2 Rue Pierre Magne, 24000; 05 53 09 51 50) provides a riverside setting and offers French dishes; includes a kids' menu. *Family treat* Hercule Poireau (2 Rue de la Nation, 24000; 05 53 08 90 76) serves traditional French cuisine.

Festival Concerts de Jazz, jazz concerts in the streets (Aug)



Roman remains on display in the Musée Gallo-Romain de Vesunna, Périgueux

KIDS' CORNER

Find out more...

1 Parts of the film *Ever*

After with Drew Barrymore was shot at Château de Hautefort. Do you know what fairy tale it retells?

2 An alchemist once lived at Château de Jumilhac, where he tried to find the substance that turns ordinary metals into gold and brings eternal life. Do you know what the substance is called?

3 Why was the Château de Jumilhac nicknamed the "Black Pearl" of the Green Périgord?

Answers at the bottom of the page.

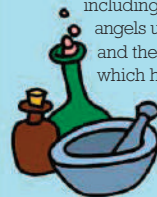


TRUFFLES

Périgueux is considered to be the city of truffles, which are edible underground mushrooms. They are extremely expensive owing to their scarcity. Specially trained dogs and pigs are used to sniff them out in the forests and undergrowth. Like in the Périgord region, the French black truffle is held in very high regard for its strong flavours.

The Alchemist

Château de Jumilhac's first count was an alchemist. Although alchemy was strictly forbidden at the time, he managed to leave signs throughout the château, including statues of angels upon the rooftop and the gardens, which have been laid out in silver and gold themes.



Answers: 1 Cinderella. 2 The philosopher's stone, just like in Harry Potter. 3 It was nicknamed so because of the black tiled roofs that were added to it in the 17th century.

5 La Roque St-Christophe

Stone Age housing complex

Resembling a giant beehive, La Roque St-Christophe is a huge troglodyte cave complex in the village of Peyzac-le-Moustier. There are 100 natural caves in five tiers, hollowed out of the rockface, which stand 250 m (820 ft) tall and 800 m (2,625 ft) in length. The caves could house up to 1,000 people, and excavations have proved that they were inhabited from the Upper Palaeolithic Age onwards. Within the rock's stronghold there would once have stood a town and an impressive fortress. Models on display show how the cave village would have looked when inhabited.

Letting off steam

For some fresh air after the rock caves, go for a little exploration around the picnic area and the duck pond. Neanderthal fossils have also been found in and around the cave complex, so keep an eye out for anything old and unusual.



A model of a cavewoman in La Roque St-Christophe, Peyzac-le-Moustier

demonstrated and both parents and children are invited to join in one of the many workshops on offer each day, from photography classes with a pinhole camera to breadmaking in a replica mill. Scattered among the exhibits are replicas of 100-year-old funfair attractions for kids to enjoy. Nearby, the **Parc Aquarium du Périgord Noir**, France's largest freshwater aquarium, has over 6,000 types of fish. There is much to see and do, like watching shark feeding and a guided tour with the resident marine biologist.

Letting off steam

There are plenty of open spaces for kids to run around in Le Bournat. Visit the old-fashioned funfair and enjoy the rides on offer. Head for the **St-Avit Loisirs** (www.saint-avit-loisirs.com), a 10-minute drive west in the town of Le Bugue. This holiday park has a kids' play area, camp site, crazy golf and water flumes.



A traditional windmill at the outdoor museum of Le Bournat

6 Le Bournat

Step back in time

French life from a bygone era is re-created in this outdoor museum, where time appears to have stood still since 1900. An old-fashioned rural community has been rebuilt, complete with chapel, farm and windmill. In each of the different village areas, traditional crafts are

Prices given are for a family of four

The Lowdown

- Map reference** 8 E6
Address 24260 (Dordogne).
Le Bournat; Le Bugue; 05 53 08 41 99; www.lebournat.fr; Parc Aquarium du Périgord Noir; Allee Paul-Jean Souriau, Le Bugue; 05 53 08 41 99; www.aquariumperigordnoir.com
- Car** 30-min drive from Sarlat
- Visitor information** Porte de la Vézère, 24260 Le Bugue; 05 53 07 20 48
- Open** Le Bournat: Mar–Sep: daily. Parc Aquarium du Périgord Noir: Feb–Mar & Oct–Nov: Mon–Sat pm, Sun am & pm; Apr–Sep: daily
- Price** Parc Aquarium: €43; under 4s free; Le Bournat: €13.50; under 4s free

Eat and drink *Picnic* The village shop sells speciality foods from times gone, including bread, cheese and preserves. *Real meal* Chez Paul (Le Bournat, 24260 Le Bugue), a family-friendly restaurant, serves regional delicacies.



Shop selling foie gras in the medieval centre of Sarlat

7 Sarlat

France's most popular town

An incredibly attractive town with a maze of narrow lanes, yellow sandstone buildings and medieval, as well as Renaissance architecture, Sarlat has featured in quite a few films, including the *Cinderella* inspired *Ever After* (1998) and *The Musketeer* (2001). It is very popular with tourists and extremely busy in the summer, but it is still possible to soak up its atmosphere by getting purposefully lost among its winding streets. Just wander around, spot pretty gas lights, carved decorations and surprising statues. Eventually everyone ends up at the Place de la Liberté, full of cafés, and also, on Saturday mornings, the site of the region's finest market. In season, stalls sell walnuts, foie gras, truffles and local delicacies.

The Lowdown

Map reference 12 F1
Address 24200 (Dordogne).

Train from Bordeaux

Visitor information Rue Tourny, 24200 Sarlat; 05 53 31 45 45; www.sarlat-tourisme.com

Eat and drink Real meal Le Bistrot de l'Octroi (111 Ave Selves, 24000; 05 53 30 83 40) is a popular haunt with local families. It provides a great opportunity to sample local delicacies, including truffles, duck and crème brûlée.

Family treat Restaurant Le Grand Bleu (43 Ave de la Gare, 24000; 05 53 31 08 48) is a Michelin-starred restaurant that serves innovative and modern French food. Try some of the more unusual dishes, such as the asparagus ice cream.

Festival Fête de la Truffe, an annual celebration of the glorious truffle (Jan)

Letting off steam

Head for the two tree-top adventure parks: **Indian Forest Périgord** (www.indianforestperigord.com) and **La Forêt des Ecurieuil** (www.laforetdesecureuil.com), located 2 km (1 mile) east of Sarlat. Rope bridges and zip lines strung between trees offer Indiana Jones-style adventure in the French countryside. Health and safety equipment are provided. There are courses of varying difficulty, some suitable for kids aged 4–8 years.

8 Beynac

Lights, camera, action

Beynac is a picturesque French town with a château that dates back to the Middle Ages. Perched high on a limestone cliff, which protected the

town from potential invaders, the **Château de Beynac** overlooks the Dordogne river below. It was lovingly restored in the 1960s by Lucien Grosso and is now one of the best preserved in the region. Within the château walls lies a Romanesque keep and several Renaissance sculptures. Thanks to this château, Beynac has had an illustrious film career. It has provided the location for big budget movies that include *Les Visiteurs* (1993) and *Jeanne d'Arc* (1999).

Letting off steam

Hire some bicycles from any of the cycle shops at Bike Bus (*Castelnaud la Chapelle*; 06 08 94 42 01) and follow one of the recommended routes through the surrounding countryside to experience its stunning beauty and splendour.

The Lowdown

Map reference 8 E5
Address 24220 (Dordogne).
Château de Beynac: Le Bourg, Beynac-et-Cazenac

Train from Sarlat

Visitor information La Balme, 24220 Beynac-et-Cazenac; 05 53 29 43 08

Open Château de Beynac: all year round, timings vary

Eat and drink Real meal Auberge Lambert (*Le Capeyou*, 24220 Beynac et Cazenac; 05 53 29 50 45) serves its own award-winning local dishes plus foie gras and cassoulet (rich bean stew). Kids' menu too. **Family treat** La Petite Tonelle (*La Balme*, 24220 Beynac et Cazenac; 05 53 29 95 18) serves traditional local dishes such as Quercy lamb and mushrooms in cream. Oysters feature too.

KIDS' CORNER

The silent spectator

Perched upon a wall above Sarlat's market place (Freedom Square) is Gerard Auliac's bronze sculpture of a boy silently watching the comings and goings below. The statue is called *Le Badaud* or "The Onlooker". Debate continues to rage as to whether he represents simple peasant folk or is indeed a great thinker, meditating on the hustle and bustle below. What do you think? Seek him out and wonder what his background is and why he is sitting there today.



THE WOLF OF SARLAT

In 1766, the Wolf of Sarlat attacked and wounded 17 of the townsmen. Its victims were always grown men rather than women or kids and it would stand on its hind legs to rise to their height. It took a hunting party of 100 men to track the wolf down and to shoot it at point blank range.

A traditional toy

The spinning top, a traditional children's toy, was extremely popular in the early 20th century and is still loved by children. At the village of Le Bournat, you will see the wood turner make spinning tops in the same way as he would have done 100 years ago. Did you know that if a spinning top is left on a table, nine out of 10 passersby will give it a spin? See if you succumb next time you see one.



A canoe and a gabare on the Dordogne river, overlooked by the Château de Beynac

9 Rocamadour

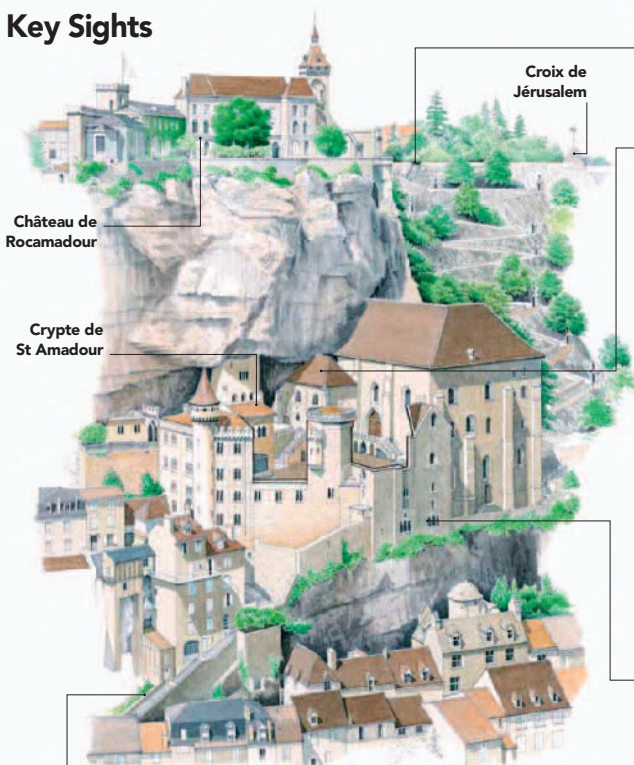
From flocks of pilgrims to flocks of birds

Located in a gorge above the Dordogne river in the Parc Naturel Régional des Causses du Quercy, this small and almost vertical village, set into the cliffside, has been the destination of pilgrims for centuries. The apparently miraculous healing abilities of the church's Black Madonna have been the main draw. Today, it is France's second most visited tourist location outside Paris. At the summit sits the château, followed by the cluster of churches and the village itself, sweeping down towards the river below. Do not miss the exotic birds that soar freely above the Rocher des Aigles.



Black Madonna

Key Sights



The uppermost point A final set of steps lead up to the château's ramparts, dating from the 14th century. From here, visitors can survey the countryside for miles around.

Chapelle de Notre Dame The statue of the Black Madonna depicts the Virgin Mary with dark skin. This chapel houses her wooden form and throne, carved from one single piece of walnut wood.



Grand Escalier This great stairway consists of 216 steps and leads from the village to the sanctuaries above. Earlier, pilgrims used to climb the steps on their knees.

Le Sanctuaire de Notre Dame This is a complex set of churches centred around the statue of the Virgin Mary and tomb of St Amadour, whose perfectly preserved body was discovered in the 12th century.

Grand Escalier

Main Street The village of Rocamadour has only one street and two fortified gateways: Porte du Figuier and the Porte Salmon.



Château de Rocamadour The château stands on the site of a fort that protected the sanctuary from the west.



The Lowdown

Map reference 12 F1
Address 46500 (Lot),
 Château de Rocamadour:
 Rocamadour

Train from Paris to Gramat, then taxi; TER from Rodez, Figeac & Brive

Visitor information L'Hospitalet, 46500; 05 65 33 22 00; www.rocamadour.com (opening hours vary)

Letting off steam

Head for the **Rocher des Aigles** (46500 Rocamadour; 05 65 33 65 45; www.rocherdesaigles.com), also known as Eagle's Rock, just past the Château de Rocamadour. Kids will love the spectacular air ballet here that is performed by birds of prey in free flight. There are over 400 types of birds and 60 species at the centre. Learn about how birds are trained as well as their mating and feeding habits.

Eat and drink

Picnic: under €20; *Snacks:* €20–45; *Real meal:* €45–90; *Family treat:* over €90 (based on a family of four)

PICNIC Leclerc (*Champbas, 46500 Gramat*) stocks grocery essentials along with fresh produce such as fruit and vegetables. Picnic on the river bank at the foot of the village.

SNACKS Café du Château (*Le Château, 46500; 05 65 33 62 31*) is an adequate choice for a light lunch after the grand ascent.

REAL MEAL L'Auberge le Roc du Berger (*Bois de Belveyre, Route de Padirac, 46500; 05 65 33 19 99*) specializes in wood-fire grilled meats such as duck and lamb, and seasonal fish. The desserts are a hit with kids as they mostly involve ice cream and chocolate.

FAMILY TREAT Restaurant

Jehan de Valon (*Cité Médiévale Rocamadour, 46500; 05 65 33 63 08*) serves rich regional dishes, including truffles, on its terrace.

Shopping

Go to **Celeste Bazaar** (*Rue de la Couronnerie, 46500*) for traditional French craft and a range of fair trade products. Visit the **Rocamadour Boutique Iemanja** (*Pl Europe, 46500*),

a stylish little boutique with a great range of French styles and designer labels that may tempt mum or dad to treat themselves for a change!

Find out more

DIGITAL For further information on Rocamadour, go to www.rocamadour.com. Visit www.sacred-destinations.com/france/rocamadour-shrine for information on the Black Madonna.

Take cover

Grotte Préhistorique des Merveilles (*L'Hospitalet, 46500*) has 20,000-year-old cave paintings and rock formations. Visit the **Préhistologia Parc Préhistorique** (*Lacave, 46200; 05 65 32 28 28*; www.prehistologia.com) to discover over 150 life-size replicas of dinosaurs and also see the reconstruction of a Neolithic village.



A cave painting of spotted horses, Grotte du Pech Merle

Next stop...

PECH MERLE A 35-minute drive south of Rocamadour is the Grotte du Pech Merle. Discovered in 1922, the cave is 2 km (1 mile) in length, a third of which can be explored to reveal galleries of rich subterranean paintings that date back 25,000 years. Experts believe the caves may have been used as a refuge by prehistoric man during the Ice Age.

KIDS' CORNER

Find out more...

- 1 How many steps make up the Grand Escalier?
- 2 In what year was the Crypte de St Amador (the crypt of the hermit called *roc amator* or "lover of rock") discovered?
- 3 Which English king visited the Black Madonna in the hope of finding a cure for his illness?



Answers at the bottom of the page.

BLESSING THE GOATS

Rocamadour gives its name to a creamy goat's cheese that is celebrated along with other cheeses at the annual Fête des Fromages held every Pentecost Sunday. The day starts with a Mass of Thanksgiving followed by the blessing of herds of sheep and goats gathered in the centre of the village.



The legend of the sword

Look at the cliff face above the Chapelle de Notre Dame where part of an old sword can be seen protruding from the rockface. *The Song of Roland* tells how a knight was hiding in the Pyrenees, waiting to die at the hand of the Saracens. His sword was blessed and contained many sacred items in its metalwork. Determined that the Saracens would not capture the sword, he threw it with all his might but he was not strong enough. The Archangel Michael heard his calls and swooped down, hurling the sword into the mountains – legend says it landed in the cliff face at Rocamadour.



Open Château de Rocamadour: 8am–8pm daily

Skipping the queue Winter is the best time to visit as it is less crowded.

Guided tours Daily 90-min walking tours of Rocamadour can be arranged by appointment through the tourist office.

Age range All ages

Allow Half a day

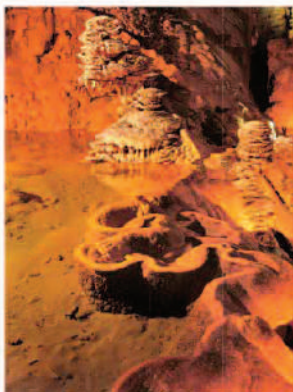
Café Café du Château near the Château de Rocamadour

Toilets There are public toilets in the village.

Good family value?

This is a good and inexpensive day out for the family with the main cost being for food and drink.

Answers: 1 216 2 1166 3 Henry II
Illustration of Eleanor of Aquitaine



Underground caves at the Gouffre de Padirac

10 Gouffre de Padirac

Going underground

A spectacular cave complex, the Gouffre de Padirac cannot fail to impress its visitors. Central to the experience is the eerie descent via stairs or lift into the gaping chasm, 103 m (338 ft) underground. The tour continues on board a gondola through the subterranean river system that links the network of caves below. The rest of the tour is on foot through the Great Dome, a large limestone chamber within the cave. This is an awe-inspiring underground adventure, sure to transport visitors back in time. Bring warm clothing, since it is chilly inside.

The Lowdown

Map reference 12 F2
Address 46500 (Lot).
46500 Padirac; 05 65 33 64 56;
www.gouffre-de-padirac.com

Train to Rocamadour, then a 20-min taxi ride

Visitor information 3 Rue Tourny, 24203 Sarlat Cedex; 05 53 31 45 45; www.sarlat-tourisme.com

Open Apr–mid-Nov: daily

Price €35; under 4s free

Eat and drink **Snacks** There is a snack bar (on site; Jul & Aug) with a park and a picnic area.
Real meal L'Auberge du Gouffre (on site; 05 65 38 48 53) offers regional specialties from foie gras and truffles to Rocamadour cheeses.



The village of St-Cirq-Lapopie on its ragged clifftop

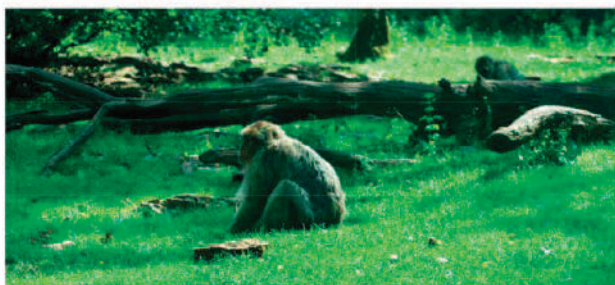
Letting off steam

Head for the **Forêt des Singes** (www.la-foret-des-singes.com) in Rocamadour, a 20-ha (50-acre) forest home to 130 barbary apes. Families have the rare opportunity to see the apes playing freely in the forest or to visit the research centre on site to discover more about this species.

11 St-Cirq-Lapopie

A painter's paradise

Perched on a cliff above the Lot river, the picturesque village of St-Cirq-Lapopie provides spectacular views across the valley. Officially declared one of *Les Plus Beaux Villages de France*, it has inspired painters such as the Impressionist Henri Martin and writers including André Breton with its sheer beauty. In the Middle Ages, four feuding families were embroiled in fights over the village's ownership. This resulted in the construction of several castles and fortified houses. There are many opportunities to fuel the imagination of children as they explore the narrow cobbled streets running between the shops



A barbary ape basking in the sun at the Forêt des Singes, Rocamadour

The Lowdown

Map reference 12 F2
Address 46330 (Lot).

Bus or boat ride from Cahors (see opposite).

Visitor information PI Sombrol, 46330; 05 65 31 31 31;
www.saint-cirqlapopie.com

Eat and drink **Snacks** Lou Pastis Quercynois (Grand Route, 46330; 05 65 35 30 30) serves local tarts and pies to eat on the premises or take away. **Family treat** Le Gourmet Quercynois (Le Bourg, 46330; 05 65 31 21 20) is a more expensive option, offering traditional local dishes.

and houses and the medieval ruins along the riverbank. The village has also been proclaimed a natural heritage monument preventing any new building work.

Letting off steam

Head back down the hill to the Lot river below. On the riverbank there is a nice grassy area suitable for picnics and a kids' play park. Fishing workshops are available for kids aged 8 plus (www.pechelot.com).

12 Cahors

Bridging the past

The medieval capital of the Lot region, Cahors sits on the banks of the Lot river, which winds its way through this wine region and beyond for about 500 km (310 miles). The town is the birthplace of popes and poets and home to the 14th-century Pont Valentre, reputed to be France's most beautiful bridge and shrouded in myth and legend. This market town also has 29 secret gardens (hidden behind and between buildings) to explore – each garden has a different theme. A map of their locations is available at the tourist office. There is a statue of the famous 16th-century French poet Clément Marot in the town.

Letting off steam

Hire a canoe at the river or drive 25 km (16 miles) west to St-Cirq-Lapopie and canoe leisurely back to town. Families with younger children can board the **Bateau Promenade Valentre** (www.bateau-cahors.com) and take a cruise along the Lot. The boat's departure point is near the Pont Valentre. **L'Archipel** on the Île de Cabessut (www.tourisme-cahors.com).



Above Canoeing on the Lot river, Cahors
Below The fortified Pont Valentre spanning the Lot, Cahors

com/fr/cahors-ludique/loisirs.php) is a water park that has slides and also a toddler pool. It is only open in high season from June to September.



A view of multi-hued vineyards around Cahors

The Lowdown

Map reference 12 F2
Address 46000 (Lot).

Train from Paris and Toulouse.
Bus from Fumel in the west and Figeac in the east

Visitor information Pl François Mitterrand, 46000; 05 65 53 20 65; www.tourisme-cahors.fr

Eat and drink Snacks Le Mephisto (10 Ave Jean Jaures, 46000; 05 65 53 00 77) has an entertaining owner and reasonably priced traditional lunch options.

Real meal Au Fil des Douceurs (90 Quai de la Verrière, 46000; 05 65 22 13 04) is a floating restaurant, just upriver from the Pont Cabessut. The desserts alone are worth the trip.

Festival Le Blues Festival de Cahors, an annual blues festival that attracts international performers (Jul)

KIDS' CORNER

Find out more...

- 1 Which pope was born in the town of Cahors and when?
- 2 What does *Gouffre* mean in English?
- 3 During the restoration of the Pont Valentre in the 19th century, the architect placed a carving of the devil at the top of one of the three towers. Can you spot it?
- 4 Before entering the chasm at Gouffre de Padirac (also known as the Devil's Doorway),



where can you find the hoof print left behind by St Martin's horse?

Answers at the bottom of the page.

MATTER OF INTEREST

Cahors was once France's main financial area with many of the country's bankers based here. It became famous for being the first place where bankers charged interest on their loans.



The devil's bridge

In the 14th century, the builder of the Pont Valentre promised to sell the devil his soul if he would help him finish the bridge. The builder, however, panicked and to delay the completion of the bridge, gave the devil a sieve to collect the last bucket of sand. The devil admitted defeat and the builder laid the final brick. But, the devil came back every night to knock out the corner stones at the top of the bridge's central tower. The bridge was finally completed after a restoration project by Paul Gout in 1879.



Answers: 1 Pope John XXIII in 1249
2 Deep hole or bottomless pit 3 Middle tower at the very top 4 Near the entrance at the rim of the abyss.





Breathtaking view of boats awaiting travellers at the dock, Luzech

13 Château de Bonaguil

Most fortified castle in France

Known as France's most magnificent folly, the Château de Bonaguil was begun in the 13th century, but was extensively fortified by the mighty Bérenguer de Roquefeuil (1444–1530), an infamous hunchbacked tyrant. He dedicated over 30 years of his life to building further towers, along with a bunker and no less than seven drawbridges. Further sections were added over the centuries. The castle eventually fell into disrepair and was sold in the 18th century for just 100 francs and a sack of walnuts. Since 1862,

The Lowdown

Map reference 12 E2
Address 47500 (Lot-et-Garonne), Château de Bonaguil; 47500 St-Front-sur-Lémance; 05 53 71 90 33; www.bonaguil.org

Train from Bordeaux and Paris to Agen, then a 70-min taxi ride

Visitor information Pl Georges Escande, 47500 Fumel; 05 53 71 13 70; www.cc-dufumelois.com

Open Mar–Oct: daily; Nov–Feb: daily, school hols pm only

Price €22–32; under 6s free

Eat and drink *Picnic* Marché du Dimanche (Rue de la République, 47500 Fumel) is superb for picking up fresh produce. Picnic at the château. *Real meal* La Brasserie (1 Place Georges Escande, 47500; 05 53 71 80 87) is a modern brasserie located close to the château. It offers classic local cuisine at reasonable prices. The well-executed dishes include *foie gras* with fig jam and duck *confit*.

however, it has been classified as a national monument and has undergone extensive restoration. During this process, graffiti from the Middle Ages was discovered. It is a fascinating insight into old France, illustrating the evolution of defence techniques between the Middle Ages and the Renaissance.

Letting off steam

Canoes can be hired from a number of places in the town of Fumel and the nearby towns of Puy l'Éveque and Luzech. Hire them by the hour or book a guided tour.

14 Villeréal

Bustling market and a leper's house

Dating back to the 13th century, this small town was originally founded by Alphonse de Poitiers as a *bastide* town, one of the hundreds of new



Above Horse-riding through the lush green countryside near Villeréal
 Below The Château de Bonaguil



The Lowdown

Map reference 12 E2
Address 47210 (Lot-et-Garonne).

Train from Bordeaux to Bergerac, then a 45-min taxi ride

Visitor information Pl de la Halle, 47210; 05 53 36 09 65; www.villereal-tourisme.com

Eat and drink *Real meal* Le Montecristo (Bois de Madame, 47210 Boumel; 05 53 36 65 78) is very family orientated and specializes in pizzas. It also has a kids' outdoor playground. *Family treat* La Dolce Vita (31 Rue du Dropt, 47210; 05 53 71 64 02) is a more expensive option offering a contemporary twist to local dishes, along with a range of tempting desserts.

towns built in the 13th and 14th centuries in a bid to colonize southwest France. On Saturdays, the town's original 14th-century market hall springs to life with local tradesmen selling their wares. People from far and near have flocked to this town market for over 700 years.

A guided walk leaflet is available from the tourist office that takes in the town's back streets, including the Leper's House – a refuge in medieval times for those suffering from leprosy – with its ornate sculpted door and the old station. Some town houses date back to the 16th century.

Letting off steam

Saddle up and see the countryside on horseback with *La Bride du Cazal* (05 53 63 15 49) located in the town of Vergt de Biron 9 km (6 miles) west of Villeréal. This



Plants for sale at the 14th-century market hall in Villeréal

equestrian centre offers riding lessons for all levels and smaller ponies suitable for kids aged 6 plus.

15 Latour-Marliac

Monet's water lilies

This water lily nursery was founded in 1875 by lawyer Joseph Bory Latour-Marliac. Latour-Marliac's passion was plants and he devoted all his spare time to growing tropical plants in his purpose-built greenhouse. This led to him crossbreeding water lilies with other wild varieties of plants and exhibiting his results at the World Fair in Paris. Claude

Monet, the renowned French Impressionist painter saw the exhibit and became captivated with water lilies. Monet made a pond in his garden home in the village of Giverny and ordered his plants directly from Latour-Marliac. It was these plants that would become the subject of Monet's famous water lily paintings.



Water lilies in full bloom in the nursery at Latour-Marliac

Letting off steam

At Latour-Marliac there are acres of open spaces to explore, with lawns, gardens, ponds and bridges. Or visit the colourful town of Damazan, which is located 27 km (17 miles) west of Latour-Marliac. Damazan is a good example of an "arcaded bastide" where residents are required by law to keep the façades of the buildings brightly coloured. For a fun evening, visit on a Tuesday (July and August) around 7pm when the night market is set up. Local families bring their own crockery, cutlery and glasses, buy local treats from market stalls and enjoy an open-air picnic with plenty of singing and dancing.

Picnic under €20; Snacks €20–45; Real meal €45–90; Family treat over €90 (based on a family of four)

KIDS' CORNER

Create a painting of water lilies...

- 1 Apply watered-down blue and green paints to cover the whole page. Use more blue to create the lake.
- 2 Using watered-down green paint, make large splotches with your brush for the water lilies.
- 3 Dry the page. Cut out 10 circles of 4 cm (2 inches) and 10 circles out of 3 cm (1 inch) diameters from coloured tissue paper. Scrunch each circle up tightly, then open out again.
- 4 With glue, stick the larger circles to the page, floating between your green water lily splotches. Stick the small circles of paper to the centre of the larger circles.
- 5 Admire your water lilies.



FRIGHTFUL FACT

The Château de Bonaguil fell into the hands of the evil Bérenguer de Roquefeuil, who in the 1460s began to persecute the local men and take their wives as his own. When he was fined by Charles VII, he sealed himself into the castle with a year's provisions.



More about Monet

Born in Paris in 1840, renowned artist Claude Monet helped invent the style of painting known as Impressionism. His was particularly interested in how something looked when the sunlight was hitting it. He would wait patiently outdoors with his canvas and brushes until the sunlight was just right before beginning to paint. When Monet painted *Water Lilies*, perhaps his best known works, he was losing his eyesight.





Steps through Albi's historic centre, with Ste-Cécile in the background

Letting off steam

Take bus A from the city centre to go to **Espace Nautique Atlantis** (Rue Pierre Brossolette, 81000; www.grand-albigeois.fr) just north of Albi's centre. Kids will enjoy rollicking in its indoor and outdoor pools and slides.

Eat and drink

Picnic: under €20; Snacks: €20–45; Real meal: €45–90; Family treat: over €90 (based on a family of four)

PICNIC **Place Marché Couvert** is the place to pick up fresh supplies. Picnic at the grassy areas along the river.

SNACKS **Le Soleihou** (13 Rue Plancat, 81000) serves light food, including tasty tarts and quiches.

REAL MEAL **Le Papillon** (1 bis Rue Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec, 81000; 05 63 43 10 77) offers contemporary dishes, including vegetarian options drawn from California and Asia.

FAMILY TREAT **Le Vieil Alby** (25 Rue Toulouse-Lautrec, 81000; 05 63 38 28 23) is a nice little hotel located in the historic centre of Albi.



Brioches and pastries on sale in the local market

It serves a range of traditional dishes that represent the best of the region.

Shopping

The main shopping area is east of the Cathédrale Ste-Cécile. Here there is a wide range of boutiques, antique shops and gift vendors. Kids will enjoy the souvenirs available at every turn. On a Saturday morning, visit the local flea market that takes place in the **Halle du Castelviel** (Pl du Castelviel, 81000). There is lots of fun to be had rummaging for bargains.

Find out more

DIGITAL Log on to www.lautrec.info for the great French artist's life and works. Scroll through images of Lautrec's complete works at www.toulouse-lautrec-foundation.org.

Take cover

On a rainy day, head to the **Château du Bosc** (www.aveyron.com/english/tourism/boscUK.html) in the village of Camjac, 41 km (25 miles) north of Albi. This was the summer home of Toulouse-Lautrec and his family. This is where the artist spent most of his childhood and also where he sustained the injuries that resulted in his stunted growth and the limited use of his legs. Guided tours of the château are available on a daily basis.



Houses of the town of Cordes-sur-Ciel climbing skywards up the hilltop

Next stop...

CORDES-SUR-CIEL Standing high on an isolated hilltop, 24 km (15 miles) west of Albi, is the town of Cordes-sur-Ciel. In spring and autumn, its rooftops glisten in the sunlight, while the low cloud and mist in the valley below shows it is floating. There is lots to do in this town for families – from annual medieval festivals to a visit to the Historama museum, which has over 80 life-size waxworks.

KIDS' CORNER

Who was Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec?

The young Henri first started to show his true artistic talents at the tender age of 8 years. As a teenager, he suffered many accidents and illnesses that left him unable to compete in sports, so he threw himself further into his artwork. Although he died at only 36, he is one of France's most renowned and celebrated artists.

In 2005, one of his paintings set a new record at Christie's auction house when it sold for a colossal €16 million!



PEACE OFFERINGS

To show his peaceful intentions, the French explorer Lapérouse took the following items with him to give to people he would meet en route as he sailed around the world: 600 mirrors, 2,600 combs and 50,000 sewing needles!



Vanished into thin air...

Lapérouse set sail on 1 August 1785, intending to return to France four years later. His two ships, *La Boussole* and *L'Astrolabe*, made good progress, going around Cape Horn, entering the Pacific in January 1786. The next year saw him visit Chile, Easter Island and Maui in the Hawaiian Islands. He sailed along the Asian coastline sending notes of the journey to King Louis XVI. The ships docked in Botany Bay in Australia and continued sailing on 10 March 1788. Soon after, the ships and crew vanished. What happened to them? Find out at the Musée Lapérouse.



17 Toulouse

Space craft and pink houses

Toulouse is known as one of the “three pink cities” in the region – the other two being Montauban and Albi. This thriving red-bricked city has a significant part of its modern-day industry based around space technology. A visit to the **Cité de l’Espace** provides a fascinating insight into the mysteries of space via shows, interactive exhibitions and guided tours.

Toulouse is also considered to be the rugby capital of France so visitors are guaranteed an electric atmosphere when any of the major championship matches are being played at the Stadium Municipal de Toulouse located on the Île du Ramier, south of Toulouse. On the island, visitors will also find the Parc du Ramier with walking trails and cycle paths. Away from the bustling city centre, the park is a peaceful haven for nature lovers. Toulouse offers an impressive collection of museums. Visit the **Musée des Augustins de Toulouse** and the **Muséum d’Histoire Naturelle**, with a vast number of fascinating exhibits.



The European rocket launcher Ariane 5 and other exhibits, Cité de l’Espace



A bronze statue of the legendary king's musketeer D'Artagnan, Auch

Letting off steam

Relax and run about in the **Jardin des Plantes** (Allée Frédéric Mistral, Allée Jules-Guesde, 31000), a public park and botanical garden.

18 Auch

One for all and all for one

The historical capital of Gascony, Auch is rich in local heritage. The old town is fascinating to explore on foot and a visit to the **Cathédrale Ste-Marie**, started some time in the 15th century and completed over two centuries, is a must. Climb over 200 steps to the top of the Escalier Monumental and be rewarded with spectacular views over the Gers valley. On the way down, be sure to nod respectfully to the statue of D'Artagnan, the legendary swordsman and king's musketeer. Born 45 km (28 miles) west of Auch in Lupiac in 1611, D'Artagnan captured the public's imagination in Alexandre Dumas' 1844 novel *The Three Musketeers*, an exciting

The Lowdown

- **Map reference** 12 E4
Address 32000 (Gers).
Cathédrale Ste-Marie: Rue Arnaud de Moles; 06 30 41 19 38
- 🚗 **Train** from Toulouse or from Bordeaux to Agen, then bus
- i **Visitor information** 1 Rue Dessoles, BP 174, 32003; 05 62 05 22 89; www.auch-tourisme.com
- 🍷 **Eat and drink** **Snacks** Thé Comédie (12 Louis Aucoin, 32000; 05 62 05 81 13) is a tea room serving delicious desserts such as crumbles and lemon tarts, as well as light meals. **Real meal** Le Daroles (4 Pl Libération, 32000; 05 62 05 00 51) serves tasty steaks and duck, the regional speciality.
- 🎪 **Festival** Eclat de Voix, singing festival (Jun)

fictionalized story of the life and adventures of Louis XIII's musketeers based on local folklore around the exploits of the real D'Artagnan.

Letting off steam

Picnic in the **Jardin Ortholan** (Quai Lissagaray, 32000) or the **Parc de Coulome** (5 Pl de la Libération, 32000). Down by the river, explore a 4-km (2-mile) discovery trail that winds its way along the riverbank.

19 Condom

Castles and brandy

Condom is an ancient town with its first recorded inhabitants dating back to before the Roman conquest in 27 BC. The town sits on the banks of the Baise river and is home to two 13th-century castles: the Château de Mothes and the Château de Puygardin, with its intact keep (the castle's tower and most fortified section), as well as two watermills. During the Middle Ages, Condom was an important religious centre, housing over 130 churches due to its position on the famous pilgrim route to Santiago de Compostela (see p244), ending in northwest Spain.

The town is also known as Condom-en-Armagnac. The **Musée de l'Armagnac** celebrates France's oldest distilled brandy. On display is a 17th-century frame with an 18-ton (16-tonne) wine press. More than 1,000 years ago, it was the pilgrims travelling through the town who would load up with bottles

The Lowdown


- **Map reference** 12 F4
Address 31000 (Haute-Garonne).
Cité de l’Espace: Ave Jean Gonord, 31506; 08 20 37 72 33; www.cite-espace.com. Musée des Augustins de Toulouse: 21 Rue de Metz, 31000; 05 61 22 21 82; www.augustins.org. Muséum d’Histoire Naturelle: 35 Allées Jules Guesde, 31000; www.museum.toulouse.fr
- 🚗 **Train** from Paris and Bordeaux
- i **Visitor information** Square du General Charles de Gaulle, 31080; 08 92 18 01 80; www.toulouse-tourisme.com
- 🕒 **Open** Cité de l’Espace: Sep–Mar: Tue–Sun; Apr–Aug: daily; closed

- Jan. Musée des Augustins de Toulouse: 10am–6pm daily
- 🍷 **Eat and drink** **Snacks** ZePléGraounde (20 Pl Occitane, 31000; 05 62 30 11 80; closed Aug; www.zeplegraounde.fr) serves home-made food with fresh juices. **Real meal** Eau de Folles (14 Allée du President Roosevelt, 31000; 05 61 23 45 50), a family-friendly restaurant, offers a choice of fixed price menus; duck is a speciality.
- 🎪 **Festivals** C'est de la Danse Contemporaine celebrates the art of choreography (Apr). Festival International de Théâtre d’Enfants (Jun). Christmas Market held on the Place du Capitole (Dec)



The Grands Moulins de Condom, one of two mills overlooking the Baise river

The Lowdown

-  **Map reference** 11 D3
Address 32100 (Gers).
Musée de l'Armagnac: 2 Rue Jules Ferry; 05 62 28 47 17
-  **Train** from Bordeaux to Agen, then a bus or taxi
-  **Visitor information** 5 Pl St Pierre, 32100; 05 62 28 00 80; www.tourisme-tenaraze.com
-  **Open** Musée de l'Armagnac: Apr–Oct: Wed–Mon; Nov–Dec: Wed–Sun; closed Jan. Guided tours on request via the tourist office (www.vins.tourisme-gers.com)
-  **Eat and drink** **Real meal** L'Origan (4 Rue Cadeot, 32100; 05 62 68 24 84) offers an affordable menu and great pizzas. **Family treat** La Table des Cordeliers (1 Rue des Cordeliers, 32100; 05 62 68 43 82) has an impressive menu with lots of regional specialities.
-  **Festival** Festival de Bandas y Penas, orchestras and brass bands (May)

of Armagnac and export them all over Spain as they continued on their journey.

Letting off steam

Go to Condom's central **Parc de la Gauge** (Chemin Argente, 32100), where younger kids can play in the large playground and families can picnic along the river bank.

20 Larressingle

Good things come in small walled villages







The boundaries of this picturesque tiny village, which is the smallest walled village in France, consists of a 300-m (984-ft) circle of heavily fortified 13th-century walls. It can

only be entered by crossing a moat via a pretty little bridge and then continuing through the village's only gate. The village museum depicts the life of the locals in the Middle Ages, but to really fuel the imagination, pay a visit to the exhibition of medieval weaponry on display just outside the village walls, at the **Cité des Machines du Moyen-Age**. Here a 13th-century siege camp has been re-created complete with battering rams and medieval armour, making it easy to go back in time and imagine what life must have been like while the village was under siege centuries ago.

Letting off steam

Kids can run around the grassy areas just outside the village walls. There are also benches ideal for a picnic.

The Lowdown

-  **Map reference** 11 D3
Address 32100 (Gers).
Cité des Machines du Moyen-Age: Camp de Siège Médiéval, La Cité des Machines; 05 62 68 33 88
-  **Train** to Agen, then an hour's taxi
-  **Visitor information** Communauté de Communes de al Tenarèze, 32100; 05 62 68 22 49; www.tourisme-tenarze.com
-  **Open** Cité des Machines du Moyen-Age: Jul & Aug: daily; Mar–Jun & Sep–mid-Nov: pm only
-  **Price** €17–31 (see larressingle.free.fr for details)
-  **Eat and drink** **Picnic** Marché de Condom (Wed & Sat am) has freshly baked breads, local cheeses and delicacies on sale. Picnic in the grassy area outside the village's walls. **Snacks** Larressingle Creperie (Château de Larressingle, 32100; 05 62 68 48 88) serves a wide range of crêpes. (€6

Picnic under €20; Snacks €20–45; Real meal €45–90; Family treat over €90 (based on a family of four)

KIDS' CORNER

How well do you know your musketeers?

- 1 What are the names of the three musketeers?
- 2 Who is their close friend and fellow musketeer?
- 3 In what century is the story set?
- 4 What is the musketeers' favourite motto?
- 5 Who wrote the novel *The Three Musketeers*?
- 6 What other famous novel did he also write – *The Count of...*



Answers at the bottom of the page.

RUGBY CHAMPIONS

Toulouse Olympique is the only French rugby team to have played the prestigious H-Cup, since it was first started in 1995. The team has since gone on to win it an impressive four times so far.



Saved by Bostonians

Larressingle began as a small and insignificant French village when a Roman gentleman chose to build his villa on the ridge where the village now stands. A thousand years later, a church was built and Larressingle fell to the Bishop of Agen. However, in the centuries that followed, the village fell into ruins. It was Napoleon's great grandson, the last Duke of Treviso, who mounted a campaign to save Larressingle. He sought urgent funding from America and it was the residents of Boston who generously donated. As a result, all Bostonians are guaranteed a warm welcome here.



Answers: 1 Athos, Aramis and Portos. 2 D'Artagnan. 3 17th century. 4 One for all and all for one! 5 Alexandre Dumas. 6 *The Count of Monte Cristo*.

Where to Stay in Périgord, Quercy and Gascony

From child-friendly *gîte* complexes, traditional hotels and modern B&Bs to eco yurts, log cabins and tents, Périgord, Quercy and Gascony offer a wide range of accommodation options to families. Enjoy a taste of rural hospitality, sample a little luxury or experience the latest trend in glamping.

AGENCIES

Tots to Travel

www.totstotravel.co.uk

The website specializes in lodging for young families. There is a wide selection ranging from *gîte* complexes to rural farmhouses.

Gites de France du Gers

www.gers-gites-france.com

The official tourism website for *gîtes* in Gers lists family-friendly accommodation in Gascony.

Albi

Map 12 G3

HOTEL

Hotel du Parc

3 Park Ave, 81000; 05 63 54 12 80; www.hotel-du-parc-albi.com

Located in the heart of the city, this hotel is an affordable base for exploring the main attractions of Albi. Although the furnishings are basic, the facilities are clean and there is a small bar and restaurant. Ideal for a short stay. Friendly staff.



€€

CAMPING

Albironack Park Camping Lodge et Spa

1 Allée de la Piscine, 81000; 05 63 60 37 06; www.albironack.fr

Just 2 km (1 mile) from the centre of Albi, a riverside trail leads directly from this camp ground into the city centre. The site is modern and



Interior of the Albironack Park Camping Lodge et Spa, Albi

luxurious, with a choice of chalets, wooden lodges or serviced pitches. A heated pool, kids' club and organized activities run during the summer months, with a spa and cooking lessons for grown-ups.



€

Belves

Map 12 E1

SELF-CATERING

Domaine de

Peyrecaty

24170 Belves; 05 53 29 16 83; www.peyrecaty.com

Set on a 23-ha (56-acre) estate, this family-friendly property offers nine cottages, each sleeping between four and 12. Tennis courts, an adventure playground, a play barn, organized activities and babysitting service are also available.



€€€

Bergerac

Map 11 D1

SELF-CATERING

Ecovallée Yurts

LD Coste Perie, 24150 Couze et St Front; 05 53 57 94 41; www.ecovallee.com

With a vast woodland to explore, animals to feed, eggs to collect and hammocks to snooze in, this property offers two 5-m (18-ft) tall yurts for weekly hire, each with a double and two single beds. An outdoor safari-style kitchen and a kids' play yurt complete the set-up. Baby and toddler supplies are available.



€€

Beynac

Map 12 E1

CAMPING

Camping le Capeyou

24220 Beynac; 05 53 29 54 95;

www.campinglecapeyou.com

A stone's throw from the village with its cafés and restaurants, this camp site sits in the shadow of the



A spacious and elegantly decorated family room at Le Chatenet, Brantôme

Château du Beynac. Families can pitch their own tent here or hire a luxury tent or mobile home. There are two pools and a large play area on site, with access to the nearby beach, where bicycles, canoes and kayaks are available for hire. The perfect base for exploring the region's most famous châteaux.



€

Brantôme

Map 8 E6

HOTEL

Le Chatenet

24310 Brantôme; 05 53 05 81 08; www.lechatenet.com

Originally built in the 17th century by Seigneur de Giry, this is a small but luxurious hotel, in a tranquil setting, and Brantôme's largest private estate. This magnificent manor house has fabulous gardens and an outdoor pool, as well as tennis and badminton courts.



€€€

Cabrerets

Map 12 F2

BED & BREAKFAST

Un Jardin dans la Falaise

46330 Cabrerets; 05 65 30 85 35;

www.unjardindansfalaise.com

With breathtaking views over the Célé valley below, this small and charming B&B is located in the

historical village of Cabrerets. It offers three rooms, including a family suite with its own small kitchen area. Ideal for exploring the Lot, including Cahors and the painted caves of Pech Merle.

P €

Cahors

Map 12 F2

HOTEL

Hôtel Jean XXII

2 Rue Edmond Albe, 46000; 05 65 35 07 66; www.hotel-jeanxxii.com

Situated at the foot of the Jean XXII tower, this hotel is housed in what was once the 13th-century Dueze Palace. The ensuite rooms are equipped with LCD TVs and free Wi-Fi. There is a reading room and board games are available too.

€

Catus

Map 12 F2

SELF-CATERING

Pagel Holidays

46150 Catus; 05 61 21 69 19 (France); 01273 249617 (UK); www.pagel-france.com

A 20-minute drive from the medieval town of Cahors, Pagel offers child-centred holidays, exclusively for families with children aged under 10, in three painstakingly restored cottages in a tranquil setting. There are acres of woodland to explore, an Indian village complete with totem pole and wigwams, a pirate ship, a heated swimming pool and a play barn full of toys and dressing-up gear.

P €€€

Clermont-Pouyguilles

Map 11 D4

SELF-CATERING

Domaine la Douce, 32300

Clermont-Pouyguilles; 05 62 61 88 92; www.domaineladoucefrance.nl

These luxurious safari tents stand on raised platforms, complete with large terraces for fine views of the extensive privately owned woodland. The furnishings are high end and each tent has electricity and a fully equipped kitchen, as well as a bathroom. Forest trails, swimming pool, play area and lakes for fishing make it a superb base for a family holiday. Picnic baskets are available on request.

P €€

Duravel

Map 12 E2

CAMPING

Club de Vacances

Duravel

Route de Vire, 46700; 05 65 24 65 06; www.clubdevacances.eu

This four-star camp site, on the banks of the Lot river, has a wide range of accommodation options, including pitches, mobile homes, tents and chalets. In summer, there are kids' clubs for ages 4–12 with daily activities, and cabaret shows for the whole family in the evening. There are swimming pools, water slides, a playground, football pitch and volleyball court on site, along with a bar and restaurant.

P €–€€



Exterior of the beautiful Hostellerie La Roseraie, Montignac

Mirepoix

Map 12 F5

CAMPING

Belrepayre Airstream & Retro Trailer Park

09500 Manses; 05 61 68 11 99; www.airstreameuropa.com

Guests can pitch their own tent or take their pick from a fleet of vintage Airstream American Trailers at this scenic camp site. The on-site diner is a converted Airstream, serving up tapas, grills and milk shakes. For grown-ups, there is a spa area, with hot tub for a little R&R.

P €–€€

Montignac

Map 12 E1

HOTEL

Hostellerie La Roseraie

24290 Montignac; 05 53 50 53 92; www.laroseaie-hotel.com

Located on the riverside in the heart of Montignac, this is a completely

refurbished 19th-century mansion hotel. The large grounds have an outdoor swimming pool, a rose garden and terrace overlooking the river. There is an excellent restaurant, and babysitting service is offered; packed lunches on request.

P €€

SELF-CATERING

Le Four à Sel

Le Port d'Aubas, 24290 Aubas; 05 53 51 39 87; www.lefourasel.com

Located 2 km (1 mile) outside the village, this is a group of three holiday homes set in vast private grounds. They vary in size and can accommodate groups ranging from two to 30 people. A playground and a covered play area for kids make it an ideal base for families.

P €€

Le Hameau Du Moulin

Chemin de Gourny, 24291 Montignac; www.le-hameau-moulin-montignac.federal-hotel.com

Situated on the outskirts of Montignac, this holiday complex is in a prime location for exploring Lascaux II and the surrounding area. It is child-friendly with a choice of fully serviced maisonettes in the grounds. There is a BBQ area and two heated outdoor pools. It also offers activities for young children and teenagers.

P €€

Montcabrier

Map 6 C5

SELF-CATERING

Domaine de la Dolce

46700 Montcabrier; 05 65 31 62 90; www.domainedeladolce.com

Three family-friendly gîtes set in the rolling countryside. Each cottage is single storey and equipped with baby and toddler essentials such as highchairs, sterilizers and bouncy chairs. There is a heated swimming pool, shaded playground and a play cottage full of toys and books. Guided trips, parent pamper sessions and babysitting available.

P €€€

Price Guide

The following price ranges are based on one night's accommodation in high season for a family of four, inclusive of service charges and any additional taxes.

€ Under €100 €€ €100–200 €€€ over €200



Rustic Domaine de la Rhue, Rocamadour

Padirac

Map 12 F1

CAMPING

Roca d'Amour – Les Chenes

46500 Padirac; 05 65 33 65 54;

www.campingleschenes.com

This is a large, family-oriented camp site with its own aquatic park. There is organized entertainment in high season. Bar, restaurant and pizzeria on site.

P ☉

€

Rocamadour

Map 12 F1

HOTEL

Domaine de la Rhue

46500 Rocamadour; 05 65 33 71 50;

www.domainedelarhue.com

Set in the Parc Naturel Régional des Causses du Quercy, this is a charming hotel with 14 rooms in a renovated stable block. Several options are available for family accommodation, including adjoining rooms, with kitchenettes and terraces.

☎ ☑ P

€€

BED & BREAKFAST

La Noyeraie

46500 Rocamadour; 05 65 40 43 91;

www.lanoyeraierocamadour.com

This beautiful B&B offers a choice of suites for families and a separate apartment sleeping four. Parquet floors, chandeliers and breathtaking views of the walnut orchards make it a superb choice. The terrace café serves up a delicious walnut cake. Friendly owners; pets are welcomed.

☎ ☑ P

€€

Sarlat

Map 12 F1

BED & BREAKFAST

La Barde

Montfort, 24200 Vitrac;

05 53 28 24 34; www.labarde-montfort.com

Located 3 km (2 miles) from the bustling medieval town of Sarlat, this

is a small, traditional B&B. There are four double or triple bedrooms and a family suite with two bedrooms. Games, a billiards table and a BBQ area are provided. Highchairs and cots are available on request.

☎ P ☉

€€

CAMPING

Campsite Aqua Viva

24200 Carsac-Aillac, 05 53 31 46 00,

www.campings.village-center.com

This lakeside camp site offers pitches, eco-lodge tents and mobile homes, with kids' clubs for ages 4–17 years in summer. A small paddling pool with water slides provides outdoor fun, along with a play area and mini-golf. In high season, there is a shop, snack bar and restaurant on site. Bicycles are available for hire.

P ☉

€–€€

St-Amand-de-Coly

Map 12 F1

CAMPING

Lascaux Vacances Camping

24290 Yelloh Village; 05 53 50 81

57; www.yellohvillage.co.uk

A family-oriented wooded camp site, it offers pitches, chalets, log cabins and tents. There are plenty of leisure activities on site, including a volleyball court. In summer there are clubs for kids aged 5–17 years. Nearby are Lascaux II and outdoor activities such as horse-riding.

P ☉

€–€€

St-Cirq-Lapopie

Map 12 F2

CAMPING

Camping de la Plage

46330 St-Cirq-Lapopie; 05 65 30

29 51; www.campingplage.com

In a stunning location beside the Lot river, in the shadow of one of France's most beautiful villages, this is a basic camp site. There are 98 pitches for tents, caravans and motor

homes. Fishing lessons, kayaking trips, hiking trails and team sports are available.

P

€–€€

St-Jean-Poutge

Map 12 D3

BED & BREAKFAST

Château de Plehaut

32190 St-Jean-Poutge; 05 62 64

68 06; www.chateauduplehaut.co.uk

Set in 5 ha (12 acres), this château provides two B&B options. Guests can stay in the main house or in the cottage by the pool. There is a family suite with adjoining bedrooms. Fishing on site.

☎ ☑ P ☉

€€

Toulouse

Map 12 F4

HOTEL

Citadines Wilson

Toulouse

8 Blvd de Strasbourg, 31000; 05 34

41 75 00; www.citadines.com/en/france/toulouse/wilson.html

This clean and modern city-centre apartment-hotel offers studios and larger apartments with bathrooms and kitchens ideal for families. Cots and highchairs are available on request, and breakfast is included.

☎ ☑ *

€€

Hotel Castellane

17 Rue de Castellane, 31000; 05 61

62 18 82; www.castellanehotel.com

This contemporary hotel offers good value for money in the heart of the "pink" city. The 53 rooms range from single to family rooms sleeping up to 8 guests. All rooms have either a whirlpool bath or power shower; some rooms have balconies. Breakfast is served on an outdoor terrace during the warmer months. Child-minders are available on request.

☎ *

€€

Varen

Map 12 G3

CAMPING

Le Camp

Arnac, 82330; 06 11 94 33 68;

www.lecamp.co.uk

A small, stylish, family-run camp site, it offers fully equipped luxurious tents and yurts, which are elevated on wooden platforms, with panoramic views of the surrounding countryside. There is woodland to explore and a natural swimming pond.

☎ P ☉

€€€

Poitou and Aquitaine

South of the Loire, this fertile Atlantic region of gentle hills and rivers starts in the north with the waterways of the Marais Poitevin and ends in the south with the sandy beaches and pine forests of Les Landes. While La Rochelle and Bordeaux are packed with history, Futuroscope offers a high-tech wonderland. Seaside resorts and camp sites line the coasts.

Below The 15th-century Porte Cailhau with its fairy-tale bell tower, Bordeaux



1 Futuroscope

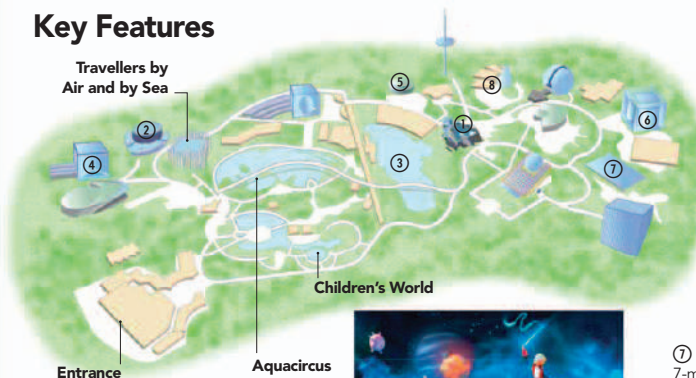
Play with the future

Futuroscope makes the future fun. Dedicated to exploring current techniques in media, it offers 25 experiences that illuminate the world's past, present and future using the latest multimedia imagery, from IMAX and Omnimax to augmented reality and 4D rides. Now France's second-largest theme park, Futuroscope focuses on novel experiences suitable for all age groups; half the experiences in this unique park change every two years.



The unique and dazzling Kinémax building

Key Features



1 Ultimate Wave Tahiti Ride the Tahitian waves with world champion surfer Kelly Slater and discover how waves are formed on the giant IMAX screen in the crystal-shaped Kinémax building.



2 Cosmic Collisions Made with the aid of NASA satellite images and narrated by Robert Redford, this film puts visitors in the chaotic centre of intergalactic space.



3 Féerie Nocturne Lady 0 This spectacular light and sound show features pyrotechnics, multi-coloured lasers, dancing flames and fountains.

4 Dynamic Vienne Tour the villages and landscapes of the area around Futuroscope in a speeding train, hang-glider and Formula 3 car.

5 The 8th Continent Help scientists ride the ocean of trash on virtual scooters and shooting laser pistols in this life-size video game.

6 Arthur, the 4D Adventure Don 3D glasses, hop in a "Ladybuggy" and go on a wild ride in an award-winning adventure created by film director Luc Besson.

7 Dances with Robots Hop on to ten 7-m (23-ft) tall robots, while they do a breathtaking boogie woogie.

8 Le Petit Prince Inspired by Antoine de St-Exupéry's famous story, this 3D adventure uses special effects, such as mists and tickles, to make the on-screen action more life-like.



The Lowdown

Map reference 7 D4
Address 86000 (Vienne).
 Avenue René Monory, 86360
 Chasseneuil-du-Poitou; 05 49 49
 11 12; www.futuroscope.com

Train TGV from Paris to Futuroscope's own station.
Bus 1 from Poitiers

Open mid-Feb–mid-Sep: daily. For other months, check website for details. The park opens at 10am and closes at dusk. The evening show starts 30 mins before the park closes.

Price One-day pass (includes evening show): €150; under 5s free; a two consecutive days pass: €270; evening tickets (summer) €72; under 5s free

Skipping the queue Book tickets and packages online, including stay in one of the family-oriented chain hotels within a 10-minute walk of the entrance. Pick up the day's

schedule of shows and start with the furthest and less crowded attractions. In July and August, arrive early to get a seat for the evening show.

Guided tours Spiral up the Gyrotour, a 45-m (150-ft) high shaft, for a 360° view of the park, with a commentary.

Age range 2 plus; pushchairs available. Some rides have a minimum height restriction of 1 m (3 ft) or 1.2 m (4 ft).

Allow At least a day or, even better, two to see and do everything

Café Inside the park (see p283)

Toilets Many inside the park

Good family value?

Futuroscope is great for kids, but there can be long queues in the summer.



Kids enjoying thrilling boat slides at Children's World

Letting off steam

Futuroscope's **Children's World** is ideal for 12-year-olds and younger, with boat slides, flying seats that are suspended on parachutes, cars to drive through the city of the future, foam ball fights and more. While some rides are suited for tots, some are for kids aged 8 plus with adult supervision. Head to the **Lac de St-Cyr** (www.lacdesaintcyr.com), a 10-minute drive north of the park, for calmer swims in a large lake, mountain bikes and kayaks.

Eat and drink

Picnic: under €20; Snacks: €20–45; Real meal: €45–90; Family treat: over €90 (based on a family of four)

PICNIC Supermarché Auchan (on the D3, 86360 Chasseneuil-du-Poitou), less than 2 km (1 mile) from the park, stocks ingredients for picnics. Picnic inside Futuroscope in the covered area; buy a good supply of water.

SNACKS Illico Resto (on site) is a snack bar that offers a wide choice of sandwiches, tortilla wraps, salads, crêpes, waffles, ice cream and drinks throughout the day. There are nine outlets in the park.



Motorbikes on display in the Musée Auto Moto Vélo, Châtelleraut

REAL MEAL La Crêpe Volante (on site), one of the seven restaurants in the park, specializes in crêpes with a flying saucer theme. There are salads and grilled meats on offer. Try

Comptoir du monde (on site) for a wide choice of world cuisine.

FAMILY TREAT Le Cristal (on site, by lake; check website for timings) serves some colourful and often surprisingly good food of the future, overseen by Hervé This, a physical chemist and one of the fathers of molecular cuisine; kids are catered for as well. Book well in advance to dine here.

Shopping

There are eight gift shops in the park selling a variety of clothing, toys, games, souvenirs, books, fashion accessories, gadgets and a range of regional delicacies.



Outdoor seating at La Crêpe Volante, "the flying pancake"

Find out more

DIGITAL Go to www.coloriages-jeux-futuroscope.com for games and interactive pictures.

Next step...

A MUSEUM AND A CHÂTEAU

Take Vitalis bus 1 or E to the town of Châtelleraut to see the Pont Henri IV, built in 1609, with its fairy-tale towers and the **Musée Auto Moto Vélo** (3 Rue Clément Krebs, 86100; tinyurl.com/4x7zdkr; closed Mon & Tue), which has bicycles, cars and engines dating back to 1818. From the town of Châtelleraut, bus 210 goes to the town of Scorbé-Clairvaux, where the 15th-century **Château de Clairvaux** (7 Pl de Montbron, 86140; open mid Jul–Aug) has a park, orangerie and a chess museum, featuring 150 chess sets from 70 countries, including one so tiny, it fits inside a Fabergé egg.

KIDS' CORNER

The timeless appeal of cinema

In 1895, when the Lumière brothers showed the world's first films in public on their cinematograph, Louis Lumière predicted, "The cinema is an invention without a future", imagining that people would be bored of seeing things on a screen that they could see any other day. But the next year, French film maker Alice Guy proved that everyday things were hardly the limits when she made *The Cabbage Fairy*, the first fiction film.



BLAST FROM THE PAST

In 1738, Frenchman Jacques Vaucanson made the first true robots in modern times. His most famous work was the Digesting Duck that "ate" and "defecated", using 400 moving parts.



Fun with a digital camera

- 1 Look out for unusual items and take "mystery pictures". See if people can guess what they are.
- 2 Make stories with your favourite toys or action figures, and use free software to make them into stop-motion movies.
- 3 Take pictures from a different point of view – say from a dog's eye view and see how different the world looks.
- 4 Use free software to edit your photos into "paintings" in the style of Van Gogh.
- 5 Collect images of certain items or features – fountains, old cars, streetlights, unusual doors. By the time you grow up, you will be an expert in whatever subject you choose.



② Poitiers

Troubadours and colourful churches

Poitiers was France's third-largest city in the Middle Ages, and famous as the seat of Eleanor of Aquitaine's Court of Love. Her palace, with its great hall where troubadours once sang, is now part of the **Palais du Justice**. Poitiers is most famous for its medieval churches. Check out the façade of the 11th–12th-century Notre-Dame-la-Grande whose sculptures were originally brightly coloured. On summer evenings, a spectacular show, *Polychromies*, "re-paints" the church's sculptures with lights. Inside, the columns are painted in myriad geometric shapes. The 12th-century Cathédrale St-Pierre in Grand Place still has its original stained glass, while the 6th-century **Baptistère St-Jean** contains Merovingian tombs. The **Musée de Ste-Croix** houses curious Upper Palaeolithic engravings from a nearby cave, sculptures by Camille Claudel, Roman finds and medieval capitals.

Letting off steam

Play in the **Parc de Blossac** (*Rue de la Tranchée, 86000; 05 49 41 39 37*) with streams and bridges. Visit **Royal**



Noah's Ark, an exquisite 12th-century wall painting, in the Abbaye de St-Savin

Kids (www.royalkids.fr), an indoor games park for kids (1–10 years) with ball pools and giant LEGO blocks.

③ Angles-sur-l'Anglin

The hidden treasure under Wizard's Rock

A ruined **château** perches on the cliffs above the pretty village of Angles-sur-l'Anglin. More intriguing, however, is the find made in 1922, of a 13,000-BC Magdalenian-era settlement at the base of a local cliff called the Roc aux Sorciers (Wizards' Rock). In 1947, archaeologist Suzanne de Saint-Mathurin came to investigate and found a stunning 20-m (65-ft) Magdalenian frieze of horses, bison, goats, lions and human figures in motion, dubbed the "Lascaux of Sculpture". The original, still under the cliff, is inaccessible to the public, but the **Centre d'Interprétation du Roc-aux-Sorciers** has a life-size cast and a multimedia spectacle that explains everything.

Letting off steam

Run in the **Jardin Public** (*Rue de l'Église, 86260*), located by the Église St-Martin. Take a taxi or drive west to **Chauvigny**, a medieval village, where Vélo-Rail (www.velorail-chauvigny.fr)

The Lowdown

- 📍 **Map reference** 8 E4
Address 86260 (Vienne). Centre d'Interprétation du Roc-aux-Sorciers: 2 Route des Certeaux; www.roc-aux-sorciers.com
- 🚗 **Bus** 10313R from Poitiers to Chauvigny, then taxi
- 📍 **Visitor information** 2 Rue du Four Banal, 86260; 05 49 48 86 87; www.anglesuranglin.com
- 🏠 **Open** Château d'Angles-sur-l'Anglin: Jul & Aug: Wed–Mon; May & Sep: Sat & Sun pm. Centre d'Interprétation du Roc-aux-Sorciers: French school hols, public hols & Jul–Aug: daily; Apr–Nov: Wed–Sun; Nov–Mar: Sat & Sun; closed Jan
- 🍴 **Eat and drink Snacks** Le Marsala (*38 Rue du Pont, 86260; 05 49 48 65 44; www.lemarsala.fr*; closed Mon & Tue and Wed lunch) serves grilled meats, pizzas and home-made *frites*. **Family treat** Le Relais du Lyon d'Or (*4 Rue d'Enfer, 86260; 05 49 48 32 53; www.lyondor.com*; closed mid-Nov–mid-Mar) offers beautifully prepared dishes perfectly matching the fine wines.

offers 2-hour excursions through pretty landscapes on pedal bicycles fitted on old train tracks.

④ St-Savin-sur-Gartempe

A 900-year-old comic strip

In the 8th century, during the reign of Charlemagne, the discovery here of the relics of the martyrs Savin and Cyprian prompted the construction of a chapel, which by the 11th century grew into the vast **Abbaye de St-Savin**. The abbey church is nothing less than the "Sistine Chapel

The Lowdown

- 📍 **Map reference** 7 D4
Address 86000 (Vienne). Palais du Justice: Pl Alphonse-Petit; 05 49 50 22 00. Baptistère St-Jean: Rue Jean-Jaurès. Musée de Ste-Croix: 3 bis Rue Jean-Jaurès; www.musees-poitiers.org
- 🚗 **Train** from Paris and La Rochelle
- 📍 **Visitor information** 45 Pl Charles de Gaulle, 86000; 05 49 41 21 24; www.ot-poitiers.fr
- 🏠 **Open** Palais du Justice: Mon–Fri. Baptistère St-Jean: Apr–Sep: Wed–Mon; Jul & Aug: daily; Oct–Mar: Wed–Mon pm. Musée de Ste-Croix: Jun–Sep: Tue–Sun; Oct–May: Tue–Fri, Sat & Sun pm
- 🍴 **Eat and drink Snacks** L'Oasis des Saveurs (*78 Rue de la Cathédrale, 86000*; closed Sun & Mon) serves tasty kebabs and Moroccan pastries. **Real meal** Les Bons Enfants (*11 bis Rue Cloche Perse, 86000; 05 49 41 49 82*; closed Sun night & Mon) offers some of the best food at reasonable prices. Best to book ahead.



Impressive façade of Notre-Dame-la-Grande, Poitiers

The Lowdown

Map reference 8 E4
Address 86310 (Vienne). Abbaye de St-Savin: 26 Pl de la Libération; www.abbaye-saint-savin.fr

Bus from Poitiers train station

Visitor information 20 Pl de la Libération, 86310; 05 49 48 11 00; www.saintsavin.com

Eat and drink *Real meal* Le Patisson (52 Pl de la République, 86310; 05 49 84 14 73; www.lepatisson.fr; closed Tue dinner & Wed) serves simple but tasty dishes such as scallops cooked on a hot griddle. *Snacks* La Calzone (22 Rue Saint-Louis, 86310; 05 49 48 72 82; open Wed–Sun, closed Nov–Apr lunch) serves pizzas, paninis and pastas. Feast on hot snacks by the riverside.

of Romanesque Art” – its early 12th-century murals cover the biblical story from creation to apocalypse in scenes presented like a comic strip. Today, these are brought to life with films, fibre optics and special activities for kids.

Letting off steam

Go for a splash in St-Savin's **Centre Aquatique de La Gassotte** (*Allée des Tilleuls*, 86310; Jul–Aug), an open-air pool complex with slides and a wading pool for tots.

5 Marais Poitevin

The green Venice of France

The Poitevin marshes offer a different world altogether – an emerald dreamland of tree-canopied canals

populated by frogs, dragonflies and swans. Take a boat tour or hire a *batai* (punt) to explore the green labyrinth – the waterways are well signposted and maps are available.

Start in pretty little Coulon, where the **Maison des Marais Poitevin** has displays on the history and traditions of the region. At St-Hilaire La Palud, in the heart of the marshes, punt or take a boat tour through the **Parc Ornithologique Les Oiseaux du Marais Poitevin**, a sanctuary to 70 species of birds.

Letting off steam

Go for a pedal with the **La Bicyclette Verte** (www.maraispoitevin-bicyclette.com) on the 300-km (186-mile) bike path to the town of St-Hilaire. They offer all kinds of bikes, including tandems, bikes with child seats, and kids' bikes.



Flat-bottomed batais moored at Coulon's quayside in the Marais Poitevin

The Lowdown

Map reference 7 C4
Address 17000 (Charente-Maritime), 79000 (Deux Sèvres) and 85000 (Vendée). **Maison des Marais Poitevin:** Pl de la Coutume, 79510 Coulon; 05 49 35 81 04. **Parc Ornithologique Les Oiseaux du Marais Poitevin:** Le Petit Buisson, 79210 St-Hilaire La Palud; www.oiseauxmaraispoitevin.com

Train from Poitiers or La Rochelle to Niort, then bus 20 or 21 to the villages in the marshes

Visitor information Parc Interrégional du Marais Poitevin, 2 Rue de l'Eglise, 79510 Coulon; 05 49 35 15 20; www.parc-maraispoitevin.fr

Open **Maison des Marais Poitevin:** Apr–11 Nov. **Parc Ornithologique Les Oiseaux du Marais Poitevin:** late Mar–15 Sep: daily pm; mid-Sep–1 Nov: pm, closed Mon

Eat and drink *Snacks* La Nappe à Carreaux (178 Route des Bords de Sèvre, Coulon 79510; 05 49 35 90 36; www.camping-laveniseverte.fr) organizes picnics on booking. **Family treat** Le Central (4 Rue d'Autremont, 79510 Coulon; 05 49 35 90 20; www.hotel-lecentral-coulon.com; closed Sun dinner,

Mon & Oct–Mar) offers a gourmet splurge of local specialities such as eels, snails and frogs' legs.

Festival Pentecost Crafts Festival at the Maison de la Meunerie (Jun)

KIDS' CORNER

Bring binoculars to the Abbaye de St-Savin and find out...

- 1 In the scene where God creates the sun and the moon, what is already growing tall on earth?
- 2 There is a very unusual scene in the church's West Porch. What creature is threatening the Virgin Mary and Child?
- 3 How did the artist distinguish God from the men?
- 4 How did the artist arrange the passengers in Noah's Ark?

Answers at the bottom of the page.



A KING'S RANSOM

At the Battle of Poitiers in 1356, the English captured the French king, Jean II. He dressed the same way as 19 of his knights but his helmet came off and he was recognized. The king was taken captive to London. His ransom was never paid and he died as a prisoner.



Wet or dry?

Since the 11th century, people, especially monks, have built dykes and channelled wetlands of the Marais Poitevin to use the land for agriculture. Since the 1970s, this drying out has accelerated dramatically, mostly to grow corn. Environmentalists, today, are fighting hard to preserve the marshes that remain.



Answers: 1 Three giant mushrooms. 2 A dragon. 3 Joseph strikes back in terror, while an angel comes to rescue the infant Jesus. 4 One deck for humans, wears a halo. 5 One deck for animals, one for birds, and another for humans.

6 La Rochelle

Historic gateway to the west

Guarded by its landmark fat towers, La Rochelle bursts with character, proud mansions and arcaded streets. By the 16th century, it was making fortunes from the New World, while becoming a defiant Huguenot stronghold. Two revolts, in 1622 and 1625, led it to suffer the siege of 1627–8. La Rochelle regained prosperity through the Atlantic slave trade; today it boasts a spectacular aquarium and several fine museums.



Tour de la Lanterne

Key Sights

- Muséum d'Histoire Naturelle** One of the best outside Paris, the museum's natural history exhibits include Zarafa, the country's first giraffe.
- Musée du Nouveau Monde** The museum covers La Rochelle's settlement and trade with the New World and Native Americans, and also slavery.



- Hôtel de Ville** The Renaissance town hall houses mementos related to the 1627–8 siege.

- Rue de l'Escalé** One of La Rochelle's oldest streets, it is paved with stones from Canada brought over as ballast. Nearby, seek out the gargoyles on Rue des Merciers and the arcaded Rue de Minage.

- Tour de la Lanterne** The last medieval lighthouse on the Atlantic, this 70-m (230-ft) high tower was also a prison.



- Tour de la Chaîne and Tour St-Nicolas** Built in the 15th century, these towers guard the entrance to the Vieux Port. Nearby is Le Gabut, the old fishermen's quarter.



- Aquarium** Some 12,000 creatures from the Atlantic, Mediterranean and Caribbean live here in stunning natural settings.

- Musée des Automates and Musée des Modèles Réduits** Antique clockwork figures reconstruct Montmartre in the Musée des Automates; the adjacent museum displays a miniature sea battle.

The Lowdown



Map reference 7 B5

Address 17000 (Charente-Maritime). **Muséum d'Histoire Naturelle:** 28 Rue Albert 1er; www.museum-larochelle.fr. **Musée du Nouveau Monde:** 10 Rue Fleuriau; 05 46 41 46 50. **Hôtel de Ville:** Pl de l'Hôtel de Ville; 05 46 41 14 68. **Tour de la Lanterne:** Rue sur les Murs; la-rochelle.monuments-nationaux.fr. **Aquarium:** Quai Louis Prunier; www.aquarium-larochelle.com. **Musée des Automates & Musée des Modèles Réduits:** Rue La Désirée, Ville-en-Bois; www.museeslarochelle.com



Train TGV from Paris, regular train from Bordeaux and Nantes. **Bus** Besides regular buses, sea buses link the Tour de la Chaîne to the Port des Minimes (Oct–Mar: Sat & Sun only) for €8; under 5s free. An electric shuttle boat Le Passeur links Tour de la Chaîne and Ville-en-Bois.



Visitor information 2 Quai Georges-Simenon, Le Gabut, 17000; 05 46 41 14 68; www.larochelle-tourisme.com



Open Muséum d'Histoire Naturelle: Tue–Fri, Sat & Sun pm. Musée du Nouveau Monde: Oct–Jun: 9:30am–12:30pm & 1:45–5pm; Sat & Sun: 2–6pm. Jul–Sep:

10am–1pm & 1:45–6pm, 2–6pm Sun; closed Tue. **Hôtel de Ville:** Jun–Sep: 3pm daily (till 4pm Jul–Aug), Oct–May 3pm Sat & Sun. **Tour de la Lanterne:** daily. **Aquarium:** Apr–Jun & Sep: 9am–8pm; Jul & Aug: 9am–11pm; Oct–Mar: 10am–8pm. **Musée des Automates & Musée des Modèles Réduits:** 10am–noon & 2–6pm daily; Jul & Aug: 9:30am–7pm



Prices Muséum d'Histoire Naturelle: €8; under 18s free. Musée du Nouveau Monde: €9; under 18s free. Hôtel de Ville: €6–12. Tour de la Lanterne: €12. Aquarium: €46; under 3s free. Musée des Automates &

Letting off steam

Head for the **Parc Charruyer** (*Chemin des Remparts, 17000; 05 46 41 14 68*) for its canals and ducks. Go for a romp at the **Mini Golf du Mail** (*Ave de la Monnaie, 17000; 05 46 41 76 06; www.minigolf-larochelle.com*), near the Vieux Port. It has an 18-hole mini-golf course, bouncy castles, bumper cars and a crêperie.



Boats docked at the tranquil inner harbour of La Rochelle

Eat and drink

Picnic: under €20; Snacks: €20–45; Real meal: €45–90; Family treat: over €90 (based on a family of four)

PICNIC **Marché Couvert** (*Pl du Marché, 17000; till 1pm daily*) is a covered market. Head for the city's charming Parc Charruyer to enjoy the picnic.

SNACKS **Amaryne** (*18 Bis r Gambetta, 17000; 05 46 37 88 39*) is the perfect place to eat in or take out great Thai food. Try **Ernest Le Glacier** (*18 Rue du Port, 17000*) for home-made ice cream and sorbets in delicious flavours.

REAL MEAL **Téatro Bettini et Accademia** (*1 Rue de Thiers, 17000; 05 46 41 07 03; open daily*) is

located in a former theatre. Dine on excellent pizza, generous portions of lasagne and other pasta dishes.

FAMILY TREAT **Les Quatre Sergents** (*49 Rue Saint-Jean du Pérot, 17000; 05 46 41 35 80; www.les4sergents.fr; closed Mon*) has a pretty winter garden setting and some of La Rochelle's tastiest cuisine. The restaurant also has a kids' menu.

Shopping

Head for **La Licorne Bleue** (*25 Rue des Dames, 17000*) for board games, cards and figurines. For new and antique toys, visit **Piccolo** (*16 Rue du Pas-du-Minage, 17000*). Drop in to **Model Kit** (*9 Rue St Nicolas, 17000*) to check out model boats, planes, cars and trains.

Find out more

DIGITAL Download The Three Musketeers game from www.dingo.games.com/three-musketeers-game.

FILM The siege of La Rochelle is shown in Alexandre Dumas' *The Three Musketeers*, which has been filmed many times over the years, the latest version in 2011.



Aerial view of the lighthouses at St-Clément des Baleines

Next stop...

ÎLE DE RÉ Take a bus from La Rochelle's train station over the 3-km (2-mile) long toll bridge to the Île de Ré, with its golden beaches, salt pans and vines. Rent a bike (child seats available) and aim for the port of La Flotte and the town of St-Martin-de-Ré, with fortifications by French military engineer Vauban. In Loix, visit the **Ecomusée du Marais Salant** (www.marais-salant.com) to learn about salt marshes. At St-Clément des Baleines, visit the two lighthouses (1682 and 1854) known as **Phare des Baleines** (www.lepharedesbaleines.fr) named for the whales frequently spotted here. There is also a whale museum.

KIDS' CORNER

In the Musée du Nouveau Monde, find out...

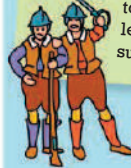
- 1 Why did so many people from La Rochelle settle in Canada?
- 2 What was exchanged in the Atlantic slave trade, also known as the Triangular Trade?
- 3 What did La Rochelle's merchants specialize in?



Answers at the bottom of the page.

A BARBARIC ACT

Although La Rochelle was made safe for Protestants by King Henri IV, his son Louis XIII and Cardinal Richelieu besieged it. In 1627, the city had a population of 30,000. During the 14-months siege, they were reduced to eating rats and leather. Only 5,000 survived to surrender.



To France, with love from Egypt

Zarafa, a gift from Ali Pasha of Egypt to King Charles X of France in 1826, was the first giraffe the French had ever seen. She was shipped to Marseille and then walked 880 km (547 miles) to be presented to the king in Paris. She also had a special raincoat to cope with the French weather. When she died 10 years later, she was stuffed and brought to La Rochelle.



Answers: 1 Because they were exchanged sugar for furs in Canada. 2 They exchanged sugar for rum in the Caribbean. 3 Textiles and other manufactured goods from Africa who were exchanged for slaves. 2 Textiles and other manufactured goods because of trade connections. Protestants and not welcome in France; 1 Because they were

Musée des Modèles Réduits: €38 each, or €5 together

Skipping the queue The tourist office's Pass' Rochelais (www.passpartout17.org) offers admission at discount to 13 sights, guided tour and free bus, sea or bike transport.

Guided tours Contact the tourist office for details.

Age range 4 plus

Allow At least a day

Good family value?

La Rochelle offers lots of things to see and do, with fascinating historical monuments, museums and an excellent aquarium.

7 Rochefort

Maritime marvels

A handsome 17th-century port near the mouth of the Charente river, Rochefort is home to the mighty arsenal set up under Louis XIV and his minister Colbert. It is also the home port of the frigate *Hermione*, which has been superbly reconstructed in the Corderie Royale complex. The *Hermione* was used by the Marquis de La Fayette to sail to America from Rochefort in 1780. In May 2015, the reconstructed frigate retraced Lafayette's journey across the Atlantic to Yorktown USA. **La Corderie Royale** recalls the town's shipbuilding past in an astonishing 374-m (1,224-ft) long building, where ropes for the original *Hermione* were made. The Corderie houses the **Centre International de la Mer** and both offer films, games and audio guides for kids. The **Musée National de la Marine** has a collection of ship models, figureheads and cannons



Richly decorated interior of the *Maison de Pierre Loti*, Rochefort



Carefully sculpted ape enclosure at the delightful Zoo de La Palmyre, Royan

from the arsenal, while the **Musée des Commerces d'autrefois** has re-created 20 French shops from 1900. Visit the **Maison de Pierre Loti**, the house of naval officer, novelist and travel writer Julien Viaud who was known as Pierre Loti (1850–1923). For fun, cross the **Pont Transbordeur**, France's last active transporter bridge.

Letting off steam

Play hide and seek in the yew labyrinth at La Corderie Royale. Take bus G to the Grande Plage de Fouras, 5 km (3 miles) west of Rochefort, for a mighty bounce with nets, helmets and harnesses at the **Attraction Trampoline** (www.location-trampoline.com), with activities for kids aged 4 plus.

8 Marennnes and the Île d'Oléron

Oyster city and oyster island

Two names that French oyster lovers know well are Marennnes and Oléron. Learn about molluscs in the **La Cité des Huitres**, in Marennnes, with audio visuals, games and oyster shacks. The museum is visited via a 3-km (2-mile) trail for which bikes are given. Over the viaduct is the Île d'Oléron. Hire bikes (www.velos17loisirs.com) to visit its west coast beaches, small villages and nature reserves. Try the sheltered Anse de Gatseau beach, by St-Trojan-les-Bains. Architectural highlights on the island include the star-shaped **Citadelle du Château d'Oléron**, which is impressive in spite of being mostly destroyed by Allied bombs in World War II, and the **Phare de Chassiron**, the lighthouse on the island's northernmost point and local "world's end", with a museum and old-fashioned fish traps; the tide brings the fish in and imprisons them behind walls when it goes out.



Visitors to the oyster beds at La Cité des Huitres, Marennnes

The Lowdown

Map reference 7 B5

Address 17300 (Charente-Maritime). La Corderie Royale & shipyard: Rue du Docteur-Pujols; www.corderie-royale.com; www.hermione.com/ en/home. Musée National de la Marine: Pl de la Galissonnière; www.musee-marine.fr. Musée des Commerces d'autrefois: 12 Rue Lesson; www.museedescommerces.com. Maison de Pierre Loti: 141 Rue Pierre Loti; www.ville-rochefort.fr. Pont Transbordeur: www.pont-transbordeur.fr

Train from La Rochelle; TGV from Paris to Surgères, then shuttle

Visitor information Ave Sadi Carnot, 17300; 05 46 99 08 60; www.rochefort-ocean.com

Open La Corderie Royale & Musée des Commerces d'autrefois: daily, closed Jan. Shipyard: daily, closed 25 Dec & Jan (combined tickets

available with La Corderie Royale). Frigate *Hermione*: visits possible when in harbour – check website. Musée National de la Marine: Feb–Apr & Oct–Dec: pm; May–Sep: daily. Musée des Commerces d'autrefois: Feb–Jun & Sep–Dec: Mon–Sat, Sun pm; Jul–Aug: daily. Maison de Pierre Loti: closed for renovation until 2016.

Eat and drink Snacks Restaurant des Longitudes (Site de La Corderie Royale, BP 50108, Rochefort 17300; 05 46 87 56 16) is located in a guard house of the Corderie Royale. It offers good quality snacks and burgers. **Real meal** La Goule Benaise (23 Ave Marcel Dassault, 17300; 05 46 83 19 17; closed Sun eve & Mon) offers changing daily specials and market-fresh cuisine.

Festival Résonances, a world music festival (Jul)

The Lowdown

Map reference 7 B5
Address 17560 (Charente-Maritime). La Cité des Huitres: Chenal de la Cayenne, 17320 Marennes; 05 46 36 78 98; www.cite-huitre.com. Citadelle du Château d'Oléron: Pl de la République, 17480; 05 46 47 60 51. Phare de Chassiron: St-Denis-d'Oléron, 17650; 05 46 75 18 62; www.chassiron.net

Train to Surgères, then bus to Marennes, Bourcefranc and Château d'Oléron. Viaduct to Île d'Oléron or passenger boats from Bourcefranc to Le Château d'Oléron or La Tremblade to St-Trojan-les-Bains

Visitor information Route du Viaduc, 17480 Bourcefranc-le-Chapus; 05 46 85 65 23; www.ile-oleron-marennes.com

Open La Cité des Huitres: Jul & Aug: daily; Apr–Jun & Sep–mid-Nov: Wed–Sun; closed Jan. Citadelle du Château d'Oléron: day and night tours arranged by the tourist office in Bourcefranc. Phare de Chassiron: daily

Eat and drink *Real meal* Di Piazzo (Pl de la République, 17480 Le Château d'Oléron; 05 46 85 02 66) has a kids' menu and offers picture books. *Family treat* Les Jardins d'Aliénor (11 Rue du Maréchal Foch, 17480 Le Château d'Oléron; 05 46 76 48 30; www.lesjardinsdalienor.com; closed Mon & Tue (winter) has chicken or fish on the kids' menu.

Festival Fête de Vent, kite flying at St-Denis-d'Oléron (Aug)

Letting off steam

Head for Dolus-d'Oléron's **Park Aquatique** (www.vert-marine.com) for indoor or outdoor fun. Splash in a lagoon, go down giant slides and float amid geysers, down a "river" and under waterfalls.

9 Royan

Beaches, butterflies and bonsai

Located near the northern tip of the Gironde estuary, the seaside resort of Royan became a popular bathing resort for its sheltered silky sands. It was, however, one of the last places held by the Nazis in France in World War II, and when the Allies tried to bomb them out in January 1945, they tragically hit the civilian population instead; Royan was not liberated until 18 April. Rebuilt with plenty of concrete in the 1950s, it



Colourful striped tents on the sandy beach at Royan

looks like no other French resort. Visit the surviving 19th-century *belle époque* mansions and **Les Jardins du Monde**, with bonsais, orchids, Japanese and English gardens, and a butterfly greenhouse. There is also an 1,800-year-old olive tree, 7 m (23 ft) in circumference, which was brought here from Spain. Kids can follow a treasure hunt, find their way out of a bamboo maze and ride electric boats.

Letting off steam

Play on the beaches of the Côte de Beauté in Royan or head west to the small town of La Palmyre to visit the **Zoo de La Palmyre** (www.zoo-palmyre.fr), with 1,600 animals and a giant ape enclosure.

The Lowdown

Map reference 7 B6
Address 17200 (Charente-Maritime). Les Jardins du Monde: 5 Ave des Fleurs de la Paix; 05 46 38 00 99

Train from Angoulême or Saintes, or directly from Paris in summer. Ferry from Le Verdon

Visitor information 1 Blvd de la Grandière, 17200; 05 46 05 04 71; www.royan-tourisme.com

Open Les Jardins du Monde: phone to check

Eat and drink *Snacks* La Nona (82 Front de Mer, 17200; 05 46 38 39 86; closed Tue & Wed) serves delicious pizzas in a contemporary dining room. It also has a lovely, sheltered outdoor terrace. *Real meal* Le Lido (157 Blvd Frédéric Garnier, 17200; 05 46 05 12 00; restaurant lelido.monsite-orange.fr; Apr–mid-Nov) serves simple but tasty dishes – seafood, duck and beef.

Festival Rêve d'Icare, a festival of kites, balloons and gliders (Jun, every two years)

KIDS' CORNER

In La Corderie Royale, find out...

- How many football fields in a line would it take to contain La Corderie Royale?
- After wood, what was the most important material required to build a sailing ship?
- How much rope did a top-of-the-line frigate require in the time of Louis XIV?
- After the rope was made and dried, what was the next step?

Answers at the bottom of the page.



RAGING WINDS

On 27 December 1999, the winds of Tempête Martin, which toppled 20 million trees across France, reached 198 km (123 miles) per hour on the Île d'Oléron.

Flattering the diners

Oysters make pearls when a little parasite gets in their shell; to protect itself it covers the intruder in nacre or mother-of-pearl, the same shiny material that can be seen inside its shell. Natural pearls are rarely found and are worth a lot of money, yet some restaurants will put up a sign: "If you find a pearl in your oyster, you can keep it". It is a safe bet because no one



has ever found one. The oysters that make pearls are not the same kind people eat!

Answers: 1 Four 2 Hemp, for the rope to make it weatherproof.
 3 100 km (62 miles), stretched end to end 4 It was tarred in pine resin.

10 Angoulême

The world capital of comics

A medieval city divided into an aristocratic upper town and business-like lower town, Angoulême has a history intertwined with its river, the meandering Charente. The river's water was so pure that it was perfect for paper making. But as the local paper mills were replaced by big industrial plants, Angoulême decided to re-invent itself as the world capital of comic strips, hosting the prestigious Festival International de la Bande Dessinée.



Statue at Musée de la Bande Dessinée

Key Sights



1 Musée du Papier-Le Nil
Founded in 1792, this former mill houses a museum devoted to the Charente river and paper making then and now.



2 Musée de la Bande Dessinée
Comics, from the first ones of 1830 till the present, are interspersed with videos on how they are made.

0 metres 200
0 yards 200



3 Cathédrale St-Pierre Built in the 12th century, its huge façade has sculptural reliefs on the Ascension of Christ and the Last Judgment and the knight Roland fighting the Moors.



4 Musée d'Angoulême Housed in the former archbishop's palace, it has excellent sections on history, geology, fine arts and one of France's top collections of African and Oceanic art.

5 Château d'Angoulême Marguerite d'Angoulême, known for her writings and patronage of humanists, was born here in 1492. A tower and keep remain of the medieval castle, which are now used as the Town Hall.

6 Place des Halles This square occupies the spot of Angoulême's 10th-century fortress; today it is the location for a pretty 19th-century covered market.

7 Fondos Régional d'Art Contemporain Poitou-Charentes This art gallery in a big white building exhibits its collection of over 800 works by contemporary French and foreign artists from recent decades, in rotating exhibitions.

The Lowdown



Map reference 7 D6
Address 16000 (Charente).
Musée du Papier-Le Nil: 134 Rue de Bordeaux; www.angouleme.fr/museep. Musée de la Bande Dessinée: Cité Internationale de la Bande Dessinée, 121 Rue de Bordeaux; www.citebd.org. Musée d'Angoulême: 1 Rue Friedland, Square Girard II; www.angouleme.fr/museeba. Fondos Régional d'Art Contemporain Poitou-Charentes: 63 Blvd Besson-Bey; www.frac-poitou-charentes.org



Train from Paris and Bordeaux



Visitor information Pl des Halles, 16000; 05 45 95 16 84; www.angouleme-tourisme.com



Open Musée du Papier-Le Nil: 10am–noon & 2–6pm Tue–Fri, 2–6pm Sat & Sun; Jul & Aug: noon–6:30pm Tue–Fri, 1–6:30pm Sat & Sun. Musée de la Bande Dessinée: Sep–Jun: 10am–6pm Tue–Fri, 2–6pm Sat & Sun; Jul & Aug: till 7pm. Musée d'Angoulême: 10am–6pm Tue–Sun. Fondos Régional d'Art Contemporain Poitou-Charentes: 2–9pm Tue–Sat & first Sun of month



Prices Musée du Papier-Le Nil, Musée d'Angoulême & Fondos Régional d'Art Contemporain Poitou-Charentes: free. Musée de la Bande Dessinée: €26–36; under 18s free



Skipping the queue Visit the Musée de la Bande Dessinée in the morning when it is less crowded.



Guided tours Via Patrimoine (www.via-patrimoine.com) offers a range of guided tours and the Musée d'Angoulême has audio guides in English and French.



Entrance to the Centre Aquatique Nautilus in St-Yrieix-sur-Charente

Letting off steam

Wander along the Charente river on Boulevard Besson-Bey or take bus 9 to the town of St-Yrieix-sur-Charente, located 6 km (4 miles) northwest, for a splash in the **Centre Aquatique Nautilus** (www.grandangouleme.fr). The park has seven pools, water slides, and an ice-skating rink near an artificial lake, where swimming is free.

Eat and drink

Picnic: under €20; Snacks: €20–45; Real meal: €45–90; Family treat: over €90 (based on a family of four)

PICNIC Les Halles (Pl des Halles, 16000) is the covered market from where picnic supplies can be bought. Picnic by the lily pond in the shady Place Beaulieu.

SNACKS Le Palet d'Or (1 Pl Francis Louvel, 16000; 05 45 95 00 73) serves sandwiches and light lunches to take away, as well as some of Angoulême's best cakes.

REAL MEAL La Braise (5 Rue Trois Notre-Dame, 16000; 05 45 95 52 60; www.restaurant-angouleme.info; Wed–Sun) serves grilled meats –

there are no fewer than 27 varieties to choose from, along with big salads and home-made desserts.

FAMILY TREAT Chez Paul (8 Pl Francis Louvel, 16000; 05 45 90 04 61; www.restaurant-16.com; Nov–Mar: closed Sun) has a pretty garden overlooking the ramparts, which is the perfect place to enjoy its market cuisine with exotic touches.

Shopping

Go to **Chocolaterie Letuffe** (10 Pl Francis Louvel, 16000; chocolaterie-letuffe.fr) for a range of chocolates and sweets. Take bus 21, to the west of Angoulême, to Trois-Palis, to visit the store's factory and gift shop. At the **Librairie de la Bande Dessinée**, pick up comic albums, DVDs, toys and figurines.

Next stop...

AUBETERRE-SUR-DRONNE Take a bus south to Montmoreau and then a taxi to the tiny village of Aubeterre-sur-Dronne. Similar to St-Émilion (see p296), the village is known for its curious *église monolith*, excavated out of the rock. **Église St-Jean** is the underground church with the highest nave in Europe – the work of Pierre de Castillon – who returned from the First crusade inspired by the cave-churches of Cappadocia. While only the façade remains, the 12th-century **Église St-Jacques** (Pl Ludovic Trarieux, 16390) has finely sculpted Spanish-Moorish portals. Watch puppet shows in the **Musée des Marionnettes** (05 45 98 45 59) in July and August. Explore the pretty Dronne river in a canoe hired from the **Club Canoë Kayak** (Route de Riberac, 16390 Aubeterre; 05 45 98 51 72; snpa.aubeterre.pagesperso-orange.fr; May–Sep).

KIDS' CORNER

In the Musée du Papier-Le Nil, find out...

- 1 What did Europeans write on before paper?
- 2 What was paper pulp made of for centuries?
- 3 In 1719, a Frenchman got the idea that paper could be made out of wood by watching certain insects build their nest. Can you guess what the insects were?



Answers at the bottom of the page.

First modern woman

The sister of Francois I, Marguerite d'Angoulême, was famous for her tolerance and kindness as well as her mind: one historian has called her "the first modern woman".

UP IN THE AIR

General Resnier of Angoulême invented a flying machine. In 1806, he launched himself off the 1806, he launched himself off the city ramparts in the first-known French attempt at motor-less flight. Luckily, the only thing he broke was his leg!



Can you imagine a world without paper?

Paper was a state secret when it was invented in China around 100 BC. It reached France 1,300 years later after the Christians had conquered Islamic Spain. Without paper, Gutenberg could not have invented the Western printing press in 1454 – and we would not have printed books today.



Answers: 1 Animal skins – parchment. 2 Rags – today old blue jeans are often used for quality blue paper. 3 Wasps. "paper nests", who chew up wood into pulp to make.



Age range 6 plus

Allow Half a day

Festivals Festival International de la Bande Dessinée (Jan). Coupe d'Europe de Montgolfières, world hot-air balloon rally (Jul–early-Aug, odd numbered years). Circuit des Remparts, Bugatti and other classic cars race (Sep).

Good family value?

An inexpensive and low-key town worth a leisurely day. Knowing French is a big plus here.



Château de la Rochefoucauld with its pepper-pot towers

11 Château de La Rochefoucauld

Keeping it in the family

Begun in the 11th century, this Renaissance château is still inhabited by the La Rochefoucaulds, one of the oldest families in France. In the late 15th century, one ancestor, François, became godfather to the future king François I. Since then, as the portraits on the wall make clear, “François” has remained the favourite family name. Of all these, François VI was a witty writer, while number XII fought against slavery and introduced vaccines to France in 1800.

The Lowdown

1 **Map reference** 7 D5
Address 16110 (Charente).
1 Rue Tanneurs, 16110 La Rochefoucauld; 05 45 62 07 42; www.chateau-la-rochefoucauld.com

2 **Train** from Paris and Bordeaux to Angoulême, then taxi

i **Visitor information** Rue des Halles, Ancien Couvent des Carmes, 16110; 05 45 63 07 45; www.bandiat-tardoire.fr

3 **Open** Apr–Dec: Wed–Mon; Jan–Mar: Sun pm only

4 **Price** €30–40; under 12s free

5 **Eat and drink** *Real meal* Chez Steph (Pl du Champs de Foire, 16110; 05 45 62 09 11; closed Mon, book in summer) is a local favourite with friendly staff and succulent meat dishes. *Family treat* La Carpe d’Or (1 Route de Vitrac, 16110; www.hotel-restaurant-lavielleauberge.com; closed Sun eve) serves classic French cuisine, including a rack of lamb and crème caramel. It has a kids’ menu.

The arcaded courtyard has an Italian air; Leonardo da Vinci is said to have contributed to the design.

Letting off steam

Walk along the paths by the Tardoire river. Run about in the village’s lovely **Le Jardin St-Florent** (1 Rue St-Florent, 16110; 05 45 23 94 30). Or head for the outdoor **Piscine Municipale** (Rue de la Piscine, 16110; 05 45 62 01 25). It is open from mid-June to August.

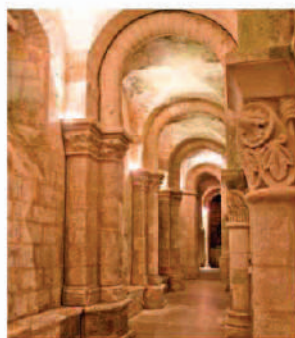
12 Cognac

Not just a drink

There is more to the handsome town on the Charente river than its famous namesake. Get an overview in the **Espace Découverte en Pays du Cognac**, with child-friendly activities such as illuminated models, 3D “magical books”, films and the **Musée d’Art et d’Histoire**, which has treasures ranging from a Neolithic canoe to Art Nouveau glass by French artist Émile Gallé. Nearby is the Château de Cognac, now the Otard distillery, where François I was born. **Hennessey** is the most interesting for kids, with its museum, film tour and boat trips across the Charente river to the vines. Reward the tots with a trip on a wooden *gabare* (a traditional river boat) called *La Dame Jeanne*. Boat trips (www.tourism-cognac.com/fr_decouverte/04gabare.htm) are available from May to September.

Letting off steam

Head for the big playgrounds of **Base André Mermet** (Allée Basse du Parc, 16100; 05 45 82 46 24) on the banks of the Charente river, with sand pits, rope climbs and more.



Romanesque leaf carvings on columns in the church of St-Eutrope, Saintes

The Lowdown

1 **Map reference** 7 C5

Address 16100 (Charente).
Espace Découverte en Pays du Cognac: Les Remparts, Pl de la Salle Verte; 05 45 36 03 65; www.espace-decouverte.fr.
Musée d’Art et d’Histoire: 48 Blvd Denfert-Rochereau; 05 45 32 07 25; www.hennessey-cognac.fr.
Hennessey: Rue de la Richonne; 05 45 35 72 68; www.hennessey.com

2 **Train** from Angoulême and La Rochelle

i **Visitor information** 16 Rue du XIV Juillet, 16100; 05 45 82 10 71; www.tourism-cognac.com

3 **Open** Espace Découverte en Pays du Cognac: timings vary (check website). Musée d’Art et d’Histoire: check website. Hennessey: May–Sep: daily; Oct–Dec, Mar–Apr: Mon–Fri (book tours online)

4 **Eat and drink** *Real meal* L’Ateliers des Quais (2 Quai St Jacques, 16100; 05 45 36 31 03) is a smart brasserie with a spacious terrace overlooking the Charente by the Pont Neuf. *Family treat* Les Pigeons Blancs (110 Rue Jules Brisson, 16100; 05 45 82 16 36; www.pigeons-blancs.com; closed Sun eve & Mon lunch) features trout with a creamy sorrel sauce and a delicious dessert cart. A gourmet kids’ menu is available.

13 Saintes

From a Roman chariot to Louis XVI’s slippers

Once the Roman capital of Aquitaine, Saintes is proud of its Arch of Germanicus, built in the 1st century AD to mark the completion of Via Agrippa across Gaul. In the nearby **Musée Archéologique** are remnants of a Roman chariot and horses’ bridles which might have been used in Saintes’ amphitheatre, which in its prime seated 15,000.

There is a splendid 11th-century pilgrimage church, St-Eutrope, and the **Abbaye aux Dames**, now dedicated to music. The **Musée Dupuy Mestreau** is filled with historical treasures, including slippers worn by Louis XVI before he lost his head.

Letting off steam

Play in the **Parc Pierre Mendès-France** (Ave de la Saintonge, 17100). To explore the river, drive north to



The tree-lined drive to the majestic Château d'Usson in Pons

The Lowdown

Map reference C 5
Address 17100 (Charente-Maritime). Musée Archéologique: Esplanade André Malraux; 05 46 74 20 97; www.ville-saintes.fr
 Abbaye aux Dames: 11 Pl de l'Abbaye; www.abbayeauxdames.org
 Musée Dupuy Mestreau: 4 Rue Monconseil; 05 46 93 36 71; www.ville-saintes.fr

Train from Angoulême

Visitor information Pl Bassompierre, 17100; 05 46 74 23 82; www.saintes-tourisme.fr

Open Musée Archéologique & Musée Dupuy Mestreau: year round Tue–Sun; Apr–Sep: closed Sun am; Oct–Mar: closed daily am. Abbaye aux Dames: Apr–Sep: daily; Oct–Mar: Mon–Fri, Sat & Sun pm.

Eat and drink **Snacks** Le Petit Bistrot (7 Rue Victor Hugo, 17100; 05 46 91 56 24; closed Sun) serves *salades composées* (mixed salad with cheese, meat or seafood). **Real meal** Le Mezzé (9 Rue de la Comédie, 17100; 05 46 92 22 36; closed Sun & Mon) is a Lebanese restaurant that also offers many vegetarian dishes.

the town of Port-d'Envaux, where families can hire bikes or canoes from **Les Canotiers** (www.les-canotiers.fr).

14 Pons

Into the castle of riddles

A massive **Donjon** (keep) towers over the medieval town of Pons. It was rebuilt in the 12th century after the original keep was razed by Richard the Lionheart in 1179, as a lesson to his uppity vassals, the Lords of Pons, for not toeing the line. The Hôpital des Pèlerins, from the same time, was founded for pilgrims on their way to Santiago de Compostela.

For families, however, the big lure is the beautiful Renaissance **Château d'Usson** – the whole château was moved stone by stone from another village by its new owner and rebuilt in the 1880s. Kids get busy exploring the château, park and farm by way of games, puzzles and activities related to Knights Templars and musketeers.

Letting off steam

If the château adventure was not enough, run around the Donjon a couple of times.

The Lowdown

Map reference C 6
Address 17800 (Charente-Maritime). Donjon de Pons: 5 Pl de la République; Château d'Usson: Les Egreteaux; www.chateau-enigmes.com

Train from Angoulême, La Rochelle and Bordeaux

Visitor information 1 Rue des Pontils, 17800; 05 46 96 13 31; www.pons-tourisme.fr

Open Donjon de Pons: Easter–Jun, Sep–mid-Oct: Tue–Fri & Sun pm, Sat: all day; Jul–Aug: daily. Château d'Usson: mid-Apr–early Nov: daily

Eat and drink **Real meal** Les Moulins de la Vergne (9 Impasse du Moulin de la Vergne, 17800; 05 46 90 50 84; May–Sep) is run by a welcoming Dutch couple and has a simple brasserie-style menu. **Family treat** Auberge Pontoise (23 Ave Gambetta, 17800; 05 46 94 00 99; closed Sun eve & Mon lunch) has a young chef who cooks tasty dishes from the region's oysters, duck, beef, fruit and vegetables.

Festival Sur un Air de Barouf, a rock festival (Aug)

KIDS' CORNER

In Saintes, find out...



1 How is

St Eutrope's name spelled on his tomb?

2 Whose slippers are on display in the Musée Dupuy Mestreau?

3 What are the figures on the façade of the Abbaye aux Dames doing?

Answers at the bottom of the page.

Sound of music

The Abbaye aux Dames is known for its excellent acoustics. Test it for yourself – speak aloud or sing a tune while standing in the choir.



NECTAR OF HEAVEN

An estimated 22 million bottles' worth of cognac evaporates from the barrels in the cellars every year – known as the "Angels' share". The inner cellars, where the oldest cognacs are kept, is called "Paradise".



A painless death

In 1738, Saintes was the birthplace of the kind-hearted Dr Joseph-Ignace Guillotin, who wanted to make executions more "humane" and "equal". The result was the instrument that took his name (against his will). Before then, prisoners were hanged, beheaded with swords, boiled or burnt alive. With the guillotine, the victim only felt "a cool puff of air on the neck" – a puff felt by as many as 40,000 during the Terror (1793–4).



Answers: 1 EUTROPIS (in Latin, 'S' and 'U' were often the same); 2 Louis XVI's slippers; 3 Stabbing each other.

15 Bordeaux

Wine and dukes around the Port of the Moon

Built along the banks of the Garonne, where the river forms the crescent called the "Port of the Moon", Bordeaux grew out of the prime Gallo-Roman city of Burdigalia. Its rulers were the powerful Dukes of Aquitaine, including William, the first ever troubadour. His granddaughter Eleanor's marriage to Henry II made Bordeaux the capital of English Aquitaine for three centuries. The town was largely rebuilt in the 18th century with money from France's colonies. Today, Bordeaux is most famous for some of the best wines in the world.



Monument des Girondins

Key Sights



1 Place de la Bourse Elegant 18th-century buildings surround a giant reflecting pool with 900 misting jets, designed for frolicking.

2 Bordeaux Monumental Located in the Quartier St-Pierre, Bordeaux's medieval core, this exhibition centre traces the city's evolution over the centuries.



3 Basilique St-Michel This Flamboyant-Gothic basilica has a landmark 47 m (154 ft) detached bell tower, one of the tallest in France.

4 Musée d'Aquitaine The museum covers the history of Aquitaine, starting in 25,000 BC. Nearby, the huge bell in the 15th-century Grosse Cloche gate used to signal the start of the wine harvest.

5 Cathédrale St-André The city's huge Gothic masterpiece is where Eleanor of Aquitaine married Louis VII in 1137.

6 Musée des Beaux Arts Housed in the Palais de Rohan, this museum is rich in Dutch masters, but also has works by Bordeaux's Odilon Redon and Albert Marquet.

7 Musée d'Art Contemporain (CAPC) A former warehouse houses this edgy art museum in Quartier des Chartrons, the old wine merchants' quarter.



8 Monument des Girondins Located in the Place des Quinconces, this monument and fountain honours Bordeaux's revolutionaries killed in the Terror (1793–94).



The Lowdown

Map reference 11 C1
Address 33000 (Gironde). Musée d'Art Contemporain (CAPC): 7 Rue Ferrère; www.capc-bordeaux.fr. Bordeaux Monumental: 28 Rue des Argentiers. Cathédrale St-Michel: 45 Rue des Faures, 33800. Musée d'Aquitaine: 20 Cours Pasteur. Cathédrale St-André: Pl Pey-Berland. Musée des Beaux Arts: 20 Cours d'Albret

Train from Toulouse; TGV from Paris

Visitor information 12 Cours du 30 Juillet, 33000; 05 56 00 66 01; www.bordeaux-tourisme.com

Open Musée d'Art Contemporain (CAPC): 11am–6pm Tue–Sun, until 8pm Wed. Bordeaux Monumental: the timings of this heritage varies from month to month. Check the website for the opening hours before planning a trip. Musée d'Aquitaine: 11am–6pm Tue–Sun. Musée des Beaux Arts: 11am–6pm Wed–Mon

Prices Musée d'Art Contemporain (CAPC): €20; under 18s free. Bordeaux Monumental, Musée d'Aquitaine & Musée des Beaux Arts: free

Skipping the queue Book ahead during the city's big events, especially late June–early July.

Guided tours Contact the tourist office for details.

Age range 4 plus

Activities Cruise on the Gironde estuary with Croisières Burdigala



The traditionally elegant white and blue dining room at La Gabriel

Letting off steam

Play in the new park areas along the Garonne river or visit the **Jardin Public** (Rue de Verdun, 33000), which has a few playgrounds. Take bus 503 to the town of Cadaujac to the **Ferme Exotique** (www.fermeexotique.com), with donkey and dromedary rides, plus horse-drawn carriages.

Eat and drink

Picnic: under €20; Snacks: €20–45; Real meal: €45–90; Family treat: over €90 (based on a family of four)

PICNIC Marché des Grands

Hommes (Pl des Grands Hommes, 33000) is a market from where supplies can be picked. Picnic by the Garonne river or in the Jardin Public.

SNACKS La Vie en Rose (8 Rue Sicard, 33000; 05 56 48 03 44; closed Sun & Mon) is a tea room serving home-made savoury tarts, salads and sandwiches, and delicious cakes.

REAL MEAL Le Plat dans l'Assiette (8 Rue Ausone, 33000; 05 56 01 05 01; www.leplatdanslassiette.fr; Mon, Wed & Sat lunch, closed Sun) serves southwestern and Lyonnaise specialties with three courses (starter, main and cheese). Vegetarian options are available and the kids' menu offers special grills and steaks.

(www.evolutiongaronne.fr). The tourist office offers a whole range of wine tours and tastings throughout the year.

Allow At least a day

Festivals Les Epicuriales, food festival (Jun)

Good family value?

A year-round destination with free or affordably priced attractions and near the beaches at Arcachon.

FAMILY TREAT Le Gabriel (10 Pl de la Bourse, 33000; 05 56 30 00 80; restaurant.bordeaux-gabriel.fr; closed Sun & Mon) offers François Adamski's exquisite Michelin-starred cuisine, but lunch in the bistro downstairs is more reasonably priced.

Shopping

L'Ecole Buissonnière (74 Rue des Trois-Conils, 33000; 05 56 79 12 86) stocks every conceivable toy – from porcelain dolls to action heroes. Drop by **Cadiot Badie** (26 Allées de Tourny, 33000; 05 56 44 24 22; www.cadiot-badie.com) for some wonderful sweets from a master chocolate maker since 1826.

Find out more

FILM *The Lion in Winter* (1968), a historical drama starring Katharine Hepburn and Anthony Hopkins, is about Eleanor of Aquitaine and Henry II. Eleanor also features in *Robin Hood* (2010).



Footsteps crisscrossing on the immense sands of the Dune de Pyla

Next stop...

ARCACHON AND DUNE DE PYLA

Several trains a day go to Arcachon, Bordeaux's beach playground, the source of its oysters, and site of the historic **Musée Aquarium** (2 Rue Professeur Jolyet, 33120; 05 56 83 33 32) created in 1865. Buses from the Arcachon bus station go around the bay to a mind-boggling sand mountain, the 107-m (351-ft) Dune de Pyla, 10 km (6 miles) from Arcachon. Carry on to La Hume in the adjacent village of Gujan-Mestras, home to the **Parc de la Coccinelle** (www.la-coccinelle.fr), with 800 animals, a petting zoo and rides for tots and **Kid Parc** (www.kidparc.com), a park for kids under 12.

KIDS' CORNER

Find out more...

1 The Place des Quinconces is named for the quincunx pattern of trees in groups of five planted along its edges. It was also a formation used by Roman



legions when attacking. What does it look like?

2 On the Monument des Girondins, figures representing Lies, Ignorance and Vice cower beneath horses – but what do the horses have instead of hooves?

3 The Grosse Cloche is the city's symbol. On the very top of the gate is another symbol, dating from Bordeaux's days as the capital of

English Aquitaine. What is it?



A RED DAY

In June 1451, when the French finally took Bordeaux from the English, 10,000 Bordelais were massacred. It was the French who did the majority of the killing – a day known as the *Male Journée* (The Rotten Day).

A fit queen

Eleanor of Aquitaine (1122–1204) was not only Queen of France and Queen of England (though not at the same time) but she also had an extraordinary constitution. She went crusading in the Holy Land with her first husband, King Louis of France. At the age of 70, she was instrumental in raising the ransom to free her son



Richard the Lionheart, when he was held prisoner after the Third Crusade. It was said that she even rode to Germany to deliver the ransom in person.

Answers: 1 The five on a die 2 Claws 3 A golden leopard



Above Broad horizons across a vineyard at St-Émilion

Below Café terraces in the square in front of L'Église Monolithe, St-Émilion



16 St-Émilion

Into the secret underground

On the surface St-Émilion is a lovely old wine town, but another world awaits underground. Book a visit with the tourist office to explore the cave of the hermit Emilion – going back to the 8th century – Chapelle de St-Trinité, catacombs and the 12th-century **L'Église Monolithe** – the second-largest subterranean church in the world. Climb the bell tower, Le Clocher, or opt for the La Tour

du Château du Roy for great views. Elsewhere, quarries dating from the 12th century now house the **Musée Souterrain de la Poterie**, which has a fascinating collection of pots from Gallo-Roman times to the present.

Letting off steam

Explore St-Émilion's vine-covered countryside by foot, bicycle or petit train (www.visite-saint-emilion.com).

17 Bazas

Beef and holy blood

Bazas is synonymous with the beef that goes in the classic *steak bordelais* (grilled over vine cuttings) and for its 13th-century Gothic **Cathédrale St-Jean-Baptiste**. The cathedral, dedicated to St John the Baptist, has a beautifully sculpted triple portal, a massive rose window and a luminous interior. It houses a reliquary of the saint's blood supposedly collected by a local woman at his beheading. On the Place de la

The Lowdown

- Map reference** 11 C2
- Address** 33430 (Gironde). Cathédrale St-Jean-Baptiste: Pl de la Cathédrale. Château de Roquetaillade: 33210 Mazères; 05 56 76 14 16; chateau.roquetaillade.free.fr
- Train** from Bordeaux to Langon, then bus 512
- Visitor information** Pl de la Cathédrale, 33430; 05 56 25 25 84; www.tourisme-bazadais.com
- Open** Château de Roquetaillade: Jul & Aug: 11am–5pm; Easter–Jun & Sep–Oct: 3pm & 4pm, Nov–Easter: Sun & school holidays 3pm & 4pm
- Eat and drink** **Snacks** Café d'Oc (13 Rue Bragous, 33430; 05 56 25 96 08; www.cafedoc.com; closed Sun) serves excellent omelettes, salads and an enormous choice of savoury and sweet crêpes. **Real meal** Indigo (25 Rue Fondespan, 33430; 05 56 25 25 52; closed Sun & Mon) uses local ingredients such as Bazas beef with a twist and fish and chips or burgers on the children's menu.
- Festival** Fête de St-Jean celebrates John the Baptist's feast day with huge bonfires (Jun)

Cathédrale, seek out La Maison de l'Astronome, with the carving of an astronomer in a pointy hat like that of a wizard. Take a taxi to the village of Mazères, 9 km (5 miles) northwest of Bazas, to visit the **Château de Roquetaillade**, a 700-year-old feudal estate – in the same family the whole time – restored in the 19th century by Viollet-le-Duc, who also fixed up Carcassonne (see pp324–5).

The Lowdown

- Map reference** 11 D1
- Address** 33330 (Gironde). L'Église Monolithe: Pl Pierre Meyrat; 05 57 55 28 28. Musée Souterrain de la Poterie: 21 Rue André Loiseau; www.saint-emilion-museepoterie.fr
- Train** from Bordeaux to Libourne, then bus 315 to St-Émilion
- Visitor information** Pl des Créneaux, 33330; 05 57 55 28 28; www.saint-emilion-tourisme.com
- Open** L'Église Monolithe: underground tours year round (in English Apr–Oct); Le Clocher: key from tourist office; La Tour du Château du Roy: Apr–Sep. Musée Souterrain de la Poterie: daily

- Eat and drink** **Real meal** L'Envers du Décor (11 Rue du Clocher, 33330; 05 57 74 48 31; envers-du-decor.com; open daily) offers excellent market cuisine, salads and wonderful cheeses that match the superb wines. **Family treat** Logis de la Cadène (3 Pl du Marché au Bois, 33330; 05 57 24 71 40; closed Sun dinner & Mon) features well-prepared *steak bordelais* served at tables beneath a magical wisteria.
- Festival** Fête de Solstice & La Jurade, ceremonial judgment on the wine of the previous year and whether it deserves to be labelled "St-Émilion" (Jun)

Letting off steam

Scamper around the lovely medieval garden next to the cathedral. Take a taxi west to the town of Belin-Belliet



Carved stonework on the Cathédrale St-Jean-Baptiste, Bazas

to canoe along the shady Leyre river, suitable for kids aged 6 plus (www.canoesurlaleyre.com).

18 Ecomusée de la Grande Lande

Go back in time

Les Landes were once a sparsely populated moorland, where shepherds eked out a meagre living, much of the time on stilts. Gradually, maritime pines were planted, which resulted in what is now the largest cultivated forest in Europe. In the middle, accessible only by a special historic train from the station in Sabres, Marquèze, an agricultural estate preserved as it was in 1836, is now the **Ecomusée de la Grande Lande**. The pavilion of Marquèze at the train station in Sabres offers an overview, while in Marquèze itself visitors can watch or even join the “locals” going about their lives. There are activities for kids too: allow up to half a day.

The Lowdown

-  **Map reference** 11 C3
Address 40630 (Landes). Ecomusée de la Grande Lande; 05 58 08 31 31; www.parc-landes-de-gascogne.fr
-  **Train** to Mont-de-Marsan, then taxi to Sabres, then train
-  **Open** Ecomusée de la Grande Lande: Apr–mid-Nov: daily
-  **Eat and drink** *Real meal* La Table de Marquèze (40630 Marquèze; 05 58 07 59 44; *French summer hols, Easter–Nov, Sun & hols lunch daily*) offers farm-raised chicken and duck dishes. *Real meal* Léontine (108 Ave du Marensin, 40550 Léon; 05 58 49 24 21; Jul–Aug: daily pm, Sat & Sun lunch; Mon, Thu–Sun pm) serves home-made pasta, grilled fish and beef with golden chips, and has a children’s menu.
-  **Festival** La Fête du Printemps et des bergers, Gascon music, dancing and egg hunts (Apr)

Letting off steam

Take a taxi west to Léon for a boat tour with **Les Bateliers du Courant d’Huchet** (www.bateliers-courant-huchet.fr). Or go to Soustons Plage, where kids aged 11 plus can captain replica steamships at the **Port Miniature de Port d’Albret** (www.loisirs-soustons.com).



Hot thermal springs at La Fontaine Chaude, Dax

19 Dax

Hot mud and cow jumping

France’s number one thermal resort, Dax is famous for the hot water that steams out of the earth in the central La Fontaine Chaude. Parents can soak in the mud at the **Thermes Borda**, while everyone can enjoy the **Musée de l’ALAT**’s collection of light aircraft and helicopters. Best of all, take in a *course landaise*. Dax and the nearby Mont de Marsan rival each other in their passion for this sport, where participants leap over charging cows.

Letting off steam

Take a bus to the Atlantic beaches of Hossegor. Or visit the anteaters and lemuris at **Oceafaunia** (<http://zoo-labenne.com>), located south in Labenne. For big slides, go to **Atlantic Park** (www.seignosse.fr), a water park north of Seignosse.

The Lowdown

-  **Map reference** 11 B3
Address 40100 (Landes). Thermes Borda: 30 Rue des Lazaristes; www.thermes-borda.com. Musée de l’ALAT: 58 Ave de l’Aérodrome; www.musee-helico-alat.com
-  **Train** from Bordeaux
-  **Visitor information** 11 Cours Foch, 40100; 05 58 56 86 86; www.dax-tourisme.com
-  **Open** Thermes Borda: Mon–Sat. Musée de l’ALAT: Mar–Nov: Mon–Fri pm; Jul–Aug: Mon–Sat pm
-  **Eat and drink** *Snacks* Au Fin Gourmet (3 Rue Pénitents, 40100; 05 58 74 04 26) serves the meaty specialities of the Landes and Basque Country. *Real meal* La Table de Pascal (4 Rue de la Fontaine Chaude, 40100; 05 58 74 89 00; closed Sun & Mon) is known for its upmarket market cuisine.
-  **Festival** Feria, a 6-day-long fun fair (Aug)

KIDS’ CORNER

In L’Église Monolithe, find out...

- 1 Where is the man fighting a monster?
- 2 Where are the three zombies?
- 3 Where is the knight with a sword and shield?



Answers at the bottom of the page.

Walking on stilts

In the 19th century, shepherds in the Landes practically lived on stilts. This was because the soil was marshy and stilts kept their feet dry and helped them to watch over their flocks. Sheep were prized not so much for their meat or wool, but for their manure, which fertilized the soil to grow rye for bread.



HERO ON STILTS

Sylvan Dornon, the hero of the Landes, walked on stilts up the Eiffel Tower and, in 1891, walked on stilts from Paris to Moscow – 2,850 km (1,771 miles) – in 58 days!

Wine for freedom

Richard the Lionheart’s weak younger brother, King John Lackland, loved the wine of St-Émilion. In 1199, in exchange for wine, he granted a good deal of self-rule to the burghers and the parishes in his *jurade* (jurisdiction). Although the *jurade* lost its political power, its members still don medieval robes to announce the beginning of the harvest and to test St-Émilion’s wines.



Answers: 1 Over the choir. 2 The Chapeille de St-Trinite. 3 On the tomb in the catacombs. Figures are in the “Living Dead” tomb in the

Where to Stay in Poitou and Aquitaine

For the most part, accommodation in Poitou and Aquitaine is oriented towards summer holidays near the ocean and, compared to France's other coasts, offers good value for money for families. Fancy villas and boutique hotels are rare, but camp sites and holiday apartments are easy to find.

AGENCIES

Discover Poitou-Charentes

www.discover-poitou-charentes.com

This website lists a wide range of self-catering accommodation and châteaux, B&Bs, as well as camp sites across Poitou-Charentes, most of it suitable for families.

Alternative Aquitaine

www.alternative-aquitaine.co.uk

A specialist agency, with focus on the west coast, it lists villas, beach houses, apartments and cottages in the Gironde and Landes.

Angoulême

Map 7 D6

HOTELS

Ibis Styles

Angoulême Nord

122 Rue des Meneaux, 16430

Champniers; 05 45 68 53 22;

www.ibisstyles.com

This chain hotel, 7 km (4 miles) off the Paris-Bordeaux motorway, is family friendly, with 30 rooms that come with the Disney channel, Wi-Fi, Vtech game consoles and crayons. Bottle warmers and baby shampoo are available. Breakfast is included.

☎ P *

€

Le Palma

4 Rampe d'Aguesseau, 16000;

05 45 95 22 89

This renovated hotel has been in the same family since 1919 and offers a convenient base for visiting the city. The nine rooms have Wi-Fi and flat-screen TV. There is a restaurant. Parking is available nearby.

*

€

CAMPING

Les Gorges du Chambon

Map 7 D5

16220 Eymouthiers; 05 45 70 71

70; www.camping-gorgesduchambon.com

Located east of Angoulême towards La Rochefoucauld, this environment-

friendly camp ground occupies an old farming estate; tents to two-star gîtes are on rent. Club for kids aged 6–12 years, mini-golf and river swims, as well as a pool, games, pony rides, canoeing and hot-air balloon rides are provided.

☎ P ☎

€

Arcachon

Map 11 B2

SELF-CATERING

Residhome Apart Hotel Piazza

49-51 bis Ave Lamartine, 33120;

05 57 15 48 00; www.residhome.com

Opened recently, these flats are in Arcachon's Ville d'Été, a 5-minute walk from the beach and within walking distance of the train station, putting Bordeaux within easy reach. The apartments are in natural colours; babysitting and baby kits available.

☎ ☎ *

€€

CAMPING

Camping de la Dune

Route de Biscarrosse, 33115 Pyla-sur-

Mer; 05 56 22 72 17; www.campingdeladune.fr

Set in pine trees next to the Dune de Pyla, this camp site is where two French comedies – *Camping* and *Camping 2* – were shot. There are mobile homes and chalets to rent and disposable bedding to buy; bicycle hire is also available.

☎ P ☎

€–€€

Bordeaux

Map 11 C1

HOTELS

Au Comte d'Ornon

Allée de Mégevie, 33170 Gradignan;

05 56 75 26 85; www.aucomte-dornon.com

This pleasant little Logis de France is in a peaceful area, a 15-minute drive south of the city centre. The rooms are equipped with Wi-Fi and satellite TV. There is a restaurant, which serves delicious regional French cuisine.

☎ P *

€€

Hôtel des 4 Soeurs

6 Cours du 30 Juillet, 33000; 05 57

81 19 20; www.hotel-bordeaux-centre.com

Right in the heart of Bordeaux, this hotel occupies an 18th-century town house and retains elegant features, in spite of a complete overhaul in the recent past. Rooms are soundproof and Wi-Fi-equipped. Underground parking nearby in Place Tourny.

☎ *

€€



A well-furnished one-bedroom flat in Citadines Centre Mériadeck Bordeaux

Ibis Bordeaux Centre Mériadeck

35 Cours de Maréchal Juin, 33000;

05 56 90 74 00; www.accorhotels.com

Located right in the centre of Bordeaux, the Ibis is a stone's throw from the 18th century quarter and the city's historic buildings. The sound insulated rooms are comfortable and equipped with TV and internet access. The brasserie and bar are open 24 hours a day.

☎ P *

€€

BED & BREAKFAST

Ecologie de Chartrons

23 Rue Raze, 33000; 05 56 81 49 13;

www.ecologiedeschartrons.com

In the old wine merchants' quarter, the Quartier des Chartrons, this is a B&B in an 18th-century stone building. Beautifully restored, using sustainable materials, and equipped with solar power and water-saving devices, it has won the European Eco-label award. The friendly owners serve a healthy breakfast.

☎ P

€€€

Natura Cabana

75 Rue la Fontaine, 33290 Le Pian
Médoc; 05 56 96 85 41; www.natura-cabana.fr

Located 14 km (9 miles) from Bordeaux, the Natura Cabana is a delightful wooden house perched high in the trees of the enormous Parc du Château de Malleret. A mobile phone is essential in case of emergencies and kids have to be at least 3 to stay here.

P €€

Cognac

Map 7 C5

**HOTEL
Cheval Blanc**

6 & 8 Pl Bayard, 16100; 05 45 82
09 55; www.hotel-chevalblanc.fr

Housed in a former coach house, a 2-minute walk from the city centre, these motel-style rooms are suited for a brief stay in the area. Rooms are soundproofed and equipped with Wi-Fi, but the hotel's parking spaces are limited; be sure to reserve a parking space when booking.

P *

BED & BREAKFAST**Les Yourtes****Charentaises**

Map 7 C6

19 Rue de la Tonnerrie, 17800
Salignac; 05 16 20 48 87; www.yourtescharentaises.com

This B&B is located 7 km (4 miles) from Cognac in Salignac. Individual toilets, along with solar-heated Italian showers, are outside each yurt. The yurts are heated, but bring warm pyjamas in winter. Rates include breakfast and the owner offers *table d'hôte* meals, if booked in advance.

P €

**Futuroscope/
Poitiers**

Map 7 D4

HOTELS**Jules Verne Futuroscope**

Ave Jean Monnet Téléport 3, 86961;
05 49 49 10 49; www.hoteljulesverne-sitedufuturoscope.biz

This modern family hotel, located near the entrance to Futuroscope, has been inspired by Jules Verne's *Nautilus*. See website for special packages and ticket discounts. There are free shuttle services to the park during school holidays.

P €



Towers of the charming *Château de la Motte*, Poitiers

Le Bois de la Marche

D611, 86240 Ligugé; 05 49 53 10 10;
www.hotel-poitiers-bestwestern.com

A 15-minute drive from Futuroscope and Poitiers, this sleek modern hotel enjoys a peaceful setting surrounded by a large forest. Free Wi-Fi and phone calls to 23 countries, satellite TV and Jacuzzis in some rooms are on offer. A games room is also available.

P €€

Le Grand Hôtel

28 Rue Carnot, 86000;
05 49 60 90 60;

www.grandhotelpoitiers.fr

A delightful establishment in the historic centre of Poitiers, this hotel has big comfy beds. The buffet breakfast is superb and served on the patio in good weather. Rooms are equipped with Wi-Fi and satellite TV. There is no restaurant, but there are many in easy walking distance.

P *

Plaza Futuroscope

Ave du Futuroscope Téléport 1,
86960; 05 49 49 07 07; www.hotel-plaza-site-du-futuroscope.com

A short walk from the entrance to Futuroscope, this contemporary hotel offers a wide variety of packages and discounts for early booking. The indoor pool is open all year. There is a gym, billiards and an attractive restaurant with a giant fish tank.

P €€

BED & BREAKFAST**Château de la Motte**

Map 8 E3

2 La Motte, 86230 Usseau;
05 49 85 88 25; www.chateau-de-la-motte.net

A short drive north of Futuroscope, this wonderful 15th-century château, with pointy towers, is set in a pretty

medieval garden. The charming owners keep up the medieval castle theme, and love telling its stories to guests.

P €€€

La Roseraie

78 Rue Armand Caillard, 86170
Neuville de Poitou; 05 49 54 16 72;
www.laroseraiefrance.fr

Located 11 km (7 miles) from Poitiers, this impressive English-owned manor house has two-room suites especially fitted out for families. Rooms have Wi-Fi. Breakfasts are delicious and other meals are available on request.

P €€

CAMPING**Le Futuriste**

St-Georges-les-Baillargeaux, 86130;
05 49 52 47 52; www.camping-le-futuriste.fr

Just north of Futuroscope, this camp ground offers pitches, chalets and mobile homes. A lake for fishing, playground and football pitch are on offer. There is a restaurant.

P €

Hossegor

Map 11 B4

CAMPING**Camping du Lac**

518 Rue du Janin, 40440 Ondres; 05
59 45 28 45; www.camping-du-lac.fr

South of Hossegor, this woody camp site is perfect for visits to the big beaches of the Landes, as well as Bayonne and the Basque country just to the south. Rentals range from *roulottes* (wooden caravans) to chalets. There are special "Kid Camping" activities on weekdays.

P €



Façade of the modern Plaza Futuroscope, Poitiers

Price Guide

The following price ranges are based on one night's accommodation in high season for a family of four, inclusive of service charges and any additional taxes.

€ Under €100 €€ €100–200 €€€ over €200

Île d'Oléron

Map 7 B5

HOTEL

Hôtel de la Plage

51 Blvd du Capitaine-Leclerc, 17310
St-Pierre d'Oléron; 05 46 47 28 79;
www.oleronhotel.com

A short walk from the sandy beach and La Cotinière, the island's main fishing port, this hotel offers a mix of pleasant rooms and studios. Rooms have Wi-Fi and also high-tech anti-mosquito devices to keep pests at bay. Steep stairs in the studios are unsuitable for very young children.



€€

BED & BREAKFAST

La Cabane

62 Route du Viaduc, 17480 Ors;
05 46 47 48 01; www.alacabane.fr

Just outside of Château d'Oléron, Ors is a traditional oyster-fishing hamlet on the south coast of the island. Families can stay in a stylish B&B room in the 200-year-old house of an oysterman. The helpful owner also has five gîtes all in the area, a short walk from the sea.



€€

CAMPING

Sequoia Parc

La Josephtrie, 17320 St-Just-Luzac; 05 46 85 55 55; www.sequoiaparc.com

On the mainland near the bridge to Oléron, this award-winning family-friendly camp site, in a garden setting surrounding a spectacular water park, rents well-equipped modern chalets and mobile homes by the week. There are playgrounds, a pony club, kids' clubs, bike hire and a good restaurant, as well as a pizzeria on site, along with a full range of evening entertainment.



€-€€

Île de Ré

Map 7 B4

SELF-CATERING

Le Palais des Gouverneurs

Rue des Gouverneurs, 17410
St-Martin-de-Ré; 08 92 70 21 80;
www.pv-holidays.com

Located in the centre of St-Martin-de-Ré, the Île-de-Ré's former governors' palace and two other buildings have been converted into elegant apartments. There is a children's playroom and free Wi-Fi

by the reception. It is a short walk to shops and restaurants; the Plage de Cible is nearby.



€€€

Saint-Martin Club

Chemin des Marais, 17410

St-Martin-de-Ré; 05 46 09 01 43;
www.belambda.co.uk

This stress-free family vacation club amidst the pines, 3 km (2 miles) from St-Martin, offers self-catering chalets and bungalows with furnished patios. Flat-screen TVs, a playground and kids' club for ages 3-10 years and free baby kits for under two are on offer. Horse-riding and beaches are nearby. Thalassotherapy packages are also available.



€€€



The no-frills exterior of Hôtel Saint-Nicolas, La Rochelle

La Rochelle

Map 7 B5

HOTELS

Hôtel Saint-Nicolas

13 Rue Sardinerie, 17000; 05 46 41 71 55; www.hotel-saint-nicolas.com

Located in the heart of the Vieux Port near Place de la Solette, this family-friendly hotel is a great base for exploring La Rochelle. Completely renovated, the hotel's rooms are comfortable and contemporary and equipped with Wi-Fi and satellite TV. Discounts on kids' breakfast; free breakfast for kids aged under 6.



€€

Les Brises

1 Chemin de la Digue Richelieu,
17000; 05 46 43 89 37; www.hotel-lesbrises.eu

Named for its sea breezes, this oceanfront hotel is near the Tour de la Laterne. The sea-view family room is especially lovely, with its balconies. Rooms have free Wi-Fi and there is

a solarium. Although there is no restaurant, there are plenty to choose from a short walk away.



€€€

CAMPING

Le Beaulieu

Map 7 C4

3 Rue du Treuil Gras, 17138
Puilboreau; 05 46 68 04 38;
www.camping-la-rochelle.com

A 10-minute drive from La Rochelle's Vieux Port, this camp site rents out pitches, bungalows and mobile homes. Free club for kids aged 6 plus in summer holidays. Disposable sheets, laundrette, towels, bike hire and a playground are also available.



€-€€

Marais Poitevin

Map 7 C4

HOTEL

Maison Flore Hôtel Environnemental

25 Rue du Port, 79210 Arçais; 05 49 76 27 11; www.maisonflore.com

On the banks of one of the channels in the centre of the marshes, this solar-powered hotel has been renovated to be as ecologically sustainable as possible. The ten rooms are named after flowers and decorated accordingly. Breakfast is organic and features home-made jams; bikes and games are available.



€

BED & BREAKFAST

Château de l'Abbaye

Map 7 B4

Moreilles, 85450; 02 51 56 17 56;
www.chateau-moreilles.com

A half-hour drive from both the beaches and La Rochelle, this grand, ivy-swathed house has five delightful guest rooms and a family apartment to rent. The charming hosts prepare superb table d'hôte meals. Free Wi-Fi in rooms; mountain bikes available.



€€

CAMPING

Le Lidon

Lieu-dit Lidon, 79210 St-Hilaire-La-Palud; 05 49 35 33 64;
www.camping-le-lidon.com

Right in the centre of the Marais Poitevin, this lush, well-wooded camp ground also has a base for boats to explore France's "Green Venice". There are 136 shady pitches and chalets with kitchenettes, as well as tents sleeping four to rent. There is a playground too.

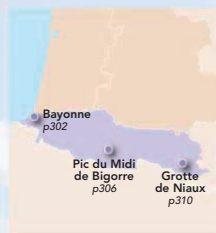


€

The Pyrenees

France's second-highest mountain range, running along the border with Spain, the Pyrenees offer spectacular scenery, easy access and a calendar full of activities. By contrast, the Basque country in the west has beaches, a unique culture and France's chocolate city, Bayonne. Families can enjoy scenic trains, animal parks and prehistoric painted caves high up in the mountains.

Below Hikers at the Cirque de Gavarnie, a UNESCO World Heritage Site



Letting off steam

If hanging out on the beaches of Anglet and Biarritz is not enough, the Bay of Biscay has some of the best waves for surfing in Europe, and the surf schools offer lessons to kids aged 7 plus. **Plums Surf School** (Rue Garderès, 64200 Biarritz; 05 59 24 10 79; www.touradour.com/shops/plums/gb/index.htm) has staff that speaks English.




Brightly striped tents lining the Grande Plage at Biarritz

Eat and drink

Picnic: under €20; Snacks: €20–45; Real meal: €45–90; Family treat: over €90 (based on a family of four)

PICNIC Les Halles (Quai du Commandant Roquebert, 64100) is full of Basque cheeses and cured Bayonne ham. Picnic in the Remparts de Mousserolles and explore the famous fortifications of France's military engineer Vauban. **SNACKS** Pâtisserie Raux (7 Rue Bernadou, 64100; 05 59 59 34 61) offers home-made chocolates, sandwiches, *plats du jour* (daily special), tea and hot chocolate.

 **Allow A** day for the city and more for the beach

 **Festivals** Foire au Jambon, the Bayonne Ham Festival (late Mar/early Apr). Biarritz Surf Festival and championships (Jul). Other surf events (Aug). Fêtes de Bayonne, street music, bull fights and costumes (late Jul–Aug)

Good family value?

Generally inexpensive and not very touristy, the city combines beach fun and sightseeing with a modest mix of things to see and do.

REAL MEAL Brasserie du Trinquet Saint-Andre (1 Rue Jeu de Paume, 64100; 05 59 25 76 81; brasserie-saint-andre.fr) offers salads, steaks, chops and Basque hamburgers.

FAMILY TREAT Auberge du Cheval Blanc (68 Rue Bourgneuf, 64100; 05 59 59 01 33; closed Sat lunch, Sun pm & Mon) is a Michelin-starred restaurant famous for its seafood.

Find out more

DIGITAL Families can download and play the three Chocolatier games on tinyurl.com/6ftuapb and learn about the international chocolate business.

FILM *Le Voyage à Biarritz* (1963) stars Fernandel as a station master who goes on a holiday to Biarritz. *Un amour de sorcière* or *Witch Way Love* (1997), starring Vanessa Paradis and Jean Reno, a comedy film, was shot in part just outside Bayonne.

Take cover

Visit the *trinquet* (indoor court) at **Trinquet St-André** (Rue des Tonneliers, 64100; 05 59 25 76 81; closed Sun) to watch *pelota*, the Basque national sport. A ball game played with the hand or a *chistera* (curved racket), *pelota* can also be played in a *fronton* (outdoor court).



Food counters selling local specialties at Les Halles

Next stop...

SARE Located south of Bayonne, in the Pyrenean foothills, is the village of Sare. Go to the **Grottes de Sare** and the **Musée et du Parc Mégalithique** (both www.grottesdesare.fr) to learn about Palaeolithic caves, Neolithic dolmens and the origins and myths of the Basques. Or take a ride on the **Petit Train de la Rhune** (www.rhune.com) up to the holy mountain of the Basque country.

KIDS' CORNER

You be the General

It is the year 1813, and the Duke of Wellington wants you to get through Vauban's famous fortifications...

1 Every surface is sloped to make your cannonballs glance off.

2 Your cannons have a range of about 300 m (984 ft), but the Bayonnais have cleared everything outside the walls for more than that. There

is no cover; you cannot rush your infantrymen in with ladders, and if you bring your cannons close enough, the defenders can knock them out.

3 You cannot attack from the river, as they have built another powerful fortress there. So think how can you get in.

Suggestion at the bottom of the page.



WHALE TONGUE

If you caught a whale in the old days you could keep it – except for the tongue, which had to be given to the Bishop of Bayonne, because it was thought of as the best meat.



Hamming it up

Bayonne is world famous for its cured hams. One of its secrets is a thick red paste of Espelette peppers rubbed into the meat as it dries to give the ham its unique tang.



Suggestion: Dig deep trenches to get men close to the walls, and then turned under the walls to collapse them. That was one of Vauban's strategies and he was as good at taking cities, as defending them.



Pont de la Légende, the medieval bridge in Sauveterre-de-Béarn

2 Grottes d'Isturitz et Oxocelhaya

An underground river and an ancient flute

Located in the heart of the French Basque country near Hasparren, this village southwest of Bayonne, these caves were inhabited as long ago as 80,000 BC. A guided tour follows the course of an underground river, through halls and grottos of brilliant stalactites, but the real wonders here are the relics and works of art left by early man. There are a huge number of finds – drawings and incisions picturing animals, tools and weapons, as well as a 40,000-year-old flute.

The Lowdown

- Map reference** 11 B4
Address 64240 (Pyrénées-Atlantiques). On the D251; 05 59 29 64 72; www.grottes-isturitz.com
- Bus** from Bayonne or St-Jean-de-Luz to Hasparren, then taxi
- Visitor information** 2 Pl St-Jean, 64240 Hasparren; 05 59 29 62 02; www.hasparren-tourisme.com
- Open** Mar–May & Oct–Nov: daily pm; Jun–Sep: daily
- Price** €26–36; under 7s free
- Eat and drink** **Snacks** Pizzas-Pat (6 Rue Pierre Broussain, 64240 Hasparren; 05 59 93 03 17; www.pizzas-pat.fr) offers takeaway pizzas, cooked dishes and paninis. **Real meal** Argia (32 Rue Jean Lissar, 64240 Hasparren; 05 59 29 60 24; www.hotel-restaurant-argia.fr) serves tasty dishes such as Basque-style poached eggs and grilled duck.

Letting off steam

Head 7 km (4 miles) to the south of Bayonne where the **Base de Baigura** (www.mendionde.fr/gd/Base-de-loisirs-du-baigura.htm) offers trampolines, mountain bikes and an initiation in hang-gliding, as well as a tourist train ride to the top of the 897-m (2,942-ft) Mount Baigura.

3 Sauveterre-de-Béarn

A medieval time capsule and a museum of salt

In the Middle Ages, this was a busy town on the main route to Spain. Medieval life is re-created in the **Maquette de la Cité Médiévale**, an impressive model of the town, housed in the Chapelle St-Martin. The town's monuments include the original walls and gates, some fine Romanesque sculpture in the St-André church and an enchanting half of the Pont de la Légende (Bridge of Legend) whose tolls were once the town's main source of income. The legend involves the local viscountess who, in 1170, was accused of witchcraft, tied up and thrown off the bridge. She was alive



A 17th-century statue of Good King Henri, Pau

The Lowdown

- Map reference** 11 B4
Address 64390 (Pyrénées-Atlantiques). Maquette de la Cité Médiévale: Chapelle de Sunarthe; 05 59 38 57 56. Musée du Sel: Rue Des Puits-Salants, 64390 Salies de Béarn; 05 59 09 31 99
- Train** to Orthez on the Bayonne–Pau line, then bus 22 to Sauveterre and Salies de Béarn
- Visitor information** Pl Royale, 64390; 05 59 38 32 86; www.tourisme-bearn-gaves.com
- Open** Maquette de la Cité Médiévale: Jul & Aug: Wed–Sat pm; Apr–Jun: Sat pm; Sep–mid-Nov: by reservation only. Musée du Sel: mid-Apr–Oct: Tue–Sat pm
- Eat and drink** **Snacks** Pub-Snack de la Mairie (Pl Royal, 64390; 05 24 37 11 85; Oct–May: closed Thu) is good for a quick bistro-style lunch, with frites, salads and croque-monsieurs (grilled ham and cheese sandwich). **Real meal** Au Fil du Temps (Blvd St-Guily, 64390 Salies-du-Béarn; 05 59 38 31 27; www.hotelcasinoduparc.fr), an elegant restaurant, offers lunch menus and a chance to look at a restored hotel from the 1890s.

when they found her downstream, so she was said to have passed the “test of innocence”.

Just north of Sauveterre-de-Béarn is Salies de Béarn. This lovely old spa town, built on winding little rivers that resemble Venetian canals, is well known for its saline springs. Head for the **Musée du Sel** (salt museum) that is one of the landmarks of the town.

Letting off steam

Sauveterre-de-Béarn's Gave d'Oloron river is renowned for salmon fishing and whitewater rafting. The **Centre Nautique de Soeix** (05 59 39 61 00; www.soeix.com) offers rafting trips. It is suitable for kids aged 8 plus.

4 Pau

Birthplace of Good King Henri

East of the Basque country, Béarn is a little enclave of mountains and dairy farms that for centuries was a proudly independent Gascon state, ruled by its own viscounts. Its capital Pau is a lively city that became a Victorian-era resort popular with the British, who gave it the continent's first golf course. Take in the famous view from the promenade, the

"Balcony of the Pyrenees" and visit the **Musée National du Château de Pau**, where Pau's favourite son and France's most amiable king, Henri IV, was born in 1553; his mother, according to legend, rubbed his lips with garlic to make him a good Gascon. The star exhibit is his famous tortoiseshell cradle.

Letting off steam

Pau's elegant Parc Beaumont is a good place to play, or have year-round family water fun in **Calicéo** (Bvd du Cami Salié, 64000; 08 26 30 36 64; <http://www.caliceo.com/pau>), a spa.

The Lowdown

- 1** **Map reference** 11 C4
Address 64000 (Pyrénées-Atlantiques). Musée National du Château de Pau: 2 Rue du Château; www.musee-chateau-pau.fr
- 2** **Train** from Bordeaux & Toulouse
- 3** **Visitor information** Pl Royale, 64000; 05 59 27 27 08; www.pau-pyrenees.com
- 4** **Open** Musée National du Château de Pau: daily
- 5** **Eat and drink Snacks** La Brochetterie (16 Rue Henri IV, 64000; 05 59 27 40 33; www.la-brochetterie.com) is popular for grilled meats and fish. **Real meal** La Fourchette à Soupe (12 Blvd Champetier de Ribes, 64000; 05 59 90 14 70; www.la-fourchette-a-soupe.com; closed Sun, Mon & Tue pm) uses locally sourced and organic ingredients in tasty soups, vegetarian and meat dishes, as well as pretty desserts.
- 6** **Festivals** Carnaval Biarzés, wild week-long festivities (Feb). Festival des Pyrénées hosts traditional dancers and musicians from all over the world (Jul)

5 Le Petit Train d'Artouste

Europe's highest train ride

At Artouste, in the Vallée d'Ossau, hop aboard the open-top Petit Train d'Artouste. At 2,000 m (6,561 ft), this is Europe's highest train. The spectacular trip goes right up to the Lac d'Artouste on the Spanish border. At the top, hike around the mountain lakes or take a 20-minute walk to the Artouste dam. Ride the cableway the skiers use in winter, or



Le Petit Train d'Artouste in the Vallée d'Ossau

visit a shepherd in his *bergerie* (sheep pen) to see how he makes cheese. Prolong the fun by camping or booking a bed in a refuge to spend a night on the mountain. In winter, the Station de Ski d'Artouste has a special park for kids and a luge run, as well as a ski school.

Take cover

Head north to Aste-Beon, the site of the **Falaise aux Vautours** (Vulture Cliffs). Cameras built into the cliffs allow a look at the big scavengers and their chicks in the nests on the screens in the information centre (www.falaise-aux-vautours.com).

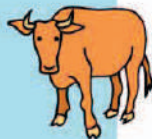
The Lowdown

- 1** **Map reference** 11 C5
Address 64440 (Pyrénées-Atlantiques).
- 2** **Bus** from Pau to Laruns, then summer bus or taxi to Artouste
- 3** **Visitor information** Maison de la Vallée Ossau, Laruns; 05 59 05 31 41; www.ossau-pyrenees.com
- 4** **Open** Jun–Oct: train departs every hour; Jul & Aug: every 30 mins. Book at 05 59 05 36 99; www.altiservice.com/excursion/pyrenees/train-artouste/accueil
- 5** **Price** €70–80; under 4s free
- 6** **Eat and drink Snacks** Le Panoramic (Station Altitude, 64440 Artouste Fabrèges; 05 59 05 42 56; open daily) offers sandwiches and ice cream with spectacular views. **Real meal** L'Embarcadère (13 Ave de la Gare, 64440 Laruns; 05 59 05 41 88; www.gite-embarcadere.com; closed Tue) serves filling *garbure* (bacon and vegetable soup) and grilled meats.
- 7** **Festival** Montagnes en Chansons, a mountain song festival in Laruns (May)

KIDS' CORNER

Look out for...

- 1** Cows over the bridge in Béarn: carved door lintels are a tradition here and often come with the date when the house was built. Sometimes they have pictures, like the cows that figure on the Béarn coat of arms.
- 2** Pottoks: these are small, shaggy wild ponies with big brown eyes. These ponies are native to the Pyrenees and you might see some grazing in a mountain meadow.
- 3** The Basque flag: green, red and white, strangely familiar to British visitors – it was based in 1882 on the Union Jack.
- 4** Little red peppers: the Basques love their little *piments d'Espellette* (chilli peppers). In summer, they are hung out on the houses to dry in the sun. They may appear in your dinner!



CARING KING

Henri IV was well loved because he wanted to make all French people prosperous. One of his mottos was: "A chicken in every pot!"

Fancy a game of mus?

If your family is a little crazy, you may enjoy learning the favourite Basque and Spanish card game *mus*. The game is horribly complicated, involves legal cheating and sometimes needs you to make signals like sticking your tongue out at your partner once or even twice. You will need a Spanish card deck or a *baraja espagnole* (any French tobaccoist should have one), four players and 22 pebbles. The rules are available at [www.en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mus_\(card_game\)](http://www.en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mus_(card_game)).



⑥ Pic du Midi de Bigorre

A ride through the air to the top of the Pyrenees

The Pyrenees were born when Iberia smashed into France 100 million years ago, and right in the heart of the mountains towers the Pic du Midi de Bigorre. At 2,877 m (9,438 ft), this is one of the highest peaks in the world that can be accessed by cable car. Known as the “last stop before the stars”, its pinnacle is crowned with an astronomical observatory and a 104-m (341-ft) television antenna broadcasting radio and television signals across much of Southwest France.



Wildflowers on the slopes of the Pic Du Midi

Key Features



La Lunette Jean Rösch This observatory houses a refractor telescope that studies the surface of the sun.



Terraces The views alone were enough to give the Pic du Midi de Bigorre its designation as a “site classé national” in 2003. Often, the other Pyrenees resemble floating islands.



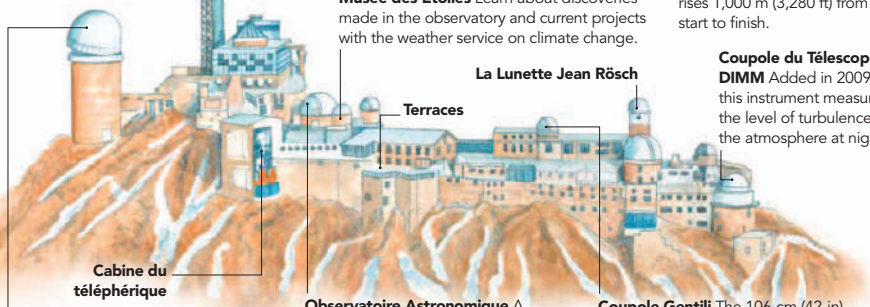
Téléphérique This cable car was built in 1952: from La Mongie, it is a 15-minute ride to Pic du Midi de Bigorre. It rises 1,000 m (3,280 ft) from start to finish.

Musée des Etoiles Learn about discoveries made in the observatory and current projects with the weather service on climate change.

La Lunette Jean Rösch

Terraces

Couple du Télescope DIMM Added in 2009, this instrument measures the level of turbulence in the atmosphere at night.



Télescope Bernard Lyot Set in a 28-m (91-ft) tower, this is the largest telescope in France.

Observatoire Astronomique A weather station was first built on the Col de Sencours in 1873. The construction of the observatory began in 1881.

Coupole Gentili The 106-cm (42-in) telescope in this dome was financed by NASA in 1963. It was used to map the moon's surface for the Apollo missions.

The Lowdown

Map reference 11 D5
Address 65200 (Hautes-Pyrénées). Pic du Midi de Bigorre: Bagnères-de-Bigorre; www.picdumidi.com

Train from Toulouse to Tarbes, then bus to La Mongie for the cable car

Visitor information 3 Allée Tournefort, 65200 Bagnères-de-Bigorre; 05 62 95 50 71

Open Mar, May–Oct & Dec: daily; Jan & Feb: Wed–Mon (check ahead in winters). Cable car (every 15 mins): Oct–May: 10am–3:30pm; Jun–Sep: 9am–4:30pm

Price Family pass €92; under 6s free (including cable car round trip)

Skipping the queue The cable car gets crowded in the ski season and August. Buy tickets online (www.skipass-ntp.com).

Guided tours Book online (www.picdumidi.com) well in advance for a sunset-night visit and a look at the stars and planets.

Age range 3 plus for the cable car, as it can be a bit scary. The ride is not recommended for pregnant women or people with heart problems.

Activities Attend a workshop (in French and English) on constellations, telescopes and talks with astronomers ending at 11:30pm. A starry evening with or without dinner.

Allow Half a day

Café There is a café at the top.

Toilets At the top and bottom cable-car stations

Good family value?

The cable car and astronomical site are great, but as a result, the area is extremely popular and expensive. Be sure to dress warmly.



Gearing up to ski outside the Col du Tourmalet, Tourmalet

Letting off steam

Drive 16 km (10 miles) south to the **Ski Station Grand Tourmalet** (www.n-py.com) at the villages of La Mongie and Barèges. In season, this is the biggest ski area in the Pyrenees, with snow crèches for kids aged 3–11 years if the parents want to hit the big slopes.

Eat and drink

Picnic: under €20; Snacks: €20–45; Real meal: €45–€90; Family treat: over €90 (based on a family of four)

PICNIC The ski resorts Le Bagnères and Mongie have plenty of shops with picnic supplies that are open every morning. Eat on the terrace of Pic du Midi de Bigorre.

SNACKS **Le Killarney** (Pl des Monge, 65200 La Mongie-Tourmalet; 05 62 91 99 24) sells sandwiches, salads and *clocherade* (meats cooked on a bell-shaped grill).

REAL MEAL **Le Cantalou** (16 Pl des Thermes, 65200 Bagnères-de-Bigorre; 05 62 95 07 72; www.restaurant-lecantalou.com; closed Mon) serves generous, home-style cuisine and pizzas, as well as pasta dishes for kids.

FAMILY TREAT **Le Jardin des Brouches** (22 Blvd Carnot, 65200; 05 62 91 07 95) serves traditional French dishes made with fresh seasonal ingredients. All the food is made on site and wines from Southwest France are a speciality.

Shopping

Bagnères is a centre for traditional handmade clothing. **Ateliers B** (12 Rue Justin Daléas, 65200 Bagnères-de-Bigorre) carries a range of high-design and high-quality goods in Pyrenean wool, leather and deerskin. **Val d'Arizes** (65200 Cieutat), 9 km (5 miles) from Bagnères, is also good for woollens.

Find out more

DIGITAL Get your own planetarium, with a free download application called *Stellarium* from www.stellarium/en. Beautifully designed and easy to use, it shows everything in the sky for a specific time and location.

Take cover

Les Grottes de Médous in Bagnères (60 Route des Cols, 65200 Asté; 05 62 91 78 46; www.grottes-medous.com; Apr–Oct) is one of the most beautiful stalactite caves in France. Visitors are taken through part of it in boats on an underground river.



Breathtaking view of the cascade and snowpatches, Cirque de Gavarnie

Next stop...

CIRQUE DE GAVARNIE Take a bus from Lourdes to the Cirque de Gavarnie (www.gavarnie.com), a UNESCO World Heritage Site – a 4-km (2-mile) mountain wall, with Europe's highest waterfall and the famous 100-m-(328-ft) gash called the Brèche de Roland. Legend has it that Roland, nephew of Charlemagne and the subject of the medieval epic, *La Chanson de Roland*, struck the mountain with his sword Durendal after his heroic defeat at the pass of Roncevaux, hoping to destroy it to keep it from falling into enemy hands. Get there by a 45-minute walk from the Hôtel du Cirque or ride on horseback with **Club Vignemale** (www.cheval-gavarnie.com).

KIDS' CORNER

A great spot for gazing at the stars



Astronomers love the Pic du Midi de Bigorre for its clear mountain air. If you are inspired

to learn more about the stars and the constellations, there are many books and star charts available to help. Here is a handy hint to follow the next time you are star-gazing – tape a piece of red cellophane over the torch, so you can look at your star chart, without your eyes having to readjust to the light.



Heroic tales

Roland was a historic character who inspired legends in France and Italy (where he was known as "Orlando"). When he failed to destroy his sword at Gavarnie, he hurled it all the way to Rocamadour (see pp268–9), where you can see it today.

IT'S ALL THERE TO SEE

On a clear day, you can see one-tenth of the surface of France from the top of the Pic du Midi de Bigorre.

Measuring the corona

The biggest telescope of the Observatoire Astronomique is named after French astronomer Bernard Lyot (1897–1952), inventor of the coronagraph in the 1930s – an instrument that measures and photographs the sun's corona. These are the gas flares that "crown" the circle of the sun. Before the coronagraph, the only chance astronomers had to see a corona without



being blinded by the sun was during a solar eclipse.



Lac de Gaube located inside the Parc National des Pyrénées

7 Parc National des Pyrénées

Snowshoes and mountain bikes

The spectacular scenery in the Pyrénées National Park competes with the exciting activities on offer here. The best place to start is in Cauterets, a gracious old spa town that has become the gateway to the park. Its **Maison du Parc** has information on the park's flora and fauna and on hiking, mountain biking, skiing, ice-skating and other sports. Inside the park, the 1,496-m (4,908-ft) high Pont d'Espagne offers waterfalls, splashing, snowshoeing and the chance to take a chairlift up to the Lac de Gaube. Take the cableway up to the Cirque du Lys, where there is skiing in winter. Mountain bikes can be hired in Cauterets in summer and are suitable for kids aged 7 plus.

The Lowdown

Map reference 11 C5
Address 65110 (Hautes-Pyrénées).
 Maison du Parc, 65110 Cauterets;
 05 62 92 52 56 59; www.parc-pyrenees.com

Bus SNCF buses from the train station in Lourdes to Cauterets

Visitor information Pl Foch, 65110 Cauterets; 05 62 92 50 50; www.cauterets.com

Open Maison du Parc: Jul–Aug: open daily; closed Sat–Sun

Eat and drink **Picnic** Carrefour (5 bis Ave de Général Leclerc, 65110; 05 62 92 50 35; closed Sun pm) is great for supplies. Picnic by the Cirque du Lys cableway. **Real meal** La Fruitière (Vallée de Lutour, 65110; 05 62 42 13 53) is a good mountain restaurant serving hearty meals in a hiker's paradise.

Take cover

From Cauterets, take a taxi or drive 10 km (6 miles) north to **Aquarium Tropical** (www.aquarium-tropical-pierrefitte.com) in Pierrefitte-Nestalas, which has freshwater and saltwater species from across the world.

8 Parc Animalier des Pyrénées

A day with birds and beasts

This animal park, in Argèles-Gazost, offers visitors a chance to meet bears, otters, lynxes and other fauna of the Pyrénées. Huge enclosures house over 100 species in their natural surroundings. Playful marmots steal the show, offering photo ops with the kids. There is a footprint trail, restaurant and picnic area. End the day with a visit to the **Donjon des Aigles** at Beaucens, where eagles, falcons, owls and parrots, among others, put on an aerial spectacle to music above an 11th-century castle.

Letting off steam

A shuttle bus links Argèles to Hautacam, the local sports centre, which offers skiing, snow-shoeing and the chance to zip down the mountain on an all-season luge.



A boy playing with marmots at the Parc Animalier des Pyrénées, Argèles-Gazost

The Lowdown

Map reference 11 D5

Address 65400 (Hautes-Pyrénées).
 Parc Animalier des Pyrénées: 60
 Ave des Pyrénées, Argèles-
 Gazost; www.parc-animalier-pyrenees.com. Donjon des Aigles:
 Beaucens; 05 62 97 19 59;
www.donjon-des-aigles.com

Bus Shuttle bus from the train station in Lourdes

Visitor information Pl de la République, 65400 Argèles-Gazost; 05 62 97 00 25; www.argeles-gazost.com

Open Parc Animalier des Pyrénées: Apr–Sep: daily; Oct: pm only; closed Nov–Mar. Donjon des Aigles: Apr–Sep: daily, shows at 3:30pm & 5pm; Aug: 3pm, 4:30pm & 6pm

Price Donjon des Aigles: €42–52. Parc Animalier: €40–50; under 3s free

Eat and drink **Picnic** Melchoir (4 Ave Pierre de Coubestin, 65400 Argèles-Gazost; 05 62 46 19 86) is a good place to pick up goodies. Enjoy them at the park's picnic area. **Real meal** Auberge de l'Arioutou (Route de Hautacam, 65400; 05 62 97 11 32; Sat, Sun & school hols only) has home-made pâtes and garbure (thick vegetable and bacon soup).

Festival Festa Muchas Bandas, musicians play on the streets (Aug)

Activities are suitable for children aged 3 plus and accompanied by a parent.

9 Lourdes

Pilgrims and wax works

In 1858, in a grotto in Lourdes, a “small young lady” appeared 18 times to Bernadette Soubirou, the 14-year-old daughter of a miller. At one point, the lady instructed her to drink from a spring that was soon found to have healing properties. The Catholic church investigated the “miracle” and it was not long before Lourdes became France's most important pilgrimage destination, with a reputation for miraculous cures.

Besides an ocean of kitsch souvenirs, which leads up to the famous grotto and church, there are also plenty of opportunities for family fun. The *petit* train, which departs every 20 minutes from Place Mons Laurence, offers a good overview. Seated on a lofty outcrop is the Château Fort that was begun in the

11th century. It houses the **Musée Pyrénéen**, with exhibits on traditional life in the mountains from the 18th to the 20th centuries as well as a botanical garden housing miniature buildings. The **Musée de Cire** has over 100 life-sized waxwork figures that represent stories of St Bernadette, Leonardo's *Last Supper* and more.

Letting off steam

Take bus 3 from Place Peyramale, 3 km (2 miles) west to the Lac du Lourdes for playgrounds, mountain bikes or to hire horses.



The town of Lourdes with the Château Fort in the background

The Lowdown

Map reference 11 D5
Address 65100 (Hautes-Pyrénées). Musée Pyrénéen: 25 Rue du Château Fort; 05 62 42 37 37; www.lourdes-visite.com. Musée de Cire: 87 Rue de la Grotte; 05 62 94 33 74; www.musee-de-cire-lourdes.com

Train SNCF from Tarbes and Pau.
Bus Limited bus services to the Pyrenean valleys

Visitor information PI Peyramale, 65100; 05 62 42 77 40; www.lourdes-infotourisme.com

Open Musée Pyrénéen: daily
Musée de Cire: Apr–Oct: daily

Eat and drink **Real meal** Grill Alexandra (3 Rue Fort, 65100; 05 62 94 31 43; open Sat, Sun & school hols) serves duck, seafood and good desserts. **Family treat** Le Magret (10 Rue des 4 Frères Soulas, 65100 Lourdes; 05 62 94 20 55; www.lemagret.com; closed Tue & Wed) serves some of the best traditional Pyrenean dishes in the region, based on local ingredients such as trout, duck and lamb; includes menu for vegetarians and kids. Book 24 hours in advance.

Festival Festival de L'Humour, comedians take part in this weekend festival (late May)

10 Château de Mauvezin

Where the Middle Ages live on

Located in little Mauvezin, east of Bagnères-de-Bigorre, the perfectly restored Château de Mauvezin was begun around the year 1000 and later belonged to a hell-raiser of the Hundred Years' War, Count Gaston Fébus. Today, it has everything that a medieval castle should have: collections of swords, halberds, axes, crossbows, armour and even a catapult. On summer Sundays, the château puts on shows of medieval music and dance, acrobatics, juggling and many other evocations of everyday medieval life.

The Lowdown

Map reference 11 D5
Address 65130 (Hautes-Pyrénées). Château de Mauvezin: 10 Rue du Château; 05 62 39 10 27; www.chateaudemauvezin.com

Train to Tarbes, then bus to Bagnères-de-Bigorre and then taxi

Visitor information 3 Allées Tournefort, 65130 La Mongie; 05 62 95 50 71; www.grand-tourmalet.com

Open Year round. Oct–Apr: pm

Price €22; under 4s free

Eat and drink **Real meal** Auberge Gourmande (1 Blvd de l'Hypéron, 65130 Bagnères-de-Bigorre; 05 62 95 52 01; closed Nov; Mon & Tue) specializes in local treats such as pork baked for 12 hours. **Family treat** l'Atelier (33 Allée des Coustous, 65130; 05 62 95 02 06; closed Sun out of season) is a modern brasserie offering creative cuisine such as fresh pasta with duck and gambas (large prawns).

Festival La Pourcailhade, an annual pig-calling contest in Trie-sur-Baise, north of Mauvezin, involves pork roasts and pig races (mid-Aug).

Letting off steam

Take a bus from La Mongie, 40 km (25 miles) west of Château de Mauvezin, to Tarbes, capital of the Hautes Pyrénées. Run around the **Jardin Massey** (PI Henri Bordes, 65000; www.ville-tarbes.fr) and play in the pool at the **Centre Nautique Paul Boyrie** (www.legrandtarbes.fr; Jun–Aug). Watch equestrian shows in summer at the **Haras National de Tarbes** (www.haras-nationaux.fr).

KIDS' CORNER

Look out for...

Spot these great birds of prey in the Parc National des Pyrénées:

1 Golden eagle



Dark brown with straight tail feathers and 85-cm (33-in) long wings, they have extremely powerful talons and can catch large prey.

2 Peregrine falcon

Black and tan mottled breast, pointed 43-cm (17-in) long wings, these birds nest on cliffs. They are the fastest creatures in the world, clocking up to 320 kmph (200 mph) when they swoop down for their prey.

3 Griffon vulture

Dual-tone grey with 100-cm (39-in) long wings, these birds have white bald heads. They lay one egg a year and can live up to 118 years.



4 Lammergeyer

These rare "bearded vultures" have 110-cm (43-in) long wings, and a big curved beak. They drop bones on the rock to break them open for the marrow.

VANISHING BEARS

The Pyrenees were famous for bears – but chances are you won't see any outside the Parc Animalier. Only a handful of the native Pyrenean bears remain and attempts to reintroduce mountain bears from Slovenia have caused big battles between animal lovers and local farmers.



Oink, oink

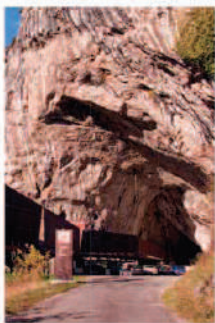
It started out as a joke, but the annual pig noise-making contest in Trie-sur-Baise, where people compete to see who can make the best pig noises, has become one of France's most famous festivals.

11 Grotte de Niaux

Amazing caveman cartoons

The most beautiful cave in the Pyrenees, the Grotte de Niaux is dazzling, its vast chambers decorated with paintings of bison, mountain goats, horses and deer. These were made by great hunters of the Magdalenian era (around 11,000 BC), who lived above the valley in the Grotte de la Vache. Like many modern artists, the hunters sketched animals in charcoal before painting them. The Parc de la Préhistoire in nearby Tarascon brings it all vividly to life.

Key Sights



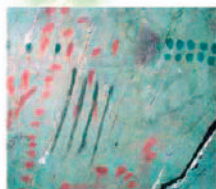
① **Entrance** The cave can be spotted from a distance because of its 55-m (180-ft) high and 50-m (165-ft) wide porch set high above the valley.

② **Entrance sculpture** In 1994 the Italian sculptor Massimiliano Fuskas erected this sculpture in raw steel that echoes the mountains and draws the eye into the cave.



④ **Les Galeries Profondes** Only experts can enter this gallery housing mysterious signs and 15,000-year-old footprints.

⑤ **Salon Noir** This enormous "Black Hall" has over 100 drawings of animals – bison, deer and horses, but also fish and a weasel.



③ **Entrance passages** The passages are full of strange symbols, which are mostly a series of dots and dashes that seem to relay a message. Scholars have been trying to decode them for decades.



Letting off steam

Head to the **Base Nautique de Mercus** (www.basenautiquemercus.fr) in the town of Mercus-Garrabet, 11 km (7 miles) north of the village of Niaux. Swimming and boating with pedal boats, wakeboarding and "télési nautique", in which eight water-skiers at a time are pulled across the lake with a giant cable, are on offer to visitors here.

Eat and drink

Picnic: under €20; Snacks: €20–45; Real meal: €45–90; Family treat: over €90 (based on a family of four)

PICNIC La Mie Dorée Ariégeoise (12 Rue St-Roch, 09040 Tarascon-sur-Ariège) offers sandwiches and pizzas. There is a picnic area with a play ground at the Parc de la Préhistoire.

Prices given are for a family of four



Lake by the Base Nautique de Mercus, Mercus-Garrabet

SNACKS La Bécane (28 Ave de Sabart, 09400 Tarascon-sur-Ariège; 05 61 03 61 72; la.becane.free.fr) is an American 1950s-style diner, which serves hamburgers and ribs, with an unlimited supply of coffee.

REAL MEAL La Mandoline (2 Ave Sabart, 09400 Tarascon-sur-Ariège; 05 61 05 15 75; closed Mon) tempts with delicious lasagne and pizzas baked in a wood-fired oven, along with steaks and seafood.

FAMILY TREAT Auberge de la Grotte (Pl du Village, 09040 Bédeilhac; 05 61 02 84 68; www.restaurant-auberge-de-la-grotte.com) is regarded as the best in the area, where a highly-rated young chef serves lobster and other seafood dishes, as well as more traditional mountain fare.

Shopping

Visit **Les Trésors de Pyrene** (Ave de la République, 09040 Tarascon-sur-Ariège) to pick up cheese, honey, hazelnut oil, pottery and crafts

The Lowdown

-  **Map reference** 12 F5
Address 09040 (Ariège).
Grotte de Niaux: south of
Tarascon-sur-Ariège on the
D8; www.sesta.fr/grotte-de-niaux.html
-  **Train** from Toulouse via Foix for
Tarascon-sur-Ariège, then taxi
to Grotte de Niaux (05 61 05
97 71)
-  **Visitor information** Ave Paul-
Joucla, 09040 Tarascon-sur-
Ariège; 05 61 05 94 94; [www.montagnesdetarasconet
duvicdessos.fr](http://www.montagnesdetarasconetduvicdessos.fr)
-  **Open** Feb–Oct: daily; Jan:
Sat & Sun; Nov: Wed–Sun; Dec:
school hols. Daily tours; book in
advance (05 61 05 88 37; www.ariège.com/niaux)

-  **Price** €27–37
-  **Guided tours** Visits are by
guided tours only. From Apr–
Oct, there are tours in English.
-  **Age range** 5 plus. It is a 2-km
(1-mile) walk and is slippery in
some places.
-  **Allow** A day to see Niaux, the
Grotte de la Vache and the Parc
de la Préhistoire.
-  **Toilets** At the ticket office at the
entrance to the cave.

Good family value?

Besides the caves, there is plenty to interest children in the area. The prices for food and accommodation are also very reasonable.

from the Pyrenees. Or head for **Hypocras**, (Pl Ste-Quitterie, 09400 Tarascon-sur-Ariège; 05 61 05 60 38; www.hypocras.com; open Tue–Sat) to watch hypocras – a spicy cinnamon, cardamom and ginger alcoholic drink being made. Attributed to ancient Greek doctor Hippocrates, the drink arrived in France with the crusaders.

Find out more

DIGITAL Get information, pictures about Niaux and other Palaeolithic art on www.bradshawfoundation.com. The Bradshaw Foundation is dedicated to online learning about art, archaeology, and in particular, rock art from around the world.

Next step...

BACK TO THE STONE AGE Pay a visit to the **Grotte de la Vache** (09040 Alliat; 05 61 05 95 06; www.grotte-de-la-vache.org) located on

the hill opposite Niaux. This cave sheltered a settlement that offers fascinating insights into the life of the Stone Age hunters in 14,000 BC. After visiting the cave, drive 4 km (2 miles) west to the **Parc de la Préhistoire** (09040 Tarascon-sur-Ariège; 05 61 05 10 10; www.sesta.fr/parcdelaprehistoire.html). This has reconstructions of Palaeolithic shelters, along with demonstrations of Stone Age skills such as fire-making and painting.



Above Trying a hand at cave painting
Below Learning about cave painting techniques at the Parc de la Préhistoire



KIDS' CORNER

Unravel the mystery of cave paintings

Think of the cave paintings as a puzzle. Why were they made and what does it all mean? When you visit Niaux, take a notebook. Copy down the symbols you see and make up a map of their locations. See if you can find any clues and patterns. Why did they paint inside caves? Why some animals and not others? What did people actually do down in the caves?



FORGED CAVE ART

As far back as 1602, people visited Niaux and carved their names in the walls, but no one "recognized" cave art until 1906. When the Palaeolithic paintings were discovered in 1880 at Altamira, Spain, people accused the man who found them of forging them!

Enjoy the underground

There are two other fascinating caves around Niaux. The Grotte de Bèdeilhac, 5 km (3 miles) north of Tarascon, has a huge entrance: a plane has been flown out of it. Inside it has beautiful stalactites and a smattering of cave art. Just 3 km (2 miles) south in Ussat-les-Bains, a little train goes up to the biggest cave in Europe: the Grotte de Lombrives.





Haunting ruins of the Château de Montségur

12 Réserve Nationale d'Orlu

Scenic mountains, golden eagles and wolf parks

Stretching eastwards from the ski-and-spa resort of Ax-les-Thermes, the Réserve Nationale d'Orlu covers one of the most scenic corners of the Pyrenees, where it is not unusual to see golden eagles floating overhead. The **Observatoire de la Montagne** is the headquarters for exploring wildlife, with an information centre and an interactive museum in French. It is also the base for nature walks or a visit to a hydroelectric dam. From here it is not far to the **Maison des Loups**, a park dedicated to wolves, who live in large natural enclosures.

Letting off steam

In summer, explore the mountains with a donkey. Hire one from **La Ferme des Anes** (www.la-ferme-aux-anes.com) at Unac, north of Ax-les-Thermes, for full-day or half-day excursions (parents walk and children ride).

13 Montségur

The last stand of the Cathars

Set vertiginously on a mountain top, the **Château de Montségur** was a witness to the demise of the heretical Cathars, who took refuge here at the end of the Albigensian Crusade (see p326). After a 10-month siege, it fell in 1244; the surviving 225 Cathars leapt into a huge bonfire rather than convert. Today, thousands visit the ruined site each year, drawn by the legends of the Cathars and the lost treasure that was smuggled out just before the fall of Montségur, possibly to Rennes-le-Château (see pp326–7). The steep climb can be



A European grey wolf on an outcrop, Réserve Nationale d'Orlu

The Lowdown

- Map reference** 12 F5
- Address** 09300 (Ariège). Château de Montségur & Musée Archéologique: Montségur
- Train** to Foix, then CAP Pays Cathare bus to Lavelanet, then taxi
- Visitor information** 32 Rue du Village, 09300; 05 61 03 03 03; www.montsegur.fr
- Open** Château de Montségur & Musée Archéologique: daily; closed Jan
- Eat and drink** *Real meal* À Table (63 Ave Léon Blum, 09300; 05 61 64 61 73) has a good selection of dishes for lunch and also offers a good kids' menu. *Family treat* Auberge Montségur (52 Le Village, 09300; 05 61 01 10 24; www.aubergemontsegur.com) is a stone-walled cosy old inn with a medieval set-up and a pretty terrace, with lots of duck on the menu; their *cassoulet* (bean and duck stew) is made from an old family recipe.

tough for children aged under 8. The **Musée Archéologique** down in the village displays everyday objects used in the Middle Ages.

Letting off steam

Drive 13 km (8 miles) north to **Base de Loisirs Le Kart'are** (05 61 64 57 83) at Aigues-Vives, which has a first-rate karting track. Also on offer are mountain biking and paintball, with a playground for smaller children.

14 Grotte du Mas d'Azil

A drive-through cave


The D119 that goes from Sabarat or Lescure to Mas d'Azil also runs right through the Grotte du Mas d'Azil. This cave is a natural 150-m (429-ft) gallery in the rock and so important to prehistorians that it gave its name to the Azilien period (9,000 BC). The galleries have late Palaeolithic etchings, bear bones and memories of oppressed Protestants who made the cave into a fortress. In 1625, around 1,000 Protestants are believed to have held out here against an army of 14,000 during the Wars of Religion. The **Musée de la Préhistoire**

The Lowdown

- Map reference** 12 F6
- Address** 09110 (Ariège). Observatoire de la Montagne: Les Forges d'Orlu; 05 61 03 06 06; www.observatoire-montagne.com. Maison des Loups: Les Forges d'Orlu; 05 61 64 02 66; www.maisondesloups.com
- Train** from Toulouse to Ax-les-Thermes, then taxi
- Visitor information** 6 Ave Delcassé, 09110 Ax-les-Thermes; 05 61 64 60 60; www.vallees-ax.com
- Open** Observatoire de la Montagne: Apr–Jun & Sep–Oct: Wed–Sun;
- Jul–Aug: daily (closed Sat & Sun am all year). Maison des Loups: Apr–Jun: Thu–Tue; Jul–Aug: daily; Sep–Oct: Wed–Sun
- Eat and drink** *Real meal* Le P'tit Montagnard (6 Pl Roussel, 09110 Ax-les-Thermes; www.leptitmontagnard.fr; closed Mon) offers more seafood than usual for a mountain restaurant, and also grilled meats, salmon and cheese fondues. *Family treat* Le Chalet (Ave Turrel, 09110 Ax-les-Thermes; www.le-chalet.fr; closed Sun, pm & Mon) offers refined cuisine with a menu for children.

The Lowdown

Map reference 12 F5
Address 09290 (Ariège).
 Grotte du Mas d'Azil & Musée de la Préhistoire: Mas d'Azil; 05 61 69 97 22; www.grotte-masdazil.com.
 Forêt des Dinosaurs: Route de Sabarot, Castagnès; 05 61 60 03 69; www.ariege-dinosaure.com

 **Train** to Foix, then taxi or car

Visitor information 17 Ave de la Gare, 09290 Mas d'Azil; 05 61 69 99 90; www.tourisme-arize-leze.com

Open Grotte du Mas d'Azil & Musée de la Préhistoire: Mar–Oct daily; other times: Sun only, daily during school holidays (ring tourist office for schedule).

exhibits artifacts from the cave, including unique works of art such as harpoons, sculptures, a throwing stick carved with a fawn and birds, and a famous skull.

There are Neolithic dolmens (megalithic table tombs) in the area and the **Forêt des Dinosaurs**, which reconstructs a dinosaur fossil dig that took place in the 1920s. Kids will enjoy the chance to play palaeontologist here.

Letting off steam

Drive 11 km (7 miles) north to the village of Carla-Bayle, to visit **Sequoia Vertigo** (www.sequoia-vertigo.com), a tree adventure park with 13 routes and 134 things to do. Set among a vast woodland of majestic sequoias planted over a century ago, it is suitable for kids aged 5 plus and over 122 cm (4 ft) tall.

15 St Bertrand-de-Comminges

Roman ghosts, ruins and medieval mysteries

This was once the flourishing Roman city of Lugdunum Convenarum, until the barbarian invasions destroyed it in the 6th century. The city's fortunes



One of the curious carved images in the Basilique de Ste-Marie, St Bertrand

Forêt des Dinosaurs: Jul & Aug: daily; May–Jun & Sep–mid-Nov Tue–Sun

Eat and drink **Picnic Proxi** Alimentation (*Rue Mouret, 09290 Mas d'Azil; 05 61 60 44 58*) is a good place for picnic supplies. **Real meal** Auberge Le Relais du Seignas (*Seignas, 09290 Mas d'Azil; 05 61 60 57 40; closed Sat lunch; book in advance*) serves hearty regional dishes. Enjoy the panoramic view from the terrace.

Festival Fête de la Figue, a village fête celebrating the fig harvest (Oct)

changed in the 11th century, when Bertrand de l'Îsle-Jourdain – the cousin of Count Raymond IV of Toulouse, who was the leader of the First Crusade – was appointed bishop and built the Romanesque **Basilique de Ste-Marie**, nicknamed the Cathedral of the Pyrenees. This cathedral is filled with intriguing details that include superbly carved capitals and choir stalls.

Letting off steam

Run around in the Roman ruins of Lugdunum or take a bus 12 km (7 miles) north to the town of Montréjeau, to the **Grottes de Gargas** (grottesdegargas.free.fr). The caves have animal decorations and 231 handprints; nearly all of them are missing at least one finger.

The Lowdown

Map reference 12 E5
Address 31510 (Haute-Garonne).
 Basilique de Ste-Marie: Pl de la Cathédrale; www.cathedrale-saint-bertrand.org

Train to Montréjeau, then SNCF bus to Labroquière, 2 km (1 mile) from St-Bertrand-de-Comminges

Visitor information Ave des Thermes, 31510 Barbazan; 05 61 88 35 64; www.tourisme-barbazan.com

Eat and drink **Snacks** Crêperie du Parvis (*Place de la Cathédrale, 31510 Saint-Bernard-de-comminges; 05 61 95 43 60; daily*) Enjoy crêpes opposite the cathedral. **Real meal** La Vieille Auberge (*Ville Basse, 31510; 05 61 88 36 60; vieilleauberge.free.fr*) has duck à l'orange (duck in orange sauce) and lemon tart.

KIDS' CORNER

In the Basilique de Ste-Marie, look out for...

- 1 A stuffed crocodile (apparently killed by a saint's prayer)
- 2 A narwhal tusk
- 3 The Green Man (a wild hairy fellow)



Answers at the bottom of the page.

A tusk that sweats!

Pope Clement V mistook the narwhal tusk for a unicorn horn. In the Middle Ages, people prized unicorn horns. They believed that the horn would start sweating in the presence of poisoned drinks and food.

EARLY AFTERLIFE

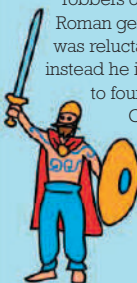
The 11,000-year-old skull of a girl in the Musée de la Préhistoire has carved bones that look like eyes stuck into the sockets. Among the earliest examples of funeral rites, it suggests that our ancestors believed in an afterlife.



Carrot or stick?

The *Convenii*, the Celto-Iberian guerrillas, were such tough warriors that their name means "robbers of souls". Even the

Roman general Pompey was reluctant to fight them; instead he invited them to found Lugdunum Convenarum and they became model Roman citizens.



Answers: 1 It is hanging on a wall 2 In Europe and might represent a spirit of chour. He appears in churches all over the treasury. 3 There are several in the nature, but no one knows for sure.

Where to Stay in the Pyrenees

Away from the Basque coast, accommodation in the Pyrenees tends to be more functional than glamorous. Self-catering apartments in the winter and summer resort areas are a popular choice for families, but there are also plenty of *gîtes* (cottage rentals), hotels and B&Bs.

AGENCIES

Alternative Aquitaine

www.alternative-aquitaine.co.uk

The website lists self-catering properties located on the coast and in the mountains in all price ranges.

French Entrée Midi-Pyrenees

www.frenchentree.com

This website lists *gîtes*, apartments and B&Bs throughout the Hautes-Pyrénées and Ariège.

Bagnères-de-Bigorre

Map 11 D5

BED & BREAKFAST Au Chat Ronfleur

3 Rue Cazalas, 65200; 05 62 95 42 87; www.bagneres-chambredhote.com

The "Snoring Cat" is located in the heart of the Bagnères. The three large rooms are basic, but the breakfasts are good. The English-speaking owners are friendly and offer sound advice for visiting the region.



€

CAMPING

Camping Monloo

Route de la Plaine, 65200; 05 62 95 19 65; www.lemonloo.com

Located in a quiet setting on the edge of the Bagnères, this camp site has mobile homes and chalets to let. There is a heated pool, waterslides, a playground, tennis and fishing to keep the kids busy. In summer, there are sports tournaments, themed evenings and other entertainment.



€

Bayonne

Map 11 B4

HOTELS

Hotel Côte-Basque

2 Rue de Maubec, 64100; 05 59 55 10 21; www.hotel-cotebasque.fr

An atmospheric establishment right in the centre of Bayonne's St-Esprit quarter, this hotel offers attractive modern rooms, done up in natural

colours, with wooden floors. Some rooms have air conditioning, and all have double glazing and Wi-Fi.



€

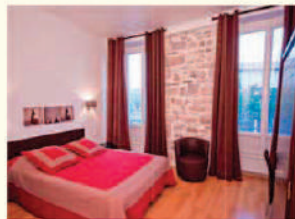
Ibis Styles Bayonne

1 Pl de la République, 64100; 05 59 55 08 08; www.ibis.com

Housed in a charming old building just across the Adour river from the city centre, this hotel has splendid views over the river towards Bayonne. Rooms are soundproof and have Wi-Fi; there is a good restaurant too.



€€



Contemporary decor in Hotel Côte-Basque, Bayonne

Biarritz

Map 11 A4

HOTEL

Hôtel de l'Océan

9 Pl Ste-Eugénie, 64200; 05 59 24 03 27; www.biarritz-hotel-ocean.com

Located in the centre near the beach, this hotel has 24 rooms done up in bold colours and equipped with Wi-Fi; balconies of some rooms overlook the sea. The restaurant is good. Discount packages are on offer for golf and other attractions.



€€€

CAMPING

Camping Le Ruisseau

Rue Burruntz, 64210 Bidart; 05 59 41 94 50; www.camping-le-ruisseau.fr

This big camp site south of Biarritz offers mobile homes, bungalows and a tree lodge; free shuttles to the beach in July and August. Mini-golf, watersports and other games available. Bar and restaurant on site.



€-€€

Cauterets

Map 11 C5

HOTEL

Village de Vacances Les Marronniers

Ave du Mamelon Vert, 65110; 05 62 92 12 12; www.marronniers-vacances.com

This resort complex is ideal for both outdoor summer sports and skiing, with an emphasis on family activities. The en-suite rooms are simple and modern. There is a playground and children's clubs for those aged 4 plus run during school holidays.



€€€

SELF-CATERING

Hotel-Résidence Le Lys

Rue de la Feria, 65110; 05 62 92 11 11; www.hotelresidencelelys.com

A bright, modern property near the cable cars, it offers attractive rooms and suites, with balconies and Wi-Fi on request. There is a small garden, facilities for kids and laundry facilities. A spa and reflexology are also on offer.



€

Foix

Map 12 F5

HOTEL

Auberge des Myrtilles

Col du Marrous, 09000 Le Bosc; 05 61 65 16 46; www.auberge-les-myrtilles.com

Just west of Foix, this secluded hotel has modern-rustic rooms, a pleasant *gîte* and a restaurant specializing in traditional home cooking. There is a Jacuzzi, garden terrace and acres of woods to roam around in.



€€

Gavarnie

Map 11 D5

HOTEL

Le Compostelle

Rue de l'Eglise, 65120; 05 62 92 49 43; www.compostellehotel.com

Located on the pilgrimage route to Santiago de Compostela, this hotel has comfortable and well-

appointed rooms, some with great views of the cirque. There is a games room for kids.

€

SELF-CATERING Gîte du Clot

Rue Principale, 65120; 05 62 92 40 49; www.leclot.fr

Set on the slopes of Mont Perdu, this gîte is a converted stone barn that sleeps up to 11. It can be divided into two independent units, including one sleeping four. It also has a pretty garden with a pond.

€

CAMPING

Le Pain du Sucre

65120 Gavarnie; 05 62 92 47 55; www.camping-gavarnie.com

Just ten minutes from the Gavarnie-Gèdre ski station, it offers 50 pitches, wooden cottages and mobile homes. A bar, shop, pizzeria, playground and laundry service are on offer.

€

Lourdes

Map 11 D5

HOTEL

Villa Bon Repos

Ave du Stade, 65400 Argelès-Gazost; 05 62 97 01 49; www.bonrepos.com

A seven-minute drive from Lourdes, this old manor house is a family-run Logis de France, with stone walls and wooden floors. Comfortable and well-kept, all rooms have Wi-Fi; some have balconies and air conditioning. There is a garden and Jacuzzi outside.

€€

SELF-CATERING Résidence Foch

13 Ave du Maréchal Foch, 65100; 05 62 92 77 67; www.lcv-hotels.com

A good-value city-centre apartment hotel, close to the sanctuaries, it offers studio and larger junior suites for



Bright and elegantly decorated interior with wooden floors



Beautiful façade of the Manoir d'Agnès, Tarascon-sur-Ariège

families, some with balconies. Wi-Fi, optional breakfast, laundry service and free parking are available. See website for special offers.

€

CAMPING

La Bergerie

8 Chemin de la Bergerie, 65400 Argelès-Gazost; 05 62 97 59 99; www.camping-labergerie.com

Just north of Argelès, at the crossroads of three valleys, this camp site offers cabins and two gîtes to let by the week. There is a playground.

€

Montségur

Map 12 F5

BED & BREAKFAST L'Oustal

46 Le Village, 09300; 05 61 02 80 70; tinyurl.com/4xfx985

This property offers four comfortable rooms and also a well-furnished gîte, with a garden and a terrace with great views. Friendly owners.

€

St-Bertrand-de-Comminges

Map 12 E5

HOTEL

Hôtel du Comminges

Ville Haute, 31510; 05 61 88 31 43; www.hotelducomminges.fr

This peaceful 15th-century pilgrims' hospice right by the Basilique de Ste-Marie was converted into a hotel over a century ago. Rooms are furnished with antiques. Breakfast available, but no restaurant.

€

CAMPING

Camping Es Pibous

D26, 31510; 05 61 88 31 42; www.es-pibous.fr

This small, well-manicured camp site sits right on top of the ruins of the

Roman city under St-Bertrand. There are chalets and a mobile home on offer. A playground is on site.

€

Salies de Béarn

Map 11 B4

HOTEL

Hôtel du Parc

Blvd St-Guily, 64270; 05 59 38 31 27; www.hotelsalies.com

A beautifully restored grand hotel of the 1890s, it has a spectacular glass-roofed lobby. Some rooms are simple and modern, others a little sleeker. There is an elegant restaurant and a casino; special deals for families.

€€

BED & BREAKFAST

Demeure de la Presqu'île

22 Ave des Docteurs-Foix, 64270; 05 59 38 06 22; www.lademeurepresquile.com

This peaceful 18th-century country house, surrounded by gardens, has en-suite rooms, with old parquet floors, tastefully painted in different colours. Excellent breakfasts and home-cooked dinners on request.

€€

Tarascon-sur-

Ariège

Map 12 F5

HOTEL

Manoir d'Agnès

2 Rue St-Roche, 09400; 05 61 02 32 81; www.manoiragnes.com

This charming 17th-century mansion looks like a gingerbread house outside; inside it is sharp and modern.

A well-run and welcoming place, with Wi-Fi and a hammam, it has one of the area's best restaurants.

€€€

CAMPING

Le Pré Lombard

Map 12 F5

09400 Capoulet-Junac; 05 61 05 61 94; www.prelombard.com

This charming 17th-century mansion looks like a gingerbread house outside; inside it is sharp and modern. A well-run and welcoming place, with Wi-Fi and a hammam, it has one of the area's best restaurants.

€

Price Guide

The following price ranges are based on one night's accommodation in high season for a family of four, inclusive of service charges and any additional taxes.

€ Under €100 €€ €100–200 €€€ over €200



The South of France

With long sandy beaches, wild mountains and Mediterranean landscapes, the South of France and Corsica are great for a family holiday. The Cathar castles of Languedoc and the Roman Theatre at Orange bring history to life, while a boat ride along the pretty Canal du Midi, or the art and glitter of the Côte d'Azur show other aspects of the region. The cuisine is world famous and the climate perfect for outdoor activities.



Highlights

Nice

Enjoy some of France's most delightful contemporary art in the capital of the Côte d'Azur. Be sure not to miss the Fondation Maeght in nearby St-Paul-de-Vence (see pp358–9).

Pont du Gard

Walk over, kayak under, have a swim and a picnic next to the world's best-preserved Roman aqueduct (see pp334–5).

The Camargue

Ride a white pony in the Camargue, home to pink flamingos, black bulls and French cowboys (see p345).

Palais des Papes, Avignon

Visit the medieval citadel of the popes in one of Provence's most beautiful cities, then seek out scenes painted by Van Gogh in Arles (see pp342–3 & 344–5).

Corsica

Build sandcastles on the beaches of the "Île de Beauté" and explore its magnificent forests, mountains and old granite villages (see pp365–75).

Carcassonne

Time-travel to the Middle Ages in Europe's strongest citadel. Walk along the ramparts and watch a joust in summer (see pp324–5).

Left The busy Quai des Martyrs de la Libération, Bastia, Corsica
Above left Barges cruising along the lush tree-lined waterway of the 240-km (149-mile) long Canal du Midi

The Best of The South of France

The South of France conjures up images of villages immersed in vines, olive groves, sunflowers and lavender, sunny Mediterranean beaches and a breathtaking hinterland of mountains and dramatic gorges. It provides an idyllic setting for France's most striking Roman monuments and medieval castles, alongside cities filled with art and culture from all eras.

Culture vultures

Spend a day exploring the **Pont du Gard** (see pp334–5) and the interactive Discovery Centre, whetting appetites for the Maison Carrée – a superbly preserved Roman temple – and the amphitheatre in nearby **Nîmes** (see p336). Stand on stage to test the Roman theatre's acoustics in **Orange** (see p345).

Travel to the Middle Ages in **Carcassonne** (see pp324–5) and the Palais des Papes in **Avignon** (see pp342–3) – both offer tours. Pay a visit to **Les Baux** (see p344), where catapults are a vivid reminder of its feisty warlords, and medieval **Bonifacio** (see pp370–71) teetering over the sea. In **Arles** (see pp344–5) and **St-Rémy-de-Provence** (see p344) discover the scenes immortalized by Van Gogh, or follow Matisse's trail through **Collioure** (see p328), **St-Tropez** (see pp354–5) and **Nice** (see pp358–9).

Right Artworks for sale on a street in St-Tropez
Below Beach near the town of Ajaccio, Corsica

The great outdoors

The beaches are great, from the long sands near **Aigues-Mortes** (see pp336–7) to the *plages* (beaches) of **St-Tropez**. Bring binoculars to watch the pink flamingos of the **Camargue**





The petit train crossing a bridge, with the imposing ramparts of the medieval citadel of Carcassonne in the background

(see p345). Kayaking is great fun on the Sorgue, down from the mysterious **Fontaine-de-Vaucluse** (see pp346–7), in the heart of some of Provence's most idyllic landscapes. Be sure to take a barge along the tree-canopied ribbon of the **Canal du Midi** (see pp330–31). For families that love nature, Corsica offers magnificent mountain scenery and forests; fantastical rock formations around the **Golfe de Porto** (see pp366–7) are a World Heritage Site, and the beaches around **Porto-Vecchio** (see p371) as well as **St-Florent** (see pp368–9) are dazzlingly beautiful.

In a week

Start with two days in lively **Nice**, visiting the city, the delightful and often playful art in the **Fondation Maeght** (see p359) in St-Paul-de-Vence and Marineland in **Antibes** (see p360). Head west to **Avignon** to tour the Palais des Papes, then use Avignon as a base for a two-day trip to **Les Baux**, **Nîmes** and the **Pont du Gard**, with a swim in the Gardon river in the afternoon. On the sixth day, continue west to **Carcassonne**, taking in a joust in the afternoon, before ending with a lazy day along the **Canal du Midi**.

By season

Spring is a good time for exploring Corsica's **Balagne** (see p368) or the classic Provençal landscapes of Luberon such as in **Apt** (see pp348–9) and Cézanne's **Aix-en-Provence** (see p352) as well as **Monaco** (see p360). In early June, go to **Céret** (see pp328–9) for its luscious cherries. Summer is a time when fresh produce floods the markets and restaurants and festivals

start to fill the calendar – from the theatre festival in **Avignon** to lively water jousts in **Sète** (see p332). Some of the biggest summer festivals take place in **Beaucaire** (see p336), and often include the city's acrobatic courses or bloodless bullfights. If it gets too hot, go to the chestnut forests of the **Cévennes** (see pp336–7) or cool, windy Mount Ventoux above **Vaison-la-Romaine** (see p348) or splash in the rock pools of the **Gorges de Spelunca** (see p366).

By autumn, the huge chestnut forest of the **Castigniccia** (see p369) in Corsica glows with colour. On the island's more sheltered beaches, the sea is warm enough for a dip well into October, as it is around **Perpignan** (see p328) and **Antibes**. In winter, take **Le Petit Train Jaune** (see p329) into the Pyrenees for skiing or head for a sunny city break to **Nice** or **Marseille** (see pp350–51). For lively carnival celebrations, head to **Limoux** (see p325), which hosts Los Fécós with music, costumes and confetti battles every weekend from January to March.



Kayaking on the Gardon river under the mighty Roman Pont du Gard

The South of France

Curving around the Mediterranean, the South of France is lined with beaches and lagoons, with the Camargue – the delta of the Rhône – in the centre. Mountains are never far, hugging the shore east of Nice, and the Pyrenees in the west. Road and rail networks are excellent along the coast and between cities. France's largest island, Corsica, is a mountain in the sea, with narrow roads and limited public transport, but extraordinary scenery and fabulous beaches.



Fresh produce at a covered market in Aix-en-Provence



Summer crowds at one of the many beaches in St-Tropez

Places of interest

LANGUEDOC-ROUSSILLON

- 1 Carcassonne
- 2 Cathar castles
- 3 Dinosauria, Espérasa
- 4 Rennes-le-Château
- 5 Forteresse de Salses
- 6 Perpignan
- 7 Collioure
- 8 Céret
- 9 Villefranche-de-Conflent
- 10 Canal du Midi, Béziers
- 11 Narbonne
- 12 Agde
- 13 Sète

- 14 Montpellier
- 15 Pont du Gard
- 16 Beaucaire
- 17 Nîmes
- 18 Aigues-Mortes
- 19 St-Hippolyte-du-Fort

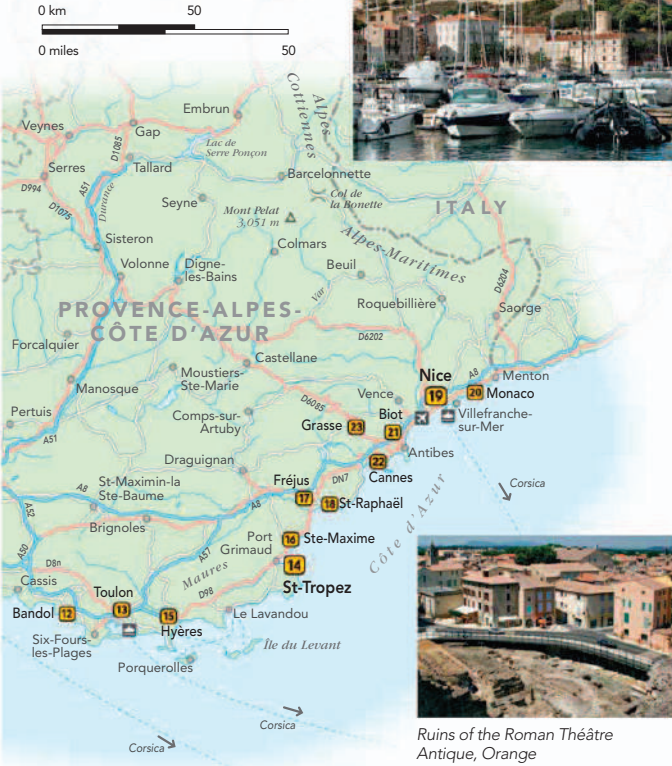
PROVENCE AND THE CÔTE D'AZUR

- 1 Palais des Papes, Avignon
- 2 St-Rémy-de-Provence
- 3 Arles
- 4 Orange
- 5 Fontaine-de-Vaucluse

- 6 Gordes
- 7 Vaison-la-Romaine
- 8 Apt
- 9 Lourmarin
- 10 Marseille
- 11 Aix-en-Provence
- 12 Bandol
- 13 Toulon
- 14 St-Tropez
- 15 Hyères
- 16 Ste-Maxime
- 17 Fréjus
- 18 St-Raphaël
- 19 Nice
- 20 Monaco

- 21 Biot
 - 22 Cannes
 - 23 Grasse
- ### CORSICA
- 1 Golfe de Porto
 - 2 The Balagne
 - 3 St-Florent
 - 4 Bastia
 - 5 Bonifacio
 - 6 Filitosa
 - 7 Ajaccio
 - 8 Aléria
 - 9 Corte

The fortified old town of Bonifacio, with the harbour in the foreground



Ruins of the Roman Théâtre Antique, Orange

The Lowdown



Getting there and around

Air (see p322). **Ferry** (www.corsica-ferries.fr) from Toulon, Marseille and Nice to Corsica. **Train** TGV (www.voyages-sncf.com) serve major cities, including links from Paris. TER provides regional train service in Provence and the Côte d'Azur and Languedoc-Roussillon; www.ter-sncf.com (in French only) lists links to the regional networks. **Bus** Service varies from excellent to poor; the further from the coast, the less regular the public transport. Marseille (www.rtm.fr), Montpellier (www.montpellier-agglo.com/tam/index2.php) and Nice, as well as the towns on the Côte d'Azur (TAM, www.cg06.fr) have useful métro, trams and bus lines. Lignes d'Azur (www.lignesdazur.com) also provides bus connections in this area. For all train and bus timetables on Corsica, see www.corsicabus.org/Train_services.html. **Car** Rent from Europcar (www.europcar.fr); compare ticket prices on www.travelsupermarket.com.



Supermarkets Major chains include Monoprix, Intermarché, Carrefour, Super U and Casino.

Markets Larger cities have daily markets, either outdoors or *halles* (covered markets), nearly all of which are closed on Monday. Many small towns and villages have markets on one set day each week. A list of markets is available from the local tourist and Département offices.



Opening hours Many shops are closed on Monday, but open on Sunday morning.



Pharmacies There is at least one pharmacy, identified by a green cross outside, in each town and many villages. A list in the window will give details of the nearest *pharmacie de garde* open outside normal hours (on Sundays and at night). They are also listed in local newspapers and on www.pharmaciesdegarde.com.



Toilets Every city, town and village has generally decent toilets. Cities have pay or free street toilets that automatically clean themselves after each use.



Place de l'Horloge, one of the main squares in Nîmes



The South of France Regional Airports

One of France's main holiday destinations for both the French and people from around the world, the south of France is well served by regional airports with links across Europe. While most are fairly small, Nice is the busiest airport in France after Paris, serving around 8 million passengers a year. Mountainous Corsica has four airports, two of which are primarily served by charters.



Wave-like roof of Béziers Cap d'Agde airport, close to the Languedoc beaches

Languedoc-Roussillon

The **Montpellier Méditerranée** is located off the D66, 9 km (5 miles) southeast of Montpellier. It is served by Air France, Ryanair, easyJet, Alitalia and many other flights. A shuttle bus (€1.60) links it to the Place de l'Europe tramway station. It is medium-sized, easy to get around and closes at night. The airport has a café and two restaurants. **Aéroport Hôtel** (04 67 20 07 08; www.r-hotel34.com) is right next to the airport.

There are several other airports in this part of France that are suited for reaching different parts of the region. **Carcassonne Pays Cathar** is located just west of Carcassonne off the A61, and offers Ryanair flights. **Béziers Cap d'Agde** is off the E80, 16 km (19 miles) east of Béziers and served by Ryanair and Flybe. **Perpignan-Rivesaltes**, 7 km (4 miles) north of Perpignan, is served by Aer Lingus, Ryanair, Flybe and others. **Nîmes-Alès-Camargue**, 11 km (7 miles) south of Nîmes, offers Ryanair flights.

Provence and the Côte d'Azur

At the west end of the Promenade des Anglais, **Nice Côte d'Azur** has flights with Air France, Aer Lingus, easyJet, Ryanair, British Airways, Lufthansa, Iberia, Air Corsica, Alitalia, Delta, Emirates and Qatar. Bus 23 (€1) goes to Nice's centre and Express Bus 99 (€4) to the train station.

There are two restaurants, sandwich/snack bars and Quick fast food in both terminals, as well as

play areas in the departure areas of Terminal 1, at the Méli-Mélo Food Court, and in T2, at the Quick. It is a big airport – be sure to go to the right terminal. Allow 10 minutes to take the free shuttle between terminals, and 15 minutes to get to the gate. The airport closes from midnight to 6am. The Novotel Nice Aéroport Cap 3000 (04 93 19 55 55, www.novotel.com) is linked to the airport by a 5-minute free shuttle.

Provence and the Côte d'Azur are served by numerous other airports.

Marseille Provence, located 20 km (12 miles) north of Marseille, just off the A7 and A55, offers flights by Air France, Ryanair, Twin Jet, easyJet, Lufthansa, Aer Lingus, Air Transat, Czech Airlines and Air Corsica.

Avignon, off the A7 in Montfavet, is 10 km (6 miles) from the city and is served by City Jet and Flybe.

Toulon-Hyères is 3 km (2 miles) south of Hyères and 23 km (14 miles) east of Toulon. Flights are operated by Ryanair, Volotea, Nouvelair, Jetairfly and Air France.

Corsica

Located 7 km (4 miles) east of Ajaccio, off the N193, **Ajaccio Napoleon Bonaparte** has flights with easyJet, Air Corsica, Air France, Transavia,



Aerial view of the busy Marseille Provence airport

Lux Air, Volotea, Hop! and Jetairfly. There are buses (€4.50) every hour linking the airport to the Ajaccio bus and train station. It has a snack bar, restaurant and an ice cream parlour. The airport is compact, easy to get around and closes at night.

Besides Ajaccio, Corsica has airports in Bastia, Figari and Calvi as well. **Bastia Poretta** is 22 km (14 miles) south of Bastia, off the N193, with Volotea, Hop!, Air Corsica, Air France and easyJet. **Figari Sud-Corse** is situated 21 km (13 miles) north of Bonifacio and served by Ryanair and Air Corsica. Located 7 km (4 miles) south of Calvi on Route des Artisans, **Calvi Sainte-Catherine** has Air Corsica, Air France and Germanwings flights.

The Lowdown

Ajaccio Napoleon Bonaparte
04 95 23 56 56; www.2a.cci.fr

Avignon 04 90 81 51 51;
www.avignon.aeroport.fr

Bastia Poretta 04 95 54 54 54;
www.bastia.aeroport.fr

Béziers Cap d'Agde 04 67 80
99 09; www.beziers.aeroport.fr

Calvi Sainte-Catherine 08 99 23
00 09; www.calvi.aeroport.fr

Carcassonne Pays Cathar 04 68
71 96 46; www.aeroport-carcassonne.com

Figari Sud-Corse 04 95 71 10 10;
www.2a.cci.fr

Marseille Provence 04 42 14
14 14; www.marseille.aeroport.fr

Montpellier Méditerranée 04 67
20 85 00; www.montpellier.aeroport.fr

Nice Côte d'Azur 08 20 42 33 33;
www.nice.aeroport.fr

Nîmes-Alès-Camargue 04 66 70
49 49; www.nimesairport.com

Perpignan-Rivesaltes 04 68 52 60
70; www.aeroport-perpignan.com

Toulon-Hyères 08 25 01 83 87;
www.toulon-hyeres.aeroport.fr

Languedoc-Roussillon

Stretching between the Pyrenees and the Rhône, this rugged region offers sandy beaches, a sunny climate and affordable prices. The ancient Romans left their remarkable legacy in the Pont du Gard and Nîmes, while Cathar castles, including the fantastic Carcassonne, evoke the Albigensian Crusade. Boating on the Canal du Midi or many rivers is a fun activity for kids.

Below Alfresco tables in front of the remarkably preserved Roman amphitheatre, Nîmes



1 Carcassonne

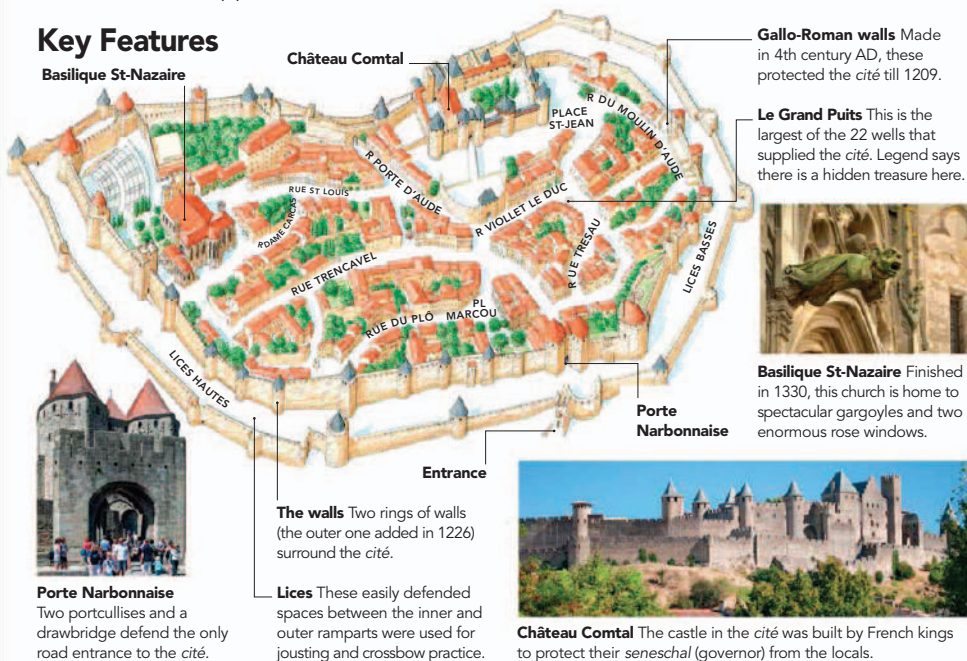
The unconquered citadel

Dominating the Aude valley – the main Atlantic-Mediterranean trade route – Carcassonne has been the key to the south of France since prehistoric times. Its medieval *cité*, the most powerful in Europe, was never conquered; its Viscount Roger Trencavel was only captured in 1209 by treachery. Abandoned in the 1700s, the *cité* was about to become a stone quarry in the 1850s when the restorer Eugène Viollet-le-Duc stepped in and brought it back to life.



Boat moored on the Canal du Midi

Key Features



Gallo-Roman walls Made in 4th century AD, these protected the *cité* till 1209.

Le Grand Puits This is the largest of the 22 wells that supplied the *cité*. Legend says there is a hidden treasure here.



Basilique St-Nazaire Finished in 1330, this church is home to spectacular gargoyles and two enormous rose windows.

Porte Narbonnaise



Château Comtal The castle in the *cité* was built by French kings to protect their *seneschal* (governor) from the locals.

The walls Two rings of walls (the outer one added in 1226) surround the *cité*.

Lices These easily defended spaces between the inner and outer ramparts were used for jousting and crossbow practice.

Porte Narbonnaise
Two portcullises and a drawbridge defend the only road entrance to the *cité*.

The Lowdown

Map reference 12 G5
Address 11000 (Aude).
Le Grand Puits: 8 Pl Grand Puits. Basilique St-Nazaire: Pl Auguste Pierre Point; 04 68 25 27 65
Château Comtal: cité de Carcassonne; www.carcassonne.monuments-nationaux.fr.

Train from Toulouse and Montpellier

Visitor information 28 Rue de Verdun, 11890; 04 68 10 24 30; www.carcassonne-tourisme.com

Open Château Comtal:
Apr–Sep: 9:30am–6:30pm daily.
Oct–Mar: 9:30am–5pm daily

Price Château Comtal: €13, under 26 with EU passport free (audio guides €12); under 18s free

Skipping the queue Arrive early in the morning – the citadel gets crowded in July and August.

Guided tours For a tour of the towers and walls, ring Château Comtal for hours and languages. Audio guides available; contact the tourist office for details. Petit Train (www.petit-train-cite-carcassonne.com) and horse-drawn carriage tours (www.carcassonne-caleches.com) depart from Porte Narbonnaise.

Age range 5 plus

Activities Hire boats from Hélios & Lou Gabaret (www.carcassonne-croisiere.com) for trips down the Canal du Midi (see pp330–31).

Allow a day

Toilets Inside Porte Narbonnaise

Festivals Feria de Carcassonne, music festival (30 Aug–2 Sep). La Fête Nationale, fireworks display (14 Jul). Le Marché de Noël, Christmas fair and markets (Dec). Festival de Carcassonne, theatre, circus and music (22 Jun–5 Aug)

Good family value?

This town is out of a storybook – kids simply adore it. The jousting tournaments are of special interest.

Letting off steam

Take bus 1 to Montlegun, with the option of lots of tree-top fun with **O2 Aventure** (www.o2aventure.com). Bus 1 also goes to **Le Parc Australien** (www.leparaustralien.fr), which has native animals such as kangaroos, wallabies, ostriches and traditional Australian games such as boomerangs.



Swinging through the trees at O2 Aventure, Montlegun

Eat and drink

Picnic: under €20; *Snacks:* €20–45; *Real meal:* €45–90; *Family treat:* over €90 (based on a family of four)

PICNIC **Les Halles de Carcassonne** (*Rue de Verdun, 11000 Carcassonne; 04 68 10 24 30*) has several market stalls selling cold meats, breads and fresh fruits and vegetables. There are picnic spots along the *Chemin des Anglais* outside the walls.

SNACKS **Le Break du Terroir** (*2 Rue du Grand Puits, 11000; 04 68 72 17 82; open daily*) is a good place to pick up sandwiches, chips and salads in the heart of the cité.

REAL MEAL **Le Saint-Jean** (*1 Pl St-Jean, 11000; 04 68 47 42 43; www.le-saint-jean.eu; closed Tue in low season & Jan*) offers a hot *chèvre* salad and salmon and a *croque*



The chic bar area of Le Saint-Jean, Carcassonne

monsieur (grilled ham and cheese sandwich) in the kids' menu. Sit in the garden and enjoy fine views of the *Château Comtal*.

FAMILY TREAT **Le Trivalou** (*69 Rue Trivalle, 11000; 04 68 71 23 11; summer closed Mon for lunch; winter closed Mon & Tue for lunch; book ahead*) serves *cassoulet*, lamb and traditional dishes, with matching wines and accommodates kids too.

Shopping

For a special treat, visit **L'Art Gourmand** (*13 Rue St Louis, 04 68 25 95 33; Feb-Dec: daily*) that sells delicious caramels, toffees, fudge, chocolate and over 30 kinds of ice cream. Take some time out to visit the fun, private museum of chivalry next door. Buy handmade arts and crafts from around Languedoc-Roussillon at **Le Vieux Lavoir** (*11 Rue de Plô, 11000; 04 68 71 00 04*).

Find out more

DIGITAL Download Carcassonne, a board game at carcassonneapp.com. The game is suitable for children aged 8 plus.

FILM Carcassonne's medieval gates and streets have been used in *Robin Hood: Prince of Thieves* (1991), which stars Kevin Costner and Morgan Freeman.



A still from the film *Robin Hood: Prince of Thieves*, shot in Carcassonne

Next step...

LIMOUX Trains from Carcassonne go to Limoux, which is famous for its fizzy *Blanquette de Limoux* wine and *Los Fécos* (Jan–Mar: Sat & Sun), a carnival of satire, costumes and dancing. Do not miss the paintings at the **Musée Petiet** (*04 68 31 85 03*). Take a taxi to the **Abbaye de St Hilaire**, off the D118, where a monk first added bubbles to wine, in 1531. The abbey has an exquisitely carved sarcophagus and a 16th-century painted ceiling.

KIDS' CORNER

Killed by treachery



In 1209, the pope called for a crusade against the heretical Cathars in the south of France. He was supported by King Philippe-Auguste, who

wanted to take over the region. The Viscount of Carcassonne Roger Trencavel protected the Cathars, so his citadel was besieged. When the crusaders' captain Simon de Montfort suggested he come outside the walls and talk, he was imprisoned and most probably poisoned. Carcassonne had a new Viscount: Simon de Montfort.

Keep an eye out for...

The steps on the stairways in the *Château Comtal* are all at different heights and could easily trip up an attacker.



FUN AND GAMES

The town gave its name to the award-winning board game *Carcassonne* (now also an app). Players compete to build castles and fiefdoms, medieval-style.

Look out for...

- 1 How many towers does Carcassonne have?
- 2 Did they look that way when they were built?
- 3 According to archaeologists, a fort has stood in Carcassonne since the 6th century BC. Which are the oldest walls in Carcassonne and how far back do they date to?



Answers: 1 53 2 No, Viollet-le-Duc the restorer added the portico roof to make them look better. 3 The Gallo-Roman walls, dating back to the 4th century AD.



A life-sized skeleton of a dinosaur in Dinosauria, Espéraza

② Cathar Castles

Catapults, crusaders and castles in the sky

In 1210, Albigensian Crusaders, led by Simon de Montfort, turned their trebuchets and catapults on Minerve, a beautiful old village located on a rocky outcrop where many Cathars had taken refuge. After two months, it fell, and 140 Cathars were burnt at the stake, a sign of things to come in Montségur (see p312), which was one of the last strongholds of the Cathars. Minerve has a full-size replica of a catapult on the opposite side of the ravine from the village as a reminder. To the west, bands of Cathars held out in castles so lost in the clouds that not even Simon de Montfort tried to attack them. **Château de Peyrepertuse**, teetering on a ridge, was abandoned only in 1240. **Château de Quéribus**, on top of a pinnacle, held out for 11 years after Montségur, till 1255. Both are ruined – but still breathtaking.

The Lowdown

Map reference 12 H5
Address 11190 (Aude).
 Château de Peyrepertuse: 11350 Duilhac-sous-Peyrepertuse; www.chateau-peyrepertuse.com.
 Château de Quéribus: 11350 Cucugnan; www.cucugnan.fr

Train from Carcassonne to Lézignan-Cubières, then taxi to Minerve. Peyrepertuse & Quéribus: Train from Carcassonne to Quillan, then taxi

Visitor information Pl André Tricoire, 11500 Quillan; 04 68 20 07 78; www.aude-pyrenees.fr. Rue des Martyrs, 34210 Minerve;

Letting off steam

Drive west through the dramatic Gorges de Galamus; the road is so narrow that it is controlled by a one-way signal in summer. Take a scenic tour on the **Train du Pays Cathar et du Fennouillèdes** (www.tpcf.fr) from the town of St-Paul-de-Fenouillet, just south of the gorge.

③ Dinosauria, Espéraza

Discovering dinosaur fossils

In the 19th-century town of Espéraza, there is a museum entirely dedicated to dinosaurs, displaying finds from a site nearby where bones and other remains have been dug out since the 1980s. The star attraction is a nearly complete skeleton of an *Ampelosaurus Atacis*, one of the four new species discovered here. In July and August, visitors can watch volunteers unearth new fossils. Espéraza was

04 68 91 81 43; www.minvois-tourisme.fr

Open Château de Peyrepertuse & Château de Quéribus: daily

Eat and drink **Picnic Spar** (20 Rue Promenade, 11350 Tuchan; 04 68 45 49 44) is a supermarket with all the ingredients for a picnic. Take them to the picnic area by the Château de Peyrepertuse. **Real meal** Auberge du Vigneron (2 Rue Achille Mir, 11350 Cucugnan; 04 68 45 03 00; www.auberge-vigneron.com; closed 15 Nov–late Mar) serves excellent cassoulet (rich bean stew) and fine wines on its terrace.

The Lowdown

Map reference 12 G5
Address 11260 (Aude).
 Dinosauria: Ave de la Gare; 04 68 74 26 88; www.dinosauria.org.
 Musée de la Chapellerie: Ave de la Gare; 04 68 74 00 75; www.museedelachapellerie.fr

Train from Carcassonne

Visitor information Pl André Tricoire, 11500 Quillan; 04 68 20 07 78; www.aude-pyrenees.fr

Open Dinosauria & Musée de la Chapellerie: daily; closed Dec & Jan

Eat and Drink **Snacks** Atelier Crêperie (22 Ave de la Gare, 11260 Espéraza; 04 68 74 16 06) offers delicious crêpes. **Real meal** Auberge du Faby (15 Place St Barthelmy, 11260 Rouvenac; 04 68 74 35 42) serves dishes such as duck breast cooked with honey and home-made desserts.

Festival Corse de Cote, rally race on the mountain roads (late May–early Jun)

once the world's second-largest producer of wool hats and the **Musée de la Chapellerie** shows how they were made.

Letting off steam

Drive or take a taxi 12 km (8 miles) south to the village of St-Martin-Lys, where **Pyrenees Outdoor** (www.pyrenees-outdoor-sports.com) offers rafting excursions down the Aude, which are gentle enough but only for children who can swim.

④ Rennes-le-Château

A village with hidden secrets

This tiny hilltop village has become famous thanks to a mystery that has inspired many conspiracy stories about the lost treasures and the



Rennes-le-Château overlooking mountainous terrain

Holy Grail, popularized by *The Da Vinci Code*. They are based around a poor parish priest Bénéger Saunière, who started to restore the church of Ste-Mary Magadeleine in the 1890s, then he was seen digging in the cemetery; he went on to spend an estimated €2.5 million before he died in 1917. Did Saunière find a treasure or discover a powerful secret and use it to blackmail the church? Over the church door, he inscribed "This is a Terrible Place". The parish house that he built, **Le Domaine de l'Abbé Saunière**, is now a museum.

Letting off steam

Play in the belvedere gardens of Rennes-le-Château. Or head 7 km (4 miles) east to **Rennes-les-Bains** (www.renneslesbains.org), a village spa with an outdoor warm mineral water pool, which is suitable for kids aged 3 plus.

The Lowdown

-  **Map reference** 12 G5
Address 11190 (Aude).
Le Domaine de l'Abbé Saunière:
Rue de l'Église; 04 68 31 38 85;
www.rennes-le-chateau.fr
-  **Train** from Carcassonne to Couiza, then take a taxi
-  **Visitor information** Le Domaine, 11190; 04 68 31 38 85; www.rennes-le-chateau.fr
-  **Open** Le Domaine de l'Abbé Saunière: daily
-  **Eat and drink** **Snacks** Le Fourmil (ZA de l'Horte, 11190 Luc-sur-Aude; 04 68 31 47 75; www.dugrainaupain.com) has organic sandwiches, snacks and drinks served on a terrace. **Family treat** Hostellerie de Rennes les Bains (Rue des Bains Forts, 11190; 04 68 69 88 49; www.hotel-renneslesbains.com; closed Nov–mid-Mar) serves meat dishes and pasta.
-  **Festival** Festival International de Folklore at Quillan (Jul)

5 Forteresse de Salses

Spain's state-of-the-art fortress

For centuries, Salses was just on the Spanish side of the French–Spanish border. France's interest in the town caused King Ferdinand and Queen Isabella of Spain to order the construction of this vast state-of-the-art fortress, which housed 1,500



Column of stately rugged arches in the Forteresse de Salses

men and 300 horses on a narrow strip of land between sea and mountain. The Forteresse de Salses is the opposite of Carcassonne (see p324) – it looks like a huge bunker – with rounded 32-ft (10-m) thick walls to deflect 15th-century cannons. Everything was carefully thought out, down to the hot baths for the officers. Despite this, the French captured it, Spain took it back, and after the Treaty of the Pyrenees in 1659, the frontier moved to where it is today.

Letting off steam

Take a taxi 11 km (7 miles) east from Salses to the town of **Port Barcarès** (www.portbarcares.com/tourisme.html). The town has a beach and hosts a summer Luna Park funfair.

The Lowdown

-  **Map reference** 12 H5
Address (66600) Pyrénées-Orientales. Forteresse de Salses, Salses-le-Château; 04 68 38 60 13; www.salses.monuments-nationaux.fr
-  **Train** from Carcassonne
-  **Open** Forteresse de Salses: daily
-  **Price** €15–25; under 26s and EU residents free
-  **Eat and drink** **Real meal** Restaurant-Pizzeria du Fort de Salses (D900 Planal Salses, 66600; 04 68 38 70 72; closed Wed & out of season) has seafood *parillades* (mixed grill). **Real meal** Rocher des Pirates (6 Rue Georges Méliès, 66600 Riversaltes; 04 68 57 15 84; www.rocherdespirates.com) is a pirate-themed restaurant with a show every evening.

Picnic under €20; Snacks €20–45; Real meal €45–90; Family treat over €90 (based on a family of four)

KIDS' CORNER

In the church in Rennes-le-Château, look out for...

- 1 The demon
- 2 Something unusual about the statues of the Holy Family.
- 3 The statue of the Virgin Mary on a stone carved on an upside-down cross.

Answers at the bottom of the page.



KILLING OF THE CATHARS

The Cathars were a Christian sect in the 12th and 13th centuries. In 1229, around half a million were killed by the Albigensian Crusaders from the north of France, who took all their lands and titles. The last Cathar was burnt at the stake in 1321.



An unsolved mystery

When the Dame de Blanchefort, the last lady of Rennes-le-Château, died in 1781, an enigmatic inscription was carved on her tomb: "Et in Arcadia Ego" ("I'm even in Arcadia") meaning that death appears even in the most beautiful places. Bénéger Saunière dug here and made sure to deface the inscription... why, no one knows. Today a sign sternly warns: "No Digging!"



Answers: 1 Under the holy water stoup. 2 Both Mary and Joseph hold a baby – some wonder if that means Jesus had a twin. 3 Outside the church.

6 Perpignan

Impressive Catalan castle

Part of Catalonia until 1659, Perpignan was the capital of a short-lived Catalan kingdom and has the **Palais des Rois de Majorque** (1276) to show for it, with ornate rooms in the keep. Unlike the soaring northern Gothic style, Catalan Gothic is best known for its remarkably wide buildings; the 15th-century **Cathédrale St-Jean** is a good example. Nearby in Place de la Loge, look out for the ship sticking out of the handsome Loge de Mer and the three arms poking out of the Hôtel de Ville. The city's best-known symbol is its castle-like gate, Le Castillet, housing the **Casa Pairal**, a museum showcasing local traditions.

Letting off steam

Head to the leafy Promenade des Platanes or take bus 22 to the sandy **Canet Plage**. Or go to **Aqualand**



The stone and red-brick walls of Cathédrale St-Jean, Perpignan



The beach of Port d'Avall, Collioure

(www.aqualand.fr) at St-Cyprien Plage, located 21 km (13 miles) south of Perpignan, separated from Canet Plage by a dune-lined lagoon.

7 Collioure

"Wild beasts" and anchovies

A pretty anchovy fishing port, Collioure is located on the rugged Côte Vermeille. It was to this port that Henri Matisse and André Derain came to paint in 1905. The result was 242 paintings and drawings that so shocked art critics in Paris, they called the artists *fauves* (wild beasts). Art would never be the same again: learn more about it in the **Espace Fauve** and along the town's Fauvism trail. The seaside church of Notre-Dame-des-Ange, which the artists loved to paint, has an extraordinary Catalan Baroque altarpiece. The **Château Royal**, the imposing summer palace of the Kings of Mallorca, is used for special exhibitions. As for the anchovies, they are big business here: learn more at **Anchois Desclaux**.



The entrance to the Musée d'Art Moderne in Céret

The Lowdown

- Map reference** 12 H6
- Address** 66190 (Pyrénées-Orientales). Espace Fauve: Ave Camille Pelletan; 04 68 98 07 16; www.collioure.com. Château Royal: Vieux Port. Anchois Desclaux: D914; www.anchoisdesclaux.com
- Train** from Perpignan. **Bus** from Perpignan
- Visitor information** Pl du 18 Juin, 66190; 04 68 82 15 47; www.collioure.com
- Open** Espace Fauve: timings vary, check website, Château Royal & Anchois Desclaux: daily
- Eat and drink** **Real meal** Le Clocher (Pl de L'Église, 66190; 04 68 82 22 94) offers hot or cold tapas. **Real meal** El Capillo (22 Rue St Vincent, 66190; 04 68 82 48 23) has classic Catalan hams, anchovy dishes and brochettes.
- Festival** Fêtes de la St Vincent, great fireworks (Aug)

The Lowdown

- Map reference** 12 H6
- Address** 66000 (Pyrénées-Orientales). Palais des Rois de Majorque: Rue des Archers. Cathédrale St-Jean: Pl Léon Gambetta, 66000; 04 68 51 33 72. Casa Pairal: Pl du Verdun
- Train** from Carcassonne, change at Narbonne
- Visitor information** Pl Armand Lanoux, 66002; 04 68 66 30 30; www.perpignantourisme.com
- Open** Palais des Rois de Majorque: daily. Casa Pairal: Tue–Sun
- Eat and drink** **Real meal** Grand Café de la Bourse (2 Pl de la Loge, 66000; 04 68 34 25 05; open daily) offers Catalan grilled meats, salads and *crème catalan*. **Family treat** Le Bistrot Côté Cours (12 Rue Pierre Rameil, 66000; 04 68 51 71 29; closed Aug, Sun) serves traditional bistro-style French cuisine.

Letting off steam

Kick up sand on Collioure's beach at Port d'Avall, or take bus 400 to the aquarium (www.biodiversarium.fr) in Banyuls-sur-Mer that showcases the marine biodiversity of the region. There are over 200 species of aquatic plants and animals from all over the Pyrénées-Orientales in 40 basins.

8 Céret

Three bridges, three Cubists and a ton of cherries

The Fauves went to Collioure, but the great Cubists – Picasso, Braque and Juan Gris – and their friends hung out in handsome old Céret. There is an art trail through the town, while the **Musée d'Art**

The Lowdown

Map reference 12 H6
Address 66400 (Pyrénées-Orientales). Musée d'Art Moderne: 8 Blvd Maréchal Joffre; www.musee-ceret.com

Train from Perpignan

Visitor information 1 Ave Georges Clémenceau, 66400; 04 68 87 00 53; www.ot-ceret.fr

Open Musée d'Art Moderne: daily; Oct–Apr: closed Tue

Eat and drink **Real meal** La Fontaine (*Pl des Nou Raigts*, 66400; 04 68 87 23 47) serves home-style French dishes. **Family treat** Del Bisbe (*4 Pl Soutine*, 66400; 04 68 87 00 85; www.hotelceret.com) offers creative Catalan cuisine.

Festival La Fête de la Cerise, cherry festival (May)

Moderne displays Matisse drawings from Collioure, Picasso's ceramics on bullfighting and works by Chagall and others. Do not miss the three bridges over the Tech river, including the 14th-century Pont du Diable, with a single 45-m (147-ft) high arch. Céret is also France's cherry capital from late May to June.

Letting off steam

Play in the car-free squares of Céret's medieval centre or take bus 340 or 341, to the town of Arles-sur-Tech, located 13 km (8 miles) southwest, where visitors don hard hats to walk along metal ganties into the **Gorges de la Fou** (les-gorges-de-la-fou.com), one of the narrowest canyons in Europe. Suitable for kids aged 5 plus.

9 Villefranche-de-Conflent

Forts in tight spots

The walled Villefranche-de-Conflent is a masterpiece created by Louis XIV's military genius, Sébastien Vauban, in the 1680s. Squeezed into the Têt valley, the covered **Ramparts** are fascinating to explore, as is **Fort Libéria**, built to defend the heights; the fort is reached by an underground staircase with 1,000 steps. Look out for the spectacular stalactite **Grotte des Grandes Canalettes** nearby and from June to September, Garage Villacèque in Verent-les-Bains offers a 4WD excursion to the lower slopes of



Colourful bunting on a square in Villefranche-de-Conflent, Têt valley

Canigou, a mountain that has been a pilgrimage spot since the Middle Ages. Rumour has it that the Holy Grail is hidden in the mountain.

Letting off steam

Run in the parks outside Villefranche's walls or take a ride into the Pyrenees on **Le Petit Train Jaune** (www.trains-touristiques.sncf.com) to Mont Louis, another Vauban citadel. Get off at **Font Romeu** (www.font-romeu.fr), an all-season resort that offers skiing, snow-shoeing, dog sledding and lovely walks in the summer.

The Lowdown

Map reference 12 G6
Address 66500 (Pyrénées-Orientales). Ramparts: 32 Rue du St-Jean. Fort Libéria: Villefranche de Conflent; www.fort-liberia.com. Grotte des Grandes Canalettes: 2 Rue St-Jacques; www.3grottes.com

Train from Perpignan

Visitor information 2 Rue St-Jean, 66500; 04 68 96 22 96; www.villefranchedeconflent.fr

Open Ramparts: daily. Fort Libéria: daily (4WD available). Grotte des Grandes Canalettes: open Apr–Nov & public holidays; winter: Sat & Sun

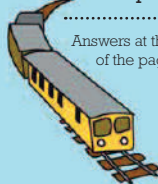
Eat and drink **Real meal** Café le Canigou (*Pl du Génie*; 04 68 96 12 19; www.bistrot-villefranche.com; open daily) offers Catalan salads, charcuterie and *escalivada* (roast vegetables). **Family treat** Grill la Senyera (*81 Rue St Jean*; 66500, 04 68 96 17 65; closed Tue, Thu pm & Wed) offers refined cuisine and a kids' menu. Best to book.

Festival Journées Médiévales (Jul)

KIDS' CORNER

Look out for...

- 1 Collioure's waterfront Blvd du Boramar has copies of paintings by Matisse and Derain. Can you guess what shocked the critics?
- 2 Can you count the number of Matisse's drawings and Picasso's ceramics that are on display in Musée d'Art Moderne in Céret?
- 3 Unlike many scenic trains that go high into the mountains, Le Petit Train Jaune is a regular train that runs year round. If it turned 100 in 2010, in which year was it completed?



Answers at the bottom of the page.

CENTRE OF THE WORLD

Perpignan's train station honours a vision the Surrealist artist Salvador Dalí had in 1963: this train station was the centre of the universe! Besides the name of the square, Place Salvador Dalí, a plaque inside the station marks the "centre of the universe".



The woman with a green face

A woman was shocked to see a portrait by Matisse of a woman with a green face and asked him "Wouldn't it be horrible if you saw a woman with a green face walking down the street?" "It most certainly would be!" Matisse said. "Thank God it is only a painting!"



Answers: 1 The brushstrokes – big, noticeable and sloppy-looking; The colours – bold ones, which did not match "reality". 2 14 drawings and 28 ceramics. 3 1910.

10 Canal du Midi, Béziers

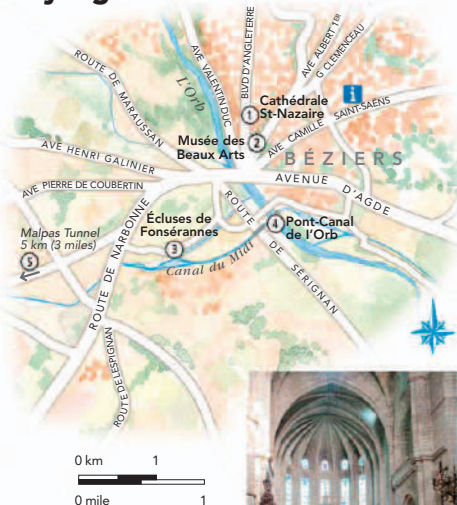
Up and down the locks

Completed in 1681, the Canal du Midi is a marvel of engineering that links the Mediterranean to the Atlantic via the Garonne river. Before it existed, cargo ships had to sail around the Straits of Gibraltar, facing pirates and other perils. With the building of the canal, transport became much easier and safer, and many inland towns along its banks profited too. One of these is Béziers, birthplace of the canal's chief builder Pierre-Paul Riquet. Today freight is moved by train, and boats cruise gently down the beautiful canal, with 63 locks and 130 bridges adding excitement.



Statue of Paul Riquet, Béziers

Key Sights



1 Cathédrale St-Nazaire

Climb up to the terrace of Béziers's great Gothic cathedral for stunning views, reaching as far as the Massif Central.



2 Musée des Beaux Arts

The mansion and paintings attest to Béziers's wealth. Many of the 20th-century works belonged to famous Resistance leader Jean Moulin, a native of Béziers.

4 Pont-Canal de l'Orb

Added in 1857, this 240-m (787-ft) aqueduct carries the Canal du Midi over the Orb river, eliminating the need for two of the Fonsérannes locks (see below).

5 Malpas Tunnel Riquet,

the engineer behind the canal and its locks, also dug the world's first canal tunnel. Walk the towpath through its 170 m (557 ft) length and seek out the Roman Via Domitia nearby.



3 **Écluses de Fonsérannes** The most impressive of Riquet's innovations, the 312-m (1,023-ft) staircase of nine locks raises boats from the Mediterranean to the level of the Orb river.

The Lowdown



Map reference 12 H4.

Address 34500 (Hérault). Cathédrale St-Nazaire: Plan des Albigeois; 04 67 76 84 00. Musée des Beaux Arts: Hôtel Fabrégat, Pl de la Révolution; 04 67 28 38 78; www.ville-beziers.fr



Train from Toulouse, Montpellier and Carcassonne



Visitor information Blvd Wilson, 34500 Béziers; 04 67 76 20 20; www.beziers-mediterranee.com



Open Musée des Beaux Arts: Oct–May; 10am–5pm Mon–Fri;

10am–6pm Sat & Sun; Jun–Sep: 10am–6pm daily



Price Musée des Beaux Arts & Espace Riquet: €10–20



Skipping the queue Prices for boat hire soar in summer – visit out of season, if possible.



Guided tours Béziers' tourist office offers one of Canal du Midi and one devoted to Paul Riquet. Book in advance.



Age range 4 plus



Activities Hire canal boats (€425 plus per week). Les Bateaux de

Soleil (www.bateaux-du-soleil.com) offers a day cruise around Béziers. The tourist office offers a Geo-caching treasure-hunt game (using SAT-NAV) in the city centre.



Allow A day to a week



Toilets At Place Pierre Semard in Béziers, Fonsérannes and Malpas Tunnel

Good family value?

Although not suitable for toddlers, the Canal du Midi is a calm, relaxing place to explore together as a family.

Letting off steam

There is plenty of room to run around and cycle along the banks of the canal. Head south of Béziers to Valras-Plage which, besides a sandy beach, has the **Palais de la Maquette** (www.palaisdelamaquette.com), housing world record-breaking LEGO and K'nex models. There are playgrounds where visitors can build their own.



A wealth of fresh farm produce awaiting shoppers in Les Halles, Béziers

Eat and drink

Picnic: under €20; Snacks: €20–45; Real meal: €45–90; Family treat: over €90 (based on a family of four)

PICNIC Les Halles (Pl Pierre Semard, 34500) sells ingredients for picnics that can be enjoyed at shady spots along the canal.

SNACKS Allo'thentic (74 Blvd Georges Clémenceau, 34500; 04 67 28 59 93; www.allothentic.com; lunch & dinner daily) is a local favourite for its scrumptious pizzas, salads and sandwiches, as well as paninis.

REAL MEAL Le P'tit Semard (13B Pl Semard, 34500; 04 67 80 31 04; www.leptitsemard-beziers.com; closed Mon & Sun dinner) offers dishes prepared with fresh ingredients from Béziers's market, just opposite the restaurant. Specialties include seafood cassoulet (rich bean stew) and tender Charolaise steak, along with home-made frites (chips).

FAMILY TREAT La Maison de Petit Pierre (22 Ave Pierre Verdier, 34500; 04 67 30 91 85; www.lamaisondepetitpierre.fr; Mon–Wed lunch & Thu–Sat lunch & dinner) is a welcoming “country house” with a garden terrace. It is the realm of Top Chef winner Pierre Augé and serves refined, quite pricey modern fare.

Shopping

Visit **King Jouet** (Rue de la Ginesse, 34500; 04 99 47 49 90), a huge toy store that stocks many international toy brands. Delectable chocolates and cakes that look almost too pretty to eat tempt everyone in **Maison CarraTié** (49 Ave Jean Moulin, 34500; 04 67 31 13 25). For a variety of locally made cheese, wine and other goodies, head to **Maison de Malpas** (Route de l'Oppidum, next to the Malpas tunnel, 34440; 04 67 32 88 77; www.lemalpas.com).

Find out more

DIGITAL Learn how canal and other locks work online at www.rideau-info.com/canal/lock.html

Take cover

Head for Béziers' excellent history museum, the **Musée du Biterrois** (Caserne Saint-Jacques, Rampe du 96ème, 34500; 04 67 36 81 61), with its antiquities and displays on how the Canal du Midi made Béziers world famous for its wine.

Next stop...

PÉZENAS Take bus 216 northeast to Pézenas, a quaint 17th-century town, where famous playwright and actor Molière and his troupe performed for the governors of Languedoc. Learn all about him in 3D at **Scénovision Molière** (www.scenovisionmoliere.com). Look out for the little tower-shaped, sweet-savoury meat pies, the *petits pâtés Pézenas*, supposedly introduced by Lord Clive of India – a must-try!



Charming 17th-century mansions lining a quiet street, Pézenas

KIDS' CORNER

The key to canal locks

The Chinese invented canal locks in AD 983. It is fun to watch boats go up and down them. But how do they work?



A lock has two gates to hold the water and two tunnels to let the water flow in and out of the lock.



Water drains into the first tunnel, after which the first gate opens.



The boat enters the lock. The tunnel and gate close at this point.



Water is released from the second tunnel. The level rises in the lock. The second gate is opened for the boat to proceed to the next level.

FIERCE CRUSADERS

During the crusades against the Cathar heretics, Simon de Montfort demanded all Catholics leave Béziers. They refused. Once the city fell, the crusaders asked the Papal Legate how they could tell the Cathars apart from the Catholics. “Kill them all,” they said, “God will know his own.” Some 20,000 people were killed.

A secret tunnel

When the canal diggers reached Ensérune Hill and found the brittle sandstone unsuitable for lock-building, Paul Riquet's enemies convinced Louis XIV's minister, Colbert, to stop the project. But Riquet secretly moved his workers to the hill and ordered them to dig the Malpas Tunnel. Completed in eight days, it also saved the cost of building another lock!

Letting off steam

Jump around in the **Fantasy Park** (www.fantasypark.fr), a bouncy castle park on Plage de la Corniche, the nearest to the centre of Sète's many beaches. Bus 320 goes to the town of Mèze, where dinosaurs once roamed. Today, the **Musée Parc des Dinosaures** (www.musee-parc-dinosaures.com) has life-size models of the giant lizards to gawp at.

The Lowdown

Map reference 13 B4
Address Hérault 34200.
 Sète Croisieres: Quai du Général-Durand; 04 67 46 00 46; www.sete-croisieres.com. Musée International des Arts Modestes: 23 Quai du M de Latre de Tassigny; www.miam.org

Train from Béziers, Narbonne or Montpellier

Visitor information 60 Grand Rue Mario Roustan, 34200; 04 99 04 71 71; www.ot-sete.fr

Open Sète Croisières: cruises Apr–Sep. Musée International des Arts Modestes: daily; closed Oct–Mar Mon

Eat and drink Snacks Royal Juice (5 Rue Gambetta, 34200; 04 67 18 72 14; www.royaljuice.fr; closed Sun) offers fresh fruit juices and a chance to make your own salads, smoothies and sandwiches **Real meal** Monte-Christo (31 Quai Général Durand, 34200; 04 67 51 95 65; daily summer, closed Wed dinner & Thu out of season) offers good-value food and seafood.

Festival Fête de St-Louis, water jousting championships (Aug)

14 Montpellier

A buzzing capital

No city in Languedoc-Roussillon can match the buzz and boutiques of Montpellier, or the fantastic collection of art by Gustave Courbet and other 19th-century artists in the **Musée Fabre**, a short walk from the vibrant Place de la Comédie. Highlights include Courbet's famous *Bonjour M. Courbet* and Berthe Morisot's *L'Été*. The €12 million **Amazonian Greenhouse** in the Parc Zoologique de Montpellier, built in conjunction with a nature reserve in French Guiana, has sloths, armadillos and much more. The **Aquarium Mare Nostrum**, on the other side of the town, displays 300 species in its tanks. There are virtual tours on offer



A stack of brightly painted toy cars outside a store, Montpellier

too: ride a cargo boat in a storm, descend into an ocean abyss and visit an ice cave.

Letting off steam

Run around the arty playgrounds near Place de la Comédie, along the Esplanade Charles de Gaulle.

The Lowdown

Map reference 13 B4
Address Hérault 34000.
 Musée Fabre: 39 Blvd de Bonne Nouvelle, 34000; 04 67 14 83 00; <http://museefabre.montpellier-agglo.com>. Amazonian Greenhouse: 50 Ave d'Agropolis, 34000; 04 67 54 45 23; www.zoo.montpellier.fr. Aquarium Mare Nostrum: Allée Ulysse, Odysseum, 34960; 04 67 13 05 50; www.aquariummarenostrum.fr

Train from Béziers

Visitor information 30, Allée de Latre de Tassigny, 34000; 04 67 60 60 60; www.ot-montpellier.fr

Open Musée Fabre: closed Mon. Amazonian Greenhouse: closed Mon except school hols. Aquarium Mare Nostrum: daily

Eat and drink Real meal Le Dilemme (12 Rue Farges; 04 67 69 02 13; closed Sun) offers affordable refined cuisine, with prawns, chicken and cassoulet (rich bean stew). The restaurant's relaxed mood has made it a big favourite. **Real meal** Les Caserolles en Folies (5 Pl de la Chapelle Neuve; 04 67 29 90 45; open daily) is centrally located and serves a variety of excellent value crêpes and galettes accompanied by cider. Kids are welcome.

KIDS' CORNER

All Hail the Water Knight!

Agde claims to have held the first modern *joutes nautiques* (water jousts) in 1601. The crusaders at Aigues-Mortes (see p336) jousted on boats because there were not many horses available. It is one of the most popular summer sports in Languedoc; children start jousting at the age of six. To be a water knight, you need:



- 1 A boat with a special platform high over the bow.
- 2 A small wooden shield and a long wooden lance.
- 3 A team of eight to ten rowers, a bowman to direct them, a drummer and an oboe player. Everyone must wear white.
- 4 Charge! Stand on the platform as oarsmen row furiously, the musicians play and you lunge at your opponent's shield. The first to fall in the water loses!

ALL THAT GLITTERS IS NOT GOLD



Bronze was so valuable in ancient times that nearly all the surviving statues today come from ship wrecks. The rest of the metal was melted down.

The hill of broken pots

In the Musée de l'Épèhe, try to spot the different types of amphorae. These were used as shipping containers in ancient times. Wine, olive oil, grains and other foods were sent in such pots, mostly to Rome – where there is a hill named Testaccio that is made of nothing but broken pots, dropped by butterfingers dock workers!



15 Pont du Gard

Built to last – and without cement

In AD 45, the growing Roman colony of Nîmes was thirsty. The nearest water source was in Uzès – far away across rugged country and the Gardon river – so Roman engineers brought water to Nîmes instead. In 15 years, a thousand workers built a 50-km (31-mile) aqueduct, carried over the Gardon on a 49-m (160-ft) high bridge known today as the Pont du Gard. This marvel has lasted 2,000 years.



Graffiti on the Pont du Gard

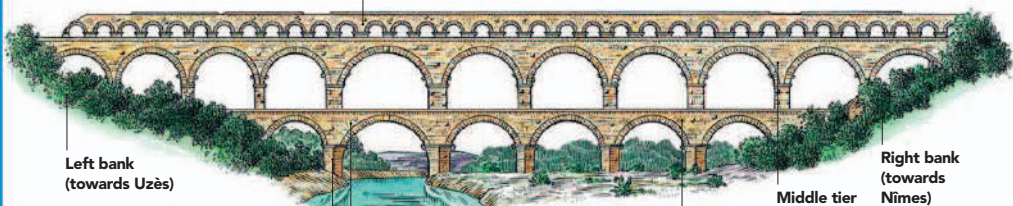
Key Features



The piers Wide and shaped like prows, they support the bridge and help the aqueduct to stand up to the Gardon's floods.

Middle tier In the 18th century, this was used to carry a road that was eventually closed in 1998. A flood that year prompted restoration work, for which stone from the original quarries was used.

Upper tier For over five centuries, water flowed through the top channel carrying up to 40,000 cubic metres (over 10.5 million gallons) a day at its peak.



Left bank (towards Uzès)

Right bank (towards Nîmes)

Middle tier

The piers

Lower tier

Cavities and protruding stones

The Romans knew that nothing lasts forever. The holes and stones were left to support scaffolding for future repairs.



The stones Although weighing up to 6 tons (5 tonnes), these were cut so perfectly that the Pont du Gard was constructed without using any mortar.

Discovery Centre Opened in 2000, this complex on the right bank puts the Pont du Gard in context with a cinema, museum, children's activities, an open-air exhibition on the local *garrigue* (the surrounding scrub-covered hills) and also a 25-minute Cinemascope film on the bridge's history.

The Lowdown

Map reference 13 C3.
Address 30210 (Gard).
Pont du Gard & Discovery Centre:
400 Route du Pont du Gard,
30210 Vers-Pont-du-Gard;
www.pontdugard.fr

Train to Nîmes, then bus 168 or 169. **Bus** 205 from Avignon

Visitor information Pl des Grands Jours, 30210 Remoulins; 04 66 37 22 34; www.ot-pontdugard.com

Open Pont du Gard: year round. Discovery Centre: Mar–May & Oct–Feb: 9am–6pm, Jun & Sep till 7pm, Jul & Aug till 8pm. Entrances to the Pont du Gard

and Discovery Centre are on both the banks.

Prices Discovery Centre: for a family of up to five €18

Skipping the queue Arrive early as the car park fills up fast.

Guided tours Contact the tourist office for details.

Age range 4 plus

Activities Ludo, in the Discovery Centre, has activities for ages 5–12 years, such as Roman role playing, observing nature and archaeology.

Allow A day

Café In the Discovery Centre

Toilets In the Discovery Centre and the left bank entrance

Festivals Garrigue en Fête, a rural festival with shows and tastings (Easter weekend). Nuit de la Chouette, "night of the owl" to learn about owls and other birds of prey (mid-March)

Good family value?

An educational and inexpensive day out, especially with the family-oriented activities in the Discovery Centre and on the Gardon river.

Letting off steam

Go for a dip in the calm, clear waters of the Gardon, or, on condition that the kids know how to swim, take an unforgettable canoe ride under the Pont du Gard with **Kayak Vert** (www.canoe-france.com/gardon/), based just upstream in Collias.

Visit the **Estel Quarries** on the left bank, which provided the easily cut golden limestone that was used to build the aqueduct. Enjoy the three easy family walks that have been set up by the Maison de la Pierre. One of the walks follows the path used by the ancient engineers to bring the stone to the building site. Just 3km (2 miles) south of the Pond du Gard at Remoulins, **Natu-Rando** (www.natu-rando.com) organizes canoe trips to the Cèze river. Canoeing under the ancient bridge, see the Pont du Gard from another perspective. There is a choice of canoe trips ranging from a few hours to 2-day trips. Also hire bikes to explore the countryside that surrounds it.



The family-friendly beach along the Gardon near the Pont du Gard

Eat and drink

Picnic: under €20; Snacks: €20–45; Real meal: €45–90; Family treat: over €90 (based on a family of four)

PICNIC Buy supplies in one of the supermarkets in the nearby town of Remoulins and have a picnic along the botanical trail that follows the Gardon river by the Pont du Gard.

SNACKS **Le Cafeteria** (Pont du Gard right bank), in the Discovery Centre, serves sandwiches, snacks, quick lunches and ice cream.

REAL MEAL **Les Terrasses** (Pont du Gard left bank; 04 66 37 50 88; summer daily, winter Thu–Sun) is a brasserie that serves Mediterranean cuisine – not just dishes such as tomato and asparagus soup, lamb provençale, but also apple pie,

along with teas and snacks. Kids' menus are available.

FAMILY TREAT **Le Moulin des Artistes** (14 Ave du Pont du Gard; 04 66 22 44 28, 30210 Remoulins; www.lemoulinidesartistes.fr) is housed in a 15th-century mill, filled with paintings and sculptures. This well-priced gastronomic restaurant serves traditional French fare, with an exotic touch.

Shopping

The Discovery Centre's three shops (two on the left bank and one on the right) offer a huge range of books, colouring books, games, comic books and clothing. Other goodies include varieties of honey, olive oil, savoury delicacies and wines, as well as ceramics and pottery that display the arts and crafts of the region.

Find out more

DIGITAL Go to www.pbs.org/wgbh/nova/lostempires/roman/aqueduct.java.html to construct an aqueduct.

Next step...

UZÈS Ride bus 205 or drive 11 km (7 miles) southeast to the town of Uzès, where the bell tower, the **Tour Fenestrelle**, looks like an upright Tower of Pisa. Take a guided tour of the **Duché** (www.uzes.com). This handsomely furnished Renaissance castle served as the residence of the 17th duke of Uzès. Follow it up with a visit to the renowned confectioner Haribo's **Musée des Bonbons** (www.haribo.fr), with interactive exhibits, games and, of course, sweet tasting.



Exquisite tiers of windows on the Tour Fenestrelle in Uzès

KIDS' CORNER

Find out more...

- 1 Count the number of arches on the Pont du Gard.
- 2 How long did it take the water to go from Uzès to Nîmes?
- 3 How did the builders keep track of which stones went where?
- 4 How can you tell which is the left or right bank of a river?



Answers at the bottom of the page.

An ancient tool

A chorobate was an ancient level used by Roman engineers to plot the aqueduct's course. It stood at eye level and had a groove filled with water in the middle and two plumb bobs hanging from either end to make sure it stood square on the ground.



AN ODD MIX

To make the water channel smooth and hard, it was painted with olive oil and then covered with a mix of lime, pig fat and unripe fig juice.

Who? When? How?

Perhaps the most astonishing fact about the Pont du Gard is that it is not mentioned by any ancient writer. Exactly when was it built? Who designed it? Who paid for it? It cost an estimated 30 million *sestertii* – roughly €30 million – to build. Were the Romans so used to greatness that it was not considered worthy of mention?



Answers: 1 52 (6 on the bottom, 11 in the middle, 35 on top) 2 Around 24 hours 3 They were numbered and lettered, for instance F511 (second stone on the front *sinistra* (front left), 4 Face in the same direction as the current.



Les Arènes in Nîmes, where gladiators fought in Roman times

16 Beaucaire

A medieval castle and a Roman farm

An important river port, Beaucaire has an impressive medieval castle towering over the Rhône. Inside the castle walls are gardens and the **Musée Auguste Jacquet**, which has archaeological finds and artifacts recalling Beaucaire's celebrated ten-day Foire de la Ste-Madeleine that drew merchants from across Europe. Just 4 km (2 miles) west of town, the **Mas des Tourelles** is located on the site of a Roman villa and an amphora factory. It produces wine the ancient

The Lowdown

- Map reference** 13 C3
Address 30300 (Gard).
Musée Auguste Jacquet: Ave Marius Gardiol; 04 66 59 90 07.
Mas des Tourelles: 4294 Route de Bellegarde; 04 66 59 19 72; www.tourelles.com
- Train** from Nîmes. **Bus** from Nîmes
- Visitor information** 24 Cours Gambetta, 30300; 04 66 59 26 57; www.ot-beaucaire.fr
- Open** Musée Auguste Jacquet: closed Tue. Mas des Tourelles: pm, Jan: Sat pm (Jul & Aug: Mon-Sat am); Nov-Mar: closed Sun
- Eat and drink** **Snacks** La Maison des Pains (23 Ave Farciennes, 30300; 04 66 75 98 86; open daily) is a tea room and bakery, which serves fresh pastries and cakes. **Family treat** Auberge de l'Amandin (1076 Chemin de la Croix de Marbre, 30300; 04 66 59 55 07; www.auberge-amandin.com; closed Sun dinner & Mon) is the place for artistic Provençal dishes; includes a kids' menu.

way – a film on a giant screen shows how they do it. There is also a reconstructed Roman wine cellar.

Letting off steam

Kids aged 7 plus can go for a spin at Beaucaire's **Karting Circuit Julie Tonelli** (Chemin des Melettes, 30300; 04 66 74 11 17). A short distance 6 km (4 miles) south is **Le Vieux Mas** (www.vieux-mas.com), where tots can run around a 1900s farm, with friendly animals and costumed crafts-people.

17 Nîmes

The Rome of France

Nîmes earned its nickname, the "Rome of France", thanks to two exceptional buildings. The **Maison Carrée**, an intact ancient temple, shows a 3D film to further boost the imagination. **Les Arènes**, the world's best surviving amphitheatre, demonstrates its purpose in the *Espace Gladiateur*, which shows virtual combats. The **Castellum Divisorium**, where water from the Pont du Gard

The Lowdown

- Map reference** 13 C3
Address 30000 (Gard).
Maison Carrée: Pl de la Maison Carrée and Les Arènes: Pl des Arènes; www.arennes-nimes.com.
Castellum Divisorium: Rue de la Lampèze
- Train** from Montpellier
- Visitor information** 6 Rue Auguste, 30020; 04 66 58 38 00; www.ot-nimes.fr
- Open** Maison Carrée, Les Arènes & Castellum Divisorium: daily

was distributed in ten lead pipes across the city is a rare survivor. Look out for crocodiles. A crocodile chained to a palm, celebrating Augustus's defeat of Antony and Cleopatra, is the symbol of Nîmes. The symbol is even on sewer lids.

Letting off steam

Let the kids tear around the **Jardins de la Fontaine** (6 Ave Jean Jaurès, 30000; 04 66 58 38 00), one of the oldest public gardens in France, built in 1735 around the spring that served Nîmes before the Pont du Gard. There is a ruined temple of Diana, and a path up Mont Cavalier leads to the **Tour Magne** (Cadereau, 30000; 04 66 58 38 00), a 32-m (101-ft) high Roman tower.



Jet skis on the Rhône with the Château de Beaucaire in the background, Beaucaire

18 Aigues-Mortes

Through the salt mountains

The mighty **Ramparts** of Aigues-Mortes rise out of the salty marshes of the Camargue (see p345) that gave this medieval town its name – "Dead Waters". King Louis IX made it a base for his crusades, setting sail from here in 1248 with 1,500 ships bound for the Holy Land. Remains of his

- Eat and drink** **Real meal** Les Bartavelles (4 Rue de l'École, 30000; 04 66 21 30 18; closed Mon) tempts with generous portions of the local *gardianne de taureau* (beef stew); book ahead. **Family treat** Aux Plaisirs des Halles (4 Rue Littré, 30000; 04 66 36 01 02; www.aux-plaisirsdeshalles.com; closed Sun & Mon) is one of the gourmet delights of Nîmes and pricey. Weekday adult and kids' menus are reasonable.
- Festival** Feria de Pentecôte features bull fights (Jun)

The Lowdown

Map reference 13 C4
Address 30220 (Gard).
 Ramparts & Tour de Constance:
 Pl Anatole France; *aigues-mortes.*
monuments-nationaux.fr. Salins
 du Camargue: Route du Grau-du-
 Roi; 04 66 73 40 24; *www.visites*
alinsdecamargue.com

Train from Nîmes. **Bus** from Nîmes

Visitor information Pl St-Louis,
 30220; 04 66 53 73 00; *www.ot-*
aiguesmortes.fr

Open Ramparts & Tour de
 Constance: daily. Salins du
 Camargue: Mar–Oct: tours daily

Eat and drink **Real meal** L'Eden
 (8 Rue Denfert Rochereau, 30220;
 04 66 53 69 45; *www.eden*
restaurant.fr; closed Sun dinner &
 Mon) serves home-cured smoked
 salmon, steaks and grilled sea-
 food. **Family treat** Hotel Villa
 Mazarin Restaurant La Table (35
 Blvd Gambette, 30220; 04 66 73
 90 48; closed Mon & Tue) this
 Baroque-style dining room offers
 traditional dishes like Corbières
 pigeon on the menu.

castle can be seen in the **Tour de Constance**, which in the 17th century was used as a prison for Protestants. Sea salt has for long been a mainstay of the town; the **Salins du Camargue** can be visited on *petit train* rides through mountains of salt and pink lagoons. Look out for the Tower of the Salted Burgundians located left of the south exit of the town.

Letting off steam

Kids will love running around the walls of the town. Take a taxi or drive to **Domaine de Listel** (*Domaine de*



The old town of Aigues-Mortes, fortified with medieval ramparts

Jarras, 30220; *www.chevaux-listel.com*. *argue.fr*) for riding safaris and pony rides. Play on the beach in **Le Grau-du-Roi** (*www.ville-legrauduroi.fr*), 8 km (5 miles) from Aigues-Mortes.

19 St-Hippolyte-du-Fort

Hungry little caterpillars

Most people associate silk with China, but for centuries it has been a mainstay of the lush hills of the Cévennes. One of the main centres of silk production is the village of St-Hippolyte-du-Fort. The **Musée de Soie** demonstrates how silk is made – from silkworm to cocoon to cloth. Kids can try a hand at untangling the threads. Count the sundials while walking through the village (there are at least 20). Like most towns in the Cévennes, St-Hippolyte was once Protestant and it claims to have the biggest Temple (Protestant church) in France.

The Lowdown

Map reference 13 B3
Address 30170 (Gard).
 Musée de Soie: Pl du 8 Mai;
 04 66 77 66 47; *www.museede*
lasoie-cevennes.com

Bus D40 from Nîmes

Visitor information Les Casernes,
 30170; 04 66 77 91 65; *www.*
piemont-cevenol-tourisme.com

Open Musée de Soie: Apr–Nov:
 daily

Eat and drink **Real meal** El
 Gusanillo (*Place 8 mai* 1945,
 30170; 04 66 77 99 68), a delight-
 ful pizzeria, offers excellent
 pizzas and home-made chips.
Family treat Auberge Cigaloise
 (*Route de Nîmes*, 30170; 04 66 77
 64 59; *www.aubergecigaloise.fr*;
 closed Wed in summer) is a
 respected gourmet restaurant.
 The patisseries are delicious and
 there is a pool by the terrace.

Festival Total Festum, an Occitan
 & Catalan celebration (Jun)

Letting off steam

There is plenty of room to run around in sleepy St-Hippolyte. Or take bus 715 to the town of Anduze, which is famous for its bamboo gardens, **Bambouseraie** (*www.bambouseraie.com*). Catch the **Cévennes steam train** (*www.trainavapeur.com*) from Anduze to St-Jean-de-Gard.

KIDS' CORNER

Look out for...

The Tour de Constance in Aigues-Mortes is a masterpiece of 13th-century defence. Be sure not to miss:

- 1 The 6-m (20-ft) thick walls at the base
- 2 The narrow footbridge. Even if attackers crossed over, they had to get past three doors. Find the artfully hidden second door to the stairs.
- 3 Nooks for archers to shoot from
- 4 Slots to toss spears through
- 5 Holes to pour boiling water through



Engraved forever
 The word "register" (resist) was chiselled in the wall of the Tour de Constance by Protestant Marie Durand, who was imprisoned there for 38 years.

SALTED AND STACKED

In 1421, during the Hundred Years' War, Aigues-Mortes was occupied by Burgundians. The Armagnacs, their enemies, massacred them and to keep the corpses from rotting, salted them and stacked them in what is now known as the Tower of the Salted Burgundians.

The story of jeans

The Protestants in this corner of France not only manufactured silk, but also a sturdy serge fabric. After the 16th-century Wars of Religion, many immigrated to London where they sold this fabric called "de Nîmes" or denim. In 1849, Levi Strauss took dyed *bleu de Gênes* (Genoese blue) denim to the California Gold Rush to make tents. He realized that sturdy trousers were more in demand and blue denim jeans were born.



Where to Stay in Languedoc-Roussillon

With its warm climate, beaches, beautiful scenery and laid-back attitude, Languedoc-Roussillon is an especially popular region for camping in the great outdoors, although rates of its luxury hotels and villas tend to be more affordable than elsewhere in Mediterranean France.

AGENCIES

Crème de Languedoc

www.creme-de-languedoc.com

This website offers an extensive list of luxury villas, cottages, B&Bs and apartments in all price ranges, across Languedoc-Roussillon.

Chez Nous

www.cheznous.com

A good selection of self-catering properties such as cottages, gîtes and villas for all budgets, many with pools, are listed here by their owners.

Aigues-Mortes Map 13 C4

HOTEL

Hotel les Croisades

2 Rue du Port, 30220; 04 66 53

67 85; www.lescroisades.fr

In the centre of town, overlooking the Tour de Constance and the marina, this pleasant hotel's rooms on the ground floor are especially designed for families with children. Rooms are equipped with Wi-Fi. Breakfast offers good value and is served on the verandah much of the year.



€€

CAMPING

Yelloh! Village La Petite Camargue

30220 Aigues-Mortes; 04 66 53

98 98; www.yellohvillage-petite-camargue.com

Located near the beach, this camp site offers three different kids' clubs, including one for teens, and a horse-riding centre with lessons. Shuttles to the beaches of Le Grau du Roi and La Grande Motte are available.



€€€

Beaucaire Map 13 C3

HOTEL

Hôtel Robinson

Route de Remoulins, 30300; 04 66

59 21 32; www.hotel-robinson.fr

Just 2 km (1 mile) northwest of the centre of Beaucaire, this 31-room

Mediterranean-style hotel is set in the hills and woods. Facilities include two pools, ping-pong and a playground. The restaurant offers a kids' menu.



€€

Béziers

Map 13 A4

HOTELS

Hôtel des Poètes

80 Allées Paul Riquet, 34500; 04 67 76

38 66; www.hoteldespoetes.net

This little hotel, a short walk from the train station, overlooks the romantic garden right in the centre of Béziers, where the leafy lawns offer plenty of room to scamper about. Rooms are modern, functional and comfortable. Wi-Fi is free and bikes are available.



€

Hôtel Résidence

35 Ave de la Cave, 34440 Nissan-les-

Enserune; 04 67 37 00 63; www.hotel-residence.com

Housed in a 19th-century wine-maker's mansion near the Canal du Midi, this attractive hotel has a pretty courtyard garden. The nearest Mediterranean beaches are a ten-minute drive away. Its superb restaurant has a kids' menu.



€€



Elegant entrance to the Hôtel des Poètes, Béziers

Château de Lignan

Pl de l'Église, 34490 Lignan-sur-Orb;

04 67 37 91 47; www.chateaulignan.fr

Located on the banks of the Orb river, just ten minutes from the city centre, this elegant château is set in a huge park full of old trees. Rooms are peaceful and modern. The restaurant serves exceptional cuisine.



€€€

SELF-CATERING

Résidences Port Minervoises Les Hauts du Lac

Map 12 H4

Route du Lac, 11200 Homps;

04 67 26 07 90; www.coralia-vacances.com

Located near the Canal du Midi, this complex offers 2–5-room villas ideal for families, with a communal playground, tennis, beach volleyball, mini-golf and spa. Some of the villas have private pools. Wi-Fi is available at the reception. Linen and towel hire and baby kits are also available.



€€€

CAMPING

Le Sérignan Plage

34410 Sérignan; 04 67 32 35 33;

www.leserignanplage.com

On the sandy beach south of Béziers, this large camp site has unusually well-equipped mobile homes and chalets (minimum stay a week).

The more luxurious ones are equipped with air conditioning, bedding, TV, dishwashers and bicycles. There are mini-clubs and games for kids.



€€

Le Cap d'Agde Map 13 B4

HOTEL

Hôtel Hélios

Mont St-Martin, 12 Rue du

Labech, 34300; 04 67 01 37 68;

www.hotel-helios.com

This low-rise hotel, recently remodelled in an Art Deco style, is in the centre of action in Le Cap d'Agde and within walking distance



Outside tables in the courtyard of Hôtel de la Cité, Carcassonne

of the beaches and golf course. There is an apartment just for families and a playground in the garden.

🏠 P * 🌳 €€

CAMPING Camping La Tama

4 Rue du Cadet Malet, 34300; 04 67 94 79 46; www.camping-latama.com
This camp site on the big sandy La Tamissière beach, 5 km (3 miles) west of the town centre, offers attractive pitches amidst a pine grove. They provide tents on wooden platforms, sleeping four, or chalets with kitchens. A play area, table tennis, launderette, barbecues and a shop are on offer.

🏠 P 🌳 €–€€

Carcassonne

Map 12 G5

HOTELS La Bastide

81 Rue de la Liberté, 11000; 04 68 71 96 89; www.hoteldelabastide.com
A 20-minute walk from the medieval citadel, near the train station, this hotel has well-kept rooms. A number of good restaurants are located nearby. Internet is available for a fee.

🏠 P * 🌳 €

Hôtel de la Cité

Pl Auguste-Pierre Pont, 11000; 04 68 71 98 71; www.hoteldelacite.com
One of Languedoc's most luxurious hotels occupies the former bishop's palace in the heart of the citadel, with canopied beds and other medieval trimmings. Many rooms overlook the romantic garden. The restaurant has a Michelin star. Special family packages are available.

🏠 * 🌳 €€€

SELF-CATERING Domaine de la Bouriette

Map 12 G4

11290 Arzen; 04 68 24 61 77; www.carcassonne-gite-wine.com
Set amidst the vineyards, a short drive on the D119 west of the city, these two stone-built family gîtes sleeping four are a relaxing retreat. The vineyard also has a petting zoo of farm animals and perhaps the only vine maze in France.

🏠 P 🌳 €€

Les Gîtes de Cabardès

Map 12 G4

7 Rue des Jardins, 11610 Ventenac-Cabardès; 04 68 24 08 23; www.carcassonne-holidays.com

Located 8 km (5 miles) northwest of the city on the edge of a traditional village, these three tidy gîtes built over enormous ancient wine vats enjoy a peaceful feel. They come equipped with DVD players, TV and Wi-Fi, as well as baby cots and highchairs.

🏠 P 🌳 €€

CAMPING Domaine d'Arnauteille

Arnauteille, 11250 Montclar; 04 68 26 84 53; www.camping-arnauteille.com

Located 14 km (7 miles) south of the city, this camp site has mobile-home cottages and chalets, with incredible shower and toilet facilities, done up in Greco-Roman style. Morning kids' club for ages 4–12 years; horse-riding excursions are offered as well.

🏠 P 🌳 €€

Collioure

Map 12 H6

CAMPING Les Criques de Porteles

Corniche de Collioure D114, 66701 Argelès-sur-Mer; 04 68 81 12 73; www.lescriques.com

A half-hour walk from Collioure, this stylish camp ground is set on terraces above the rugged coast, with steps leading down to the coves. It has playgrounds, a mini-farm and music, art and sports activities. Highchairs and cots available.

🏠 P 🌳 €–€€€

Narbonne Plage

Map 12 H6

HOTEL Hotel de la Clape

4 Rue des Fleurs, 11100 Narbonne Plage; 04 68 49 80 15; www.hoteldelaclape.com

A short walk from the big sandy beach, this eco-friendly hotel has a lovely patio and a great restaurant; half-pension terms offer a good deal. Staff is welcoming.

🏠 P * 🌳 €€

Nîmes

Map 13 C3

HOTEL Acanthe du Temple

1 Rue Charles Babut, 30000; 04 66 67 54 61; www.hotel-temple.com

A 5-minute walk from the Maison Carrée and 2 minutes from the airport shuttle stop, this is a friendly little hotel in a 17th-century mansion. It offers free Wi-Fi and a reasonably priced breakfast; the nearby garage is available for a fee.

🏠 €

SELF-CATERING Le Cheval Blanc

1 Pl des Arènes, 30000; 04 66 76 05 22; www.chevalblanc-nimes.com

Housed in a former denim factory, these large apartments enjoy a superb location looking out over Les Arènes. It retains several original features. The apartments come with stylish furnishings and flat-screen TV, as well as Internet access.

🏠 🌳 * €€

Price Guide

The following price ranges are based on one night's accommodation in high season for a family of four, inclusive of service charges and any additional taxes.

€ Under €100 €€ €100–200 €€€ over €200

Perpignan

Map 13 A6

BED & BREAKFAST La Maison Haute

17 Impasse Drancourt, 66000; 04 68 34 76 64; www.lamaisonhaute-perpignan.fr

Conveniently located between the train station and the centre of Perpignan, this relaxed, welcoming *chambre d'hôtes* has a suite ideal for two adults and two kids. The owner knows all about Perpignan and treats visiting families like her own.



€

Pont du Gard & Uzès

Map 13 C3

HOTELS

Hôtel Restaurant Le Gardon

9 Rue de Campchesteve, 30210
Collias; 04 66 22 80 54; www.hotel-le-gardon.com

In the heart of the Gardon gorges, this hotel offers a relaxed atmosphere along with good cooking using local ingredients. There are many places of interest around, such as the Pont du Gard, Roman villages, great walks and rivers to paddle or swim in.



€€

Château d'Arpaillargues

Route du Château, 30700
Arpaillargues; 04 66 22 14 48;

www.chateaudarpaillargues.com

Just west of Uzès, set in a park of century-old trees, this beautiful 18th-century residence was once home to Franz Liszt's beloved Marie de Flavigny. Run by a young couple, it has an outdoor Jacuzzi, tennis, table tennis and bikes to rent, as well as an elegant restaurant.



€€€

SELF-CATERING Résidence le Mas des Oliviers

1 Rue des Cedres, 30700 Uzès; 04 79 65 08 41

Located in a quiet neighbourhood, a short walk from the historic centre of Uzès, these modern and well-maintained apartments with terraces offer an excellent and affordable option for families. Linen can be hired and Wi-Fi is available on the ground floor.



€€

Mas des Sagnes

68 Chemin de la Draille, 30210
Collias; 04 66 22 85 62; www.lemasdessagnes.fr

This collection of newly built *gîtes*, set amidst olives and mulberries, is immersed in the countryside, with views over the *garrigue*-covered hills stretching all the way to Mont Ventoux in Provence. Pastel rooms are simply furnished; the owners are helpful and provide linen; cots and highchairs are also available.



€€

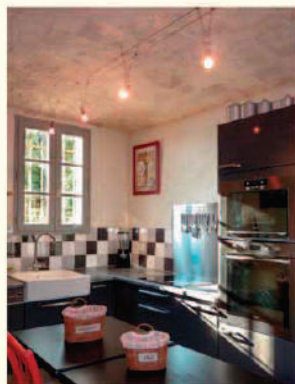
Le Mazet

D981, 30700 Uzès; 06 10 42 15 23;
www.mazet-uzes.com

Only 2 km (1 mile) from the centre of Uzès, in a charming rural setting, this stone *bergerie* (sheepfold) has been restored into a villa. The garden is perfect for lazing around the pool. Internet access is available and board games are provided for rainy days.



€€€



The fully equipped modern kitchen of Le Mazet, Uzès

CAMPING

Camping Gorges- Gardon

762 Chemin Barque Vieille, 30210
Vers-Pont-du-Gard; 04 66 22 81 81;
www.camping-gorges-gardon.fr

Located on the banks of the Gardon river and not far from the famous aqueduct, this camp ground offers shady pitches and a choice of mobile homes and chalets. Kids love the pool with its giant slides and there is a playground and games room, too. The restaurant offers takeaways and there is free Wi-Fi at the bar.



€-€€

Sète

Map 13 B4

HOTEL Hôtel Venezia

Les Jardins de la Mer, 20 La Corniche
de Neuburg, 34200; 04 67 51 39 38;
www.hotel-sete.com

A rare affordable family lodging in Sète, this modern 18-room hotel is located near the beach and a short bus hop into the city centre. Each room has a patio, where the friendly owners deliver breakfasts. Restaurants are within walking distance.



€€

CAMPING

Le Castellas

RN 112, 34200; 04 99 57 21 21;
campings.village-center.com

Located 15 km (9 miles) southwest of Sète, this large and popular camp ground is right on the beach and offers a variety of activities, entertainment and clubs for kids aged 4 plus in July and August. There are pitches but the chalets and mobile homes are preferable; half board is available.



€-€€

Villefranche-de- Conflent

Map 12 G6

BED & BREAKFAST Casa Penalolen

3 Domaine Ste-Eulalie, 66500;
04 68 96 52 35; casa-penalolen.com

Built in 1910, this handsome pink granite and marble villa, by the Têt river and surrounded by a lush meadow and mountains, is only a few minutes from Villefranche. The rooms are decorated with a smattering of antiques; the friendly owners serve a generous breakfast on the summer terrace.



€€

SELF-CATERING Chalets Quazemi

Bldv St-Martin, 66820 Casteil; 04 68 05 55 11; www.leschaletsquazemi.e-monsite.com

In a stunning setting on the slopes of Canigou, the sacred mountain of the Catalans, these basic wooden chalets are a good choice for families who love nature. Villefranche is a short drive away and there are picturesque mountain paths in every direction. Meals are provided on request.



€

Provence and the Côte d'Azur

This region, extending from the Rhône river to the Italian Riviera, has inspired some of the greatest 19th- and 20th-century artists with its sun-soaked landscapes. Avignon boasts the splendid Palais des Papes, Marseille has great museums and St-Tropez has France's most famous beaches. Kids will enjoy spotting real French cowboys in the Camargue.

Below Sunbathers and swimmers at one of the many beaches of St-Tropez



1 Palais des Papes, Avignon

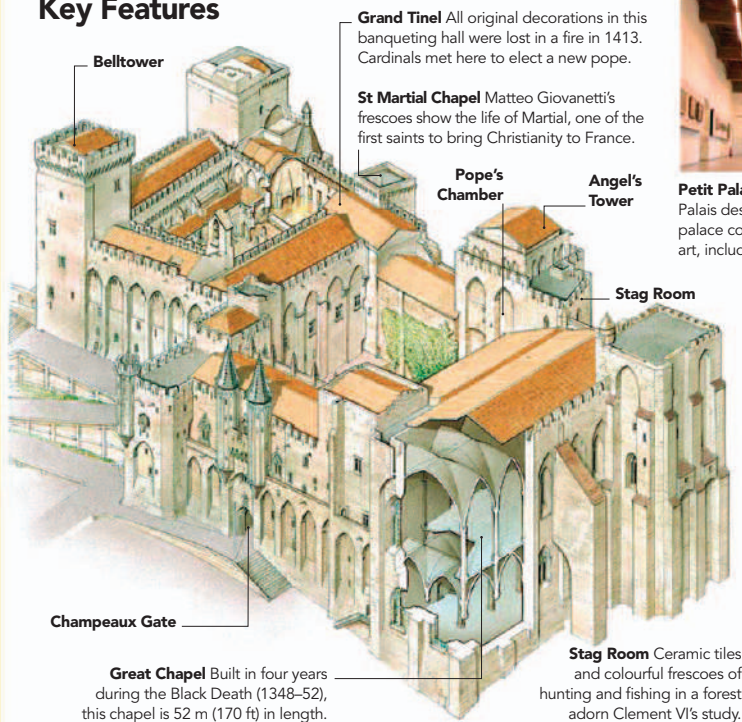
Splendour and intrigue

In 1309, after French King Philip IV bribed cardinals to elect the French Pope Clement V, he convinced Clement to flee Rome, a city of warring gangs, and come to Avignon. The next six popes stayed here, bringing 70 years of corruption; in 1340, the poet Petrarch called Avignon “the sewer of the earth”. The popes’ palace, begun in 1335, proclaims the power of the medieval church – the largest Gothic palace ever built.



Tower of Avignon Cathedral

Key Features



Belltower

Grand Tinel All original decorations in this banqueting hall were lost in a fire in 1413. Cardinals met here to elect a new pope.

St Martial Chapel Matteo Giovannetti's frescoes show the life of Martial, one of the first saints to bring Christianity to France.

Pope's Chamber

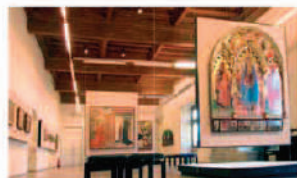
Angel's Tower

Stag Room

Chameaux Gate

Great Chapel Built in four years during the Black Death (1348–52), this chapel is 52 m (170 ft) in length.

Stag Room Ceramic tiles and colourful frescoes of hunting and fishing in a forest adorn Clement VI's study.



Petit Palais Located to the north of the Palais des Papes, the former archbishop's palace contains a fine collection of Italian art, including Botticelli's *Virgin and Child*.



Military architecture The ten towers of the palace ensured it was virtually unconquerable.



The Lowdown

Map reference 13 D3
Address 84000 (Vaucluse).
 Palais des Papes: 3 Pl du Palais;
www.palais-des-papes.com.
 Petit Palais: 3 Pl du Palais des Papes; www.petit-palais.org

Train from Nîmes and Marseille
Visitor information 41 Cours Jean Jaure, 84000; 04 32 74 32 74; www.ot-avignon.fr

Open Palais des Papes:
 Nov–Feb: 9:30am–5:45pm;
 Mar: 9am–6:30pm; Aug:
 9am–8:30pm; Sep–Oct &
 Apr–Jun: 9am–7pm. Petit

Palais: 10am–1pm &
 2–6pm Wed–Mon

Price Palais des Papes: €42 (including audio guides); under 8s free. Petit Palais: €18; under 12s free

Skipping the queue Get the Avignon Passion pass. Pay full fare at one monument and receive discounts at others. Contact the tourist office for details.

Guided tours Contact the tourist office for details

Age range 6 plus
Allow 2 hours

Café On the terrace

Toilets On the ground floor

Festivals Festival d'Avignon, the biggest theatre festival in France (Jul). The Festival d'Avignon Off features street performances and alternative productions (Jul)

Good family value?

Kids with imagination who like history will enjoy it. The guided tours really help bring it to life.

Letting off steam

Dance to the tune of *Sur le pont d'Avignon* on the Pont St-Bénézet, below the Palais des Papes. Legend says the original wooden bridge was built by the shepherd Bénézet. When it collapsed, a new one, with 22 arches, was built of stone in 1172, which lasted for 600 years. Four arches remain, enough for a little dance. Then ride an antique carousel in nearby Place d'Horloge.



The Pont St-Bénézet bridge located just below the Palais des Papes

Eat and drink

Picnic: under €20; Snacks: €20–€45; Real meal: €45–€90; Family treat: over €90 (based on a family of four)

PICNIC Les Halles (Pl Pie, 84000; www.avignon-leshalles.com; closed Mon) offers fresh ingredients every morning in a building with a garden growing on the façade. Enjoy food on the Île de la Barthelasse – free shuttle boats, from the landing just up the river from the Pont St-Bénézet, cross over every 15 minutes from April to December.

SNACKS Encas de Plaisir (5 Rue des Fourbisseurs, 84000; 04 90 85 59 48; closed Sun) offers delicious quiches, Sicilian arancini (deep fried rice balls) and spitini (filled meat parcels on a skewer), either to eat in or take away.

FAMILY TREAT Tapalocas (15 Rue Galante, 84000; 04 90 82 56 84; www.tapalocas.com; open daily), a Spanish theme restaurant, remains



Diners enjoying an evening at Tapalocas, a popular choice for its tapas

a firm favourite for its wide choice of hot and cold tapas (all available at the same price) and its big lunch specials.

REAL MEAL La Petite Pêche (13 Rue St-Étienne, 84000; 04 90 86 02 46; closed Sun), an informal little restaurant, serves perfectly cooked fresh seafood and offers an affordable wine list.

Shopping

Visit **Librerie Boutique Palais des Papes** (6 Rue Pente-Rapide, 84000; 04 90 27 50 87) for educational toys and books with a medieval theme. Go to **La Carte à Jouer** (6 Rue De La Rappe, 84000; 04 90 16 98 75) for games and stuffed toy flamingoes.

Find out more

DIGITAL Families can download a self-guided walking tour of Avignon at www.gpsmycity.com/iphone/avignon-walking-tours-269.html.



A street performance at the Palais des Papes during the Festival d'Avignon

Take cover

Walk south to the **Musée Calvet** (65 Rue Joseph Vernet, 84000; www.musee-calvet.org), with an eclectic collection of exhibits. Or the **Musée Angladon** (5 Rue Laboureur, 84000; www.angladon.com), where Van Gogh's only painting in Provence keeps good company with others by Picasso, Degas and Cézanne.

Next stop...

TARASCON Take a train south from Avignon to the town of Tarascon to visit "Good King" René's **Château Royal de Provence** (<http://chateau.tarascon.fr>) high over the Rhône. A medieval legend tells how St Martha saved the town from a man-eating monster called the Tarasque, now Tarascon's symbol. See it at the train station, public buildings and in the Place Charles de Gaulle.

KIDS' CORNER

Look out for...

1 There is a painting of the devil by the artist Niccolò di Pietro Gerini in the Petit Palais. Can you find the painting and spot the disguise the devil is in?
2 In the Palais des Papes, how many different animals can you spot in the Stag Room?

3 What type of bird is shown on the walls of the pope's bedchamber?

Answers at the bottom of the page.



Fatal fact

When Pope Clement V had a stomach ache, his doctor prescribed a plate of ground emeralds. Clement ate them and promptly dropped dead.



MASONS' MARKS

Masons left their personal marks on the stones they cut to ensure they were paid. Bring paper and pencil to the Palais des Papes and see how many different marks you can spot and copy them down.

Follow the money

Rumours said Pope John XXII turned lead to gold to fill his treasury, which enabled the next pope, Benedict XII, to begin the Palais des Papes. The gold was stored at the bottom of the Angel's Tower.



Answers: **1** The devil is a woman in a pink dress. **2** There are ducks, a ferret, pike, and a falcon. **3** Nightingales. Many popes used to keep nightingales in cages.



Pink flamingoes in the Parc Ornithologique in the Camargue

② St-Rémy-de-Provence

Where Vincent van Gogh painted *The Starry Night*

Under the jagged peaks of the Alpilles, delightful St-Rémy-de-Provence has been an artists' town ever since 1889, when Vincent van Gogh checked himself into a local asylum. The **Hôtel Estrine: Centre d'Art Presence** covers this period, while the hospital where Van Gogh painted the hypnotic *The Starry Night* occupies the Romanesque monastery of **St-Paul-de-Mausole**, a 15-minute walk south from the art centre. Just opposite the monastery is Les Antiques – a triumphal arch and cylindrical mausoleum – erected to honour Roman emperors Julius Caesar and Augustus. They belong to the predecessor of St-Rémy: the evocative

Celtic-Greek-Roman city of **Glanum**, preserved for 1,700 years under a layer of silt from the Alpilles.

Letting off steam

For some stunning ruins, take bus 59 to Les Alpilles and Les Baux, where the **Château des Baux** (www.chateau-baux-provence.com) was once home to troublemaking lords. Three catapults, including Europe's largest trebuchet, are fired several times a day. Visit the leisure centre at **Park de Loisirs des Alpilles** (www.parcdeleoisirs-alpilles.com) for a bouncy castle, mini-golf and playgrounds (Apr–Sep).

③ Arles

Gateway to the Camargue

Like St-Rémy, Arles was home to Van Gogh for a year. The tourist office distributes a map of a Vincent van Gogh Walk, taking in places where he set up his easel (much has

The Lowdown

- 📍 **Map reference** 13 C4
- Address** 13200 (Bouches-du-Rhône). Espace Van Gogh: Pl du Docteur Félix-Rey, 13200. Amphithéâtre: 1 Rond-Point des Arènes, 13200; www.arenearles.com. Musée d'Arles et de la Provence Antiques: Presqu'île du Cirque Romain, 13635; 04 13 31 51 48; www.arles-antique.cg13.fr
- 🚗 **Train** from Avignon and Tarascon
- Visitor information** Blvd des Lices, 13200; 04 90 18 41 20; www.arlestourisme.com
- 🕒 **Open** Espace Van Gogh: closed Sun & Mon. Amphithéâtre: daily. Musée d'Arles et de la Provence Antiques: closed Tue
- 🍴 **Eat and drink** **Real meal** La Grignotte (6 Rue Favorin, 13200; 04 90 93 10 43; www.lagrignottearles.com), offers Provençal fish soup, sea bass cassoulet, beef dishes and lavender-scented crème brûlée. **Real meal** La Péniche (Quai St-Pierre-Trinquetaillo, 13200; 04 90 93 31 10; www.la-peniche-arles.fr; closed Mon), on a boat, tempts with monkfish in saffron or chicken in old-fashioned mustard sauce.
- 🎪 **Festivals** FERIA Pascale (Apr). Fête du Costume and Les Suds d'Arles, celebrate local costumes and music (late-Jun/early-Jul).

changed, but the Pont de Langlois still looks the same). The city's Médiathèque doubles up as the **Espace Van Gogh**, whose gardens were the inspiration for his painting *Garden of the Hospital*. But there is more to Arles, known in ancient times as Arelate (Bog Town). Under the Place du Forum, explore the underground galleries of the 1st-century BC Cryptoporticus, entered

The Lowdown

- 📍 **Map reference** 13 D3
- Address** 13210 (Bouches-du-Rhône). Hôtel Estrine: Centre d'Art Presence: 8 Rue Estrine, 13210; 04 90 92 34 72. St-Paul-de-Mausole: Route des Baux, 13210; 04 90 92 77 00. Glanum: Route des Baux-de-Provence; www.glanum.monuments-nationaux.fr
- 🚗 **Bus** 1057 from Avignon
- Visitor information** Pl Jean Jaurès, 13210; 04 90 92 05 22; www.saintremy-de-provence.com
- 🕒 **Open** Hôtel Estrine: Centre d'Art Presence: call to check. St-Paul-de-Mausole: mid-Feb–Dec:

- daily. Glanum: Apr–Aug: daily; Sep–Mar: Tue–Sun
- 🍴 **Eat and drink** **Family treat** O Caprice de Mathias (Chemin de la Croix des Vertus, Domaine Météfiot, 13210; 04 32 62 00 00) is a gourmet restaurant serving traditional French cuisine made with fresh seasonal ingredients. **Real meal** L'Estagnol (16 Blvd Victor Hugo, 13210; 04 90 92 05 95; restaurant-lestagnol.com; closed Mon & Sun pm) serves not just carefully sourced seafood, but also makes duck confits and steaks.
- 🎪 **Festivals** Orgama, an organ festival (Jul–Sep). FERIA features bloodless bull sport (Aug)



Ruins of the fortified 10th-century Château des Baux, Les Baux



The passageways of the old Roman Amphithéâtre in Place du Forum, Arles

by way of the elegant Hôtel de Ville in the Place de la République. This square features another masterpiece – the 11th-century sculpted portal of the Cathédrale de St Trophime, with more great sculptures in the cloister – find St Martha and the Tarasque.

Dating back to AD 80, Arles' **Amphithéâtre**, which is 3 m (10 ft) wider than Nîmes' Arènes, hosts mock gladiator combats on Tuesdays and Thursdays in July and August. On the edge of the town, the excellent **Musée d'Arles et de la Provence Antiques** exhibits artifacts and models of how things worked during Roman times.

Letting off steam

Relax in the Jardin d'Été, located between St-Trophime and the Amphithéâtre, or take bus 20 to the **Camargue**, the delta of the Rhône, and the largest delta in western Europe. Do not miss the French *gardians* (cowboys), who ride a special breed of white horses, herding black bulls. Head for the **Parc Ornithologique** (www.parcornithologique.com) in the Camargue and spot pink flamingos and 400 other species of birds.

4 Orange

Be a star on an ancient stage

Built by the Emperor Augustus in the 1st century AD, Orange's **Théâtre Antique** or Roman Theatre is the best preserved of its kind – with seats for 10,000 spectators, the stage and the rarest survival of all, its back wall. The wall makes the acoustics

extraordinary – just stand on the stage and test them! Built around the same time, Orange's equally well-preserved Arc de Triomphe on Rue Victor Hugo, celebrates the victory of the Second Gallic Regiment over the Gauls.

Letting off steam

Steps from the theatre lead up to the **Colline de St-Eutrope**, a park with views, play areas and more ruins. For a biology lesson, take a taxi to Sérignan-le-Comtat, 8 km (5 miles) to the north of Orange and visit **L'Harmas** (tinyurl.com/3z4dzlq), where 19th-century writer Jean-Henri Fabre, known as the "Virgil of insects", lived and planted a huge variety of plants to attract insects he loved. Nearby is the science centre **Naturoptère** (www.naturoptere.fr), dedicated to his life and insects.



Exhibits at Naturoptère, the science centre at Sérignan-le-Comtat

The Lowdown

- **Map reference** 13 D3
- Address** 84100 (Vaucluse). Théâtre Antique: Rue Madeleine Roch; 04 90 51 17 60; www.theatre-antique.com
- 🚆 **Train** from Avignon
- i **Visitor information** 5 Cours Aristide Briand, 84100; 04 90 34 70 88; www.otorange.fr
- 🕒 **Open** Théâtre Antique: daily (free kids' activity books available)
- 🍷 **Eat and drink** *Real meal* Le Garden (6 Pl de Langes, 84100; 04 90 34 64 47; closed Sun lunch & Mon) offers traditional Provençal dishes in a wide choice of fixed-price menus. *Family treat* Au Petit Patio (58 Cours, Aristide Briand, 84100; 04 90 29 69 27; closed Sun, Wed pm, Thu pm) offers a number of gourmet delights. Book in advance.
- 🎭 **Festival** Les Chorégies, opera festival (Jul)

KIDS' CORNER

How to draw a flamingo

- 1** Draw a large "S" shape.
- 2** Make an egg shape at the bottom of the curve for the body. Add a short, downward facing tail feather. For the rest of the "S" make a double line for the neck.
- 3** Make a long skinny leg, with a knee halfway down and a triangular webbed foot.
- 4** For the head, draw a small "C" on top of the "S" then draw a beak. Add an eye. Colour the end of the beak black, and the rest of the body pink.



Baby flamingo food

Did you know that baby flamingos are fed "crop milk" secreted by glands in their parents' digestive tracts?

TASTE FOR TONGUES

Believe it or not, in ancient times flamingos were especially hunted by the Romans for their tongues. This was because the emperors considered their tongues to be a great delicacy.



A home for artists

Vincent van Gogh dreamt of founding an artists' colony similar to Pont-Aven (see pp168–9) in Arles, but after falling out with Paul Gauguin, the one artist who had joined him, he cut off one of his ears in a moment of madness. During his lifetime, Van Gogh sold only one painting, for 400 francs. Today, his paintings sell for millions of euros.

5 Fontaine-de-Vaucluse

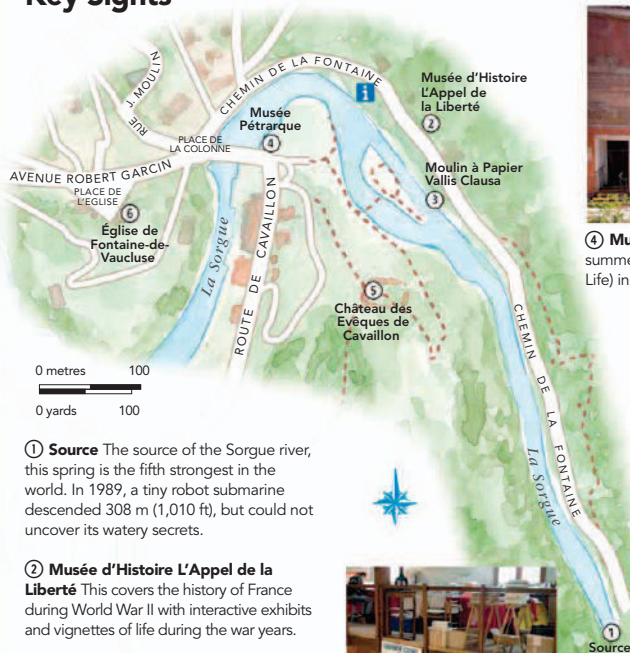
A mysterious spring

Squeezed in the narrow *vallis clausa* ("closed valley"), Fontaine-de-Vaucluse and the wonder of its mysterious "bottomless" spring have long fascinated visitors. In ancient times, water gods were worshipped here; in the Middle Ages, stories spoke about how it was guarded by a fierce dragon. Today, scientists try to explain how an average of 60,000 litres (15,850 gallons) of water per second flows year round into a green pool at the base of a cliff.



The shimmering green pool of Fontaine-de-Vaucluse

Key Sights



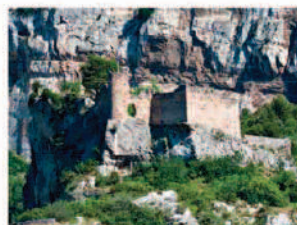
① **Source** The source of the Sorgue river, this spring is the fifth strongest in the world. In 1989, a tiny robot submarine descended 308 m (1,010 ft), but could not uncover its watery secrets.

② **Musée d'Histoire L'Appel de la Liberté** This covers the history of France during World War II with interactive exhibits and vignettes of life during the war years.

③ **Moulin à Papier Vallis Clausa** Fontaine-de-Vaucluse once had seven paper mills along the Sorgue river. This mill, which dates back to the 15th century, still makes paper the old-fashioned way.



④ **Musée Pétrarque** Petrarch, the Italian poet, spent summers writing his *De Vita Solitaria* (On the Solitary Life) in this villa.



⑤ **Château des Evêques de Cavaillon** This romantic 14th-century ruin on a rocky outcrop occupies the site of a 7th-century town. Climb up for the great views.

⑥ **Église de Fontaine-de-Vaucluse** This Romanesque church was built over an ancient temple. Its crypt houses the 6th-century tomb of St Véran. Legend says the saint slew the dragon who lived near the source.

The Lowdown

● **Map reference** 13 D3
Address 84899 (Vaucluse).
 Musée d'Histoire L'Appel de la Liberté: Chemin de la Fontaine, 84800; 04 90 20 24 00. Moulin à Papier Vallis Clausa: Chemin de la Fontaine, 84800; www.moulin-vallisclausa.com. Musée Pétrarque: Rive Gauche de la Sorgue, 84000. Château des Evêques de Cavaillon: 84800 Fontaine-de-Vaucluse. Église de Fontaine-

de-Vaucluse: Ave Robert Garcin, 84800

🚗 **Train** from Avignon to L'Isle-sur-la-Sorgue, then the Voyages Raoux bus

📄 **Visitor information** Chemin de la Fontaine, 84800; 04 90 20 32 22; www.oti-delasorgue.fr

🕒 **Open** Musée d'Histoire L'Appel de la Liberté: Apr–Oct: Wed–Mon; Mar, Nov & Dec: Sat & Sun; closed Jan & Feb. Moulin

à Papier Vallis Clausa: daily; closed 2 weeks in Jan. Musée Pétrarque: Wed–Mon

🎫 **Prices** Musée d'Histoire L'Appel de la Liberté & Musée Pétrarque: €10–20; under 12s free; combined ticket: €15–25. Moulin à Papier Vallis Clausa: free

👤 **Skipping the queue** Come in spring or after autumn rains, when the source is at its most dramatic.

👤 **Age range** 6 plus

Letting off steam

Spend a couple of hours canoeing down the limpid, emerald Sorgue river with **Kayak Vert Aqueduc** (84800 Fontaine-de-Vaucluse; 04 90 20 35 44; www.canoe-france.com/sorgue/; late-Apr–Oct). This is suitable for kids aged 6 plus.



Canoe and kayaking trips on the Sorgue river

Eat and drink

Picnic: under €20; **Snacks:** €20–45; **Real meal:** €45–90; **Family treat:** over €90. (based on a family of four)

PICNIC Super U (Route de Carpentras, 84800 L'Isle-sur-la-Sorgue) is an ideal place to stock up on goodies. Picnic at the nearby Partage des Eaux, a lovely spot with picnic tables by the river.

SNACKS A qui Sian Ben (Quartier la Baume, 84800; 04 90 20 35 44; Apr–Oct) is an informal family snack bar and restaurant on the Sorgue river offering sandwiches and *plats du jour* (specials of the day).

REAL MEAL **Hostellerie le Château** (Quartier Château Vieux, 84800; 04 90 20 31 54; open daily) allows diners to sit on the riverfront terrace. It serves mouthwatering *foie gras* with honey and succulent lamb.

FAMILY TREAT **Chez Dominique** (6 Pl de la Colonne, 84800; 04 90 20 33 26; open daily) offers superb no-fuss Mediterranean dishes (try stuffed mini-vegetables) to accompany a delightful, affordable wine list. Book a table on the flower-filled balcony.



Allow Half a day

Festival Festival de la Sorgue, boat races from the L'Isle-sur-la-Sorgue (Jul)

Good family value?

Along with great natural attractions, there are interesting shops and craft workshops as well. Prices are kind.

Shopping

Visit **La Marmite des Saveurs** (Ave Robert Garcin; www.lamarmitedes-saveurs.com) for a wide range of Provençal goodies, including jams and *tapenades* (olive spreads).

Find out more

DIGITAL See what the spring looks like at full force on www.wat.tv/video/fontaine-vaucluse-en-crue-19cod_2g3dt_.html.

Take cover

Duck into **L'Ecomusée du Santon** (Pl de la Colonne, 84150; 04 90 20 20 83; www.musee-du-santon.org) and see over 2,000 Christmas nativity scene figurines made out of everything from bread to wax.



Menus on display in the Sunday market at L'Isle-sur-la-Sorgue

Next stop...

WATERWHEELS, CAVES AND PAPER MILLS Visit **Le Monde Souterrain** (Chemin de Gouffre, 84899; 04 90 20 34 13; www.monde-souterrain.fr), a museum that displays cave carvings and geological findings. It also retells endeavours of marine explorer Jacques Cousteau to find the bottom of the source of the Fontaine-de-Vaucluse. Beyond Fontaine-de-Vaucluse, the Sorgue river splits to form L'Isle-sur-la-Sorgue, an island town of canals, footbridges and waterwheels that once powered textile and paper mills. Today, antique shops have taken their place, joined on Sunday mornings by a flea market. Visit the **Musée de l'École d'Autrefois** (musecole.vaucluse.pagesperso-orange.fr), a historic French schoolhouse, which traces school life from 1880.

KIDS' CORNER

In Le Monde Souterrain, find out...

- 1 What is the difference between a stalagmite and a stalactite?
- 2 Who was Norbert Casteret?
- 3 Many caves are formed by water running through what kind of rock?

Answers at the bottom of the page



Mind your language

Before 1880, when school became mandatory in France, nearly everyone in Provence spoke Occitan. The new laws set out to make everyone speak French. If a pupil said a word in Occitan, the teacher would then hang a wooden clog around the child's neck!



SMART DONKEYS

Donkeys were thought to be very smart and it was hoped that by wearing a "donkey hat" (a cap with two pointy ears), some of its intelligence would seep into a pupil's brain. However, since wearing it was seen as a punishment, it soon became a mark of shame and stupidity.

Lost treasure found

Along with the legend of St Véran's dragon at Fontaine-de-Vaucluse, there was another legend of sunken treasure, which actually came true. In 2001, two divers exploring the source, found 1,600 bronze, silver and gold coins from 1st-century BC to 5 AD.



Answers: 1 Stalagmites "grow up", "right" on to the ceiling. 2 A famous expert on caves. 3 Limestone.

6 Gordes

Underground labyrinths and stone igloos

With its golden stone houses piled up high on a steep hill, Gordes is called the “Acropolis of Provence”. The **Château de Gordes** crowns the summit, housing the second-largest fireplace in France and a collection of paintings by Belgian avant-garde artist Pol Mara in the **Musée Pol Mara**. Don headlamps to explore the subterranean side of Gordes, with sound and light effects, in the **Caves du Palais de St-Firmin**, also near the summit.

Some 4 km (3 miles) north of Gordes, the Abbaye de Sénanque is a spectacular sight, set among fields of lavender. The Cistercian monks make lavender oils, honey and liqueurs, for sale in the abbey shop.

Letting off steam

Visit the **Village des Bories** (www.gordes-village.com), 3 km (2 miles) southwest of Gordes, to explore the stone igloos. They are perfect for playing hide and seek.

The Lowdown

Map reference 13 D3
Address Vaucluse 84220.
Château de Gordes & Musée Pol Mara: Pl Genty Pantaly; 04 90 72 02 75. Caves du Palais de St-Firmin: Rue du Belvédère, 84220; www.caves-saint-firmin.com

Train to Cavaillon, then taxi to Gordes

Visitor information Pl de Château, 84220; 04 90 72 02 75; www.gordes-village.com

Open Château de Gordes & Musée Pol Mara: daily; closed Dec 25 & Jan 1. Caves du Palais de St-Firmin: May–Sep: Wed–Mon; Oct–Apr: book ahead

Eat and drink **Real meal** Les Cuisines du Château (Pl du Château, 84220; 04 90 72 01 31; closed mid-Nov–early Mar, Sun pm & Mon except in Jul & Aug) is a charming restaurant that features home-style Provençal cooking such as lamb, stews and patés, as well as yummy desserts. **Family treat** Auberge de Carcacille (Route de Apt; 84220; 04 90 72 02 63; www.auberge-carcacille.com; closed Fri lunch) serves Provençal cuisine in a garden setting, with a play area. There are two kids' menus.

Festival Soirées d'été à Gordes, evening concerts (Aug)



Château de Gordes looking out over the sunlit village

7 Vaison-la-Romaine

The devil in the church

Vaison was a Roman city with a mouthful of a name, Vasio Vocontiorum. Its remains are in two sections: La Villasse has public baths and two posh villas; while Puyrmin has a theatre that could seat 7,000, “Pompey's Portico”, an enclosed garden, and the **Musée Archéologique Théo Desplans**, where objects from statues to lead pipes are explained by audio guides.

On the western end of the town, the Cathédrale Notre-Dame-de-Nazareth sports a spectacular apse and a stone devil. Cross Vaison's Roman bridge to the medieval Haute Ville, a steep maze of streets leading to the ruined 12th-century Château Comtal, which offers a bird's-eye view of the town.

Letting off steam

Play in Vaison's **Jardin des Neuf Damoiselles** (Route de Roaix; 04 90 36 11 30) or drive up the 1,912-m (6,272-ft) Mont Ventoux, Provence's



Display of candied fruits at the Kerry Aptunion factory, Apt

The Lowdown

Map reference 13 D2
Address Vaucluse 84110.
Musée Archéologique Théo Desplans: Pl du Chanoine, 84110; 04 90 36 50 38; www.vaison-la-romaine.com

Bus Lieutaud bus from Avignon & Orange

Visitor information Pl du Chanoine Sautel, 84110; 04 90 36 02 11; www.vaison-ventoux-tourisme.com

Open Musée Archéologique Théo Desplans: daily

Eat and drink **Snacks** L'Annexe Café (3 Pl Montfort, 84110; 04 90 36 00 03; closed Mon except in Jul & Aug) offers crêpes, salads, sandwiches, *plats du jour* (daily special) and a kids' menu in the heart of the town. **Real meal** Le Bonheur Suit Son Cours (20 Cours Taulignan, 84110; 04 90 46 45 27) serves mostly organic food, with a choice of unusual local wines. Book.

Festival Festival International de Danse features dancers from various parts of the world (Jul)

highest mountain. At the **Mont Serein** (www.stationdumontserein.com), a sports centre, families can ski on snow in winter and on grass in summer. For kids, there is go-karting, pony rides and bouncy castles.

8 Apt

World capital of candied fruit

Capital of the Luberon region, Apt shows its Roman origins in its street plan. Remains of a Roman building dating back to the 1st century AD can be found in the lower crypt of the **Cathédrale Ste-Anne**. Begun in the late 12th century, the cathedral is full of precious things, including the Veil

of St Anne and ivories brought back by the crusaders, which are now housed in the treasury. After that, pay a visit to the **Musée de l'Aventure Industrielle**, which explores the traditional trades of Apt's region – ochre mining, ceramics and candied fruit. Learn more about the latter during a tour of **Les Fleurons d'Apt**, the world's biggest candied fruit factory. The town is also famous for its Saturday market.

The Lowdown

Map reference 13 D3
Address Vaucluse 84400.
 Cathédrale Ste-Anne: Rue St-Anne, 84400; 04 90 04 85 44; www.apt-cathedrale.com. Musée de l'Aventure Industrielle: Pl du Pastal, 84400; 04 90 74 95 30. Kerry Aptunion: Quartier Salignan, 84400; 04 90 76 31 43; www.lesfleurons-apt.com

Train from Avignon & Cavillon

Visitor information 20 Ave Philippe de Girard, 84400; 04 90 74 03 18; www.luberon-apt.fr

Open Musée de l'Aventure Industrielle: closed Tue, Sun & Jan. Les Fleurons d'Apt: ring ahead to visit

Eat and drink **Snacks** Les Gourmands Disent (17 Pl du Septier, 04 90 74 27 97; closed Sun) serves tarts and pastries. **Real meal** Le Royal's (18 Pl de la Bouquerie, 84400; 04 90 04 77 69; daily) offers *steak au poivre* (steak with peppercorns).

Festival Le Corso d'Apt, floats and music (May)

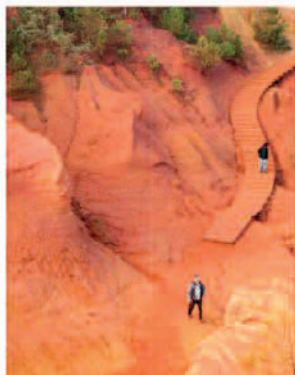
Letting off steam

Apt has a beautiful **Jardin Public** (Pl Lauze de Perret, 84400). Or take a bus or taxi 11 km (7 miles) west to the village of **Roussillon**, located on a hill of ochre. Walk through the quarries on the Ochre Quarry Trail.

Lourmarin

Gargoyles and a Nobel Prize winner

The beautiful village of Lourmarin is built around a medieval tower where the village clock keeps track of things. Pay a visit to the Renaissance **Château de Lourmarin** to see the gargoyles, the remarkable twisting spiral stair and strange fireplace with its "Aztec" faces made during the Renaissance, when the New World seemed very exotic. The château



A bird's-eye view of the red cliffs of the ochre quarries, Roussillon

frequently hosts superb exhibitions. Lourmarin's most famous resident was Nobel-Prize-winning author Albert Camus, who always said the most absurd way to die would be in a car crash. In 1960, Camus died at the age of 46 in a car crash after accepting a lift from his publisher; he was found with an unused train ticket in his pocket. He is buried in the local cemetery.

Letting off steam

Run around the fields by the château or drive north 12 km (8 miles) on the D36 to Bonnieux to stroll through the cedar forest planted in 1861.

The Lowdown

Map reference 13 D3
Address Vaucluse 84160.
 Château de Lourmarin: Impasse Pout du Temple, 84160; 04 90 68 15 23; www.chateau-de-lourmarin.com

Bus from Avignon, Apt & Aix-en-Provence

Visitor information Pl Henri Barthélémy, 84160; 04 90 68 10 77; www.lourmarin.com

Open Château de Lourmarin: daily; closed Dec 25 and Jan 1

Eat and drink **Real meal** Le Bistro de Lourmarin (2 Ave Philippe de Girard, 84160; 04 90 68 29 74) is a good vaue French bistro serving Southern cuisine. **Family treat** L'Antiquaire (9 Rue du Grand Pré, 84160; 04 90 68 17 29; www.restaurant-antiquaire.com; closed Sun night and Mon) serves classy cuisine in the heart of the village, with a gorgeous terrace.

Festival Journées Vénitienennes de Lourmarin, Venetian costume parade (Jun)

KIDS' CORNER

Look out for...

On a visit to the Cathédrale Notre-Dame-de-Nazareth in Vaison-la-Romaine:



- 1 What is embedded in the bell tower of the cathedral?
- 2 How many devils are there in the church? Can you spot them?
- 3 Where is the

big sun symbol in a triangle located. What is just below it?

Answers at the bottom of the page.

BOMB-PROOF BRIDGE

Vaison-la-Romaine's Roman bridge, which was built in the 1st century AD, is the toughest bridge in France – it even survived a German bomb during World War II.

Shepherds' shelters

The *bories* of Gordes are unusual in that there are so many in one place and there is a record of people actually living in them. Thousands of similar dry stone huts dot southern France. They served as handy shelters for shepherds and for storage but they were also useful as a way of clearing stones from fields – each uses 180 tons (163 tonnes) of rock. Try to build one in miniature.



Answers: 1 A Roman tombstone. 2 Two devils. The big devil is in the cloister; the little one is high up on the tower. 3 It is on the facade. A maze.

10 Marseille

Saints, sailors and fish stew

Sunny, exuberant, multi-ethnic Marseille buzzes with excitement. The city began as a Greek colony in 600 BC and quickly grew into a major port city. Louis XIV himself ordered the opening of the main street, La Canebière, in 1666. Nearby, the Marché des Capucins offers scents from around the world, while the Vieux Port is the perfect place to try the city's famous *bouillabaisse* (fish stew).



Fort St-Jean towering over the marina, Vieux Port

Key Sights



1 Museum d'Histoire Naturelle Over 300 stuffed animals and interactive displays are housed in the magnificent Palais Longchamps, surrounded by fountains and gardens.

2 Musée d'Histoire de Marseille This houses the ancient Roman merchant ship that was found near the port.



3 Vieille Charité This 17th-century poorhouse has two museums: one with spookily expressive African masks and funny Mexican animal sculptures and the other with Egyptian mummies.

5 Musée Marcel Carbonel Watch santons (little saints) being produced in Musée Marcel Carbonel's workshop, which makes over 600 figures.

6 Abbaye St-Victor Founded by St Jean Cassien in 416, this fortress-like church contains a 1,500-year-old crypt full of strange carvings and ancient sarcophagi.



7 Notre-Dame-de-la-Garde Marseille's landmark church has magnificent views. Touching votive paintings made by sailors saved from drowning crowd the interior.

4 Musée Cantini This superb collection of 20th-century art features works by the leading Fauves, Cubists and Surrealists, and abstract artists.

The Lowdown

Map reference 13 D4
Address 13000 (Bouches-du-Rhône). Museum d'Histoire Naturelle: 21 Blvd Claude Charles Guillaume Philippon, 13004; www.museum-marseille.org. Musée d'Histoire de Marseille: Pl Belsunce, Centre Bourse, 13001; 04 91 90 42 22. Vieille Charité (Musée d'Archeologie Méditerranéenne & Musée des Africains, Océanien & Amérindien): 2 Rue de la Charité, 13002; 04 91 54 77 75. Musée Cantini: 19 Rue Grignan; 04 91 54 77 75. Musée Marcel Carbonel: 47 Rue Neuve Ste Catherine, 13007; www.santonsmarcelcarbonel.com. Abbaye St-Victor: 3 Rue de l'Abbaye; www.saintvictor.net. Notre-Dame-de-la-Garde: Rue

Fort du Sanctuaire, 13006; www.notredamedelagarde.com

Train from Paris, Nice, Lyon and Toulouse

Visitor information 4 La Canebière, 13000; 08 26 50 05 00; www.marseille-tourisme.com

Open Museum d'Histoire Naturelle: 10am–5pm Tue–Sun. Musée d'Histoire de Marseille: currently closed for restoration. Vieille Charité (Musée d'Archeologie Méditerranéenne & Musée des Africains, Océanien & Amérindien): Oct–May: 10am–5pm, closed Mon; Jun–Sep: 11am–6pm, closed Mon. Musée Cantini: Oct–May: 10am–5pm, closed Mon; Jun–Sep: 11am–6pm, closed Mon. Musée Marcel

Carbonel: 10am–12:30pm & 2–6:30pm, closed Mon. Abbaye St-Victor: 3–7pm Mon–Fri. Notre-Dame-de-la-Garde: daily

Prices Museum d'Histoire Naturelle: €16; under 21s free; free Sun am. Vieille Charité (joint admission charge for Musée d'Archeologie Méditerranéenne & Musée des Africains, Océanien & Amérindien): €10; under 18s free; free Sun am. Musée Cantini: €10; under 18s free. Musée Marcel Carbonel: free. Abbaye St-Victor: crypt €4–14; under 18s free

Skipping the queue The Marseille City Pass offers a boat trip to the Château d'If, a guided tour, a ride on the *petit train*, admission to 14 museums and

Letting off steam

Take bus 83 along the Corniche John F Kennedy to the **Plages du Prado**, with a long stretch of beach, lawns and playgrounds. For a treat, take a boat trip to the Calanques, 12 km (7 miles) east of Marseille, with **Bleu Evasion** (www.visite-bateau-calanques-marseille-cassis.fr). They offer child-friendly excursions and good places to swim and snorkel.



Vendors selling fruits and vegetables at the Marché des Capucins

Eat and drink

Picnic: under €20; Snacks: €20–45; Real meal: €45–90; Family treat: over €90 (based on a family of four)

PICNIC Marché des Capucins

(Pl des Capucins, 13001) is an ideal place to stock up on goodies. Take bus 83 to Parc Borély for a picnic.

SNACKS Le Splendid (1 Blvd Garibaldi, 13001; 04 96 12 06 69)

offers sandwiches and kebabs on the sidewalk terrace. For dessert, there is ice cream and sorbets at **Maison de la Glace** (94 Rue Sainte, 13007).

REAL MEAL Beach Café (214 Quai du Port, 13002; 04 91 91 55 40; beach-cafe.net; lunch only) is a

child-friendly bar-restaurant located on the north side of the Vieux Port. It serves good seafood and has a reasonably priced choice of menus.

FAMILY TREAT Chez Fonfon (140 Vallon des Auffes, 13007; 04 91 52 14 38; www.chez-fonfon.com) in a stunning setting above the port, cooks up an excellent version of *bouillabaisse*. It also has a kids' menu.

Shopping

Visit Marseille's oldest bakery, **Le Four des Navettes** (136 Rue Sainte, 13007; 04 91 33 32 12; www.four-desnavettes.com), which opened in 1791 and specializes in boat-shaped "navette" pastries, associated with St Victor. For Marseille's famous olive oil and soap, go to **La Savonnerie du Séraïl** (50 Blvd Anatole de la Forge, 13001; www.savon-leseraïl.com).

Find out more

FILM *The Count of Monte Cristo* (many versions, last 2002), adapted from Alexandre Dumas's novel, *My Father's Glory* and *My Mother's Castle* (both released in 1990 and based on books written by Marcel Pagnol), are all set in Marseille.

Next stop...

CHATEAU D'IF Take the **Frioul Express boat** (www.frioul-if-express.com) from the Quai des Belges to the Château d'If (www.monuments-nationaux.fr) built by François I in 1529 to defend Marseille from his enemy the Holy Roman Emperor Charles V. In Alexandre Dumas's renowned novel, *The Count of Monte Cristo*, Edmund Dantès was imprisoned here for 14 years. See his "cell" complete with his escape hole, along with spectacular views near Marseille.



Sheer white cliffs and stunningly blue creeks at the Calanques

KIDS' CORNER

Nativity scenes at home

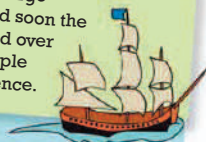
St Francis of Assisi made the first nativity scene in 1223 – some say he got the idea from his French mother! When churches closed during the French Revolution (1789–99), the people of Provence missed the nativity scenes so much that Jean-Louis Lagnel of Marseille started making little clay figures that people could set up at home. They were so popular that Marseille held its first *santon* (little saint) market in 1806, and it still takes place every December.



Look out for traditional figures not mentioned in the Bible such as *Bartoumieu* (jolly tramp), *Le Ravi* (the delighted one) and *L'Aveugle* (a blind man with his hand on his son's shoulder).

DEADLY SHIP

In 1720, a merchant ship in Marseille was put into quarantine as sailors on board had died of bubonic plague. The merchants insisted on getting the cargo released and soon the plague killed over 100,000 people across Provence.



They're singing our song

In 1792, Rouget de Lisle, an officer in Strasbourg, composed *The War-song of the Army of the Rhine*. Shortly after it was published, someone sang it at a banquet in Marseille for 500 Revolutionary volunteers. When the 500 marched into Paris, singing the song it became known forever after as the *Marseillaise*. It is still their national anthem.



free public transport for 1 or 2 days (€22 or €29 per person).

Guided tours Marseille Le Grand Tour (www.marseillelegrandtour.com) offers hop-on hop-off double-decker bus tours with an English audio guide.

Age range 5 plus

Allow A day

Festivals Carnaval de Marseille, carnival celebrations and parades (Mar). Fête du Vent has kite flying competitions (Sep)

Good family value?

Marseille is larger than life – has good transport, a warm climate and a warm heart, but does not have many sights for young kids.

11 Aix-en-Provence

Cézanne paintings and hot water

Once home to the art-loving 15th-century King René of Provence, the handsome city of Aix is still refined and arty. The Cathédrale St-Sauveur is filled with paintings, including the Renaissance *Triptych of The Burning Bush* by Nicholas Froment. Next door, in the archbishop's palace, the **Musée des Tapisseries** houses three sets of "merry" Beauvais tapestries, including a series on Don Quixote. Carefully hidden under the rafters from revolutionaries, the tapestries were only rediscovered in the 1840s.

Aix was the birthplace of artist Paul Cézanne (1839–1906), whose visionary paintings paved the way for the 20th-century artistic revolutions of Fauvism and Cubism, even though he was jeered at during his lifetime in



Copies of Cézanne's paintings on sale at Aix-en-Provence



The téléphérique (cable car) going up Mount Faron, high above Toulon

his hometown. Now the repentant city runs tours of **Atelier Cézanne**. Dinosaur fossils await in the **Museum d'Histoire Naturelle**, located close to the outdoor market in the Place des Prêcheurs. Here, the Église-St-Marie-Madeleine has another Renaissance masterpiece *The Annunciation*. Natural hot springs steam out of the fountains along the Cours Mirabeau. Just south is the **Musée Granet**. Eight Cézanne paintings were given to this museum by the French government in 1984 to cover up the fact that no one in Aix had bought his work while he was alive. Also housed in the museum are archaeological finds, including the sculptures of decapitated heads from the Celtic settlement of Entremont.

Letting off steam

Visit the playground in **Parc Rambot** (67 Cours Gambetta, 13100) or find Cézanne's favourite haunts by car

along the sign-posted Route de Cézanne, east of Aix towards Mont Ste-Victoire, a mountain he painted 87 times. Or take a 35-minute drive south to Carry-le-Rouet beach with its family-oriented sands.

12 Bandol

The city that sank in the sea

Famous for its wine, Bandol is a sunny resort. Tall cactuses grow in the **Jardin Exotique Sanary Bandol**, sheltering monkeys, flamingos, toucans and Vietnamese pigs.

In ancient times, this coast belonged to Tauroentum, "the city of the bull", founded by the Cretans around 500 BC, which sank into the sea during an earthquake. The **Musée Tauroentum**, west of Bandol, in St-Cyr-sur-Mer, is centred around a Roman villa with beautiful mosaics. St-Cyr is also proud over its Statue of Liberty in Place Portalis – one of the original models by Bartholdi before making the big one in New York. On nearby Île des Embiez, **L'Institut Océanographique Paul Ricard** showcases endangered marine species.



Colourful birds at the Jardin Exotique Sanary Bandol

The Lowdown

Map reference 14 E4

Address 13100 (Bouches-de-Rhône). Musée des Tapisseries: 28 Pl Martyrs de la Résistance, 13100; 04 42 23 09 91. Atelier Cézanne: 9 Ave Paul Cézanne, 13090; 04 42 21 06 53; www.atelier-cezanne.com. Museum d'Histoire Naturelle: 6 Rue Espariat, 13100; 04 42 27 91 27; www.museum-aix-en-provence.org. Musée Granet: Pl St Jean de Malte, 13100; 04 42 52 88 32; www.musee-granet-aixenprovence.fr

Train from Marseille

Visitor information 300 Ave Giuseppe Verdi, 13605; 04 42 16 11 61; www.aixenprovencetourism.com

Open Musée des Tapisseries: Feb–end Dec: closed Tue; closed Jan.

Atelier Cézanne: 1 Oct–end Mar: daily (visits in English: 4pm); Apr–Sep: daily (visits in English: 5pm); Dec–Feb: closed Sun. Museum d'Histoire Naturelle: daily. Musée Granet: mid-Jun–mid-Oct: daily; rest of the year: closed Mon.

Eat and drink **Real meal** Le Comté d'Aix (17 Rue Coronne, 13100; 04 42 26 79 26; closed Sun & Mon lunch) offers dishes from various regions of France. **Family treat** Mitch (26 Rue des Tanneurs, 13100; 04 42 26 63 08; www.mitchrestaurant.com; Mon–Sat dinner only, closed Sun) serves chic gourmet market cuisine.

Festivals Festival du Tambourin, music in the streets (Mar). Festival d'Aix, concerts and theatre (Jun–Jul)

The Lowdown

● **Map reference** 14 E5

Address 83110 (Var).

Jardin Exotique Sanary Bandol: 83100 Sanary-sur-Mer; 04 94 29 40 38; www.zoosanary.com.

Musée Tauroentum: 131 Route Madrague, 83270; 04 94 26 30 46; www.saintcyrsummer.com.

L'Institut Océanographique Paul Ricard: Île des Embiez, 83140 Le Brus; 04 94 34 02 49; www.institut-paul-ricard.org

🚆 **Train** from Marseille or Toulon.

Ferry from Six-Fours-les-Plages to Île Embiez

i Visitor information Allées

Vivien, 83110; 04 94 29 41 35; www.bandol.fr

🕒 **Open** Jardin Exotique Sanary

Bandol: Feb–Oct: daily; Nov–Jan: Wed, Sat & Sun. Musée Tauroentum: Jun–Sep: Tue pm, Wed–Mon; Oct–May: Sat & Sun pm. L'Institut Océanographique Paul Ricard: closed Feb–Mar: Sat & Sun am; Apr–Jun & Sep–mid–Nov: Sat am; mid–Nov–Jan: Sat & Sun

🍷 **Eat and drink Real meal** Pizzeria della Stazione (151 Ave de la Gare, 83150; 04 94 94 77 82) offers Italian-style pizzas and salads. **Family treat** Ti Punch (10 Rue Voltaire, 83150; 04 94 32 31 32; closed Sun in winter) serves seafood with a Caribbean flair.

🎉 **Festival** Fête du Millésime, wine festival in Bandol (Dec)

Letting off steam

Bandol has great beaches, as does St-Cyr-sur-Mer, whose Les Leques is huge, sandy and gently shelving. Or pay a visit to the nearby **Aqualand** (www.aqualand.fr).

13 Toulon

Big ships, little ships

Boasting one of the finest natural harbours on the Mediterranean, Toulon is France's biggest naval port. Its **Musée National de la Marine** has a collection of ships' models and figureheads. The **Musée des Arts Asiatiques** showcases treasures the sailors brought home from their adventures. Take the *téléphérique* to Mount Faron, a 584-m (1,916-ft) limestone massif for great views, walks, picnic grounds and the **Musée Mémorial du Débarquement en Provence**, covering the August 1944 Allied landings in the south of France. Close by is the **Zoo du Mont Faron**, whose tigers and other big cats are being prepared for a life in the wild.



A life-size model of a ship at the Musée National de la Marine, Toulon

Letting off steam

There are playgrounds in the central **Jardin Alexandre 1er** (Blvd Général Leclerc, 83000) or take bus 3 or 13 to the Plage du Mourillon just by the 16th-century Tour Royal and its park. Take a boat tour with the **Bateliers de la Rade** (Quai Constradt, 83000; 04 94 46 24 65) to get close to the aircraft carriers anchored in the harbour.

The Lowdown

● **Map reference** 14 E5

Address 83000 (Var).

Musée National de la Marine: Pl Monsenergue, 83000; 04 22 42 02 01; www.musee-marine.fr. Musée des Arts Asiatiques: Villa Jules Verne, 169 Littoral Frederic Mistral, 83000. Musée Mémorial du Débarquement en Provence: Route du Faron, 83200; 04 94 88 08 09; www.telepherique-faron.com. Zoo du Mont Faron: 83200; 04 94 88 07 89; www.telepherique-faron.com

🚆 **Train** from Marseille. **Bus** 40 to the téléphérique

i Visitor information 12 Pl Louis Blanc, 83000; 04 94 18 53 00 www.toulontourisme.com

🕒 **Open** Musée National de la Marine: closed Tue except in Jul & Aug; closed Jan. Musée des Arts Asiatiques: Tue–Sun pm. Musée Mémorial du Débarquement en Provence: call in advance. Zoo du Mont Faron: daily.

🍷 **Eat and drink Real meal** Le Pascalou (3 Pl à l'Huile, 83000; 04 94 62 87 02; lunch only; Sep–Mar: closed Mon) serves delicious family-style seafood dishes. **Family treat** La Bouche et l'Oreille (1 Ave de l'Infanterie de Marine, 83000; 04 94 46 38 47; www.labouchetloireille.com) offers classic cuisine and tapas.

🎉 **Festival** Festival de Jazz (Jul)

KIDS' CORNER

How to play pétanque...

1 Get six metal *boules* (balls) and a *cochonnet* (little target ball). Play on a flat, firm but not paved, surface – hard packed earth is ideal, or a gravel driveway.

2 Divide into two teams. Each team takes three balls with the same pattern on them. Flip a coin to see who will go first.

3 Draw a circle on the ground. A player from the team that won the toss stands in it and throws the *cochonnet* 6–10 m (19–33 ft).

4 Standing in the circle, a player from the same team throws the first *boule*, trying to get it as close as possible to the *cochonnet*. Then the other team throws theirs. Whoever has the closest *boule* holds the point.

5 After all six *boules* have been tossed, the team with the closest *boule* gets a point for each *boule* that is closer to the *cochonnet* than their opponents. The game is then repeated. The first team to earn 13 points wins the match.



KILLER GAME

In 1792, soldiers in Marseille were playing *boules*, using cannon balls around barrels of powder, and kaboom! Thirty eight of them died in the explosion.



Birth of a sport

When playing *boules*, players used to take three leaping steps before throwing their balls – that is, until 1910 in La Ciotat (east of Marseille), when Ernest Pitiot allowed his friend, suffering from rheumatism, to play standing with his feet together or *ped tanca* in Occitan, the local language. Thus the sport called *pétanque* was born.



14 St-Tropez

From pirate ships to millionaires' yachts

Isolated on its peninsula, St-Tropez suffered pirate attacks for centuries. The locals did not pay taxes in exchange for defending the coast, and in 1637 they beat off 22 Spanish galleons. In the 20th century, life changed radically when artists, writers and film stars converged on St-Tropez, making it one of the world's most famous resorts. If the pirates returned today, they would find plenty of loot in the luxury yachts, villas and boutiques!



Sculpture of St Torpès

Key Sights

① **Place des Lices** Once used for practicing military skills, this big square now hosts a colourful market on Tuesdays and Saturdays and endless games of pétanque under the plane trees.



② **Musée de l'Annonciade** This chapel boasts a collection of Fauvist and Pointillist paintings by artists such as Matisse.

③ **Maison des Papillons** Entomologist Dany Lartigue runs this fascinating butterfly museum in his house, beautifully displaying some 20,000 different species.

④ **Château de Suffren** This tower is all that remains of the castle of Admiral Pierre-André de Suffren, who fought the British in America's War of Independence.



⑤ **Église de St-Tropez** This 18th-century Italian-style Baroque church houses the statue of patron saint St Torpès that goes on parade during the Bravade celebrations.



⑥ **Place d'Ormeu** With the Église de St-Tropez and ochre coloured bell tower of Église de Notre-Dame, this is one of the most photogenic squares in town.



⑦ **Musée de la Citadelle** Housed in the 16th-century royal citadel that was often attacked by the independent-minded locals, this museum's exhibits focus on the town's colourful naval history.

⑧ **Plage des Graniers** Located below the citadel, this beach is a family favourite. It is also one of St-Tropez's few free beaches. Bouillabaisse and Jumeaux beaches are also options for kids.

The Lowdown

Map reference 14 F4
Address 83990 (Var).
 Musée de l'Annonciade: Pl Georges Grammont; 04 94 17 84 10. Maison des Papillons: 9 Rue Étienne Berny; 04 94 97 63 45. Église de St-Tropez: 6 Rue du Commandant Guichard, 83990. Musée de la Citadelle: Rue de la Citadelle, 83990; 04 94 97 59 43

Train to St-Raphaël, then bus 7601

Visitor information Quai Jean Jaurès; 08 92 68 48 28; www.ot-saint-tropez.com

Open Musée de l'Annonciade: 10am–noon & 2–6pm Wed–Mon; closed Nov. Maison des Papillons: Apr–mid-Nov: 10am–12:30pm & 2–6pm; closed Mon, Tue am, Thu am & Sun. Musée de la Citadelle: 10am–12:30pm & 1:30–5:30pm daily; ring ahead for timings

Prices Musée de l'Annonciade: €20; under 12s free. Maison des Papillons: €8; under 12s free. Musée de la Citadelle: €12; under 8s free

Skipping the queue Visit the sites in the morning to beat the crowds.

Guided tours Contact the tourist office for details.

Age range 3 plus

Allow A day

Festivals Fête de la Bravade (May) and Fête des Espagnols (Jun). Both festivals feature costumes, processions and loud muskets, celebrating historic victories.

Good family value?

St-Tropez has a laid-back atmosphere and great beaches, but gets very crowded during July and August and is also very expensive.



A snorkelling lesson in progress at the Domaine du Rayol, Le Rayol-Canadel

Letting off steam

Zip off to the nearby village of Gassin for a thrilling time in the **Azur Park** (www.azurpark.com), a massive funfair. Drive or take a taxi 27 km (17 miles) west of St-Tropez to the Mediterranean gardens of the **Domaine du Rayol** (www.domainedurayol.org) in Le Rayol-Canadel, which are a part of the coastal nature reserve. Book ahead for a guided snorkelling tour of the underwater flora and fauna in its Jardin Marin, suitable for kids aged 8 plus.

Eat and drink

Picnic: under €20; *Snacks:* €20–45; *Real meal:* €45–90; *Family treat:* over €90 (based on a family of four)

PICNIC La Tarte Tropicienne

(Pl des Lices, 83990; 04 94 97 04 69) offers the local sweet yeast bread and cream tart. Picnic by the Plage des Graniers.

SNACKS Pizzeria Bruno (2 Rue de l'Eglise, 83990; 04 94 97 05 18; Apr–Nov) bakes pizzas, with plenty of choices for kids and also creamy mussels and savoury tarts.

REAL MEAL La Part des Anges (Rue de l'Eglise, 83990; 04 94 96 19 50; closed Sun) is a warm and friendly little bistro, with tasty food and reasonably priced menus displayed on chalkboards.

FAMILY TREAT La Pesquièrre-Le Mazagran-Lou Revelen (1 Rue des Remparts, 83990; 04 94 97 05 92; www.restaurant-pesquiere.fr; late Mar–late Oct: open daily) offers Provençal cuisine on a pretty terrace near the sea; includes a kids' menu.

Shopping

The classic store **Galleries Tropéziennes** (56 Rue Gambetta, 83990; 04 94 97 68 14) stocks a

range of unique gift items, clothes, fabrics and espadrilles for the whole family. Check out **Rondini** (16 Rue Georges-Clemenceau, 83990; 04 94 97 19 55; www.rondini.fr), the inventor of handmade *sandales tropéziennes*. The shop has been around since 1927 and is renowned for elegant sandals, including versions for kids.

Find out more

FILM *Le Gendarme de Saint-Tropez* (1964), a French comedy about a sergeant, and other Louis de Funès comedies were filmed in St Tropez. The beach scenes in the children's musical *Chitty Chitty Bang Bang* (1964) were also shot in St-Tropez.



Winding canals in the popular resort of Port-Grimaud

Next stop...

PORT-GRIMAUD In summer, boats (www.bateauxverts.com) cross over to Port-Grimaud, Provence's "Little Venice" created in the 1960s out of a swamp by architect François Spoerry. The canals, beaches and lack of cars make it fun to explore. Hire bikes from **Amiral Services** (51 Grande Rue, 83310; 04 94 43 47 32) or a boat for half a day from **Presta Marine** (Quai de Fossés, 83310; 04 94 56 19 93; presta-marine.com).

KIDS' CORNER



Find out more...

- 1 Walk out on the Môle Jean Réveille, located close to Château de Suffren and sit on the infamous *Banc des Mensonges* (Liar's Bench). Some say you can see the Alps from here on a clear day. Is it true?
- 2 What is in the tower with a yellow top that dominates St-Tropez?
- 3 In the Musée de l'Annonciade, in the Quai de St-Tropez, see pictures painted by Paul Signac using dots of colour. What is this technique called? a) Fauvism b) Pointillism c) Impressionism

Answers at the bottom of the page.



COAT OF ARMS

St-Tropez's coat of arms features St Torpès holding a sword. A Roman officer in Pisa, Torpès was beheaded with a sword in AD 68 for being a Christian. His body was put in a boat with a dog and rooster, and it floated here – and the town had a new name.

Sacrificed in vain

The model of the ancient Greek sculptor Praxiteles, Phryne, had the body of a goddess but the face of a toad. Exiled from Athens in 4 BC, she married a Celto-Ligurian officer and founded a town named Athenopolis, the future St-Tropez.

The Ligurians later sacrificed Phryne to the Ligurian gods, thinking that would keep out any future foreigners. It did not work very well!



Answers: 2 A clock. 3 b) Pointillism. When you step back from the painting, the dots become forms that seem to shimmer with light.

15 Hyères

Cubism and sand dunes

A balmy micro-climate has enabled the city of Hyères to make a living out of growing palms and selling them around Europe. Sadly the trees have been laid low by grubs and weevils, but a few have survived amidst lush plantations in the **Jardins Olbius-Riquier**. In 1924, during the height of the palm boom, Charles de Noailles, a patron of writers and artists such as Salvador Dalí, Jean Cocteau, Picasso and Man Ray, built **Villa Noailles**, a “Château Cubiste,” with a Cubist garden and an indoor pool. It hosts exhibitions and the annual Festival International de Mode et de Photographie à Hyères.

A 35-minute drive up in the hills is the **Village des Tortues**, a fascinating Hermann’s tortoise sanctuary in the town of Gonfaron, located 27 km (17 miles) northeast of Hyères.

Letting off steam

Head to the vibrant **Magic World** (www.fun-mania.fr), for a variety of amusements at the funfairs and shows. For a sand and beach outing, take the bus to the unique Giens Peninsula, located south of Hyères. Made up of two *tomobos* (sand dune ridges) that enclose salt



The beach on Porquerolles island, near Hyères

marshes, the peninsula is favoured by pink flamingos. The more sheltered east side is better for sunbathing. TLV and TVM boats (www.tlv-tvm.com) shuttle off from Giens’s Tour Fondue pier to the car- and cigarette-free island of Porquerolles, which is now a national park. Hire bicycles to explore its beaches and cliffside scenery, its fort and windmill.

16 Ste-Maxime

Babar on the beach

The city of Ste-Maxime may not have the glitter of St-Tropez, but it has long sandy beaches and Jean de Brunhoff (1899–1937), author of the Babar books. His *Voyage de Babar* eternalized the Plage des Eléphants, located east of the centre, although it is hard to imagine Babar on the jet skis that buzz there today.

Housed in the 16th-century tower of Ste-Maxime, the **Musée de la Tour Carrée** focuses on local history. The **Musée du Phonographe et de**



Remains of an impressive Roman aqueduct, Fréjus

The Lowdown

- **Map reference** 14 F4
Address 83120 (Var).
 Musée de la Tour Carrée: Pl de l’Eglise; 04 94 96 70 30. Musée du Phonographe et de la Musique Mécanique: Route du Muy; 04 94 96 50 52; www.phono.org/Maxime.html
- 🚗 **Boat** from St-Tropez. **Bus** (www.bateauxverts.com) from St-Tropez
- i **Visitor information** 1 Prom Simon Lorigère, 83120; 04 94 55 75 55/08 26 20 83 83; www.ste-maxime.com
- 🕒 **Open** Musée de la Tour Carrée: closed Mon & Tue. Musée du Phonographe et de la Musique Mécanique: May–Sep: 10am–midnight & 4–6 pm Wed–Sun
- 🍷 **Eat and drink** *Family treat* Mahi Plage (53 Ave Gen Touzet du Vigier, 83120; 04 94 96 25 57; www.mahiplage.fr; open daily) on the beach, ranges from seafood to paninis. *Family treat* L’Endroit En Provence (40 Rue Paul Bert, 83120; 04 94 49 19 71; closed lunch) serves stylish Mediterranean dishes; best to book.
- 🎪 **Festival** Foire Annuelle Sainte Maxime, market of regional foods, handmade goods and plants (Apr)

la Musique Mécanique, located 6 miles (10 km) north, in a toy-like building in the Parc St-Donat, exhibits inventions of all kinds, including some of Edison’s original phonographs.

Letting off steam

Take water-skiing classes and lots more at the **Water Glisse Passion** (Plage de La Nartelle, 83120; 06 61 85 59 27; www.water-glisse-passion.com) or enjoy exhilarating water rides in **Aqualand** (www.aqualand.fr).

The Lowdown

- **Map reference** 14 F5
Address 83400 (Var).
 Jardins Olbius-Riquier: Ave Ambroise Thomas, 83400; 04 94 00 78 65. Villa Noailles: Parc St-Bernard, 83400; 04 98 08 01 98; www.villanoailles-hyeres.com. Village des Tortues: Quartier les Plaines, 83590; 04 94 78 26 41; www.villagetortues.com
- 🚗 **Train** from Toulon
- i **Visitor information** Rotonde du Park Hôtel, Ave de Belgique, 83400; 04 94 01 84 50; www.hyeres-tourisme.com
- 🕒 **Open** Jardins Olbius-Riquier: daily until sunset. Villa Noailles: closed Jul–Aug; Mon; rest of the year: Mon, Tue & public hols. Village des Tortues: daily
- 🍷 **Eat and drink** *Real meal* Au fil de l’eau (Pl des Savonnières, 14 Rue de Limans, 83400; 04 94 28 69 82; closed Mon & Sun) changes its menu seasonally. *Family treat* Les Jardins de Bacchus (32 Ave Gambetta, 83400; www.baccushyeres.com) serves Mediterranean cuisine.

Tree-top thrills await those aged 5 plus in **Arbre et Aventure** (www.arbreetaventurestemaxime.com).

17 Fréjus

Julius Caesar was here

Founded by Julius Caesar, Fréjus was the first Roman colony in France, but suffered a major setback when its huge port silted up. It was raided at least seven times by Saracens, but the Roman **Amphithéâtre** and aqueduct survived. Fascinating finds include a beautiful mosaic and a two-faced statue of Hermes, on display in the **Musée Archéologique**.

The **Cité Episcopale** is built around an early Gothic cathedral. Take a guided tour to see splendid Renaissance doors, a rare 5th-century baptistery and the unique cloister, where the ceiling is covered with 300 14th-century paintings of daily life and imaginary animals.

The Lowdown

Map reference 14 F4

Address 83600 (Var). Roman Amphithéâtre: Rue du Theatre Roman; 04 94 53 58 75. Musée Archéologique: Pl Calvini. Cité Episcopale: 58 Rue de Fleury; 04 94 51 26 30; www.cathedrale-frejus.monuments-nationaux.fr

Train from Nice and Toulon

Visitor information 249 Rue Jean Jaurès, 83600; 04 94 51 83 83; www.frejus.fr

Open Amphithéâtre & Musée Archéologique: Apr–Oct: Tue–Sun; Nov–Mar: Tue, Thu–Sat. Cité Episcopale: daily; Oct–May: closed Mon

Eat and drink Snacks L'Absolu (Pl Paul Vemet, 83600; 04 94 17 19 19; summer daily except Sun, winter lunch daily except Sun & dinner Fri and Sat only) offers global cuisines. **Real meal** Autre Ray'son (37 Quai Marc-Antoine, 83600; 04 94 17 11 21; closed Mon & Nov) offers traditional creative cooking.

Festivals La Bravade (Apr–May). Fréjus Festival de l'Air, massive kite flying festival (Nov)

Letting off steam

If Fréjus's long beach is not enough, go to **Aqualand** (www.aqualand.fr), the biggest water park on the Côte d'Azur. Or feel the chills at **Luna Park** (www.lunapark-frejus.com), with its terrifying Magic Mountain and the massive Ferris wheel.



The orange-tiled roofs of the city centre, St-Raphaël

18 St-Raphaël

Mysteries under the sea

For decades people talked of a sunken city, perhaps even Atlantis, off the coast of St-Raphaël. Divers kept finding bricks, but it was oceanographer Jacques Cousteau who found a Roman shipwreck that had been carrying building materials. The finds are housed in the **Musée d'Archéologie Sous-marine**, along with the reconstruction of a Roman galley and a room on the dolmens, as well as menhirs of the area.

Today a charming seaside resort, St-Raphaël was badly damaged during World War II and underwent extensive restoration. Only Église St-Rafèu, built in 1150, and its Templar tower recall that this was once an important medieval town.

Letting off steam

Head to one of St-Raphaël's several beaches or drive or take a taxi east to the porphyry cliffs and creeks of Massif de l'Estérel. The **Parc Naturel de la Pointe de l'Aiguille** in Théoule-sur-Mer has picnic tables with superb views over the Baie de Cannes.

The Lowdown

Map reference 14 F4

Address 83700 (Var). Musée d'Archéologie Sous-marine: Rue des Templiers; 04 94 19 25 75

Train from Nice and Toulon

Visitor information Quai Albert 1er, 83700; 04 94 19 52 52; www.saint-raphael.com

Open Musée d'Archéologie Sous-marine: Tue–Sat

Eat and drink Snacks Maître Julien (171 Ave Général du Leclerc, 83700; 04 94 53 87 27) has home-made pizzas and cakes. **Real meal** L'Espace Bleu (Port Santa Lucia, 83700; 04 94 82 34 44) serves tagliatelle with prawns.

KIDS' CORNER

Imaginary animals

The pictures on the ceiling of Fréjus's cloister represent a real and imaginary universe.

Can you find the mermaid or the man riding a pig? Some of the funniest ones are half-human and half-animal. Try making up some on your own.



The missing island

Ever since Plato wrote about the mighty island nation of Atlantis that tried to invade Athens in around 9,800 BC and sunk "in a single day and night of misfortune", people have been looking for it in the bottom of the Mediterranean and the Atlantic. One thing is for certain – it's not off St-Raphaël!

CLASSIC CINEMA

Charles de Noailles funded *L'Age d'Or* (1930), a film by Salvador Dalí and Luis Buñuel that poked so much fun at society and religion that it caused a riot when it was shown in Paris. Today, it is acknowledged as a masterpiece of Surrealist cinema.



France's most celebrated elephant

When little Mathieu de Bruhnoff was ill, his mum Cécile told him stories of an elephant named Babar. Her husband Jean drew the pictures and when *The Story of Babar* came out in 1931, it was a huge success. Ten years on, after Jean's death, his elder son Laurent de Bruhnoff continued the series. He illustrated them so well that many readers did not notice the change of artist! The stories have found new life as a 3D animated series, *Babar and the Adventures of Badou*, starring Babar's grandson.



19 Nice

France's southern capital of sun, fun and art

Popularly known in the local dialect as "Nizza la Bella", or "Nice the Beautiful", Nice was founded by the Greeks and was a part of the Italian kingdom of Sardinia until 1860. The second-most visited city in France after Paris, it offers semi-tropical gardens, great food and fine modern art museums. A superb network of public transport makes it an ideal base for touring the Côte d'Azur. Be sure to pack jelly shoes for the pebbly beach.



Wooden fishing boats in Nice's port

Key Sights

① **Musée Matisse** The museum exhibits a collection of Matisse's joyful collages, sculptures and paintings, which he left to Nice.

② **Musée Chagall** While living in nearby Vence in 1966, Chagall donated 17 colour-drenched canvases on Old Testament themes to the French state.

0 km 1
0 mile 1

③ **Musée d'Art Moderne et d'Art Contemporain** This collection is rich in the playful art of the 1960s and 70s by Ben, Warhol, Klein and Christo.

④ **Palais Lascaris** The 17th-century Baroque palace was built and decorated by Genoese architects. It houses rare and antique instruments.

⑤ **Cathédrale Ste-Réparate** This 17th-century cathedral in Vieux Nice is a fine example of pure Italian Baroque.

⑥ **Musée International d'Art Naïf Anatole-Jakovsky** The "perfume king" François Coty's villa houses an irresistible collection of art by Naïve artists such as Frederic Lanovsky.

⑦ **Parc Phoenix** Wander amidst the flora and fauna of seven tropical climates in the "Green Diamond" greenhouse, and watch the musical fountain put on a free show.



⑥ **Musée International d'Art Naïf Anatole-Jakovsky** The "perfume king" François Coty's villa houses an irresistible collection of art by Naïve artists such as Frederic Lanovsky.



⑦ **Parc Phoenix** Wander amidst the flora and fauna of seven tropical climates in the "Green Diamond" greenhouse, and watch the musical fountain put on a free show.

The Lowdown

● **Map reference** 14 G3
Address 06000 (Alpes-Maritimes). Musée Matisse: 164 Ave des Arènes de Cimiez, 06000; www.musee-matisse-nice.org. Musée Chagall: Ave Docteur Ménard, 06000; www.musees-nationaux-alpesmaritimes.fr. Musée d'Art Moderne et d'Art Contemporain: Prom des Arts 06364; www.mamac-nice.org. Palais Lascaris: 15 Rue Droite, 06300; www.palais-lascaris-nice.org. Cathédrale Ste-Réparate: 3 Pl Rossetti, 06300; www.cathedrale-nice.com. Musée International d'Art Naïf Anatole-Jakovsky: Ave de Fabron, 06200; 04 93 71 78 33. Parc Phoenix (includes Musée des Arts Asiatiques): 405 Prom

des Anglais, 06200; www.parc-phoenix.org



Train from Marseille

Visitor information 5 Prom des Anglais, 06302; 08 92 707 407; www.nicetourisme.com



Open Musée Matisse, Palais Lascaris & Musée International d'Art Naïf Anatole-Jakovsky: 10am–6pm Wed–Mon. Musée Chagall: 10am–5pm Wed–Mon; May–Oct: till 6pm. Musée d'Art Moderne et d'Art Contemporain: 10am–6pm Tue–Sun. Parc Phoenix: Apr–Sep: 9:30am–7:30pm daily; Sep–Mar: till 6pm



Prices Musée Matisse, Musée d'Art Moderne et d'Art Contemporain &

Musée International d'Art Naïf Anatole-Jakovsky: free. Musée Chagall: €16; under 18s free. Palais Lascaris: €12 Parc Phoenix: €6–12; under 12s free



Skipping the queue The French Riviera Pass (www.frenchriviera-pass.com) offers admission to the main sights in and around Nice; there are discounts for children.



Guided tours The Nice Le Grand Tour (under 4s free) and Vieux Nice Tour (in English and French; under 5s free) are available. Contact tourist office for details.



Age range 3 plus



Activities Rent bikes at Vélo Bleu (www.velobleu.org) to



Nice's pebbly beach, backed by the famous Promenade des Anglais

Letting off steam

Go for a swim off one of Nice's public or private beaches. Among the latter, Neptune and Hi! Beach are family oriented, with special play areas. Climb the steps or pay a small fee for the lift from the Quai des Etats-Unis up the **Colline du Château** (Parc du Château, 06300; 04 93 85 62 33), the Greek acropolis of Nice and now a park with a playground and scenic views.

Eat and drink

Picnic: under €20; Snacks: €20–45; Real meal: €45–90; Family treat: over €90 (based on a family of four)

PICNIC Cours Saleya hosts a great food market (closed Mon). Try socca (a crispy chickpea pancake), eaten hot from a paper cone at Thérèse's stall. Head for the beach or picnic tables in Parc Phoenix.

SNACKS Le Flow (1 Rue Delille, 06000; 09 81 03 04 73)

is a great spot for pizzas, paninis, sandwiches, and home-made desserts.

cycle along the seaside on the celebrated Promenade des Anglais.



Allow 2 or 3 days

Festivals Carnaval de Nice, one of the biggest celebrations in France (Feb). Festival de Jazz and Musicalia, a world music festival (Aug)

Good family value?

Although most of the museums are free, Nice can be expensive. With a pleasing climate and plenty to see, the city makes for a superb winter break as it is warm and sunny.

REAL MEAL La Voglia (2 Rue St François de Paule, 06300; 04 93 80 99 16; www.lavoglia.com; open daily) serves pizzas, ravioli, gnocchi (dumplings) and heavenly desserts in generous portions.

FAMILY TREAT La Merenda

(4 Rue Raoul-Bosio, 06300; www.lamerenda.net; closed Sat, Sun, public hols & 1–15 Aug) is a quirky Niçois institution. Michelin-star chef Dominique le Stanc delights with his twists on traditional regional cuisine.

Shopping

Head for the **Confiserie Florian** (12 Quai Papacino, 06300; 04 93 55 43 50) for home-made sweets and chocolates, with free tours of the workshop. A variety of model trains, cars and more awaits shoppers at **Love Modelisme** (8 Blvd Lech-Walesa, 06300; 04 93 62 31 27; www.love-modelisme.com).



The bustling market area of Cours Saleya lined with a variety of stalls

Find out more

DIGITAL Download the walking tours for Nice: www.nice-tourism.com/en/nice-attractions/sightseeing-tours-in-nice/nice-walking-tours.html

FILM *To Catch a Thief* (1955) starring Cary Grant and Grace Kelly is set on the French Riviera. *Return of the Pink Panther* (1975), starring Peter Sellers, was also shot in Nice.

Next stop...

ST-PAUL-DE-VENTE Take bus 400 west to the scenic town of St-Paul-de-Vence to visit the **Fondation Maeght** (www.fondation-maeght.com), an amazing gallery of modern art. Built in 1964, the museum is fantastic for kids. The foundation's garden, with Giacometti's stick-thin human and animal statues, Miró's maze, Chagall's mosaic and Bury's hypnotic fountain, has a magic all of its own.

KIDS' CORNER

Find out more...

- Nice's name comes from the Greek word for victory – just like the name of a well-known sports shoe company. What is the word?
- Italy's national hero was born in Vieux Nice in 1806. Who was he? (Hint: Vieux Nice has a square named after him.)
- A library in the centre of Nice (Boulevard St-Sébastien) is housed in a sculpture – what does the sculpture depict?



Answers at the bottom of the page.

Cannon boom

A 19th-century English resident was so angry because his lunch was never served on time that he ordered a cannon to be fired from Colline du Château to announce noon. It is still fired today.

WINTER SUN

The Riviera became a winter resort, thanks to Tobias Smollett, a doctor, whose bestselling book *Travels Through France and Italy* talked about the benefits of swimming in the sea. Smollett, however, was so grouchy that fellow writer Laurence Sterne nicknamed him "Smelfungus".



Paganini's prank

In the 19th century, the virtuoso violinist Paganini lived near Nice's cathedral, and he used to enjoy scaring the neighbours by making his violin sound like howling cats. He did it so well that when he died, the bishop refused him a Christian burial, claiming he was possessed by the devil.

Answers: 1 Nike 2 Garibaldi 3 A head in a box – La Tête Carrée

20 Monaco

The second-smallest country in the world

Smaller than New York's Central Park, Monaco is famed for its casino, Formula 1 Grand Prix, millionaires and actress Grace Kelly, who married into the royal family of Grimaldi. Her son, Prince Albert II, opens his **Palais Princier** to visitors; the changing of the guard takes place at the entrance to the palace daily at 11:55am.

In 1910, the scientifically inclined Prince Albert I built the **Musée Océanographique**, a stone cliff of a building, with a 90-tank aquarium, including a shark and coral lagoon. He also planted the unique **Jardin Exotique** on the mountainside with crazy-looking cactuses. A visit to these gardens includes the Observatory Cave, which is filled with unusual stalactites, and also the Musée d'Anthropologie Préhistorique. The **Nouveau Musée National de Monaco-Villa Sauber** has a huge collection of dolls and their houses.

The Lowdown

Map reference 14 G3

Address 98030 (Monaco). Palais Princier: Monaco-Ville, 98000; 00377 93 25 18 31; www.palais.mc. Musée Océanographique: Ave St-Martin, 98000; 00377 93 15 36 00; www.oceano.mc. Jardin Exotique: 62 Blvd du Jardin Exotique, 98002; www.jardin-exotique.mc. Nouveau Musée National de Monaco-Villa Sauber: 17 Ave Princesse Grace, 98000; www.nmm.mc

Train or RCA bus 100 from Nice

Visitor information 2a Blvd des Moulins, 98030; 00377 92 16 61 16; www.visitmonaco.com

Open Palais Princier: Apr–Oct: daily. Musée Océanographique, Jardin Exotique & Nouveau Musée National de Monaco-Villa Sauber: daily

Eat and drink **Real meal** La Pizzeria Monegasque (4 Rue Terrazzani, 98000 La Condamine; 00377 93 30 16 38; closed Sat lunch & Sun) offers pizza, steaks and duck maigret. Book. **Family treat** Il Terrazzino (2 Rue des Iris, 98000; 00377 93 50 24 27; Mon–Sat) has daily pasta, meat specials and an antipasti bar.

Festivals Festival International du Cirque de Monte-Carlo (Jan–Feb), International Gran Prix de Monaco (May)



The Musée Océanographique perching on its cliff, Monaco

Letting off steam

Hit the beach – Larvotto is the only public beach in Monaco, but the fee-charging Note Bleue offers fun attractions and a playground for kids.

21 Biot

Home of the fat noodly Tubist

In 1955, Fernand Léger bought land in the hill town of Biot to build a giant ceramic garden, but he died two weeks later. Instead, his widow built the **Musée Fernand Léger** to house his paintings and mosaics. Léger was nicknamed the “Tubist” for his love of fat, noodly and colourful art forms. Next to the museum is the Okonek family's Japanese gardens and Europe's biggest bonsai forest at the **Musée du Bonsaï**. Biot is also noted for its bubbly glass, made at the **Verrerie de Biot**, where visitors can watch the glassblowers at work.

Letting off steam

Head south to **Marineland** (www.marineland.fr) in the town of Antibes. It comprises four parks – Marineland, with an aquarium, polar bears and dolphin and seal shows; the Ferme du Far West, with fun rides and vast playgrounds; Adventure Golf,



Colourful bubbly glasses for sale in the shops in Biot

The Lowdown

Map reference 14 G4

Address 06410 (Alpes-Maritimes). Musée Fernand Léger: Chemin du Val de Pome; 04 92 91 50 20; www.musees-nationaux-alpes-maritimes.fr. Musée du Bonsaï: 299 Chemin du Val de Pôme; 04 93 65 63 99; museedu Bonsaï.free.fr. Monaco Verrerie de Biot: Chemin des Combes; 04 93 65 03 00; www.verrieriebiot.com

Train to Antibes, then Enviaus 7 or 10

Visitor information 46 Rue St-Sébastien, 06410; 04 93 65 78 00; www.biot-tourisme.com

Open Musée Fernand Léger & Musée du Bonsaï: closed Tue. Verrerie de Biot: daily

Eat and drink **Real meal** Cucina Vera (44 Impasse St-Sébastien, 06410; 04 92 91 06 44; closed Tue & Wed) offers superb tagliatelle. **Family treat** La Pierre à Four (15 Route de Valbonne, 06410; 04 93 65 60 00; closed Sun dinner & Mon) serves Provençal cuisine and an original cheese platter.

Festival Mimosa Festival (Feb)

a crazy-golf course; and the Aqualash water park. Pick and choose, or visit all the attractions with a two-day pass.

22 Cannes

Stars by the sea

Oozing glitz and glamour, Cannes is synonymous with the Cannes Film Festival, when movie stars converge every May on the red carpet of the **Palais du Festival**, on the seafront boulevard of La Croisette. Wander along the Allée des Stars to see over 300 terracotta handprints of celebrities. Hop on to Le Petit Train du Cinéma (www.cannes-petit-train.com) for a guided tour of Cannes.

Steps lead up to the citadel which houses the **Musée de la Castre**, with paintings, Tibetan masks, Inuit art and antique instruments. For a free family beach, head to Port Canto and Plage Gazagnaire.

Letting off steam

Take a 15-minute boat ride to the car-free **Île Ste-Marguerite** (www.trans-cote-azur.com), a nature reserve with beaches and picnic sites. The Musée de la Mer here, which houses the prison cell of the Man in the Iron Mask, is a must-visit.

The Lowdown

Map Reference 14 G4
Address 06400 (Alpes-Maritimes), Musée de la Castre: Pl de la Castre, 06400 Le Suquet; 04 93 38 55 26; www.cannes.com

Train or TAM bus 20 from Nice

Visitor information Palais des Festivals, 1 Blvd de la Croisette, 06400; 04 92 99 84 22; www.cannes-destination.fr

Open Musée de la Castre: Jul & Aug: daily; Sep–Jun: closed Mon

Eat and drink *Real meal* Bistrot Margaux (14 Rue Helene Vagliano, 06400; 04 93 38 68 68) has herby lamb and creamy dauphinoise potatoes. *Family treat* IX-Nove (24 Rue Pasteur, 06400; 04 93 43 20 37; closed Sat lunch & Sun) offers pastas, Florentine steaks and vegetarian dishes.

Festival Festival de Cannes (May)

23 Grasse

France's most fragrant town

In the 16th century, the tanneries of Grasse started making perfumed gloves – one of the status symbols of the Renaissance period – for Queen Catherine de Medici. Although the gloves went out of fashion with time, the scent industry continued to grow. Known as the World Capital of Perfume, Grasse has 30 *parfumeries*, three of which, **Fragonard**, **Galimard** and **Molinard**, offer daily guided tours. The **Musée International de la Parfumerie** highlights 3,000 years of the history of perfumes: buy a joint ticket to see, or rather smell, the museum's **Perfume Garden** in the nearby town of Mouans-Sartoux.



A funny sand sculpture of Shrek on the beach of otherwise stylish Cannes

Letting off steam

Head to Castellane, an hour's ride by car or taxi, to Europe's deepest limestone canyon, the **Gorges du Verdon**, which at certain points drops to a depth of 700 m (2,296 ft) from the rim to the Verdon river. Enjoy the thrill of scary bridges and dizzying views on the circular route to the village of Moustiers-Ste-Marie.

The Lowdown

Map reference 14 G3
Address 06130 (Alpes-Maritimes), Fragonard: 20 Blvd Fragonard, 06130; 04 92 42 34 34; www.fragonard.com. Galimard: 73 Route de Cannes, 06130; 04 93 09 20 00; www.galimard.com. Molinard: 60 Blvd Victor Hugo, 06130; 04 92 42 33 28; www.molinard.com. Musée International de la Parfumerie: 8 Pl du Cours, 06130 & Perfume Garden: 979 Chemin des Gourettes, 06370 Mouans-Sartoux; 04 97 05 58 00; www.museesdegrasse.com

Bus 500 from Nice

Visitor information Cours Honoré Cresp, 06130; 04 93 36 66 66; www.grasse.fr

Open Fragonard: daily; Nov–Jan: closed 12–2:30pm. Galimard: daily; Oct–Mar: closed 1–2pm Sun. Molinard: daily; Oct–Mar: closed Sun. Musée International de la Parfumerie: Oct–Mar: closed Tue

Eat and drink *Real meal* La Voute (3 Rue du Thourun, 06130; 04 93 36 11 43; closed Sun) offers stuffed courgette flowers. *Family treat* Au Fil du Temps (83 Ave Auguste Renoir, Magagnosc, 06520; 04 93 36 20 64; closed Wed & Sun; open for dinner only Mon–Sat in Jul & Aug) serves excellent Provençal cuisine.

KIDS' CORNER

Find out more...



1 Did the Man in the Iron Mask really wear a mask made of iron?

2 Which cartoon character's handprint can you find at the Allée des Stars in Cannes?

3 Guess how many rose buds it takes to make 1 kg (2 lbs) of rose essence for perfume?

Answers at the bottom of the page.



SCENTED STINK

It is not just flowers that go into the perfumes of Grasse: whale vomit, Tibetan goat musk and secretions from the glands of Ethiopian cats are used as well, although since 1998 the latter has been synthesized in the lab.

The mysterious Man in the Iron Mask

In 1669, Louis XIV ordered the arrest of one "Eustache Dauger". He would spend the next 34 years in prison, in the Bastille in Paris, on the Île Ste-Marguerite and elsewhere, always under the care of the same gaoler. The prisoner throughout wore a velvet or leather (not iron) mask over his face. When he died, he was buried under the name of Marchioly. Many precautions were taken to keep his identity secret. It continues to be one of the great mysteries in

French history.

Over the centuries, dozens of candidates have been suggested.



Answers: **1** No, the mask was made of velvet or leather. **2** Mickey Mouse. **3** 900,000 rose buds.

Where to Stay in Provence and the Côte d'Azur

From celebrated hotels, villas and B&Bs to city apartments, self-catering resorts and camping sites, the range of accommodation in Provence and the Côte d'Azur is staggering, but often expensive. Families able to travel outside of July and August will find significant discounts.

AGENCIES

South of France Villas

www.southfrancevillas.com

This agency offers a selection of villas in Provence and the Côte d'Azur; all either have a pool or are located on the beach.

Côte d'Azur Maison

www.coteazurmaison.com

The website lists a wide range of properties – villas, apartments, gîtes and B&Bs that can be rented directly from the owners.

Aix-en-Provence Map 14 E4

HOTEL

Le Mas des Ecureuils

1170 Petite Route des Milles, 13090; 04 42 24 40 48; www.lemasdesecureuils.com

Southwest of the centre of Aix, this hotel offers well-equipped rooms with Wi-Fi and satellite TV. There are hammocks for adults, a *hammam* (Turkish bath) and a *pétanque* court. Good restaurant with a kids' menu.



€€

CAMPING

Camping Chantecler

13100 Val St-André; 04 42 26 12 98; www.campingchantecler.com

Only 2 km (1 mile) from Aix's centre, this camp site has shaded pitches, chalets and mobile homes. There is a playground, and a restaurant/snack bar open in July and August.



€€€



Rooms at the old farmhouse in Bastide de la Brague, Antibes

Antibes

Map 14 G4

SELF-CATERING

Bastide de la Brague

55 Ave Numéro 6, 06600 La Brague; 04 93 65 73 78; www.bbchambreantibes.com

Located near the sea and set amidst olive trees, this old farmhouse has five rooms with Wi-Fi and individual entrances. Meals are available and the owner, who knows the area well, offers excursions along the coast.



€€

Pierre & Vacances Premium Port Prestige

1 Ave Frédéric Mistral, 06600; 01 58 21 55 84; www.pv-holidays.com

Surrounding a garden, this complex of five buildings is within easy walking distance of the city centre. All the apartments have a balcony or terrace, Wi-Fi; baby kits for under 2s; and, for rainy days, PlayStation hire, board games and comic books.



€€

CAMPING

Camping du Pylone

Ave La Brague, 06600; 04 93 74 94 70; www.campingdupylone.com

Located near the beach, this is a friendly camp site, with games and activities, and fishing in the river. There is a restaurant, bakery, shop and a swimming pool. Besides their pitches, their website lists companies and individuals who rent out cottages and mobile homes.



€

Apt

Map 13 D3

CAMPING

Camping Le Luberon

Route de Saignon, 84400; 04 90 04 85 40; www.camping-le-luberon.com

A short drive south of Apt, this leafy and friendly camp ground offers a range of cabins, chalets and mobile



Entrance to the centrally located Hotel de l'Horloge, Avignon

homes to choose from. For kids, there is a playground and an activity a day such as cooking or juggling.



€€€

Arles

Map 13 C4

HOTELS

Hôtel de l'Amphithéâtre

5-7 Rue Diderot, 13200; 04 90 96 10 30; www.hotelamphitheatre.fr

Centrally located, this hotel combines old-world charm and comfortable furnishings. Rooms have Wi-Fi and there are computers to share in the public rooms downstairs.



€€

Hotel Régence

5 Rue Marius Jouveau, 13200; 04 90 96 39 85; www.hotel-regence.com

On the quays of the Rhône, a few minutes walk from central Arles, this hotel has rooms painted in rich Provençal colours. Reasonably priced buffet breakfast and Internet connections are available.



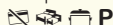
€€

SELF-CATERING

Mas Saint Germain

13200 Villeneuve-Camargue; 04 90 97 00 60; www.massaintgermain.com

Just outside Arles, in the middle of the Camargue, kids will love their stay on this organic farm. The family breeds local horses, bulls and Merino sheep. Horse-riding is also available.



€

Avignon

Map 13 D3

HOTEL

Hotel De l'Horloge

Pl de l'Horloge, 84000; 04 90 16 42 00; www.hotel-avignon-horloge.com

A short walk from the Palais des Papes, this handsome hotel in a 19th-century stone building has Wi-Fi-equipped rooms with satellite TV. There is a pay-parking lot nearby.

🚗 P ✨

€€€

BED & BREAKFAST

La Bastide des Anges

1634 Chemin des Vignes, 84000 Île de la Barthelasse; 04 90 82 56 04; www.la-bastide-des-anges.com

This old stone family house makes a good base for exploring Avignon, 5 km (3 miles) away. Rooms are well-furnished and spacious. There is a communal room, with TV, library, Wi-Fi and a kitchen for guests.

🚗 📺 P 🍷

€€

Domaine de Rhodes

486 Chemin de Rhodes, 84000 Île de la Barthelasse; 04 90 82 40 11; www.domainederhodes.com

This 16th-century country house has a family suite with two bedrooms furnished with antiques, and a self-catering apartment where four can sleep. The hosts offer bicycles to explore the Île de la Barthelasse.

🚗 P 🍷

€€

CAMPING

Camping l'Isle des Papes

30400 Villeneuve-lès-Avignon; 04 90 15 15 90; www.avignon-camping.com

Located 6 km (4 miles) north of Avignon on the Île de la Barthelasse, this family-friendly camp site has mobile homes and bungalows to rent, and playgrounds. Free shuttle bus to Avignon in July and August.

🚗 P 🍷

€

Cannes

Map 14 G4

SELF-CATERING

Villa d'Estelle

12-14 Rue des Belges, 06400; 04 92 98 44 48; www.villadestelle.com

A minute's walk from La Croisette and the sea, this property has cheerful apartments with terraces, satellite TV and Internet access. Staff is helpful. See website for special discount offers.

🚗 📺 🍷

€€€

Fontaine-de-Vaucluse

Map 13 D3

HOTEL

Hôtel des Sources

Quartier Châteaueux, Route de Cavailon, 84800; 04 90 20 31 84; www.hoteldessources.com

A short walk from the city centre of Fontaine-de-Vaucluse, on the banks of the Sorgue, this hotel offers spacious Wi-Fi-equipped rooms with fine views overlooking the river. There is a restaurant and rates include a continental breakfast.

🚗 P 🍷

€€

BED & BREAKFAST

Domaine de la

Fontaine

920 Chemin du Bosquet, 84800 L'Isle-sur-la-Sorgue; 04 90 38 01 44; www.domainedelafontaine.com

A short drive from Fontaine-de-Vaucluse, this charming home has two family suites, furnished in sunny colours. The garden, full of century-old planes and cypresses, is a great place to play and laze, as well as have breakfast. Meals are available only on Tuesdays and Saturdays.

🚗 P 🍷

€€€

CAMPING

Camping La Coutelière

D24 Route de Fontaine, 84800 Lagnès; 04 90 20 33 97; www.camping-la-couteliere.com

A 5-minute drive from Fontaine-de-Vaucluse, on the river, this camp ground offers a choice of shaded pitches, mobile homes, wooden bungalows and cabins on stilts; linen can be hired. There is a snack bar, a shop, basketball and tennis courts, a playground, table tennis and special activities for kids aged 6–12 years.

📺 P 🍷

€–€€

SELF-CATERING

La Bastide des Beaumes Rouges

84800 Chemin des Beaumes Rouges; 04 90 20 34 18; www.bastidedesbeaumesrouges.com

Decorated in Provençal yellows and blues, this apartment occupies the ground floor of an old stone manor house, with views of the cliffs and ruined castle, a short walk from the town's main spring. It has a private sunny terrace; linen can be hired. The owners also have a family B&B room.

🚗 📺 P

€€



Pool at the Camping La Coutelière, Fontaine-de-Vaucluse

Gordes

Map 13 D3

HOTEL

Mas de la Sénancole

84220 Les Imberts; 04 90 76 76 55; www.mas-de-la-senancole.com

Located 4 km (3 miles) southwest of Gordes, in a residential area, this hotel makes a peaceful base for exploring the Luberon. Rooms can be interlinked to form family rooms. There are pretty gardens and a spa for relaxing. The excellent restaurant serves contemporary cuisine.

🚗 P ✨ 🍷

€€

BED & BREAKFAST

La Guillone

84220 Murs; 04 90 72 06 43; www.guillone-luberon.com

Located 5 km (3 miles) from Gordes, this beautiful B&B in an 18th-century *bastide* has been in the same family for five generations. Rooms are painted in Provençal colours and there is a special suite for four. Breakfasts are sumptuous.

🚗 📺 P

€€

Marseille

Map 13 D4

BED & BREAKFAST

La Bastide De Roucas

5 Rue Etienne Mein, 13007; 04 91 31 79 83; www.bastide-roucas.com

In the heart of Marseille, in a calm and authentic part of the city and two steps away from the Prophète beach, this B&B has a garden and swimming pool. Breakfast can be eaten under the plane trees in the garden.

🚗 🍷

€€

Price Guide

The following price ranges are based on one night's accommodation in high season for a family of four, inclusive of service charges and any additional taxes.

€ Under €100 €€ €100–200 €€€ over €200

SELF-CATERING

Adagio Marseille
République

30 Rue Jean Trinquet, 13002; 04 96 11 67 00; www.adagio-city.com

A short walk from two Métro stations, this apartment hotel offers 33 family rooms, with high-speed Internet and television. Infant cots are available as well. There is an indoor and outdoor public parking nearby, and a laundromat.



€€

Monaco

Map 14 G3

HOTEL

Novotel Monte Carlo

16 Blvd Princesse Charlotte, 98000; 00377 99 99 83 00; www.novotel.com

This modern hotel in the heart of Monaco is a great-value option for families; two kids under 16 can stay for free in a family room and Wi-Fi is available at a charge. The hotel has play areas, a hammam (Turkish bath) and a fitness centre. The restaurant offers good menus for kids. See website for discount offers.



€€€



A pleasantly shaded tree house in Orion, St-Paul-de-Vence

Nice

Map 14 G3

HOTELS

Nice Garden Hotel

11 Rue du Congrès, 06000; 04 93 87 35 62; www.nicegardenhotel.com

This is a friendly nine-room hotel on the ground floor of a 19th-century townhouse, just a small walk from the beach. The windows are double glazed and overlook a charming little garden. There are triple rooms, where guests can add a cot.



€€

La Pérouse

11 Quai Rauba Capeu, 06300; 04 93 62 34 63; www.leshotelsduroy.com

Built right into the cliff by the sea and only a short walk from the lively

market in Cours Saleya, this boutique hotel offers suites for families done up in light Mediterranean colours. Most of these suites come with big terraces. There is Wi-Fi in the rooms and an excellent buffet breakfast. The staff is friendly and helpful.



€€€

SELF-CATERING
Goldstar Resort &
Suites

45 Rue Maréchal Joffre, 06000; 04 93 16 92 77; www.hotel-goldstar-nice.com

Centrally located for the sights and just a 2-minute walk from the Promenade des Anglais, this contemporary high-rise building has suites suitable for families. The rooftop pool and stunning views over Nice are the main attraction. Rooms have free Wi-Fi and satellite TVs.



€€€

St-Paul-
de-Vence

Map 14 G3

BED & BREAKFAST
Orion

Impasse des Peupliers, 2436 Chemin du Malvan, 06570; 04 93 24 87 51; www.orionbb.com

Set in peaceful surroundings, this property offers lodging in tree houses in an old oak grove outside St-Paul. The pool is designed like a mountain lake, with water filtered by plants.



€€€

St-Tropez

Map 14 F4

HOTELS

Hôtel des Lices

Ave Grangeon, 83993; 04 94 97 28 28; www.hoteldeslices.com

A short distance from the Place des Lices, this lovely hotel makes visitors feel as if it were in the countryside with a pretty garden and pool terrace. Rooms are spacious and furnished with St-Tropez chic. Baby cots are available. Helpful staff.



€€€

L'Orangerie

Route de Ramatuelle, 83420 La Croix Valmer; 04 94 55 27 27; www.hotel-lorangerie.com

Out on St-Tropez's peninsula, this hotel housed in an early 20th-century mansion converted into a grand hotel, is packed with character. The rooms, all completely renovated, are



Pool terrace with sun beds lined up at the Hôtel des Lices, St-Tropez

big and airy with high ceilings and many have lovely sea views. Have breakfast in the lush park dominated by towering palms.



€€€

CAMPING

Camping Les Cigalons

34 Ave du Croiseur Leger le Malin, 83120 Ste-Maxime; 04 94 96 05 51; www.campingcigalon.com

A boat ride from St-Tropez and a stone's throw from the sea and the sandy Plage de Nartelle – with Water Glisse, its water park – this popular no-frills camp site offers pitches amidst parasol pines and bungalows, as well as chalets, with terraces, to rent. There is a playground and a Wi-Fi point.



€

SELF-CATERING

Résidence Les Bastide
de Grimaud

Lieu-dit La Castellane, Route de Collobrières, 83310 Grimaud; 04 42 97 58 00; www.odalys-vacances.com

Located in one of the most expensive corners of France, this purpose-built family vacation centre offers studio apartments just outside Grimaud, 4 km (3 miles) from St-Tropez. Arranged in eight low-rise buildings, all flats come with terraces; many offer lovely views over the golf.



€€

Le Mas des Oliviers

Quartier de la Croisette, 83120 Ste-Maxime; 04 94 96 13 31; www.hotellemasdesoliviers.com

This handsome complex is just a boat ride away from St-Tropez and a few minutes' walk from a sandy beach. It offers hotel rooms and studio apartments, accommodating up to four, along with bunk beds, designed for week-long rentals. There are tennis courts. Linen can be hired.



€€€

Corsica

Wild and beautiful, Corsica has been inhabited since prehistoric times, but did not become part of France until 1769. Earlier Italian influences survive in its architecture, and also in the Corsican language and cuisine. It is famous as the birthplace of Napoleon, but nature steals the show – beaches, mountains, rivers, forests and coastal scenery.

Below Splendid view of Calvi from Notre-Dame de la Serra



① Golfe de Porto

Where Mother Nature rocks and rolls

The coastline here borders on fantasy – the deepest red rocks blaze next to the intense blue of the sea. The savage porphyry cliffs of the Calanche de Piana and the wild coast of Scandola dwarf the little port of Porto, an outpost of civilization with its eucalyptus grove and pebbly beaches. Inland, mountains rise abruptly, offering spectacular views of gorges and waterfalls. At sunset, the light makes the red rocks glow like embers.



Sailing in the picturesque Golfe de Porto

Key Sights

① **Girolata** Accessible by sea or foot, the fishermen's hamlet of Girolata has a dream-like location next to its 16th-century Genoese tower. In winter the population here is less than 10.

② **Réserve Naturelle de Scandola** A World Heritage Site, Scandola's cliffs, sea and grottoes are home to rare fish and invertebrates, and algae.

③ **La Poudrière** Once a gunpowder factory, this is now the Aquarium de la Poudrière, housing octopi and moray eels.



④ **Plage de Porto** This rocky town beach is set dramatically under the cliffs behind the Genoese tower.



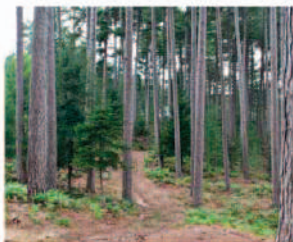
⑥ **Calanche de Piana** A narrow road and paths wind through otherworldly rock formations. The Col de Lava has spectacular views.

⑦ **Plage de Ficajola** This cove under the cliffs was originally the fishing port for the village of Piana.

⑧ **Plage d'Arone** A lovely beach, this was the first place where the Free French submarine *Casabianca* dropped off weapons for the Maquis during World War II.

Letting off steam

Swim at Porto beach or take the Corte bus east to Evisa and the nearby Forêt d'Aïtone, which has a majestic stand of Larico pines. Make the easy hour's walk to the Grotte



A winding path through the tall, slender pines in the Forêt d'Aïtone

des Bandits, or continue up to the Col de Vergio for the 10-minute walk to the beautiful Cascades d'Aïtone. From Evisa there is also an easy 2-hour walk down the old mule path through the spectacular Gorges de Spelunca to Ota with the chance for dips in the Porto river. Signs explain the key features along the way.

Eat and drink

Picnic: under €20; Snacks: €20–45; Real meal: €45–90; Family treat: over €90 (based on a family of four)








PICNIC Hibiscus (Route de la Marine – quartier Guaita, Porto Ota, 20137; 04 95 26 73 08; mid-Apr–Oct) offers Corsican cheese and charcuterie and



The well-preserved square Genoese tower at Porto

cold drinks. There are picnic spots by the Genoese bridges, 2 km (1 mile) up from Ota off the D124.

The Lowdown

-  **Map reference** 1 A3
- Address** 20150 (Corse-du-Sud). Aquarium de la Poudrière: Porto la Marine; 04 95 26 19 24
-  **Bus** Autocars SAIB from Ajaccio and Calvi (May–Sep). Mordocini buses from Corte (Jul–Aug).
-  **Visitor information** Quartier de la Marine, 20150; 04 95 26 10 55; www.porto-tourisme.com
-  **Open** Aquarium de la Poudrière: Apr–Oct: 9am–6pm daily; July & Aug: 9am–7pm daily
-  **Price** Aquarium de la Poudrière: €17; under 12s free
-  **Skipping the queue** Porto is small and very crowded in August. Try and visit in May, June or September.
-  **Guided tours** Several companies offer boat tours to the Réserve

Naturelle de Scandola and the Calanche de Piana. Nave Va (Route de Mezzavia 20090; 04 95 26 15 16; www.naveva.com) offers a three-hour tour; under 5s free.

-  **Age range** 4 plus
-  **Activities** Hire small boats for exploring the coast from Le Goéland (Port de Plaisance, Rive Gauche 20150; 06 81 06 88 08). A half-day rental is €75.
-  **Allow** At least a day
-  **Toilets** In cafés
-  **Festival** Fête de la Châtaigne, chestnut festival in Evisa (Nov)

Good family value?

Spectacular nature concentrated in a small area; outdoor-loving families cannot ask for more.

KIDS' CORNER

Look out for...

1 Rock formations in the Calanche de Piana. See if you can find the shepherdess and shepherd, the dog's head, ruined castle, bear, tortoise, and the bishop wearing a monocle.

2 Scandola is world-famous for its wildlife – bring binoculars!

See dolphins, puffin-like Cory's shearwaters and peregrine falcons.

3 The Corsican nuthatch, a small bird, only 12 cm (6 in), which nests in the pines of the Forêt d'Aitone. It can walk down the tree trunk head first, not just climb up.



FLOCKING BACK

Ospreys, or “fish eagles”, were nearly extinct in Corsica in 1975, when the Réserve Naturelle de Scandola was set up. The birds now rule the roost in Scandola, with over 20 nesting pairs.

The capture of Dragut

In 1540, the Genoese fleet was in hot pursuit of the pirate captain Dragut. After finding the embers warm at his camp at the entrance to the Golfe de Girolata, the Genoese raced ahead and caught him by surprise while he was dividing up booty with his crew. Over 2,000 pirates, including Dragut, were captured and then sent to the galleys.



SNACKS Les Palmiers (La Marine, Porto, 20150; 04 95 26 13 33; Apr–Oct) is a portside snack bar with sandwiches, paninis, salads and ice cream.

REAL MEAL Le Mini-golf (Plage de Porto, 20150; 04 95 26 17 55; Apr–Sep) offers pizza and full Corsican meal. Diners can follow this up with a rousing round of mini-golf.

FAMILY TREAT Le Bélvédère (Port of Porto, 20150; 04 95 26 82 13; Apr–Oct) serves delicious Corsican and French classics, which guests can enjoy while taking in the gorgeous views.

Take cover

Even if it is not raining, Porto's landmark Genoese tower is interesting to visit. Located on the

headland, this is one of the very few square towers built around Corsica (the other 90 are mostly round). It houses exhibits on the coastal defences of the island.

Next stop...

CALVI Head 34 km (21 miles) north to Calvi, a jolly resort with a vast sandy beach by a pinewood and a Genoese citadel located on a huge rock above the sea. A monument by the citadel boasts that Christopher Columbus was born here. Another famous seafarer Admiral Horatio Nelson, is also linked to Calvi. When Nelson attacked the town in 1794, a piece of shrapnel took out his eye and he had to wear an eye patch ever after.



The beach in Calvi, overlooked by the Genoese citadel

② The Balagne

Music and crafts

Known as the “Garden of Corsica”, the Balagne is an amphitheatre made up of *villages perchés*, olive groves, vineyards and orchards overlooking the coves on Corsica’s northwestern coast. Just getting down to the beaches – Algajola is a good one – is fun; flag down the Balagne tram that runs between Calvi (see p367) and Île-Rousse.

Away from the coast, many of the Balagne hill towns are devoted to preserving traditional crafts and farming. Chief among these is Pigna, the centre for Corsican music and its unique and haunting multi-harmonied singing. Here **Ugo Casalonga** makes *cetere*, a traditional Corsican guitar; Marie Darneal creates music boxes



The Balagne tram arriving from Calvi at Île-Rousse station

The Lowdown

Map reference 1 B2
Address 20217 (Haute Corse).
Ugo Casalonga: Pigna; 06 22 96 24 03; ugocetera.monsite-orange.fr. **Scat’A Musica:** Pigna; 04 95 61 77 34. **A Casa Musicale:** 20220 Pigna; 04 95 61 77 31; www.casa-musicale.org

Tram The Balagne tram during summers; car or taxi for hill villages

Visitor information Port de Plaisance, 20217 Calvi; 04 95 65 16 67; www.balagne-corsica.com

Open Ugo Casalonga: daily. Scat’A Musica: May–Oct: daily. A Casa Musicale: daily; book ahead for Tue & Fri night concerts

Eat and drink **Real meal** La Padulla (Plage d’Aregno, 20217 Algajola; 04 95 60 75 22; www.restaurant-algajola-padulla.com; Apr–Oct: daily) offers paella and pizzas. **Family treat** A Caserella (20220 Pigna; 04 95 61 78 08; Apr–Sep: daily) serves organic tapas, Corsican charcuterie. Book ahead.

Festival Estivoce, Corsican song festival in the Balagne (Jul)



Canoes lying on Algajola beach in the Balagne

at the **Scat’A Musica** and **A Casa Musicale** presents live music. Other villages include Sant’Antonino, famous for lemons – taste the treats in the Maison de Citron; Aregno with Poterie d’Art de Praoli, a ceramics workshop, and an 11th-century Pisan church with a strange façade sculpture of a man pulling a thorn out of his foot; and Felicitu, site of the Ange Campana glass blowers.

Letting off steam

Take a walk with Corsica’s donkeys in Calenzana, 13 km (8 miles) south of Calvi. English-speaking **Fasgianu** (fasgianu.free.fr/ane) offers a 4-hour family excursion that allows kids under 40 kg (88 lbs) to ride the donkeys. There is also a stop for lunch and a swim by a waterfall.

③ St-Florent

Between white sands and a zebra church

St-Florent is a sunny laid-back resort, with yachts bobbing in the marina and locals playing *pétanque* non-stop

in the square. Like most coastal towns, its landmark is a Genoese tower – now used for art exhibits – but it also has an exquisite Pisan church, the 12th-century **Église de**

The Lowdown

Map reference 1 C2
Address 20217 (Haute-Corse).
 Église de Santa-Maria-Assunta: 9 Cours Général de Gaulle, 20100 Sartène. Église de San Michele de Murato: 20239 Murato

Bus Santini buses from Bastia

Visitor information Bâtiment Administrative, 20217; 04 95 37 06 04; www.saint-florent.fr

Eat and drink **Real meal** Brasserie La Caravelle (Pl Porta, 20217; 04 95 37 00 27; open daily) has al fresco tables. **Family treat** U Trogliu (Rue Centrale, 20217; 04 95 37 20 73; www.utrogliau.com; open pm only) serves fresh pasta, home-made the same day.

Festivals Porto Latino, Latin music festival (Aug). Festival des Nuits de la Guitare, annual guitar festival in nearby Patromonio (mid-Jul)



Yachts at the marina in St-Florent

Santa-Maria-Assunta. The Pisans also built Corsica's most famous church, **Église de San Michele de Murato**, 17 km (10 miles) southeast in Murato. Dressed in green and white stripes and checks, the façade is decorated with reliefs of Adam and Eve, but also bizarre ones of cut-off hands and scissors, which recall that in the Middle Ages, Corsican churches often doubled as law courts.

Letting off steam

Bask on St-Florent's beach, Plage de la Roya, where **Acqua Dolce Ski Nautique** (06 07 54 10 79) hire out equipment, from inflatable boats to sea scooters. Take the 15-minute boat ride on **Le Popeye** (www.lepopeye.com) to the soft white sands of Loto and Saleccia beaches, arguably the most beautiful and unspoilt in France.



The striped façade of the Église de San Michele de Murato, near St-Florent

④ Bastia

A town bombed by mistake

With its charming old port and tall, colour-drenched houses, Baroque Bastia is Corsica's most Italian-looking town. Only a few ruins recall one of the worst mistakes of World War II, when the Allies failed to learn that the Nazis had actually withdrawn from town, before they dropped bombs and killed hundreds of the locals who were celebrating their recent liberation in the streets.

High up over the old port, the Palais des Gouverneurs, seat of Corsica's 15th–18th century Genoese rulers, is now the **Musée de Bastia**, which offers tours of the gardens, and has a collection that retraces the history of the city. A little train makes the circuit around town from



Boats docked in the magnificent old port of Bastia

The Lowdown

Map reference 1 C2

Address 20200 (Haute-Corse).

Musée de Bastia: Pl du Donjon, La Citadelle; 04 95 31 09 12; www.musee-bastia.com



Train from Corte and Ajaccio. **Bus** Santini buses from St-Florent and Les Rapides Bleues from Aléria and Porto-Vecchio



Visitor information Rue José Luccioni Port Toga, 20200; 04 95 54 20 40; www.bastia-tourisme.com



Open Musée de Bastia: Tue–Sun



Eat and drink **Real Meal** La Réserve (Port de Toga, 20200; 04 95 31 05 35; closed Sun), located by the marina, serves juicy burgers, risotti, seafood and fruit salads, as well as desserts. **Family treat** A Scaletta (4 Rue St-Jean, 20200; 04 95 32 28 70; closed Mon), a small, popular restaurant with a superb view over the old port, serves freshly cooked vegetables and local ingredients. Book in advance.



Festivals A Notte di a Memoria, historical pageant (Jul). Les Musicales, a music festival (Nov)

Place St Nicolas, but best of all is the bird's-eye view over Bastia from the village of Cardo – take bus 3 from the Palais du Justice.

Letting off steam

Tear around Bastia's central Place St Nicolas. Or take bus 5 south from the Palais du Justice to **Le Paradis des Enfants** (www.parcloisirs.com), a water park with mini-quads, trampolines and a small farm in the village of Biguglia. Continue further south towards the Castagnaccia, Europe's biggest chestnut forest, and stroll among the giant trees and to the waterfall along the Corniche de la Castagnaccia, on the D330, between San Nicolao and Cervioni.

KIDS' CORNER

Do you know?

- 1 Where can you see a man pulling a thorn out of his foot?
- 2 The slopes around Castagnaccia are too steep for vehicles. What transport do they use instead?
- 3 What is a fun way of getting to Algajola beach?

Answers at the bottom of the page.

Love of chestnuts

Both Corsica's wild black pigs and wild boars love to gorge on chestnuts.



More than stuffing

Keep an eye out for chestnuts in all types of Corsican specialities – polenta, honey, cakes, jams and sugary *marrons glacés* (candied chestnuts) – in the restaurants and shops.

BOMBS ON THE BEACH

In 1960, Hollywood came to the Plage de Saleccia to film some of the D-Day landing scenes in *The Longest Day*, a film about WW II. Even today locals find dud shells.



Vampire chestnuts!

In the 16th century, the Genoese ordered Corsicans to plant chestnut trees so that the island would not starve. Corsicans, even today, call the chestnut the "tree of life". There are many kinds of chestnuts – one for making flour, another for sweets and so on. A legend, however, speaks of a vampire chestnut tree that caught unwary travellers in its branches and sucked their blood!



Answers: 1 On the church in Aregno. 2 Donkeys. 3 The Balagne train.

5 Bonifacio

Emperors and plague, sieges and shipwrecks

Known as “Corsica’s Gibraltar”, Bonifacio looks like no other place on earth. Massive ramparts defend it from land; while tall Genoese houses teeter precariously over sheer white cliffs. But the real danger for this town lay with enemy navies and pirates, including the notorious blood-thirsty Dragut, who attacked its walls (and sometimes got in); raging tempests that sank ships and deadliest of all, the plague.



An ornate tomb in Cimetière Marin

Key Sights



① **Boat tours** Explore Bonifacio's spectacular sea caves and cliffs on tours that depart from the town harbour.



② **Le Grain de Sable** This chunk of cliff split from Bonifacio in the 13th century. See it from Chapelle St-Roch.

③ **Porte de Gênes** This zig-zag gate was designed to slow down attackers. Scenes from Bonifacio's history are displayed in the museum in Bastion de l'Étendard, which offers tours of the walls.

④ **Église Ste-Marie-Majeure** Town meetings took place in the Loggia located in front of this church. The altar holds relics of St Bonifacio.



⑤ **Escalier du Roy d'Aragon** Legend says these 187 steps, cut into the cliff, were carved in one night in 1420 during the siege of Bonifacio by the king of Aragon.

⑥ **Il Torrone** This 35-m (115-ft) high lookout tower was of no use to the Pisans in 1181, when the Genoese took Bonifacio from them.

⑦ **St-Dominique** Inside this Gothic church are the lavish Baroque sculptures that are carried around town during the Holy Week.

⑧ **Cimetière Marin** Watch beautiful sunsets from this picturesque cemetery, filled with ornate white memorials.

The Lowdown

Map reference 1 C6
Address 20169 (Corse-du-Sud). Bastion de l'Étendard: Pl des Armes. Église Ste-Marie-Majeure: Rue de St-Sacrement. Escalier du Roy d'Aragon: Rue des Pachas. St-Dominique: Rue de St-Dominique; 04 95 73 11 88

Bus Eurocorse buses link Bonifacio to Ajaccio, Sartène and Porto Vecchio. A mini-train links the port to Haute Ville.

Visitor information 2 Rue Fred Scamaroni, 20169; 04 95 73 11 88; www.bonifacio.fr

Open Bastion de l'Étendard: Apr–Oct: 9am–7pm; May–Sep: 9am–8pm. Escalier du Roy d'Aragon: Jun–Sep: 11am–5:30pm. St-Dominique: Apr–Oct: 9am–6pm; Jul & Aug: 9am–7pm

Price Bastion de l'Étendard & Escalier du Roy d'Aragon: €7–14; under 12s free

Skipping the queue Visit during spring and autumn; very crowded in summer.

Guided tours Contact the tourist office for details.

Age range 4 plus

Activities Vedettes Thalassa (www.vedettesthalassa.com) offers tours of Bonifacio's cliffs, sea caves and islets; under 8s free

Allow A day

Toilets At Bastion de l'Étendard

Festivals Holy week processions by the medieval confraternities (Apr). Festival Nautic et Music, a festival dedicated to sailing boats and music (Oct)

Good family value?

Bonifacio's settings are unique – a place that sets imaginations alight. The nearby beaches are heavenly.



Letting off steam

Bonifacio's Haute Ville is mostly pedestrian, with more open spaces at the Cimetière Marin. Or take a taxi to the delightful and sheltered beaches east of Bonifacio: Plage de Santa Manza and Plage de Maora around the Golfe de Santa Manza, and Rondinara, with a near perfect circle of sand, for kids of all ages.

Eat and drink

Picnic: under €20; Snacks: €20–€45; Real meal: €45–90; Family treat: over €90 (based on a family of four)

PICNIC AGS (4 Quai Jérôme Comparetti, 20169; 04 95 73 11 49), located by the port, stocks basic food items for picnics that can be enjoyed on the shady Piantarella beach.

SNACKS Sandwicherie du Port (Quai Comparetti, 20169; 06 10 49 86; www.cantinagrill.fr) offers tasty takeaway sandwiches.

REAL MEAL Cantina Grill (3 Quai Banda del Ferro, 20169; 04 95 70 49 86; www.cantinagrill.fr), a good-value restaurant, serves fish and meat dishes. It is situated next to the port and has a covered terrace.

FAMILY TREAT Kissing Pigs (15 Quai Banda del Ferro, 20169; 04 95 73 56 09; open daily) is a wine bar that offers a great choice



View of the old town as seen from the belvedere below the Porte de Gênes

Above The Plage de Rondinara
Below Montée Rastello, the steps linking the port with the Haute Ville



of bottles to match its exquisite Corsican charcuterie, salads, quiches and even bacon and eggs.

Shopping

Visit **Les Terrasses d'Aragon** (21 Rue Simon Varsi, 201691; 04 95 73 54 91; www.lesterrassesclaragon.com) for Bonifacio's famous good luck charms in the form of hands – a traditional present given to a baby by its godparents, to ward off the evil eye.

Take cover

Discover the history of Corsica at the **Musée de Préhistoire** (Rue Croce, 20100 Sartène; 04 95 77 01 09), which has archaeological artifacts from the Stone Age to the Iron Age.

Next stop...

PORTO-VECCHIO Located north of Bonifacio, Porto-Vecchio is Corsica at its most chic. Its dreamy beaches, including Santa Giulia, Palombaggia and Cala Rossa, are perfect for kids. Two remarkable Bronze Age forts offer inspiration: the 2,000-BC **Casteddu d'Araghju** is a steep walk up a hill north of Porto-Vecchio, and the easier-to-reach 3,500-BC **Casteddu de Tappa** is in a field to the southwest of Porto-Vecchio.

KIDS' CORNER

Find out more...

- 1 Look up when you walk through the Porte de Gênes. What do you see?
- 2 The plaques in Rue des Deux Emperors mark the houses where two emperors slept. Who were they?
- 3 Go to the Rue du Palais-de-Garde. Some of the oldest houses have no doors. How did the people get inside?

Answers at the bottom of the page.



Stormy seas

The straits of Bonifacio can get very stormy: the worst shipwreck occurred in 1855, when the *Sémillante* went down with over 700 men.

CURIOUS CAVES

One of Bonifacio's sea caves is shaped like Napoleon's hat, and another has an opening that looks like a map of Corsica!



Saved by the bell

During the siege of 1420, Bonifacio was saved thanks to Marguerite Bobbia, who caught the Aragonese soldiers sneaking up the famous cliff stair. Later, when the Aragonese prepared for a big assault on Bonifacio, the local women dressed in dead soldiers' uniforms and rang all the town bells, leading the Aragonese to believe that reinforcements from Genoa had arrived.

Thanks to the bluff, the town managed to hold out until the Aragonese really did come.



Answers: 1 The drawbridge mechanism. 2 Charles V and Napoleon. 3 They used ladders to the upper floor.

6 Filitosa

3,600-year-old stone warriors

In 1946, the owner of an ancient olive grove called Filitosa began finding stones carved with strange faces and swords. The archaeologist Roger Grosjean found some more – 70 statue-menhirs in all, mostly of warriors, dated 1400 BC. Most of the stones were deliberately broken soon after they were made and were then reused in structures that were nearly as old. Grosjean believes Filitosa's warriors were sculpted by the Shardanes, the mysterious sea people – mentioned in the pyramids of Egypt – who conquered the local Bronze Age people, the Torrèens. When the Torrèens kicked out the Shardanes, they took great pleasure in breaking their stone warriors and reusing the stone to build Filitosa's three towers. Now re-erected amidst oaks and olives, the statue-menhirs are haunting and strange. Each is individual; in fact they may be the oldest portraits in the world.

Letting off steam

Head to the nearby Porto-Pollo beach, or go to Propriano, 20 km (12 miles) from Filitosa, a town with kid-friendly beaches. Families can go sailing with the **Centre Nautique Valinco** (www.centre-nautique-propriano.com).

7 Ajaccio

The ups and downs of Napoleon Bonaparte

Born in Ajaccio in 1769, just three months after Corsica became part of France, Napoleon Bonaparte



Above A family relaxing by a river near the Col de Bavella above Aléria
Below Ajaccio's petit train showing visitors around the city



supported Pasquale Paoli, the leader of Corsican independence – until the French Revolution. In contrast to most Corsicans, Napoleon was full of enthusiasm for the “new” France and in 1793 started a little war against Paoli in Ajaccio. As a result, he and his family had to flee for their lives, with Napoleon escaping through the trap door in the **Maison Bonaparte**. Eleven years later, he was to become the emperor of France. Today, Ajaccio remembers Napoleon with plenty of statues in Places Austerlitz, Charles de Gaulle and Foch – and lots of memorabilia in the **Salons Napoléoniens** of the Hôtel de Ville and **Musée Fesch**, which contains a collection of Old Masters – Botticelli, Rembrandt and Titian – donated by Napoleon's great-uncle, Cardinal Fesch.

Letting off steam

The Jardin Elisa playground is by the Hôtel de Ville, or take bus 5 to a string of beaches off the Route des Sanguinaires. To see Europe's largest collection of turtles and tortoises, catch the bus to Bastia and get off at **Parc A Cupulatta** (www.acupulatta.com), on the N193, 21 km (13 miles) northeast of Ajaccio.

The Lowdown

- **Map reference** 1 B4
Address 20000 (Corse-du-Sud). Maison Bonaparte: 18 Rue St-Charles; 04 95 2143 89; www.musee-maisonbonaparte.fr. Salons Napoléoniens: Ave Antoine Serafini; www.ajaccio.fr/Salons-Napoleoniens_a50.html. Musée Fesch: 50 Rue Cardinal Fesch; www.musee-fesch.com
- **Train** from Bastia and Corte. **Bus** Eurocorse bus from Bonifacio
- i **Visitor information** 3 Blvd du Roi Jérôme, 20000; 04 95 51 53 03; www.ajaccio-tourisme.com
- Ⓜ **Open** Maison Bonaparte: closed Mon. Salons Napoléoniens: closed Jun–Sep; Mon am; Oct–May; Sat & Sun. Musée Fesch: closed Tue
- 🍴 **Eat and drink** **Real meal** Le Temps des Oliviers (1 Rue des Halles, 20000; 04 95 28 36 72; closed Sat lunch, Sun eve) serves Italian dishes and pizzas. Sunday brunch too. **Family treat** Le 20123 (2 Rue Roi-de-Rome, 20000; 04 95 21 50 05; www.20123.fr; closed Mon) offers excellent Corsican cuisine.
- 🎪 **Festivals** Jazz Festival (Jun). Journées Napoléoniennes, 3 days dedicated to Napoleon (mid-Aug)

The Lowdown

- **Map reference** 1 B5
Address 20140 (Corse-du-Sud). Petreto-Bicchisano; 04 95 74 00 91; www.filitosa.fr
- **Bus** Eurocorse buses from Bonifacio or Ajaccio to Propriano, then taxi
- Ⓜ **Open** Apr–Oct: daily
- 🍴 **Eat and drink** **Snacks** Filitosa brasserie (on site) serves cold drinks and snacks. **Family treat** Restaurant Le Frère (Femme-Auberge Comte Abbatucci, Pont de Calzola Lieu dit Chiesale, 20140 Casalabriva; 04 95 24 36 30; closed Tue; May–Sep) offers a farm lunch in a distinguished restaurant.
- 🎪 **Festival** Fiera di Filitosa (Aug)

8 Aléria

Roman baths, Greek vases and a dog-headed cup

The Greeks, who called Corsica *Kalliste* (the most beautiful), founded Aléria in 565 BC. Over the centuries, the city grew to become the Roman capital of Corsica, counting 20,000 inhabitants. The 15th-century Genoese Fort de Matra houses the **Musée Archéologique Jérôme Carcopino**, displaying beautiful Greek vases – status symbol for the rich in Roman times. Note the dog's

The Lowdown

Map reference 1 D4
Address 20270 (Corse-du-Sud).
 Musée Archéologique Jérôme
 Carcopino: Fort de Matra; 04 95
 57 00 92

Bus from Porto-Vecchio or Bastia

Visitor information Casa Luciani,
 20270; 04 95 57 01 51; www.aleria-corse.fr

Open Musée Archéologique
 Jérôme Carcopino & Site
 Archéologique d'Aléria: 9am–
 noon daily (Oct–May till 5pm);
 Oct–Mar: closed Sun

Eat and drink *Real meal*
 Cendrillon (20270 Catteragio; 04
 95 57 07 42; closed Sun) serves
 pizzas. *Family treat* Au Coquillages
 de Diana (20270 Étang de Diane;
 04 95 57 04 55) offers seafood by
 an oyster-filled lagoon.

and mule's head *rhytons* or drinking cups, a crystal dodecahedron (12-sided figure), dice, and Etruscan helmets and swords. A path leads to the **Site Archéologique d'Aléria**, where the Roman city's forum, houses and some baths have been excavated. Ninety per cent of it still awaits future archaeologists.

Letting off steam

Play at Aléria's beach or take a taxi to see the fabled "needles" of the Col de Bavella, a mountain pass. Or go to the nearby village of Ospedale. Here, **XtremSud** (www.xtremsud.com) offers outdoor activities such as rock climbing and an adventure park for kids aged 3–8 years.

9 Corte

Town of Corsican heroes

A statue in Place Paoli honours Pasquale Paoli, who made the town his capital in 1755–69, during his battle for independence (a fight that also inspired the revolutionaries in



The 15th-century citadel, perched high above Corte



The courtyard of the Musée Fesch, Ajaccio, with a statue of the Cardinal

America). In Place Gaffori, a statue of former independence fighter Dr Gian' Pietro Gaffori stands in front of his house, still full of Genoese bullet holes. Walk up to the 15th-century citadel's **Musée de la Corse** for its exhibits on the island's traditions and music. Even higher up sits the "Eagle's Nest" viewpoint that gives Corte a fairy-tale air from a distance. Far below is the Restonica valley, a remarkable beauty spot – although its narrow single-lane road is not for the faint hearted.

Letting off steam

Take a taxi north through Asco Valley to spot eagles in the Carozzica forest. **Asco Vallée Adventure** (www.interracorsa.fr) offers zip wires and canyoning designed for 4–8-year-old children taller than 90 cm (3 ft).

The Lowdown

Map reference 1 C3

Address 20350 (Haute-Corse).
 Musée de la Corse: La Citadelle,
 20250; www.musee-corse.com

Train from Ajaccio and Bastia. **Bus**
 Eurocorse buses from Ajaccio and
 Bastia (summer only). Autocars
 Cortenais to the Restonica valley

Visitor information La Citadelle
 de Corte, 20350; 04 95 46 26 70;
www.corte-tourisme.com

Open Musée de la Corse:
 late-Jun–mid-Sep: daily; Apr–late-
 Jun & mid-Sep–Oct: closed Mon;
 Nov–Mar: closed Sun & Mon

Eat and drink *Real meal* U Musée
 (Rampe Ribanelle, 20350; 04 95
 61 08 36; closed Nov–Mar) cooks
 Corsican food. *Family treat* Le 24
 (24 Cours Paoli, 20350; 04 95 46
 02 90; closed Jan) offers gourmet
 dishes and Corsican wines in a
 vaulted dining room.

Festival San Ghjuva, cultural
 festivities (Jun)

KIDS' CORNER

Napoleon the meddler

Napoleon was so full of mischief that his family nicknamed him "Nabulio" (little meddler). By the age of two, he was beating up his older brother Joseph. At nine, he was sent to the military academy in Brienne, which he hated, as most of the other students were French aristocrats' sons, who made fun of his Corsican accent. After his exile from Corsica, Napoleon only returned once, although he said he would recognize his island with his eyes closed, thanks to the scent of its *maquis* (shrubland).



FILITOSA FACT

The huge olive tree at Filitosa is thought to be the oldest in France – an estimated 1,200

years old. This means it would have been a sapling at the time of Charlemagne.



Things to do in Ajaccio

- 1 In Place Austerlitz sit where Napoleon liked to sit to do his homework – in the Grotte Napoleon.
- 2 Find the portrait of Napoleon riding on a mule in the Hôtel de Ville.
- 3 In Place Charles de Gaulle, what are the statues of Napoleon and his four brothers wearing?
- 4 A statue in the Musée Fesch shows Napoleon riding an unusual animal.

Can you name the animal he is riding?



Answers: 1 Toga; 2 Toga; 3 Toga; 4 A dromedary

Where to Stay in Corsica

Accommodation in Corsica varies from luxury villas and hotels to camp grounds with basic chalets, while resort areas often have family-oriented complexes of apartments and mini-villas with shared pools. Expect higher prices than on most of the mainland, especially during July and August.

AGENCIES

Direct Corsica

www.directcorsica.com

This agency offers a wide choice of accommodation in Corsica, from cottages and apartments for small families, to villas with pools.

Corsican Places

www.corsica.co.uk

The website lists villas, apartments and residences, with self-catering mini-villas in all price ranges.

Ajaccio

Map 1 B4

HOTELS

San Carlu

8 Blvd Danielle Casanova, 20000; 04 95 21 13 84; www.hotel-sancarlu.com

This is one of central Ajaccio's most pleasant hotels, with sound-proof rooms overlooking the citadelle and located only steps away from the sandy Plage St-François and several restaurants. Flat-screen satellite TVs and Wi-Fi in all the rooms. A suite on the top floor accommodates four.



€€

Hôtel Stella di Mare

Route des Sanguinaires, 20000; 04 95 52 01 07; www.hotel-stelladimare.com

Overlooking a beach 7 km (4 miles) west of Ajaccio's city centre, this hotel is perfect for combining a beach holiday with visits to the Napoleonic sites in the city; there is a bus stop in front. Take in views of the Îles Sanguinaires from the pool.



€€€

CAMPING

Les Mimosas

Route d'Alata, 20090; 04 95 20 99 85; www.camping-lesmimosas.com

This is a peaceful, basic camping option in the shade of a eucalyptus grove, 3 km (2 miles) north of the city centre. There are five chalets, one mobile home to rent, and linen available for hire. A playground, snack bar and shop are also on site.



€

Bonifacio

Map 1 C6

HOTELS

Hôtel des Etrangers

Ave Sylvère Bohn, 20169; 04 95 73 01 09

This friendly inn, in the same family for generations, is within walking distance of the marina and a real treasure in expensive Bonifacio. Located near the main road into town, its spacious rooms have double glazing and come en suite with showers; Wi-Fi in the reception.



€

Hôtel A Madonetta

5 Rue Paul Nicolai, 20169; 04 95 10 36 39; www.amadonetta.com

A 2-minute walk from Bonifacio's port and its many restaurants, this modern hotel with free parking is a good bet for touring families. All rooms have private terraces, bathtubs and Wi-Fi. There is also a hammam (Turkish bath) and Jacuzzi for relaxing. The hotel is open all year.



€€€

Solemare

Nouvelle Marine, 20169; 04 95 73 01 06; www.hotel-solemare.com

This modern low-rise hotel offers a truly breathtaking view over the bobbing yachts up to the citadel of Bonifacio. Rooms are not very large but all have balconies and there are a dozen restaurants near, at hand. The helpful, friendly management is a good source of information for the activities in the area.



€€€



The comfortable lobby of exclusive La Signoria, Calvi



One of the modern double rooms in Hôtel A Madonetta, Bonifacio

CAMPING

Camping La Rondinara

20169 Suartone; 04 95 70 43 15; www.rondinara.fr

Located between Bonifacio and Porto-Vecchio, this site offers pitches under the pines and mobile homes. A track leads to Plage de Rodinara, safe even for the youngest child.

There is a playground, volleyball, grocers, a bakery and snack bar.



€€

SELF-CATERING

Residence Casarina

20169 Golfe de Santa Manza; 04 95 73 57 01; www.casarina-village.com

Just 5 km (3 miles) east of Bonifacio, these chalets and mini-villas – rented by the week – are a short walk from Plage de Maora in the Golfe de Santa Manza. All of them come with private terraces and barbecues and cable TV. An added bonus is the excellent restaurant.



€€€

Calvi

Map 1 B2

HOTELS

La Caravelle

Route de la Plage, 20260; 04 95 65 95 50; www.hotel-la-caravelle.com

This hotel is located on Calvi's long white Marco Plage, with shallow waters and sands perfect for castle building. Rooms have views across to the citadelle; other rooms look on to a Mediterranean garden. The hotel's beach restaurant is excellent and the family in charge is helpful.



€€€

La Signoria

Route de la Forêt de Bonifato, 20260; 04 95 65 93 00; www.hotel-la-signoria.com

One of Corsica's most luxurious hotels, La Signoria is an exclusive hideaway in an 18th-century mansion surrounded by a magnificent garden. It has its own manicured sandy beach, exquisitely furnished rooms, and owners who make sure families have a good time. The restaurant is superb.



€€€

CAMPING**Camping Les Castors**

Route de Pietramaggiore, 20260; 04 95 65 13 30; www.camping-les-castors.fr

Set in a eucalyptus grove, this camp site provides a choice of self-catering chalets and apartments. For kids, the big lure is the mini-water park. The large sandy beach is a short walk away. Wi-Fi is available for a fee, and there is a basic shop, pizza van and live music two nights a week.



€€

**SELF-CATERING
Gîtes de Paradella**

20214 Calenzana; 04 95 65 31 61; www.paradella.fr

On an agricultural estate along the Figarella river – a 5-minute drive south of Calvi – these three gîtes are built to high environmental standards and stay cool in summer. Sheets and towels may be hired; highchair, baby bath and a cot are also available.



€€€

Porto

Map 1 B 3

HOTELS**Hôtel l'Aitone**

20120 Evisa; 04 95 26 20 04; www.hotel-aitone.com

Located in the mountains above Porto, this hotel in one of Corsica's most beautiful forests has staggering views; the sunsets from the restaurant are unforgettable. Rooms are a bit dated, but families can enjoy easy access to trails, waterfalls and river pools. There is a play area for kids.



€€€

Hôtel Eden Park

20147 Serriera; 04 95 26 10 60; www.hotels-porto.com

Hidden amidst the trees, near the Plage de Bussaglia, this is a relaxing

36-room hotel on the Gulf of Porto. Rooms are staggered along paths on the slopes, offering privacy, and there is a playground, table tennis, mini-golf and bike hire. Breakfast is included in the room rates.



€€€

CAMPING**Camping Les Oliviers**

20150 Porto; 04 95 26 14 49; www.camping-oliviers-porto.com

Along with its pitches, Les Oliviers offers wooden family chalets with terraces spread out amidst the trees and gorgeous views over the mountains. The pool, set among the rocks, is delightful, but there is also the option of swimming in the river. Playground and tennis courts on site.



€–€€

SELF-CATERING**Hôtel Residence
Cabanaccia**

20147 Serriera; 04 95 26 14 46; www.residence-cabanaccia.com

Immersed in the maquis and trees 5 km (3 miles) north of Porto and 2 km (1 mile) from Bussaglia beach, Cabanaccia offers guests a choice of modern mini-villas and studios with verandahs. It is a peaceful retreat but a car is essential.



€€€

Porto-Vecchio

Map 1 C 5

HOTEL**Kilina**

Route de Cala Rossa, 20137; 04 95 71 60 43; www.kilina.net

This sleek hotel is near some of Corsica's most beautiful beaches, with rooms lodging up to six people. One of the pools has a garden islet in the centre. Washing machines, an afternoon kids' club, Wi-Fi and buffet breakfast included in rates; minimum week's stay in July and August.



€€€

CAMPING**Camping U Pirellu**

Map 1 C 6

Route de Palombaggia, 20137; 04 95 70 23 44; u-pirellu.com

A few minutes drive from the toddler-friendly Plage de Palombaggia, this camp site offers sea views and simple chalets, as well as pitches. There are activities for kids, Wi-Fi, a solar heated cascade pool, a shop, as well as musical evenings at the bar.



€€

SELF-CATERING**Les Bungalows de
Palombaggia**

Map 1 C 6

20137 Palombaggia; 06 22 04 55 63; www.palombaggia.cc

Located near the enchanting Plage de Palombaggia, these seven attractive bungalows 12 km (7 miles) from the centre of town, are among the cheapest high-season rentals for a family.



€€



Swimming pool with a garden islet in Hotel Kilina, Porto-Vecchio

St-Florent

Map 1 C 2

CAMPING**Camping La Pinède**

Lieu dit Serrigio, 20217; 04 95 37 07 26; www.camping-la-pinede.com

This pleasant family camp ground is located by the Aliso river, with direct motor boat access to the sea. Most visitors stay in the chalets, which offer bunk beds for the kids and are set back in the shade. Note that linen is not supplied.



€

SELF-CATERING**E Caselle**

Lieu Dit Calvello, 20253 Patrimonio; 04 95 37 19 19; www.villas-caselle.com

Set in the hills of Patrimonio, only a 5-minute drive from St-Florent's Plage de la Roya, these comfortable modern villas in a garden setting come with modern conveniences, including Wi-Fi, barbecues and all the services of a hotel. By request, they even pre-stock the fridge with groceries.



€€€

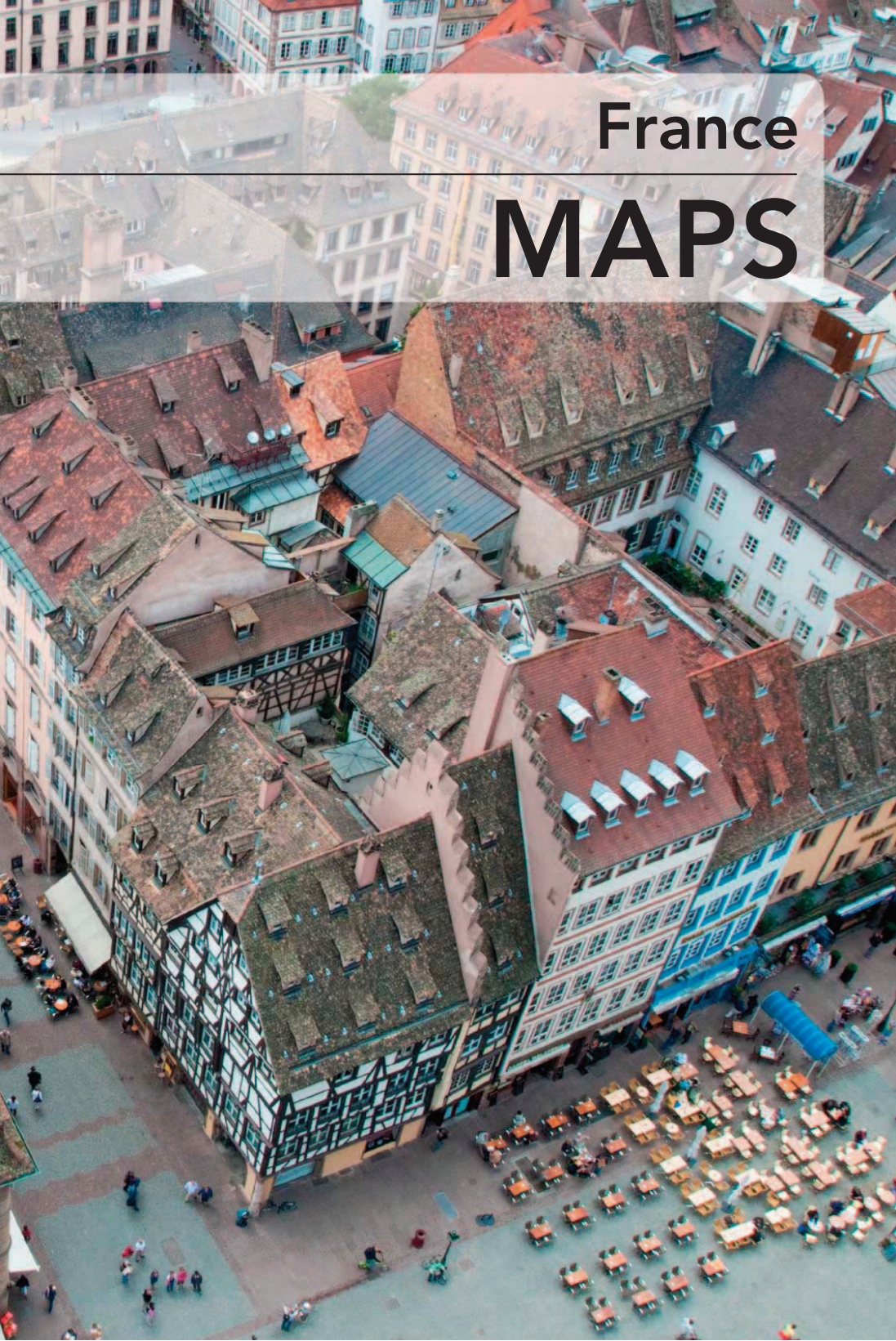
Price Guide

The following price ranges are based on one night's accommodation in high season for a family of four, inclusive of service charges and any additional taxes.

€ Under €100 €€ €100–200 €€€ over €200



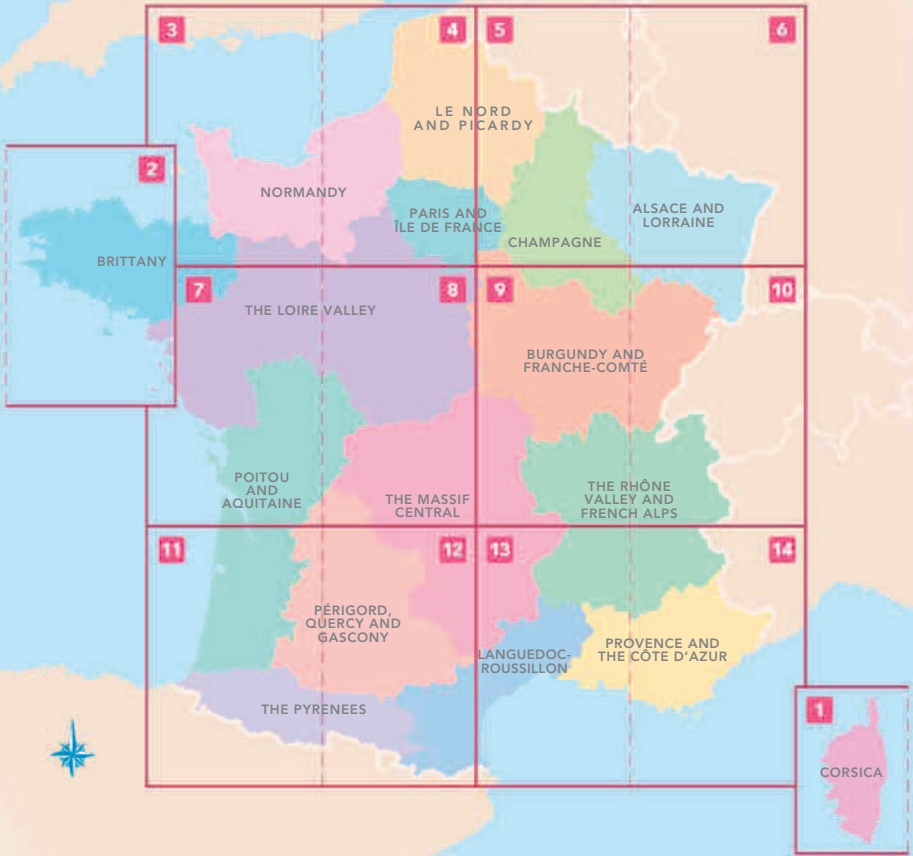
Grid of medieval streets surrounding the Gothic Cathédrale Notre-Dame in the historic heart of Strasbourg

An aerial photograph of a European town square, likely in France. The square is filled with historic buildings, including a prominent half-timbered structure. In the foreground, there is a large outdoor cafe with many tables and chairs. The sky is clear, and the overall scene is vibrant and detailed.

France

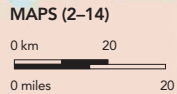
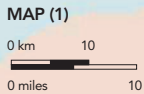
MAPS

France Maps

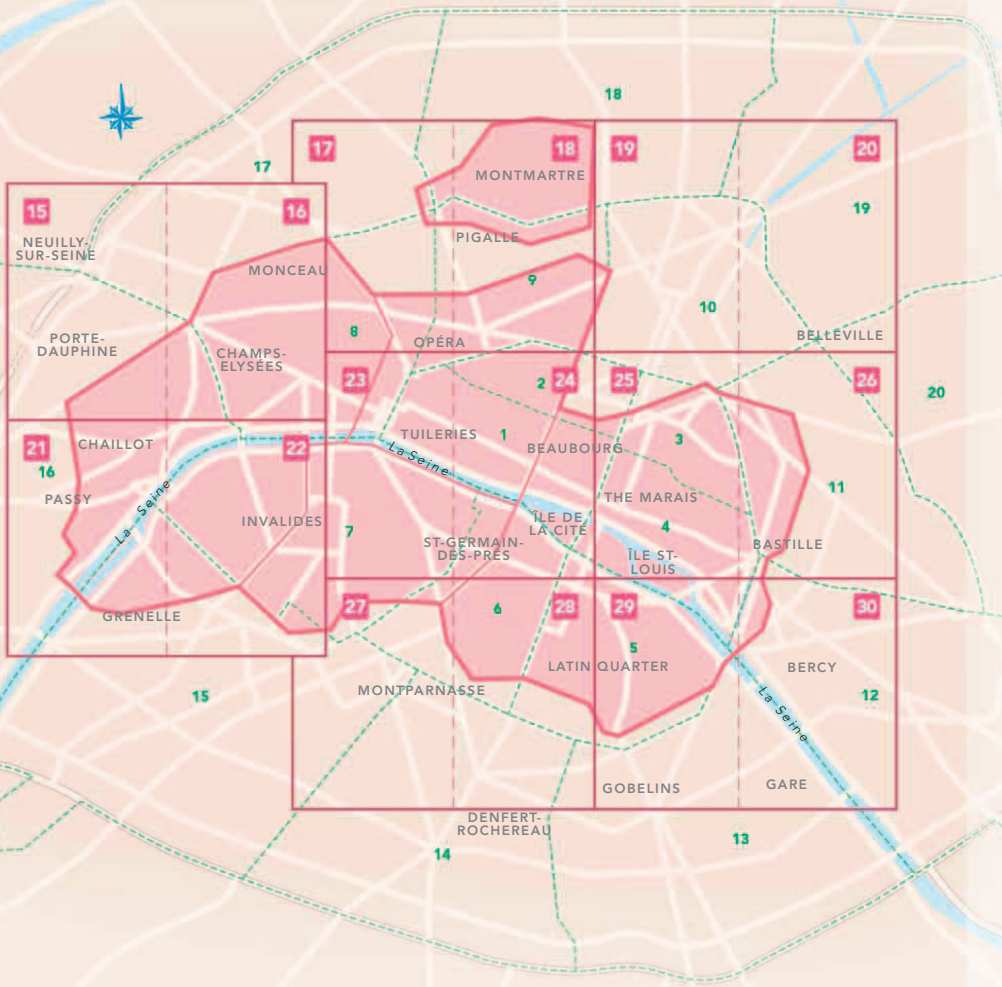


KEY TO MAPS 1–14








- | | | | | | |
|--|-------------------------|--|-----------------|--|-------------------|
| | Motorway with junction | | Regional border | | Place of Interest |
| | Dual carriageway | | Urban area | | Summit |
| | Road under construction | | Airport | | Pass |
| | Main road | | Ferry port | | |
| | Minor road | | | | |
| | Railway | | | | |
| | Ferry route | | | | |
| | National border | | | | |





Paris City Maps



KEY TO MAPS 15–30

-  Major sight
-  Place of interest
-  Other building
-  Train station
-  RER station
-  Métro station
-  Cable car/Funicular station

-  River boat stop
-  Parking
-  Visitor information
-  Police station
-  Playground
-  Motorway
-  Pedestrian street

-  Railway line
-  Arrondissement boundary

MAPS (15–30)

0 m 200

 0 yards 200



E

F

G

H

Rosslare, Cork Plymouth

Guernsey

2

Channel Islands

1 Jersey

3

2

3

4

5

7

6

E

F

G

H

Océan Atlantique





UNITED KINGDOM

English Channel

BASSE-NORMANDIE

BRETAGNE















E

F

G

H

10

1

2

3

4

5

6

E

F

G

H

10

GERMANY

ALSACE

FRANCHE-COMTÉ

SWITZERLAND

ITALY

ALPES

Forêt de Chaux

Parc Régional Naturel du Haut-Jura

Alpes Chablais

Berner Alps

Pennine Alps

Alpes Grées

Parc National de la Vanoise

Vosges

Jura

Lac de Neuchâtel

Lac Léman

Lac d'Annecy

Coldu-Mont-Cenis

Col du Petit-Saint-Bernard

Col du Grand Ballon 1,423m

Mont Blanc 4807m

Monte Cervino 4478m

Monte Leone 3552m

Punta Dufour 4634m

Gran Paradiso 4061m

Grand Ballon 1,423m

Grand Ballon 1,423m

Grand Ballon 1,423m

Grand Ballon 1,423m

Grand Ballon 1,423m

Grand Ballon 1,423m

Grand Ballon 1,423m

Grand Ballon 1,423m

Grand Ballon 1,423m

Grand Ballon 1,423m

Grand Ballon 1,423m

Grand Ballon 1,423m

Grand Ballon 1,423m

Grand Ballon 1,423m

Grand Ballon 1,423m

Grand Ballon 1,423m

Grand Ballon 1,423m

Grand Ballon 1,423m

Grand Ballon 1,423m

Grand Ballon 1,423m

Grand Ballon 1,423m

Grand Ballon 1,423m

Grand Ballon 1,423m

Grand Ballon 1,423m

Grand Ballon 1,423m

Grand Ballon 1,423m

Grand Ballon 1,423m

Grand Ballon 1,423m

Grand Ballon 1,423m

Grand Ballon 1,423m

Grand Ballon 1,423m

Grand Ballon 1,423m

Grand Ballon 1,423m

Grand Ballon 1,423m

Grand Ballon 1,423m

Grand Ballon 1,423m

Grand Ballon 1,423m

Grand Ballon 1,423m

Grand Ballon 1,423m

Grand Ballon 1,423m

Grand Ballon 1,423m

Grand Ballon 1,423m

Grand Ballon 1,423m

Grand Ballon 1,423m

Grand Ballon 1,423m

Grand Ballon 1,423m

Grand Ballon 1,423m

Grand Ballon 1,423m

Grand Ballon 1,423m

Grand Ballon 1,423m

Grand Ballon 1,423m

Grand Ballon 1,423m

Grand Ballon 1,423m

Grand Ballon 1,423m

Grand Ballon 1,423m

Grand Ballon 1,423m

Grand Ballon 1,423m

Grand Ballon 1,423m

Grand Ballon 1,423m

Grand Ballon 1,423m

Grand Ballon 1,423m

Grand Ballon 1,423m

Grand Ballon 1,423m

Grand Ballon 1,423m

Grand Ballon 1,423m

Grand Ballon 1,423m

Grand Ballon 1,423m

Grand Ballon 1,423m

Grand Ballon 1,423m

Grand Ballon 1,423m

Grand Ballon 1,423m

Grand Ballon 1,423m

Grand Ballon 1,423m

Grand Ballon 1,423m

Grand Ballon 1,423m

Grand Ballon 1,423m

Grand Ballon 1,423m

Grand Ballon 1,423m

Grand Ballon 1,423m

Grand Ballon 1,423m

Grand Ballon 1,423m

Grand Ballon 1,423m

Grand Ballon 1,423m

Grand Ballon 1,423m

Grand Ballon 1,423m

Grand Ballon 1,423m

Grand Ballon 1,423m

Grand Ballon 1,423m

Grand Ballon 1,423m

Grand Ballon 1,423m

Grand Ballon 1,423m

Grand Ballon 1,423m

Grand Ballon 1,423m

Grand Ballon 1,423m

Grand Ballon 1,423m

Grand Ballon 1,423m

Grand Ballon 1,423m

Grand Ballon 1,423m

Grand Ballon 1,423m

Grand Ballon 1,423m

Grand Ballon 1,423m

Grand Ballon 1,423m

Grand Ballon 1,423m

Grand Ballon 1,423m

Grand Ballon 1,423m

Grand Ballon 1,423m

Grand Ballon 1,423m

Grand Ballon 1,423m

Grand Ballon 1,423m

Grand Ballon 1,423m

Grand Ballon 1,423m

Grand Ballon 1,423m

Grand Ballon 1,423m

Grand Ballon 1,423m

Grand Ballon 1,423m

Grand Ballon 1,423m

Grand Ballon 1,423m

Grand Ballon 1,423m

Grand Ballon 1,423m

Grand Ballon 1,423m

Grand Ballon 1,423m

Grand Ballon 1,423m

Grand Ballon 1,423m

Grand Ballon 1,423m

Grand Ballon 1,423m

Grand Ballon 1,423m

Grand Ballon 1,423m

Grand Ballon 1,423m

Grand Ballon 1,423m

Grand Ballon 1,423m

Grand Ballon 1,423m

Grand Ballon 1,423m

Grand Ballon 1,423m

Grand Ballon 1,423m

Grand Ballon 1,423m

Grand Ballon 1,423m

Grand Ballon 1,423m

Grand Ballon 1,423m

Grand Ballon 1,423m

Grand Ballon 1,423m

Grand Ballon 1,423m

Grand Ballon 1,423m

Grand Ballon 1,423m

Grand Ballon 1,423m

Grand Ballon 1,423m

Grand Ballon 1,423m

Grand Ballon 1,423m

Grand Ballon 1,423m

Grand Ballon 1,423m

Grand Ballon 1,423m

Grand Ballon 1,423m

Grand Ballon 1,423m

Grand Ballon 1,423m

Grand Ballon 1,423m

Grand Ballon 1,423m

Grand Ballon 1,423m

Grand Ballon 1,423m

Grand Ballon 1,423m

Grand Ballon 1,423m

Grand Ballon 1,423m

Grand Ballon 1,423m

Grand Ballon 1,423m

Grand Ballon 1,423m

Grand Ballon 1,423m

Grand Ballon 1,423m

Grand Ballon 1,423m

Grand Ballon 1,423m

Grand Ballon 1,423m

Grand Ballon 1,423m

Grand Ballon 1,423m

Grand Ballon 1,423m

Grand Ballon 1,423m

Grand Ballon 1,423m

Grand Ballon 1,423m

Grand Ballon 1,423m

Grand Ballon 1,423m

Grand Ballon 1,423m

Grand Ballon 1,423m

Grand Ballon 1,423m

Grand Ballon 1,423m

Grand Ballon 1,423m

Grand Ballon 1,423m

Grand Ballon 1,423m

Grand Ballon 1,423m

Grand Ballon 1,423m

Grand Ballon 1,423m

Grand Ballon 1,423m

Grand Ballon 1,423m

Grand Ballon 1,423m

Grand Ballon 1,423m

Grand Ballon 1,423m

Grand Ballon 1,423m

Grand Ballon 1,423m

Grand Ballon 1,423m

Grand Ballon 1,423m

Grand Ballon 1,423m

Grand Ballon 1,423m

Grand Ballon 1,423m

Grand Ballon 1,423m

Grand Ballon 1,423m

Grand Ballon 1,423m

Grand Ballon 1,423m

Grand Ballon 1,423m

Grand Ballon 1,423m

Grand Ballon 1,423m

Grand Ballon 1,423m

Grand Ballon 1,423m

Grand Ballon 1,423m

Grand Ballon 1,423m

Grand Ballon 1,423m

Grand Ballon 1,423m

Grand Ballon 1,423m

Grand Ballon 1,423m

Grand Ballon 1,423m

Grand Ballon 1,423m

Grand Ballon 1,423m

Grand Ballon 1,423m

Grand Ballon 1,423m

Grand Ballon 1,423m

Grand Ballon 1,423m

Grand Ballon 1,423m

Grand Ballon 1,423m

Grand Ballon 1,423m

Grand Ballon 1,423m

Grand Ballon 1,423m

Grand Ballon 1,423m

Grand Ballon 1,423m

Grand Ballon 1,423m

Grand Ballon 1,423m

Grand Ballon 1,423m

Grand Ballon 1,423m

Grand Ballon 1,423m

Grand Ballon 1,423m

Grand Ballon 1,423m

Grand Ballon 1,423m

Grand Ballon 1,423m

Grand Ballon 1,423m

Grand Ballon 1,423m

Grand Ballon 1,423m

Grand Ballon 1,423m

Grand Ballon 1,423m

Grand Ballon 1,423m

Grand Ballon 1,423m

Grand Ballon 1,423m

Grand Ballon 1,423m

Grand Ballon 1,423m

Grand Ballon 1,423m

Grand Ballon 1,423m

Grand Ballon 1,423m</







ITALY

PROVENCE-ALPES-CÔTE D'AZUR

Côte d'Azur

Mer Méditerranée

Propriano, Ajaccio, Bastia, Île Rousse, Porto Torres

Civitavecchia, Ajaccio, Bastia, Île Rousse,

Calvi, Ajaccio, Bastia, Île Rousse,

France Maps Index

A

Abbaye Royale de Fontevraud 7 D2
 Abbeville 4 F3
 Agde 13 B4
 Agen 12 E3
 Aigues-Mortes 13 C4
 Aix-en-Provence 14 E4
 Ajaccio 1 B4
 Albert 4 G3
 Albertville 10 F5
 Albi 12 G3
 Alençon 3 D6
 Alès 13 C3
 Amboise 8 E2
 Amiens 4 G3
 Ancenis 7 B2
 Angers 7 C2
 Angles-sur-l'Anglin 8 E4
 Angoulême 7 D6
 Annecy 10 E5
 Annemasse 10 E4
 Antibes 14 G4
 Apt 13 D3
 Arc-et-Senans 10 E3
 Arcachon 11 B2
 Argelès-Gazost 11 C5
 Argentan 3 D5
 Argenteuil 4 G5
 Arles 13 C4
 Arras 5 A2
 Arromanches-les-Bains 3 C4
 Artouste 11 C5
 Arzon 2 G4
 Aste-Béon 11 C5
 Aubas 12 E1
 Aubenas 13 C2
 Auch 12 E4
 Aurillac 12 G1
 Autun 9 C3
 Auxerre 9 B1
 Avallon 9 B2
 Aven Armand 13 A2
 Avesnes-sur-Helpe 5 B3
 Avignon 13 D3
 Avranches 3 B5
 Axat 12 G5
 Azay-le-Rideau 8 E2

B

Balazuc 13 C2
 Bandol 14 E5
 Barbazan 12 E5
 Bar-le-Duc 5 D5
 Bastia 1 C2
 Batz-sur-Mer 2 H5
 Bayeux 3 C4
 Bayonne 11 B4
 Bazas 11 C2
 Beaucaire 13 C3
 Beaucens 11 D5
 Beaulieu-sur-Dordogne 12 F1
 Beaune 9 C3
 Beauvais 4 G4
 Beauval 4 G3
 Beauvoir 3 B6
 Belfort 10 F1
 Belleville-sur-Saône 9 C5
 Belvès 12 E1
 Berck-sur-Mer 4 F2
 Bergerac 11 D1
 Besançon 10 E2
 Béthune 4 G2
 Beynac-et-Cazenac 12 E1
 Béziers 13 A4
 Biarritz 11 A4
 Biot 14 G4

Blois 8 F2
 Bonifacio 1 C6
 Bordeaux 11 C1
 Bourgogne-sur-Mer 4 F1
 Bourg-en-Bresse 9 D4
 Bourges 8 G3
 Bourgueil 7 D2
 Brantôme 8 E6
 Brast 2 E3
 Breteuil 4 G4
 Briançon 14 F1
 Briey 6 E4
 Brignoles 14 E4
 Brive-la-Gaillarde 12 F1
 Bruay-la-Buissière 4 G2

C

Cabrerets 12 F2
 Cadenet 13 D3
 Caen 3 D4
 Cahors 12 F2
 Calais 4 F1
 Calvi 1 B2
 Cambrai 5 A2
 Cannes 14 G4
 Capoulet-et-Junac 12 F5
 Carcassonne 12 G5
 Carnac 2 G4
 Carpentras 13 D3
 Castres 12 G4
 Cavaillon 13 D3
 Céret 12 H6
 Chagny 9 C3
 Challans 7 A3
 Chalons-sur-Saône 9 D3
 Châlons-en-Champagne 5 C5
 Chambéry 10 E6
 Chamonix-Mont-Le Blanc 10 F5
 Champagne-Mouton 7 D5
 Champagne-en-Vanoise 10 F6
 Champeix 9 A6
 Chantilly 4 G4
 Chaource 9 B1
 Charleville-Mézières 5 C3
 Chartres 4 F6
 Chasseneuil 7 D5
 Château de Malmaison 4 G5
 Château de Mauvezin 11 D5
 Château-Gontier 7 C1
 Château-Thierry 5 A5
 Châteaudun 8 F1
 Châteaulin 2 F3
 Châteauneuf-en-Auxois 9 C2
 Châteauroux 8 F3
 Châtellerault 8 E3
 Châtillon-sur-Seine 9 C1
 Chaumont 9 D1
 Chauvigny 8 E4
 Chenonceaux 8 E2
 Cherbourg 3 B3
 Chevigny 8 F2
 Chinon 7 D3
 Cholet 7 C3
 Clermont 4 G4
 Clermont-Ferrand 8 H5
 Cluny 9 C4
 Cognac 7 C5
 Collioure 12 H6
 Colmar 6 G6
 Commercy 5 D5
 Compiègne 5 A4
 Concarneau 2 F4
 Concret 7 A1
 Condom 11 D3
 Conques 12 G2
 Corte 1 C3
 Cosne-Cours-sur-Loire 9 A2
 Coulon 7 C4

Courchevel 10 F6
 Coursans 12 H5
 Coutances 3 B5
 Creil 4 G4
 Créteil 4 G5

D

Dax 11 B3
 Denain 5 A2
 Dieppe 4 E3
 Digne-les-Bains 14 F3
 Digoin 9 B4
 Dijon 9 D2
 Dinan 3 A6
 Dinard 3 A5
 Disneyland Resort Paris 4 H5
 Dole 9 D3
 Douai 5 A2
 Douarnenez 2 F3
 Dreux 4 F5
 Dunkerque 4 G1
 Duravel 12 E2

E

Eco-musée de la Grande Lande 11 C2
 Écomusée d'Alsace 10 G1
 Eguisheim 10 G1
 Elbeuf 4 E4
 Ensisheim 10 G1
 Épernay 5 B5
 Épinac 9 C3
 Épinal 6 F6
 Erdevin 2 G4
 Ermenonville 5 A5
 Espéraza 12 G5
 Evreux 4 F5
 Evry 4 G6
 Excenevex 10 F4
 Eyguières 13 D4

F

Falaise 3 D5
 Fécamp 4 E3
 Figari 1 C6
 Figeac 12 G2
 Flavigny-sur-Ozerain 9 C2
 Flers 3 C5
 Florac 13 B2
 Foix 12 F5
 Fontaine-de-Vaucluse 13 D3
 Fontainebleau 5 A6
 Fontenay-le-Comte 7 C4
 Fontevraud 7 D2
 Forbach 6 F4
 Forêt de Brocéliande 2 H3
 Fougères 3 B6
 Futuroscope 7 D4

G

Gaillac 12 F3
 Gap 14 E2
 Ghisonaccia 1 C4
 Ghisoni 1 C4
 Gien 8 G2
 Gisors 4 F4
 Giverny 4 F5
 Givet 5 C3
 Gordes 13 D3
 Gouffre de Padriac 12 F1
 Gramat 12 F1
 Grand Parc Puy du Fou 7 C3
 Grandcamp-Maisy 3 C4
 Granville 3 B5
 Grasse 14 G3

Grenoble 10 E6
 Grotte de Niaux 12 F5
 Grotte du Mas d'Azil 12 F5
 Grottes d'Isturiz et Oxocelhaya 11 B4
 Grottes-Refuges de Naours 4 G3
 Guebwiller 10 G1
 Guérande 2 H5
 Guéret 8 F5
 Guingamp 2 G2

H

Hagondange 6 E4
 Haguenua 6 G5
 Hautefort 8 E6
 Hauterives 9 D6
 Honefleur 3 D4
 Hures-la-Parade 13 B2
 Huelzas 13 A3
 Hyères 14 F5

I

Île Rousse 1 B2
 Isoire 8 H6
 Issoudun 8 G3

J

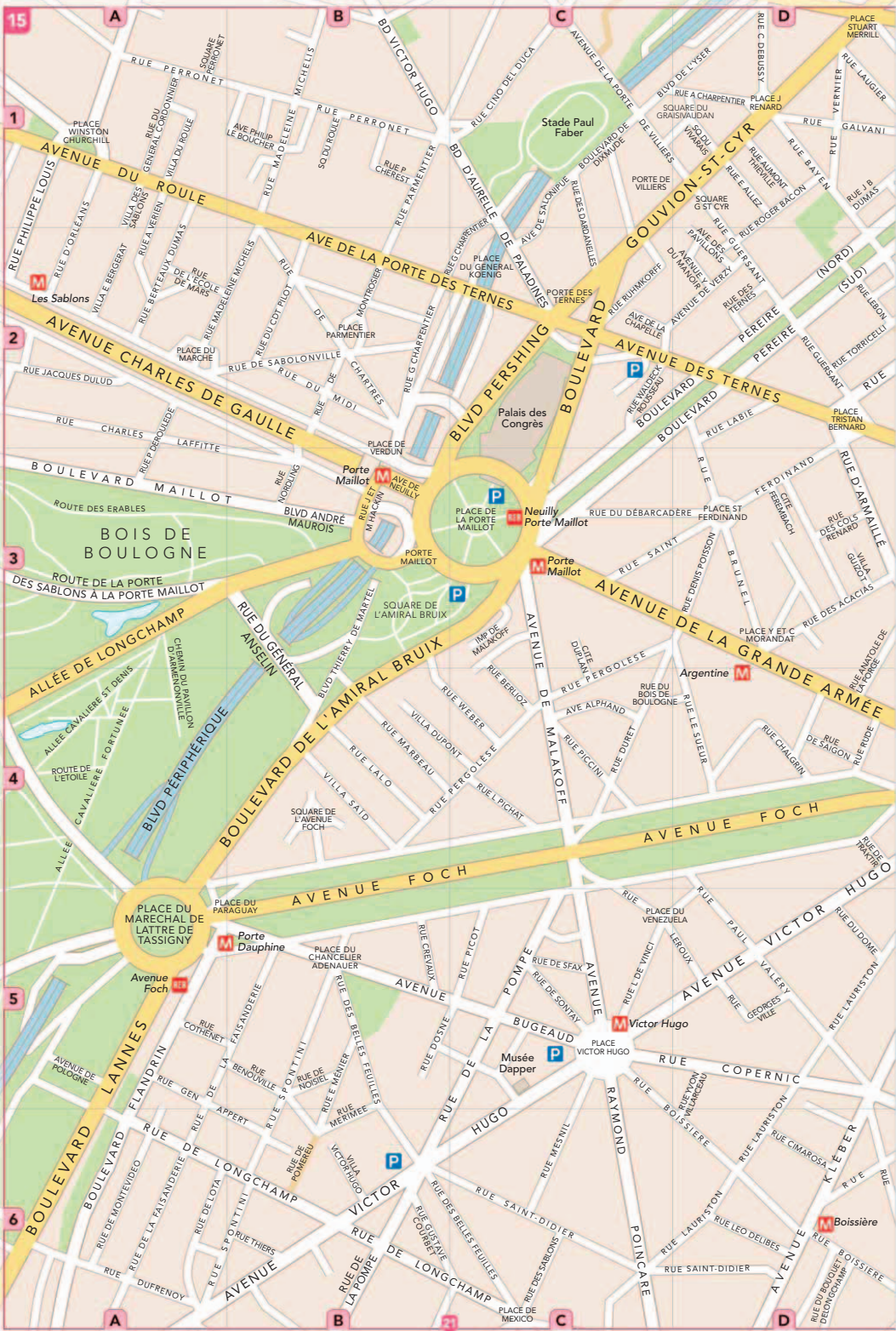
Jarry 6 E4
 Jaulnay-Clan 7 D4
 Jumilhac-le-Grand 8 E6

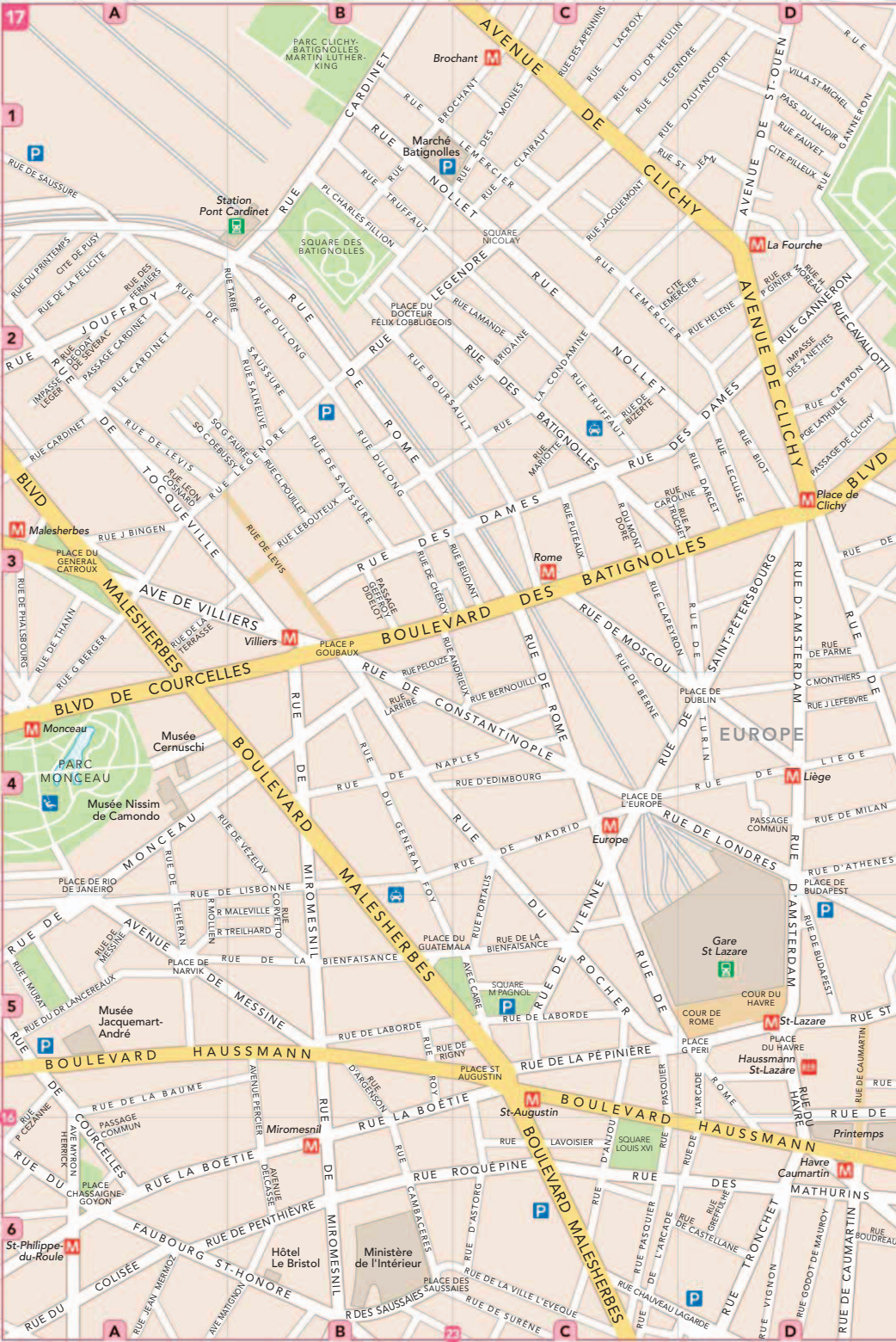
K

Kaysersberg 6 G6
 Kerlescan 2 G4

L

La Baule 2 H5
 La Chaise-Dieu 9 B6
 La Coquille 8 E6
 La Flèche 7 D1
 La Malène 13 B2
 La Palmyre 7 B5
 La Plagne 10 F6
 La Rochefoucauld 7 D5
 La Roche-sur-Yon 7 B3
 La Rochelle 7 B5
 La Roque-St-Christophe 12 E1
 La Seyne-sur-Mer 14 E5
 La Villeneuve-sur-Lot 12 E2
 Labroquère 12 E5
 Lafitte-sur-Lot 11 D2
 Lamballe 2 H3
 Lamoura 10 E4
 Landes 11 C3
 Langres 9 D1
 Lannion 2 G2
 Lanuajols 13 B3
 Laon 5 B4
 Larche 12 F1
 Larmor-Baden 2 G4
 Larressingle 11 D3
 Laruns 11 C5
 Larvotto 14 G3
 La Tremblade 7 B5
 Lascaux II 12 E1
 Laval 7 C1
 Lavilledieu 13 C2
 Le Bournat 12 E1
 Le Creusot 9 C3
 Le Croisic 2 H5
 Le Havre 3 D4
 Le Lavandou 14 F5
 Le Mans 7 D1
 Le Mont-Dore 8 H6





PARC CLICHY-BATIGNOLLES
MARTIN LUTHER KING

Brochant M

Marché Batignolles P

Station Pont Cardinet

SQUARE DES BATIGNOLLES

La Fourche M

Place de Clichy M

Malesherbes M

Villiers M

Rome M

Monceau M

Musée Cernuschi

Musée Nissim de Camondo

Europe M

Liège M

Musée Jacquemart-André

Gare St-Lazare

COUR DU HAVRE

St-Lazare M

Haussmann St-Lazare

St-Augustin M

Havre Caumartin M

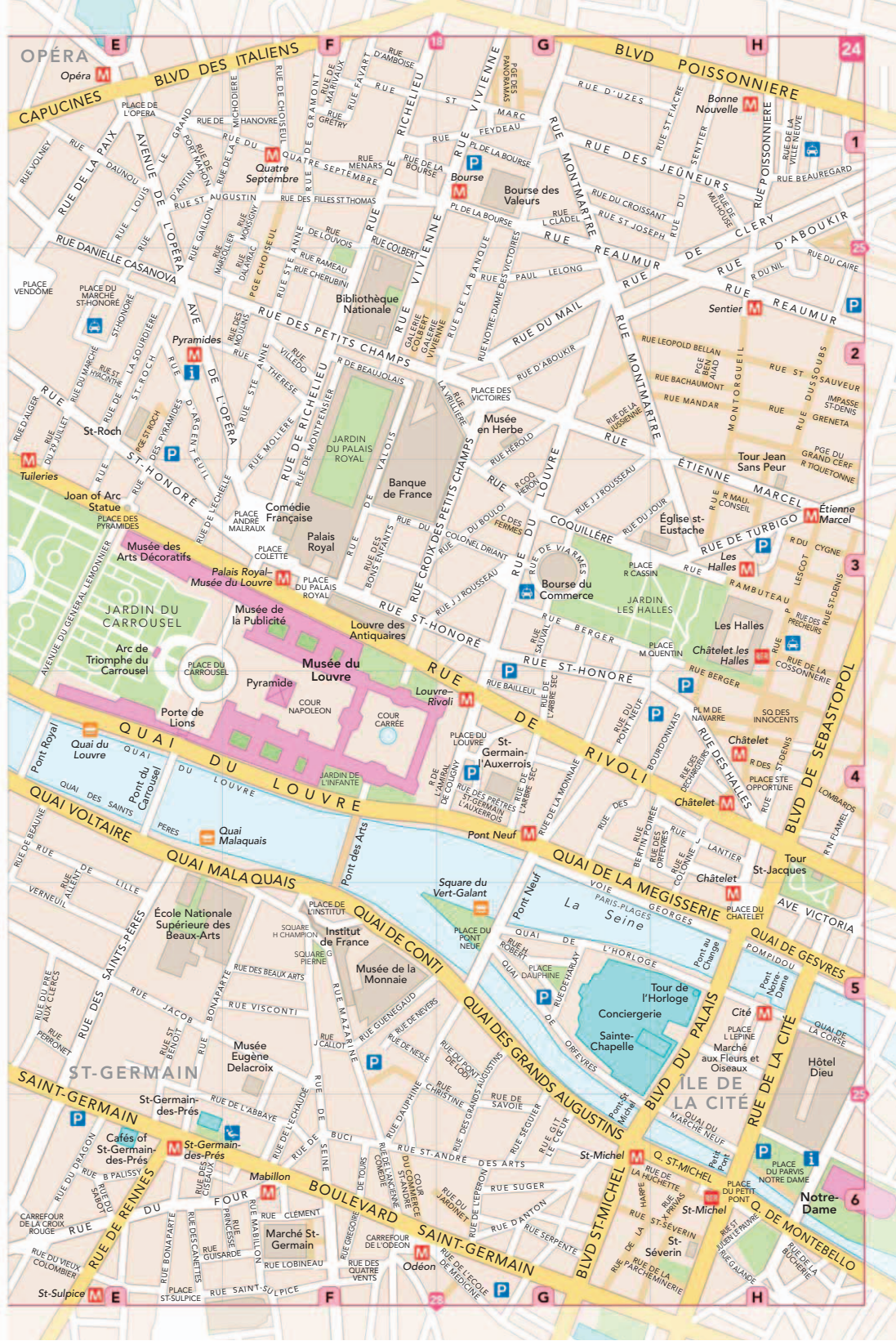
MATHURINS

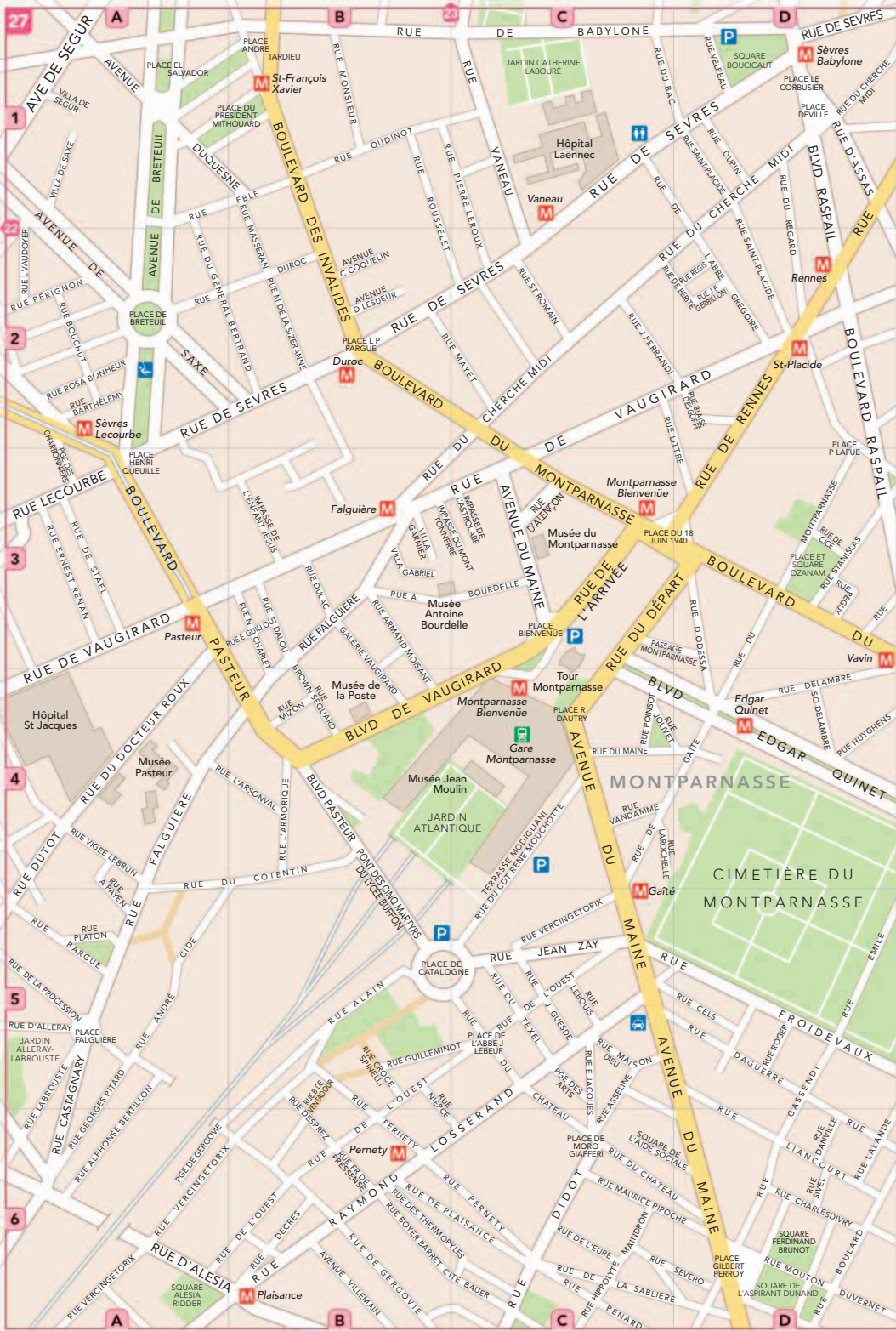
St-Philippe-du-Roule M

Hôtel Le Bristol

Ministère de l'Intérieur

RUE BOULAY





Paris Maps Index

A

4 Fils, Rue des 25 C4
8 Mai 1945, Rue du 19 C5
Abbeses, Rue des 18 F2
Abbeville, Rue d' 19 A4
Aboukir, Rue d' 25 A2
Adolphe Adam, Rue 25 A5
Aguessau, Rue d' 23 C1
Albert de Mun, Avenue 21 D1
Alboni, Rue de l' 21 C3
Alboni, Square de l' 21 C3
Alençon, Rue d' 27 C3
Alésia, Rue d' 27 A6
Alibert, Rue 20 E6
Amelot, Rue 26 E5
Amiral Bruix,
Boulevard de l' 15 B4
Ampère, Rue 16 F1
Amsterdam, Rue d' 17 D4
Anatole France, Quai 23 C3
André Citroën, Quai 21 B6
André del Sarte, Rue 18 H2
André Maurois, Boulevard 15 B3
Anvers, Place d' 18 G3
Arago, Boulevard 29 A5
Archereau, Rue 20 E1
Archives, Rue des 25 B4
Arcole, Rue d' 25 A6
Armillé, Rue d' 15 D3
Armand Carrel, Rue 20 F3
Arrivée, Rue de l' 27 C3
Auber, Rue 18 E6
Aubervilliers, Rue d' 19 D2
Aubriot, Rue 25 C4
Auguste Comte, Rue 28 E3
Auguste Vacquerie, Rue 16 E5
Aumale, Rue d' 18 F4
Aurelle de Paladines,
Boulevard d' 15 C1
Austerlitz, Quai d' 30 E4
Azais, Rue 18 G2

B

Babylone, Rue de 27 B1
Baileuil, Rue 24 G4
Banque, Rue de la 24 G2
Barbes, Boulevard 19 A1
Barbet de Jouy, Rue 23 B6
Barbey d'Aureville, Avenue 22 F3
Barthélémy, Rue 27 A2
Bassano, Rue de 16 E6
Bastille, Rue de la 26 E6
Batignolles, Boulevard des 17 B3
Batignolles, Rue des 17 C2
Beaubourg, Rue 25 B4
Beaujon, Rue 16 F4
Beaumarchais, Boulevard 26 E4
Beaune, Rue de 24 E4
Beauregard, Rue 25 A1
Beaux Arts, Rue des 24 F5
Becker, Rue des 18 G1
Belleville, Rue de 23 C5
Bellevue, Rue de 19 A4
Belles Feuilles, Rue des 15 B6
Belleville, Boulevard de 26 G1
Belleville, Rue de 20 G6
Belly, Rue de 16 E6
Benjamin Franklin, Rue 21 C2
Béranger, Rue 25 D2
Bercy, Boulevard de 30 F4
Bercy, Quai de 30 G5
Berger, Rue 24 G3
Bernard Palissy, Rue 24 E6
Berteaux Dumas, Rue 15 A2
Berthe, Rue 18 F2
Bertin Poirée, Rue 24 G4
Bichat, Rue 26 E1
Blanche, Rue 18 E4
Bleue, Rue 19 A5
Bonaparte, Rue 28 E1
Bonne Nouvelle,
Boulevard de 25 A1
Bord de l'Eau, Terrasse du 23 D3
Bosquet, Avenue 22 G2
Bosquet, Rue 22 G3

Botzaris, Rue 20 G4
Bouchardon, Rue 25 C1
Boulainvilliers, Rue de 21 A3
Bouille, Rue 26 E5
Bouloi, Rue de 24 G3
Bourbon, Quai de 25 B6
Bourdon, Boulevard 30 E1
Bourdonnais, Avenue de la 22 E2
Bourdonnais, Rue des 24 G4
Bourg Tibourg, Rue du 25 B5
Bourse, Place de la 24 G1
Bourse, Rue de la 24 F1
Brady, Passage 25 B1
Brady, Quai 21 D3
Breguet, Rue 26 F5
Bûcherie, Rue de la 24 H6
Buffon, Rue 29 C4
Bugeaud, Avenue 15 B5

C

Cambronne, Rue 22 F6
Capucines, Boulevard des 23 D1
Capucines, Rue des 23 D1
Cardinal Guibert, Rue du 18 G2
Carnetin, Passage 17 A2
Carnetin, Rue 17 B1
Carnot, Avenue 16 E3
Castagnary, Rue 27 A6
Castiglione, Rue de 23 D2
Caulaincourt, Rue 18 E2
Cavallotti, Rue 17 D2
Célestins, Quai des 25 C6
Censier, Rue 29 B4
Cersaisie, Rue de la 25 D6
Chaillot, Rue de 16 E6
Champ-de-Mars, Rue du 22 G3
Champs-Élysées,
Avenue des 16 F4
Chanailleries, Rue de 23 B6
Chanoinesse, Rue 25 A6
Chapelle, Boulevard de la 19 A3
Chappe, Rue 18 G2
Charlemagne, Rue 25 C6
Charles Dullin, Place 18 G3
Charles Floquet, Avenue 22 E3
Charles Risler, Avenue 22 F4
Charlot, Rue 25 D3
Charonne, Rue de 26 G6
Château d'Eau, Rue du 25 C1
Châteaudun, Rue de 18 E5
Chaussée de La Muette 21 A3
Chaussée d'Antin, Rue
de la 18 E5
Cherche Midi, Rue du 27 B3
Chevaleret, Rue du 30 E6
Choiseul, Passage 24 F2
Christine, Rue 24 G5
Cino del Duca, Rue 15 C1
Cinq Martyrs du Lycée
Buffon, Pont des 27 B4
Cirque, Rue du 23 B1
Cité, Rue de la 25 A6
Claude Bernard, Rue 29 A4
Claude Vellefaux, Avenue 20 E6
Clément, Rue 24 F6
Cléry, Rue de 25 A1
Clichy, Avenue de 17 D2
Clichy, Boulevard de 17 D3
Clichy, Rue de 17 D3
Clignancourt, Rue de 18 H1
Clotaire, Rue 28 G2
Clotilde, Rue 29 A3
Clovis, Rue 28 H2
Cluny, Rue de 28 G1
Cognacq Jay, Rue 22 G1
Colbert, Rue 24 F1
Colisée, Rue du 17 A6
Commandant Schloesing,
Rue du 21 C2
Commerce, Rue du 22 E6
Condé, Rue de 28 F1
Concorde, Rue 19 A4
Constantinople, Rue de 17 B3
Conti, Quai de 24 F5
Copernic, Rue 15 C5
Coquillière, Rue 24 G3

Cortot, Rue 18 G2
Cossonnerie, Rue de la 25 A3
Courcelles, Boulevard de 16 F3
Courcelles, Rue de 17 A5
Couronnes, Rue des 26 G1
Crimée, Rue de 20 G1
Croissant, Rue du 24 G1
Croix Nivert, Rue de la 22 F6
Crozatier, Rue 30 G2
Cujas, Rue 28 H2
Custine, Rue 19 A1
Cuvier, Rue 29 C3

D

Daguerre, Rue 27 D6
Danielle Casanova, Rue 24 E1
Danton, Rue 24 G6
Daumesnil, Avenue 30 F2
Dauphine, Rue 24 F6
Débarcadère, Rue du 15 C3
Debellemme, Rue 25 D4
Delessert, Boulevard 21 C2
Denfert-Rochereau, Avenue 28 E5
Départ, Rue du 27 C3
Descartes, Rue 29 A2
Deux Ponts, Rue des 29 C1
Diderot, Boulevard 30 E2
Didot, Rue 27 C6
Docteur Roux, Rue du 27 A4
Dosne, Rue 15 B5
Douai, Rue de 18 E3
Doudeauville, Rue 19 B1
Dragon, Rue du 24 E6
Dumont d'Urville, Rue 16 E5
Dunkerque, Rue de 19 A3
Duphot, Rue 23 D1
Duplex, Rue 22 F5
Duquesne, Avenue 27 A1
Durantin, Rue 18 F2
Dutot, Rue 27 A4

E

Echiquier, Rue de l' 19 A6
Ecoles, Rue des 29 A1
Ecouffes, Rue des 25 C5
Edgar Quinet, Boulevard 27 C4
Emile Accolas, Avenue 22 F4
Emile Augier, Boulevard 21 A1
Emile Deschanel, Avenue 22 F3
Emile Zola, Avenue 21 D6
Enghien, Rue d' 19 A6
Entrepreneurs, Rue des 21 C6
Estrapade, Rue de l' 28 G2
Etienne Marcel, Rue 25 A3
Eylau, Avenue d' 21 C1

F

Faisanderie, Rue de la 15 A6
Falguière, Rue de 27 A5
Faubourg du Temple,
Rue du 25 D1
Faubourg Montmartre,
Rue du 18 G5
Faubourg Poissonnière,
Rue du 19 A6
Faubourg St-Antoine,
Rue du 30 F1
Faubourg St-Honoré,
Rue du 23 B1
Faubourg St-Jacques,
Rue du 28 F5
Faubourg St-Martin,
Rue du 25 B1
Fédération, Rue de la 22 E4
Feuillants, Terrasse des 23 D2
Flandre, Passage de 20 F2
Flandre, Rue de 20 E2
Flandrin, Boulevard 15 A6
Flatters, Rue 29 A5
Foch, Avenue 15 B5
Fondary, Rue 22 E6
Fontaine au Roi, Rue de la 26 G1
Fontaine, Rue 18 E3
Fontaine, Rue de la 21 A5

Fossés Saint-Bernard,
Rue des 29 B2
Four, Rue du 24 E6
France, Avenue de 30 F6
Francœur, Rue 18 G1
François 1er, Rue 16 G6
François Mauriac, Quai 30 F5
François Miron, Rue 25 B5
Francs Bourgeois, Rue des 25 C4
Franklin D Roosevelt,
Avenue 23 A1
Frédéric le Play, Avenue 22 G4
Fresnel, Rue 22 E1
Friedland, Avenue de 16 F4
Frochot, Rue 18 F3
Froidevaux, Rue 27 D5
Froissart, Rue 25 D3

G

Gabriel, Avenue 23 B2
Gaïte, Rue de 27 C4
Galilée, Rue 15 D6
Garibaldi, Boulevard 22 G6
Garreau, Rue 18 F2
Général Anselin, Rue du 25 B3
Général Detrie, Avenue du 15 F4
Général Leclerc, Avenue
du 28 E6
Geoffroy-St-Hilaire, Rue 29 B3
George V, Avenue 29 F5
Georges Berger, Rue 16 H2
Georges Mandel, Avenue 21 B1
Gesvres, Quai de 25 A5
Gobelins, Avenue des 29 B5
Godefroy Cavignac, Rue 26 G5
Gouvion-Saint-Cyr,
Boulevard 15 C2
Grand Cerf, Passage du 24 H2
Grand Prieuré, Rue du 26 E2
Grande Armée, Avenue
de la 15 C3
Grands Augustins,
Quai des 24 G5
Grands Augustins,
Rue des 24 G6
Grange aux Belles,
Rue de la 19 D5
Gravilliers, Rue des 25 B3
Grenelle, Boulevard de 21 D4
Grenelle, Quai de 21 C5
Grenelle, Rue de 23 D5
Gros, Rue 21 A5
Gutenberg, Rue 21 A6
Guynemer, Rue 28 E2

H

Halévy, Rue 18 E6
Halles, Rue des 25 A4
Haussmann, Boulevard 18 A6
Hauteville, Rue d' 19 E6
Havre, Rue du 19 D5
Henri IV, Boulevard 27 D1
Henri IV, Quai 29 D1
Henri Martin, Avenue 21 A1
Hérold, Rue 24 G2
Hoche, Avenue 16 F4
Hôpital, Boulevard de l' 29 C6
Hôtel de Ville, Quai de l' 25 B5
Hôtel de Ville, Rue de l' 25 B5

I

léna, Avenue d' 16 E5
Invalides, Boulevard des 27 B1
Invalides, Place des 23 A4
Italiens, Boulevard des 24 E1

J

Jacques Kessel, Rue 30 H6
Jarente, Rue de 25 D5
Jean Giraudoux, Rue 16 E5
Jean Jaurès, Avenue 20 F3
Jean Nicot, Rue 22 G2
Jean Zay, Rue 27 C5

- Jean-Jacques
Rousseau, Rue 24 G3
Jeanne d'Arc, Rue 29 D6
Jemmapes, Quai de 25 D1
Jeûneurs, Rue des 24 G1
Joseph Bara, Rue 28 E3
Joseph de Maistre, Rue 18 E2
Juffroy, Rue 17 A2
Juliette Dodu, Rue 20 E5
Junot, Avenue 18 F1
Jussieu, Rue 29 B2
- K**
Keller, Rue 26 F5
Kléber, Avenue 21 D1
- L**
L'Elysee, Rue de 23 B1
La Bastille, Boulevard de 30 E2
La Boétie, Rue 17 B6
La Fayette, Rue 19 C4
Lacépède, Rue 29 B3
Lagrange, Rue 18 G2
Lamarck, Rue 25 C1
Lancry, Rue de 22 G2
Landrieu, Passage 15 A6
Lannes, Boulevard 20 G2
Laumière, Avenue de 15 D5
Lauriston, Rue 28 F6
Leclerc, Rue 27 A3
Lecourbe, Rue 30 E2
Ledru Rollin, Avenue 25 D1
Léon Jouhaux, Rue 18 F2
Lille, Rue de 24 E4
Linné, Rue 29 B2
Linois, Rue 21 C5
Lisbonne, Rue de 17 A4
Lobineau, Rue 24 F6
Logelbach, Rue de 16 H2
Londres, Rue de 17 C4
Longchamp, Allée de 15 A4
Longchamp, Rue de 21 D1
Lord Byron, Rue 16 F4
Louis Blanc, Rue 20 E4
Loumel, Rue de 21 D6
Louvre, Quai du 24 E4
Louvre, Rue du 24 G3
Lowendal, Avenue de 22 G5
Lyon, Rue de 30 E2
- M**
Mabillon, Rue 24 F6
Mac-Mahon, Avenue 16 E3
Madeleine, Boulevard de la 23 D1
Magenta, Boulevard de 19 C6
Mail, Rue du 24 G2
Maine, Rue du 27 C4
Maître Albert, Rue 29 A1
Malakoff, Avenue de 15 C3
Malaquais, Quai 24 E4
Malesherbes, Boulevard 16 G1
Manin, Rue 20 G5
Marbeau, Rue 15 B4
Marceau, Avenue 16 F5
Marché Saint-Honoré, Rue du 24 E2
Marchal Gallieni, Avenue du 23 A5
Marigny, Avenue de 23 B1
Martyrs, Rue des 18 F3
Marx Dormoy, Rue 19 C2
Mathurins, Rue des 17 D6
Matignon, Avenue 23 A1
Mayet, Rue 27 C2
Mazarine, Rue 24 F5
Meaux, Rue de 20 E4
Medicis, Rue de 28 F1
Megisserie, Quai de la 24 G4
Ménilmontant, Rue 26 H2
Messine, Avenue de 17 A5
Metz, Rue de 25 B1
Midi, Rue du 15 B2
Mirabeau, Rue 21 A6
Mirosmesnil, Rue de 17 B4
Monceau, Rue de 16 H3
Monne, Rue 29 B4
Monnaie, Rue de la 24 G4
- Monsieur le Prince, Rue 28 F1
Mont Thabor, Rue du 23 D2
Montagne Sainte-Geneviève, Rue de la 28 H2
Montaigne, Avenue 16 G6
Montevideo, Rue de 15 A6
Monthonal, Rue de 19 A5
Montmartre, Boulevard 18 G6
Montmartre, Rue 24 G1
Montmorency, Rue de 25 B3
Montorgueil, Rue 25 A3
Montparnasse, Boulevard du 27 D3
Montparnasse, Passage 27 C3
Montparnasse, Rue du 27 D3
Monttessy, Rue de 22 F2
Morland, Boulevard 29 D1
Moscou, Rue de 17 C3
Motte Picquet, Avenue de la 22 F5
Mouffetard, Rue 29 A3
Mozart, Avenue 21 A3
- N**
Nationale, Rue 29 D6
New York, Avenue de 21 D2
Nicolas Flamel, Rue 24 H4
Niel, Avenue 16 E1
Nollet, Rue 17 C2
Notre-Dame de Lorette, Rue 18 F4
Notre-Dame des Victoires, Rue 24 G2
Notre, Rue le 21 D2
- O**
Oberkampf, Rue 26 G2
Octave Gréard, Avenue 22 E3
Opéra, Avenue de l' 24 E2
Orléans, Rue d' 15 A2
Orsay, Quai d' 23 B3
Orsel, Rue d' 18 G3
Ortolan, Rue 29 A3
Ours, Rue Aux 25 B3
- P**
Paix, Rue de la 24 E1
Palais, Boulevard du 24 H5
Papillon, Rue 19 A5
Paradis, Rue de 19 A5
Parc Royal, Rue du 25 D4
Parmentier, Rue 15 B1
Pas de la Mule, Rue du 26 E5
Pascal, Rue 29 A6
Passy, Rue de 21 B3
Pasteur, Boulevard 27 B4
Paul Deschanel, Allée 22 E2
Paul Doumer, Avenue 21 B2
Paul Lelong, Rue 24 G2
Paul Valéry, Rue 15 D5
Payenne, Rue 25 D5
Penthièvre, Rue de 17 A6
Pépinière, Rue de 17 C5
Pereire (Nord), Boulevard 16 E1
Pereire (Sud), Boulevard 16 E1
Pergolèse, Rue 15 B4
Pérignon, Rue 27 A2
Périphérique, Boulevard 15 A4
Perle, Rue de la 25 C4
Pérouse, Rue la 16 E5
Perronet, Rue 15 A1
Pershing, Boulevard 15 C2
Petit Mucur, Rue du 25 D6
Petits Champs, Rue des 19 A5
Petits Hôtels, Rue des 24 F2
Pierre Ter de Serbie, Avenue 19 B4
Pierre Charron, Rue 16 F6
Pierre Demours, Rue 16 G5
Pierre Leroux, Rue 16 E2
Pierre Leroux, Rue 27 C1
Pierre Levée, Rue de la 26 E2
Pierre Picard, Rue 18 H2
Plâtre, Rue du 25 B4
Poissonnière, Rue 25 A1
Poissy, Rue de 29 B2
Pompe, Rue de la 21 A2
- Pont Louis-Philippe, Rue du 25 B5
Pont Neuf, Rue du 24 G4
Pontoise, Rue de 29 B1
Port Royal, Boulevard de 29 A5
Porte des Ternes, Avenue de la 15 B2
Presbourg, Rue de 16 E4
Président Wilson, Avenue du 21 D1
Président-Kennedy, Avenue du 21 C4
Prêtres Saint-Germain l'Auxerrois, Rue des 24 G4
Princesse, Rue de 24 F6
Prony, Rue de 16 G2
Provence, Rue de 18 F5
Pyramides, Rue des 24 E3
- R**
Rambouillet, Rue de 30 G3
Rambuteau, Rue 24 H3
Ranelagh, Rue du 21 A4
Rapée, Quai de la 30 E3
Rapp, Avenue 22 F2
Raymond Losserand, Rue 27 B6
Raynourd, Rue 21 B4
Réaumur, Rue 25 C2
Reine, Cours la 23 B3
René Coty, Avenue 28 E6
Rennes, Rue de 27 D3
République, Avenue de la 25 D2
Reuilly, Rue de 30 H1
Richard Lenoir, Boulevard 26 E2
Richard Lenoir, Rue 26 G5
Richer, Rue 19 A5
Riquet, Rue 20 E1
Rivoli, Rue de 25 A4
Rochechouart, Boulevard de 18 G3
Rocher, Rue du 17 C4
Roi de Sicile, Rue du 25 C5
Rome, Rue de 17 C3
Roquépine, Rue 17 B6
Roquette, Rue de la 26 F5
Rosa Bonheur, Rue 27 A2
Rosiers, Rue des 25 C5
Royale, Rue 23 C2
- S**
Sablons à la Porte Maillot, Route de la Porte des 15 A3
Sablonville, Rue de 15 B2
Sabot, Rue du 24 E6
Saïd, Villa 15 B4
St-André des Arts, Rue 24 F6
St-Antoine, Rue 25 D6
St-Bernard, Quai 29 C2
Saint-Charles, Rue 21 C6
St-Croix de la Bretonnerie, Rue 25 B4
St-Denis, Boulevard 25 B1
St-Denis, Rue 25 A5
St-Didier, Rue 15 D6
Saint-Dominique, Rue 22 G2
St-Germain, Boulevard 24 F6
St-Gilles, Rue 25 D4
St-Jacques, Boulevard 28 F6
St-Julien le Pauvre, Rue 25 A6
St-Louis-en-Île 25 B6
St-Marcel, Boulevard 29 B5
St-Martin, Boulevard 25 C1
St-Mérry, Rue 25 B4
St-Michel, Boulevard 28 F4
St-Michel, Quai 24 H6
St-Ouen, Avenue de 17 D1
St-Pétersbourg, Rue de 17 C4
St-Placide, Rue 27 D2
St-Roch, Rue 24 E3
St-Séverin, Rue 24 G6
St-Sulpice, Rue 24 F6
St-Vincent, Rue 18 G1
Santé, Rue de la 28 G6
Saussais, Rue des 23 B1
Saxe, Avenue de 27 A1
Scheffer, Rue 21 C2
Sébastopol, Boulevard de 25 A4
Secrétan, Avenue 20 F4
Séguier, Rue 24 G6
- Séguier Avenue de 22 G6
Seine, Quai de la 20 E2
Seine, Rue de 24 F5
Seveste, Rue 18 G3
Sèze, Rue de 23 D1
Simón Bolívar, Avenue 20 F4
Soufflot, Rue de 28 G2
Sourdière, Rue de la 24 E2
Stanislas, Rue 27 D3
Strasbourg, Boulevard de 19 B6
Sts-Pères, Rue des 24 E5
Suffren, Avenue de 22 G5
Sully, Pont de 29 C1
- T**
Tacherie, Rue de la 25 A5
Tanger, Rue de 20 E2
Tardieu, Rue 18 G3
Temple, Boulevard du 25 D2
Temple, Rue de 25 B4
Ternes, Avenue des 16 E3
Thann, Rue de 17 A3
Théâtre, Rue du 21 C5
Thorigny, Place de 25 D4
Thorigny, Rue de 25 D4
Tilisset, Rue de 16 E4
Tiquetonne, Rue 25 A3
Toqueville, Rue de 17 A2
Tournelle, Quai de la 29 B1
Tournelles, Rue des 26 E4
Tournon, Rue de 28 F1
Tourville, Avenue de 23 A6
Trémolle, Rue de la 16 F6
Trocadéro, Square du 21 C1
Trois Frères, Rue des 18 F2
Tronchet, Rue 17 D6
Trousseau, Rue 26 G6
Trudaine, Avenue 18 G3
Tuleries, Quai des 23 C3
Turbigio, Rue de 25 A3
Turenne, Rue de 25 D3
- U**
Université, Rue de l' 22 F2
- V**
Valenciennes, Rue de 19 B4
Van Dyck, Avenue 16 G3
Van Gogh, Rue 30 D3
Vaneau, Rue 27 C1
Varenne, Rue de 23 B5
Vaucanson, Rue 25 B2
Vaugirard, Boulevard de 27 B4
Vavin, Rue 28 E3
Verneuil, Rue de 23 D4
Véron, Rue 18 F2
Verrerie, Rue de la 25 B4
Versailles, Avenue de 21 A6
Verthois, Rue de 25 C2
Vézelay, Rue du 17 A4
Victor Hugo, Avenue 15 D5
Victor Hugo, Boulevard 15 B1
Victor Massé, Rue 18 F3
Victoria, Avenue 25 A5
Vieille du Temple, Rue 25 C5
Vienna, Rue de 17 C5
Vieuville, Rue de la 18 F2
Villette, Boulevard de la 20 E5
Villiers, Avenue de 16 E1
Villiot, Rue 30 F4
Vincent Auriol, Boulevard 29 C6
Visconti, Rue 24 F5
Voltaire, Quai 24 E4
Vulpian, Rue 29 A6
- W**
Wagram, Avenue de 16 E4
Washington, Rue 16 F4
Winston Churchill, Avenue 23 B2
- Y**
Yonne le Tac, Rue 18 F3

Index

Page numbers in **bold** type refer to main entries.

A

abbeys

- Abbatiale St-Ouen (Rouen) 144
- Abbaye Royale de Fontevraud (Fontevraud-l'Abbaye) 178
- Abbaye St-Victor (Marseille) 350

accommodation 28–9

activity holidays 35

Agde 332

Aigues-Mortes 336–7

Aiguille du Midi (Chamonix) 224

air travel 18, 21, 22, 23

Central France and the Alps

regional airports 198

flying to Paris 86

Northeast France regional

airports 48

The South of France regional

airports 322

Southwest France regional

airports 260

Western France regional

airports 142

Aix-en-Provence 352

Ajaccio 372

Albi 274–5

Aléria 372–3

Alsace and Lorraine 49–58

Amiens 73

Angers 178–9

Angles-sur-l'Anglin 284

Angoulême 290–91

animal parks

Parc Animalier des

Pyrénées 308

Parc de la Coccinelle 295

Apt 348–9

aquariums

Aquarium de La Poudrière

(La Poudrière) 366

Nausicaá (Boulogne-sur-Mer)

43, **68–9**

Océanopolis (Brest) 137,

162–3

La Rochelle 286–7

aqueduct

Pont-Canal de l'Orb (Béziers)

330

Arc de Triomphe (Paris) 106–7

Arc-et-Senans 214

Arcachon 295

Ardèche, Gorges de l' 232–3

Arles 14, **344–5**

Arras 70–71

Arromanches-les-Bains 148

art galleries see museums and art galleries

Artouste 305

Astérix, Parc 74–5

Aubeterre-sur-Dronne 291

Auch 276

Aude valley 324

autumn in France 16

Autun 207

Avallon 206

Aven Armand 240–41

Avenue des Champs-Élysées

(Paris) 107

Avignon 15, 34, **342–3**

Avranches 153

B

babysitting 25

Baie du Mont-St-Michel 152

Baie de Somme 72

The Balagne (Corsica) 368

Balazuc 234

Bandol 352–3

Basilique Notre-Dame de

Fourvière (Lyon) 220

Basilique St-Michel (Bordeaux)

294

Basilique St-Nazaire

(Carcassonne) 324

Basque country 302, 303, 304, 305

Basque Folklore Festival

(Bayonne) 34

Bastia 369

Bastille Day 15

Batterie Merville (Merville) 148

battlefields

Somme 72–3

Verdun 50–51

Batz-sur-Mer 176

Bayeux 34, 149

Bayeux Tapestry (Bayeux) 149

Bayonne 34, **302–3**

Bazas 296

Beaucaire 336

Beaune 202

bed and breakfast 28, 29

Central France and the Alps

216–18, 236–8, 252–3

Île de France 134

Northeast France 58, 66, 78–9

Paris 120–22

The South of France 340, 362–4

Southwest France 278–80,

298–300, 314–15

Western France 170–72, 191

Belfort 215

Besançon 214

Beynac 267

Béziers 330–31

Biot 360

Les Bisons d'Europe (Ste-Eulalie-en-Margeride) 246

Bligny-sur-Ouche 202

Blois 184–5

Bois de Boulogne

(Île de France) 128

Bonifacio 370–71

Bordeaux 294–5

Boulogne-sur-Mer 43, **68–9**

Bourges 186–7

Le Bournat 266

Brest 137, 162–3

Briançon 228–9

bridges

Pont d'Asfeld (Briançon) 228

Pont du Gard (Vers-Pont-

du-Gard) 334–5

Pont Valentre (Cahors) 271

Vieux Pont (Albi) 274

Brittany 36, **157–72**

Brocéliande, Forêt de 160

Burgundy 36

Burgundy and Franche-Comté

199–218

buses 23

C

Caen 150

Cahors 271

Calanche de Piana 366

Calvi 367

Camargue 345

camping 29

Central France and

the Alps 216–18, 236–8, 252–3

Île de France 135

Northeast France 58, 66, 78–9

The South of France 338–40,

362–4, 374–5

Southwest France 278–80,

298–300, 314–15

Western France 156, 170–72,

190–91

Canal du Midi 330–31

Cannes 14, 360–61

car travel 20–21, 22–3

Carcassonne 15, **324–5**

Carnac 36, 166–7

Carnaval de Marseille 14

Carnaval de Nantes 14

Carnaval de Nice 17

Cascades du Hérisson 213

Catalan Festival (Céret) 34

Cathars 37, 312 325, 326, 327,

331

cathedrals see churches

and cathedrals

Causse Méjean 240

caves

Aven Armand 240–41

Caverne du Pont d'Arc 232

Cité de la Préhistoire 232

- caves (cont.)
 Gouffre de Padirac 270
 Grotte de Bédailhac (Niaux) 311
 Grotte du Mas d'Azil (Mas d'Azil) 312–13
 Grotte de Niaux 310–11
 Grotte du Pech Merle (Cabrerets) 269
 Grotte Préhistorique des Merveilles (Rocamadour) 269
 Grotte de la Vache (Niaux) 311
 Grottes d'Isturitz et Oxocelhaya (Hasparren) 304
 Grottes-Refuges de Naours 72
 Lascaux II (Montignac) 262–3
- Le Centre Européen d'Essai en Vol (Nantes) 174
- Centre de l'Imaginaire Arthurien (Brocéliande) 160
- Centre Juno Beach (D-Day Beaches) 148
- Centre Pompidou (Paris) 95
- Céret 328–9
- Cévennes 242, 337
- Chamonix 224–5
- Champagne 59–66
- Champs-Élysées, Avenue de (Paris) 107
- Champs Libres 158
- Chantilly 76
- Chaource 62–3
- Charente river 290, 291, 292
- Charleville-Mézières 65
- Chartres 188–9
- Chasseneuil-du-Poitou 282–3
- Château d'Amboise **186**, 187
- Château d'Angoulême 290
- Château de Bazoches 205
- Château de Bonaguil (St-Front-sur-Lémance) 272, 273
- Château de Chenonceau 183
- Château Comtal (Carcassonne) 324
- Château des Evêques de Cavailon (Fontaine-de-Vaucluse) 346
- Château Fort de Sedan 64–5
- Château Gaillard (Les Andelys) 145
- Château du Haut-Koenigsbourg 56
- Château de Hautefort (Le Bourg d'Hautefort) 264
- Château d'If (Marseille) 351
- Château de Jumilhac 264–5
- Château de Mauvezin 309
- Château de Muro 248–9
- Château de Pierrefonds 77
- Château de Rocamadour 268
- Château de La Rochefoucauld 292
- Château Royal de Blois 184–5
- Château de Suffren (St-Tropez) 354
- Château d'Ussé (Rigny-Ussé) 182–3
- Château de Versailles (Île de France) 124–7
- Chauvet 36, 232
- Cherbourg 150
- Chevaliers de la Foi (Carcassonne) 15
- Chinon 182
- churches and cathedrals
 Basilique Notre-Dame de Fourvière (Lyon) 220
 Basilique St-Michel (Bordeaux) 294
 Basilique St-Nazaire (Carcassonne) 324
 Cathédrale Notre Dame (Chartres) 188–9
 Cathédrale de Notre-Dame (Le Puy-en-Velay) 244
 Cathédrale Notre-Dame (Reims) 60–61
 Cathédrale Notre-Dame (Rouen) 144
 Cathédrale St-André (Bordeaux) 294
 Cathédrale Ste-Cécile (Albi) 274
 Cathédrale St-Gatien (Tours) 180
 Cathédrale Ste-Marie (Bayonne) 302
 Cathédrale St-Nazaire (Béziers) 330
 Cathédrale St-Pierre (Angoulême) 290
 Cathédrale St-Pierre (Rennes) 158
 Cathédrale Ste-Réparate (Nice) 358
 Chapelle de Notre Dame (Rocamadour) 268
 Chapelle de Trémalo (Pont-Aven) 169
 Chapelle St-Michel d'Aiguilhe (Le Puy-en-Velay) 244
 Chartres Cathedral 188–9
 Le Cloître (Bayonne) 302
 Collégiale Notre-Dame (Briançon) 228, 229
 Église de Cordeliers (Briançon) 228, 229
 Église de Fontaine-de-Vaucluse 346
 Église Ste-Marie-Majeure (Bonifacio) 370
 Église de St-Tropez 354
 Notre-Dame (Paris) 81, 90–91, 105
 Notre-Dame-de-la-Garde (Marseille) 350
 Sacré-Coeur (Paris) 114–17
 Sainte-Chapelle (Paris) 92
 St-Dominique (Bonifacio) 370
- churches and cathedrals (cont.)
 St-Germain-des-Près 112–13
 Le Sanctuaire de Notre Dame (Rocamadour) 268
- cemeteries
 Cimetière Marin (Bonifacio) 370
 Cimetière de Montmartre (Paris) 117
- Cinésécnie (Le Puy du Fou) 177
- circuses 34
- Cirque de Gavarnie 307
- La Cirque de la Madeleine (Gorges de l'Ardèche) 232
- Cité de la Préhistoire 232
- Clévances 28
- Cluny 208–9
- coaches 23
- Cognac 292
- Collioure 328
- Colmar 54–5
- communication 26
- Compiègne 76–7
- Conciergerie (Paris) 92
- Condom 276–7
- Conques 246–7
- Corsica 14, 365–75
- Corte 373
- Coupole Gentili (Pic du Midi de Bigorre) 306
- Coupole du Télescope DIMM (Pic du Midi de Bigorre) 306
- A la Cour du Roy François (Château d'Amboise) 15, 34
- Courchevel 230
- Coutances 15, 154
- cycling 23
- D**
- D-Day Beaches (Normandy) 148–9
- dance 34
- Daumier, Honoré 110
- Dax 297
- Deauville 147
- Degas, Edgar 111
- dialling codes 27
- Dieppe 146
- Dijon 200–201
- Dinan 160
- Dinosauria (Espéraga) 326
- disabled facilities 26
- Disneyland® Paris 130–33
- Les Dombes 223
- Douarnenez 165
- Dune de Pyla 255
- E**
- eating out 30–31
- Ecomusée d'Alsace (Ungersheim) 56
- Ecomusée de la Grande Lande (Lande) 297
- Ecomusée du Marais Salant (Île de Ré) 287

Ecomusée Picarvie (St-Valery) 72
 Ecomusée de St-Nazaire (St-Nazaire) 176
 L'Ecomusée du Santon (Fontaine-de-Vaucluse) 347
 Eguisheim 56
 Eiffel Tower (Paris) 102–5
 electricity 27
 embassies 27
 emergency numbers 27
 entertainment 34–5
 Épernay 62
 Espace Aquatique Atlantic (St-Chély d'Apcher) 246
 Espéraza 326
 etiquette 27
 European Health Insurance Card (EHIC) 24, 27

F

factory outlets 33
 Falaise 151
 Los Fécots (Limoux) 17, 325
 Fédération Française de Camping et de Caravaning (FFCC) 29
 festivals and fêtes 14–17, 35
 Feria Pascale (Arles) 14
 Feria de Pentecôte (Nîmes) 15
 Festival d'Avignon 15, 34
 Festival de Cannes 14
 Festival de Cornouaille (Quimper) 15
 Festival de Force Basque (St-Palais) 15
 Festival Interceltique (Lorient) 15, 34
 Festival International de la Bande Dessinée (Angoulême) 17
 Festival International de Cerf-Volants (Dieppe) 16
 Festival International du Cirque de Monte-Carlo (Monaco) 17
 Festival International de Folklore d'Issoire (Issoire) 34
 Festival Mondial des Théâtres de Marionnettes (Charleville-Mézières) 35
 Fête de la Bravade (St-Tropez) 14–15
 Fête de la Lumière (Lyon) 17
 Fête de la Musique 15, 34
 La Fête des Rois 17
 Fête de St-Louis (Sète) 15
 Fête du Vent (Marseille) 16
 Les Fêtes Jeanne d'Arc (Orléans) 14
 Les Feux de la St-Jean (Montségur) 15
 Filitosa 372
 film 34

Flavigny-sur-Ozerain 203
 Florac 242–3
 Foire St-Romain (Rouen) 16
 Foire aux Santons (Marseille) 17
 Fontaine-de-Vaucluse 346–7
 Fontainebleau 129
 food and wine 32
 Forêt de Brocéliande 160
 Forêt d'Ermenonville 75
 Fort de Douaumont (Verdun) 50
 Fort du Château (Briançon) 228
 Le Fort des Rousses 212
 Forteresse de Salses (Salses) 327
 France Miniature (Île de France) 127
 Fréjus 357
 French Revolution 38
 Futuroscope (Chasseneuil-du-Poitou) 282–3

G

gardens see parks and gardens
 Garonne river 294, 330
 Girolata 366
 Gîtes de France 28
 Giverny 146, 273
 Golfe de Porto 366–7
 Gordes 348
 Gorges de l'Ardèche 232–3
 Gorges du Tarn 242
 Gouffre de Padirac (Padirac) 270
 Grand Parc Puy du Fou (Les Epesses) 177
 Grand Siècle 38
 Granville 154
 Grasse 361
 Grenoble 231
 Gros Horloge (Rouen) 144
 Grotte de Bédeilhac (Niaux) 311
 Grotte du Mas d'Azil (Mas d'Azil) 312–13
 Grotte de Niaux 310–11
 Grotte du Pech Merle (Cabrerets) 269
 Grotte Préhistorique des Merveilles (Rocamadour) 269
 Grotte de la Vache (Niaux) 311
 Grottes d'Isturitz et Oxocelhaya (Hasparren) 304
 Grottes-Refuges de Naours 72
 Gulf of Morbihan 166, 167

H

Hameau de la Reine (Versaille) 125
 Hasparren 304
 Les Hautes-Combes 212
 health 24, 27
 history of France 36–9
 holiday villages 29
 Honfleur 147
 Hôtel du Bosc (Albi) 274
 Hôtel Grün (Tours) 180
 Hôtel de Ville (Rennes) 158

Hôtel de Vogüé (Dijon) 200
 hotels 28, 29
 Central France and the Alps 216–18, 236–8, 252–3
 Île de France 134–5
 Northeast France 58, 66, 78–9
 Paris 120–22
 South of France 338–40, 362–4, 374–5
 Southwest France 278–80, 298–300, 314–15
 Western France 156, 170–72, 190–91
 house swapping 29
 Hundred Years' War 37, 144, 158, 337
 Hyères 356

I

Île de la Cité 81
 Île de France 123–35
 Île d'Oléron 288–9
 Île d'Ouessant 163
 Île de Ré 287
 Île St-Louis (Paris) 91
 insurance, travel 24
 International Grand Prix de Monaco 14
 Les Invalides (Paris) 112

J

Jardin des Tuileries (Paris) 99, 100, 110
 Jardin du Luxembourg (Paris) 81, 113
 Jardin du Palais de la Berbie (Albi) 274
 Jardin du Palais Royal (Paris) 99
 Jazz Sous Les Pommiers (Coutances) 15
 Journées du Patrimoine 16
 Jumilhac 264–5

L

La Rochelle 286–7
 La Roche-aux-Fées 159
 La Rochefoucauld 292
 Landes 297
 Langres 63
 Languedoc-Roussillon 14, 323–40
 Laon 77
 Larressingle 277
 Lascaux II 262
 Latour-Marliac (Le Temple-sur-Lot) 273
 Le Bourg d'Hautefort 264
 Le Havre 146–7
 Le Mans 15, 179
 Le Praz 230
 Le Puy-en-Velay 244–5
 Le Nord and Picardy 67–79
 Les Menuires 230

Les Sables d'Olonne 176–7
 Ligne des Hirondelles 212
 Lille 70
 Limoges 251
 Limoges Cité de la Céramique 251
 Limoux 17, **325**
 Loire Valley 173–91
 Lorient 34, 168
 Lot river 270, 271
 Lourdes 308–9
 Lourmarin 349
 La Lunette Jean Rösch (Pic du
 Midi de Bigorre) 306
 Lyon 17, 34, 36, **220–21**

M

Les Machines de l'Île (Nantes)
 174–5
 Mâcon 210, 211
 Maginot Line 52
 Maison des Canuts (Lyon) 220
 Maison du Haut-Jura 212
 Maison de la Montagne
 (Chamonix) 224
 Maison Pfister (Colmar) 54
 maps 21, 378–413
 Central France and the Alps
 196–7
 Île de France 84–5
 Northeast France 46–7
 Paris 84–5, 88–9, 96–7, 102–5,
 108–9, 114–15
 South of France 320–21
 Southwest France 258–9
 Western France 140–41
 Marais Poitevin 285
 Marché Couvert (Albi) 274
 Marennes 288–9
 markets 32–3
 Marseille 14, 16, 17, 36, **350–51**
 Marvejols 243
 Massif Central 239–53
 Matisse, Henry 110, 329, 358
 Mauvezin 309
 Memorial Pégasus (Bénouville) 148
 Mer de Glace (Chamonix) 224
 Metz 52–3
 Mimos (Périgueux) 15
 Monaco 14, 17, **360**
 Monet, Claude 111, 144, 145,
 146, 147, 273
 money 25, 27
 Mont Blanc 224
 Mont-St-Michel 137, 138, **152–3**
 Monte-Carlo 34
 Montélimar 234–5
 Montmartre (Paris) 114, 117, **118**
 Montmartre Vineyard (Paris) 118
 Montpellier 333
 Montreuil-sur-Mer 71
 Montségur 15, **312**
 Monument des Girondins
 (Bordeaux) 294

Morbihan, Gulf of 166–7
 Mortain 155
 Morvan region 206–7
 Moulin à Papier Vallis Clausa
 (Fontaine-de-Vaucluse) 346
 Mulhouse 56–7
 Murol 248–9
 museums and art galleries
 Atelier du Chocolat (Bayonne)
 302
 La Belvédère des Vautours
 (St-Pierre-des-Tripiers) 241
 Bordeaux Monumental
 (Bordeaux) 294
 Le Bournat 266
 Carré Plantagenêt (Le Mans) 179
 Casa Pairal (Perpignan) 328
 Centre d'Art Contemporain
 (Briançon) 228
 Centre d'Interprétation du
 Roc-aux-Sorciers (Angles-sur-
 l'Anglin) 284
 Château Musée (Dieppe) 146
 Château-Musée (Boulogne-
 sur-Mer) 69
 Cité de l'Automobile
 (Mulhouse) 56–7
 Cité de l'Espace (Toulouse) 276
 La Cité des Huitres (Marennes)
 288
 Cité des Machines du
 Moyen-Age (Larressingle) 277
 Cité de la Mer (Cherbourg)
 150
 Cité de la Musique (Paris) 119
 Cité des Sciences et de
 l'Industrie (Paris) 118–19
 Cité du Train (Mulhouse) 56
 La Corderie Royale (Rochefort)
 288
 Dinosauria (Espérasa) 326
 Le Domaine de l'Abbé
 Saunière (Rennes-le-Château)
 327
 Ecomusée d'Alsace
 (Ungersheim) 56
 Ecomusée de la Grande Lande
 297
 Ecomusée du Marais Salant
 (Île de Ré) 287
 Ecomusée Picarvie (St-Valery)
 72
 Ecomusée de St-Nazaire 176
 L'Ecomusée du Santon
 (Fontaine-de-Vaucluse) 347
 Escal'Atlantique (St-Nazaire) 176
 Espace Dalí Montmartre (Paris)
 118
 Espace Découverte en Pays du
 Cognac 292
 Espace Fauve (Collioure) 328
 Espace Glacialis (Champagny-
 en-Vanoise) 230

museums and art galleries (cont.)
 Espace Van Gogh (Arles) 344
 L'Estran-La Cité de la Mer
 (Dieppe) 146
 Exposition Grotte Chauvet
 Pont d'Arc 232
 Ferme Caussearde
 d'Autrefois (Huelzas) 241
 Fonds Régional d'Art
 Contemporain Poitou-
 Charentes (Angoulême) 290
 Fondation Maeght (St-Paul-de-
 Vence) 359
 Le Grand Blockhaus-Musée
 de la Poche (Batz-sur-Mer) 176
 Historical de la Grande Guerre
 (Péronne) 72
 Hôtel-Dieu (Louhans) 211
 Hôtel Estrine: Centre d'Art
 Presence (St-Rémy-de-
 Provence) 344
 Maison de la Boucherie
 (Limoges) 251
 Maison des Hommes et des
 Paysages (St-Brisson) 206–7
 Maison de la Magie Robert
 Houdin (Blois) 185
 Maison des Marais Poitevin
 (Marais Poitevin) 285
 Maison des Papillons
 (St-Tropez) 354
 Maison du Parc (Cauterets)
 308
 Maison de Pierre Loti
 (Rochefort) 288
 Le Monde Souterrain
 (Fontaine-de-Vaucluse) 347
 Musée de l'Abbaye Ste-Croix
 (Les Sables d'Olonne) 176
 Musée Airborne (Ste-Mère-
 Église) 148
 Musée de l'ALAT (Dax) 297
 Musée Alpin (Chamonix)
 224
 Musée Alsacien (Strasbourg)
 57
 Musée André Lemaître
 (Falaise) 151
 Musée Angladon (Avignon)
 343
 Musée d'Angoulême
 (Angoulême) 290
 Musée Animé du Vin (Chinon)
 182
 Musée de l'Annonciade
 (St-Tropez) 354
 Musée Aquarium (Arcachon)
 295
 Musée d'Aquitaine (Bordeaux)
 294
 Musée d'Archéologie
 Sous-marine (St-Raphaël)
 357

museums and art galleries (cont.)

Musée Archéologique (Fréjus) 357
 Musée Archéologique (Montségur) 312
 Musée Archéologique (Narbonne) 332
 Musée Archéologique (Saintes) 292
 Musée Archéologique Jérôme Carcopino (Aléria) 372–3
 Musée Archéologique Théo Desplans (Vaison-la-Romaine) 348
 Musée d'Arles et de la Provence Antiques (Arles) 345
 Musée de l'Armagnac (Condom) 276–7
 Musée de l'Armistice (Compiègne) 76
 Musée d'Art et d'Archéologie (Cluny) 208
 Musée d'Art et d'Archéologie du Périgord (Périgueux) 265
 Musée d'Art Contemporain (Bordeaux) 294
 Musée d'Art et d'Histoire (Chinon) 182
 Musée d'Art et d'Histoire (Cognac) 292
 Musée d'Art et d'Histoire (Narbonne) 332
 Musée d'Art et d'Industrie (St-Étienne) 222
 Musée d'Art Moderne (Céret) 328–9
 Musée d'Art Moderne (St-Étienne) 222
 Musée d'Art Moderne (Troyes) 62
 Musée d'Art Moderne et d'Art Contemporain (Nice) 358
 Musée d'Art Moderne et Contemporain (Strasbourg) 57
 Musée d'Art Moderne Richard Anacréon (Granville) 154
 Musée des Arts Asiatiques (Nice) 358
 Musée des Arts Asiatiques (Toulon) 353
 Musée des Arts Décoratifs (Bourges) 186–7
 Musée Auguste Jacquet (Beaucaire) 336
 Musée des Augustins de Toulouse 276
 Musée Auto Moto Vélo (Châtellerauld) 283
 Musée des Automates (Falaise) 151
 Musée des Automates (La Rochelle) 286

museums and art galleries (cont.)

Musée de l'Avallonnais (Avallon) 206
 Musée de l'Aventure Industrielle (Apt) 349
 Musée de la Bande Dessinée (Angoulême) 290
 Musée Bartholdi (Colmar) 54
 Musée Basque (Bayonne) 302
 Musée de Bastia (Bastia) 369
 Musée des Beaux Arts (Béziers) 330
 Musée des Beaux Arts (Blois) 184
 Musée des Beaux Arts (Bordeaux) 294
 Musée des Beaux-Arts (Chartres) 188
 Musée des Beaux Arts (Dijon) 200
 Musée des Beaux Arts (Lyon) 220
 Musée des Beaux-Arts (Nantes) 175
 Musée des Beaux Arts (Rennes) 158
 Musée des Beaux Arts (Rouen) 144, 145
 Musée des Beaux Arts (Tours) 180
 Musée du Berry (Bourges) 187
 Musée des Bisons d'Europe (Ste-Eulalie-en-Margeride) 246
 Musée du Biterrois (Béziers) 331
 Musée des Blindés (Saumur) 178
 Musée des Bonbons (Uzes) 335
 Musée du Bonsaï (Biot) 360
 Musée de Bretagne (Rennes) 158
 Musée Calvet (Avignon) 343
 Musée Cantini (Marseille) 350
 Musée de la Castre (Cannes) 360
 Musée Chagall (Nice) 358
 Musée de la Chapellerie (Espéraga) 326
 Musée de la Châtaignerie (Joyeuse) 233
 Musée du Château (Dinan) 160
 Musée-Château d'Annecy 227
 Musée de Cire (Lourdes) 309
 Musée de la Citadelle (St-Tropez) 354
 Musée de Cluny (Paris) 92
 Musée des Commerces d'autrefois (Rocheport) 288
 Musée du Compagnonnage (Tours) 180, 181
 Musée Condé (Chantilly) 76
 Musée de la Corse (Corte) 373
 Musée du Costume Breton (Paimpol) 164

museums and art galleries (cont.)

Musée de la Cour d'Or (Metz) 53
 Musée des Cristaux (Chamonix) 224
 Musée des Croyances Populaires (Le Puy-en-Velay) 244
 Musée Crozatier (Le Puy-en-Velay) 244
 Musée Départemental Breton (Quimper) 169
 Musée Dupuy Mestreau (Saintes) 292
 Musée de l'École d'Autrefois (Fontaine-de-Vaucluse) 347
 Musée de l'École de Nancy 53
 Musée de l'Ephèbe (Agde) 332, 333
 Musée des Etoiles (Pic du Midi de Bigorre) 306
 Musée Eugène Boudin (Honfleur) 147
 Musée Européen de l'Aviation de Chasse (Montélimar) 235
 Musée Fabre (Montpellier) 333
 Musée Fernand Léger (Biot) 360
 Musée Fesch (Ajaccio) 372
 Musée du Fromage (Chaource) 63
 Musée Gadagne (Lyon) 220
 Musée Gallo Romain (Vienne) 222
 Musée Granet (Aix-en-Provence) 352
 Musée de Grenoble 231
 Musée Greuze (Tournus) 210
 Musée Grévin (Paris) 101
 Musée de la Haute-Auvergne (St-Flour) 246
 Musée d'Histoire L'Appel de la Liberté (Fontaine-de-Vaucluse) 346
 Musée d'Histoire de Marseille (Marseille) 350
 Musée d'Histoire Naturelle (Cherbourg) 150
 Musée d'Histoire Naturelle (Nantes) 175
 Musée d'Histoire Naturelle (Rouen) 144
 Musée d'Histoire Naturelle et d'Ethnographie (Colmar) 54
 Musée d'Histoire Naturelle et de Géologie (Lille) 70
 Musée d'Histoire de St-Malo (St-Malo) 161
 Musée Historique (Mulhouse) 57
 Musée Historique et Archéologique (Orléans) 187
 Musée de l'Homme (Paris) 106

museums and art galleries (cont.)

Musée des Impressionismes (Giverny) 146
 Musée de l'Imprimerie (Louhans) 211
 Musée International d'Art Naïf Anatole-Jakovsky (Nice) 358
 Musée International des Arts Modestes (Sète) 332
 Musée International de la Parfumerie (Grasse) 361
 Musée et Jardin Christian Dior (Granville) 154
 Musée Jean-Lurçat et Tapisserie Contemporaine (Angers) 179
 Musée du Jouet (Colmar) 54
 Musée Jules-Verne (Nantes) 175
 Musée Lapérouse (Albi) 274
 Musée de la Libération (Cherbourg) 150
 Musée du Long Cours Cap-Hornier (St-Malo) 161
 Musée du Louvre (Paris) 98–9
 Musée Lumière (Lyon) 220
 Musée de la Magie (Paris) 94
 Musée Malraux (Le Havre) 147–8
 Musée des Marais Salants (Batz-sur-Mer) 176
 Musée Marcel Carbonel (Marseille) 350
 Musée National de la Marine (Brest) 163
 Musée de la Marine (Paris) 106
 Musée des Marionnettes (Aubeterre-sur-Dronne) 291
 Musée Matisse (Nice) 358
 Musée-mémorial de la Bataille de Normandie (Bayeux) 149
 Musée Mémorial du Débarquement en Provence (Toulon) 353
 Musée de la Mer (Paimpol) 164
 Musée des Métiers de la Chaussure (Les Epesses) 177
 Musée du Meuble Normand (Villedieu-les-Poêles) 154–5
 Musée de Millau (Millau) 241
 Musée des Modèles Réduits (La Rochelle) 286
 Musée Napoleon d'Art et d'Histoire Militaire (Fontainebleau) 129
 Musée National d'Art Moderne (Paris) 94
 Musée National du Château de Pau (Pau) 305
 Musée National de la Marine (Rochefort) 288
 Musée National de la Marine (Toulon) 353

museums and art galleries (cont.)

Musée de Normandie (Caen) 150
 Musée du Nougat Arnaud Soubeyran (Montélimar) 234
 Musée du Nouveau Monde (La Rochelle) 286, 287
 Musée Océanographique (Monaco) 360
 Musée de l'Oeuvre Viollet-le-Duc (Vézelay) 204
 Musée de l'Olivier (Nyons) 235
 Musée d'Orsay (Paris) 110–11
 Musée de l'Outil et de la Pensée Ouvrière (Troyes) 62
 Musée du Papier-Le Nil (Angoulême) 290, 291
 Musée Parc des Dinosaurs (Sète) 333
 Musée et du Parc Mégalithique (Sare) 303
 Musée Petiet (Limoux) 325
 Musée Pétrarque (Fontaine-de-Vaucluse) 346
 Musée du Phonographe et de la Musique Mécanique (Ste-Maxime) 356
 Musée de Picardie (Amiens) 73
 Musée Picasso (Paris) 94
 Musée de la Poeslerie (Villedieu-les-Poêles) 154
 Musée Pol Mara (Gordes) 348
 Musée de Préhistoire (Carnac) 166, 167
 Musée de Préhistoire et d'Archéologie (Vannes) 168
 Musée de la Préhistoire (Mas d'Azil) 312–13
 Musée Pyrénéen (Lourdes) 309
 Musée du Rail (Dinan) 160
 Musée Ramboltrain (Rambouillet) 128
 Musée de la Résistance et de la Déportation (Limoges) 251
 Musée de la Résistance en Morvan (St-Brisson) 206
 Musée Rodin (Paris) 112
 Musée Rolin (Autun) 207
 Musée de Ste-Croix (Poitiers) 284
 Musée St-Martin (St-Martin-de-Belleville) 231
 Musée du Sel (Salies de Béam) 304
 Musée de Soie (St-Hippolyte-du-Fort) 337
 Musée Souterrain de la Poterie (St-Émilien) 296
 Musée de la Tapisserie (Bayeux) 149

museums and art galleries (cont.)

Musée des Tapisseries (Aix-en-Provence) 352
 Musée Tauroentum (Bandol) 352
 Musée du Temps (Besançon) 144
 Musée de Tessé (Le Mans) 219
 Musée du Textile (Cholet) 177
 Musée Toulouse-Lautrec (Albi) 274
 Musée de la Tour Carrée (Ste-Maxime) 356
 Musée des Troupes de Montagne (Grenoble) 231
 Musée d'Unterlinden (Colmar) 54
 Musée des Ursulines (Mâcon) 210
 Musée de la Veilleuse Thèrière (Dinan) 160
 Musée de Velo (Cormatin) 209
 Musée de la Vie Bourguignonne (Dijon) 200
 Musée du Vieux Granville 154
 Musée des 24 Heures (Le Mans) 179
 Musée du Vitrail (Chartres) 189
 Musée Vivant du Cheval (Chantilly) 76
 Muséum du Coquillage (Les Sables d'Olonne) 176
 Muséum d'Histoire Naturelle (Aix-en-Provence) 352
 Muséum d'Histoire Naturelle (La Rochelle) 286
 Muséum d'Histoire Naturelle (Marseille) 350
 Muséum d'Histoire Naturelle (Toulouse) 276
 Muséum d'Histoire Naturelle (Tours) 180
 Nouveau Musée National de Monaco-Villa Sauber (Monaco) 360
 Palais des Beaux-Arts (Lille) 70
 Parc Jeux Petite Delire (Carnac) 167
 Parc-Musée du Puits Couriot (St-Etienne) 222
 Port-Musée (Douarnenez) 165
 Salons Napoléoniens (Ajaccio) 372
 Site Archéologique d'Aléria (Aléria) 373
 Universal Museum (Arpailargues-et-Aureillac) 335
 Vallon du Villaret (Bagnols les Bains) 243
 Vielle Charité (Marseille) 350
 Le Vieux Logis (Ste-Enimie) 242
 Vulcania (St-Ours-Les-Roches) 250
 music 34, 35

N

Nancy 53
 Nantes 14, 174–5

- Narbonne 332
 national and regional parks
 Parc National des Ecrins 229
 Parc National des Pyrénées 308, 309
 Parc National de la Vanoise 230
 Parc Naturel Régional des Causses du Quercy 268–9
 Parc Naturel Régional du Morvan 193, **206–7**
 Parc Naturel Régional des Volcans d'Auvergne 250
 Parc Régional Naturel du Haut-Jura 212–13
 Réserve National d'Orlu (Pyrénées) 312
 Réserve Naturelle de Scandola 366
- Nauiscaá (Boulogne-sur-Mer) 43, **68–9**
- Neuf-Brisach 55
- Niaux 311
- Nice 17, 317, **358–9**
- Nîmes 15, **336**, 337
- Le Nord and Picardy 67–79
- Normandy 36, **143–56**
 D-Day Landings 148–9
 Notre-Dame (Dijon) 200–201
 Notre-Dame (Paris) 81, **90–91**, 105
- Nyons 235
- O**
- Observatoire Astronomique (Pic du Midi de Bigorre) 306
- Océanopolis (Brest) 137, **162–3**
- Omaha Beach 148
- opening hours 26, 32
- opera
 Opéra Garnier (Paris) 100–101
 Opéra Nouvel (Lyon) 220, 221
 Orange 345
- Orléans 14, **187**
- Ossuaire de Douaumont (Verdun) 50
- Ota 366
- P**
- Paimpol 164–5
- Palais de Chaillot (Paris) 106
- Palais des Ducs (Dijon) 200
- Palais de Justice (Rouen) 144
- Palais Lascaris (Nice) 358
- Palais des Papes (Avignon) 317, **342–3**
- Panthéon (Paris) 93
- Parc Animalier des Pyrénées (Argèles-Gazost) 308
- Parc National des Ecrins 229
- Parc National de la Vanoise 230
- Parc Régional Naturel du Haut-Jura 212–13
- Parc Naturel Régional du Morvan 193, **206–7**
- Parc National Régional des Volcans d'Auvergne 250
- Le Parc Zoologique de Thoiry 128
- Paris 34, 36, 37, **80–122**
- parks and gardens
 Jardin Botanique de Tours 180
 Jardin du Luxembourg (Paris) 81, **93**
 Jardin du Palais de la Berbie (Albi) 274
 Jardin du Palais Royal (Paris) 99
 Jardin des Tuileries (Paris) 99, 110
 Parc de l'Arquebuse (Dijon) 200
 Parc Phoenix (Nice) 358
 Parc de la Préhistoire 311
 Parc de la Schappe (Briançon) 228
 Parc de la Villette (Paris) 118–19
 see also national and regional parks
- Parlement de Bretagne (Rennes) 158
- passports 24
- Pau 304–5
- Pays du Léon 164
- Périgord, Quercy and Gascony 261–80
- Périgieux 15, **265**
- Périphérique (Paris) 123
- Perpignan 328
- Le Petit Train d'Artouste 305
- Petit Trianon (Château de Versailles) 125
- Pézenas 331
- pharmacies 24–5
- Pic du Midi de Bigorre 306–7
- Pierrefonds 77
- Place d'Armes (Briançon) 228
- Place Balmat (Chamonix) 224
- Place Bellecour (Lyon) 220
- Place de la Bourse (Bordeaux) 294
- Place de la Concorde (Paris) 100
- Place des Halles (Angoulême) 290
- Place des Lices (Rennes) 158
- Place Plumereau (Tours) 180
- Place du Tertre (Paris) 118
- Place Vendôme (Paris) 100
- Place du Vieux-Marché (Rouen) 144
- Place des Vosges (Paris) 94
- Plage d'Arone (Piana) 366
- Plage de Ficajola (Piana) 366
- Plage des Graniers (St-Tropez) 354
- Plage de Porto (Porto) 366
- Poitevin marshes 285
- Poitiers 284
- Poitou and Aquitaine 281–300
- Centre Pompidou (Paris) 95
- Pompon, François 110
- Pons 293
- Pont d'Arc (Vallon) 232
- Pont-Aven 168–9
- Pont-Canal de l'Orb (Béziers) 330
- Pont du Gard (Vers-Pont-du-Gard) 317, **334–5**
- Pont Gustave-Flaubert (Rouen) 144
- Port-Grimaud 355
- Porto-Vecchio 371
- Promenade Nocturnes (Château de Chenonceau) 34
- Provence and the Côte d'Azur 341–64
- public conveniences 27
- public holidays 17
- puppet shows 34–5
- Le Puy du Fou 15
- Le Puy-en-Velay 16, 193, **244–5**
- Pyrenees 15, 255, **301–15**
- Q**
- Quartier Latin (Paris) 92–3
- Quimper 15, 169
- R**
- rail travel and railways 19–20, 21, 22, 23
 Cévennes steam train (Anduze) 337
 Le Petit Train d'Artouste 257, 305
 Petit Train de la Rhune (Sare) 303
 Le Petite Train Jaune (Villefranche-de-Conflent) 329
 Vallée d'Ouche Steam Railway (Bligny-sur-Ouche) 202
- Rambouillet 128–9
- refunds 33
- regional specialities 30–31
- Reims 43, **60–61**
- Rennes 158–9
- Rennes-le-Château 326–7
- Renoir, Pierre-Auguste 110, 118
- Réserve National d'Orlu (Pyrenees) 312
- Réserve Naturelle de Scandola 366
- restaurants 30
- Réveillon de Noël 17
- Réveillon de St-Sylvestre 17
- Rhône Valley and French Alps 219–38
- Ribeauvillé 56

Riquewihr 56
 Rocamadour 255, 256, **268-9**
 Rochefort 288
 Le Rocher de la Cathédrale 232
 Roi de l'Oiseau (Le Puy-en-Velay) 16
 La Roque St-Christophe 266
 Roscoff 164
 Rouen 16, **144-5**
 Les Rousses 212
 Royan 289
 Rue Lepic (Paris) 118
 Rue des Rosiers (Paris) 94

S

Sacré-Coeur (Paris) 114-17
 safari parks
 Le Parc Zoologique de Thoiry 128
 safety, personal 25
 St Bertrand-de-Comminges 313
 Sainte-Chapelle (Paris) 92
 St-Cirq-Lapopie 270
 St Claude 212
 St-Émilien 296
 St-Étienne 222, 223
 St-Florent 368-9
 St-Flour 246
 St-Hippolyte-du-Fort 337
 St-Malo 161
 St-Martin-d'Ardèche 232
 Ste-Maxime 356-7
 St-Nazaire 176
 St-Omer 70
 St-Paul-de-Vence 359
 St-Pierre-sur-Dives 151
 St-Raphaël 357
 St-Rémy-de-Provence 344
 St-Savin-sur-Gartempe 284-5
 St-Tropez 14-15, **354-5**
 Saintes 292-3
 Salers 247
 sales tax 33
 Samoëns 226
 SAMU (Service d'Aide Médicale Urgence) 24, 27
 Sapeurs Pompiers 24, 27
 Sare 303
 Sarlat 266-7
 Saumur 178
 Sauveterre-de-Béarn 304
 Scandola 366
 sea, arriving in France by 18-19, 21
 Sedan 64-5
 self-catering accommodation 28-9
 Central France and the Alps 216-18, 236-8, 252-3
 Île de France 134
 Northeast France 66, 79
 Paris 120-22

self-catering accommodation (cont.)
 The South of France 338-40, 362-4, 374-5
 Southwest France 278-80, 298-300, 314-15
 Western France 170-72, 191
 Sète 15, **332-3**
 Seurat, Georges 110
 shopping 31-3
 Signac, Paul 110
 Somme Battlefields 72-3
 Somme river 72, 73
 sports 35
 spring in France 14, 17
 Statue de Notre-Dame-de-France (Le Puy-en-Velay) 244
 Strasbourg 57
 summer in France 15, 17

T

Tarascon 343
 Tarn river 242
 Télescope Bernard Lyot (Pic du Midi de Bigorre) 306
 theatre 34
 Théâtre de la Maison de Guignol (Lyon) 34, 221
 theme parks
 Le Bioscope (Soléa) 56
 Cigoland (Kintzheim) 56
 Disneyland® Paris 130-33
 Futuroscope (Chasseneuil-du-Poitou) 282-3
 Parc Astérix (Plailly) 74-5
 Parc d'Attraction Walygator (Maizières-les-Metz) 52
 Third Republic 39
 Thoiry 128
 time 27
 toilets 27
 Il Torrone (Bonifacio) 370
 Toulon 353
 Toulouse 36, **276**
 Tour de la Chaîne (La Rochelle) 286
 Tour de France 15
 Tour des Fromages (Cluny) 208
 Tour de la Lanterne (La Rochelle) 286
 Tour Montparnasse (Paris) 111
 Tour St-Nicolas (La Rochelle) 286
 Tournus 210-11
 Tours 180-81
 trains see rail travel and railways
 Tranchée des Baïonnettes (Verdun) 50
 travel 18-23
 air 18, 21, 22, 23
 car 20-21, 22-3
 rail 19-20, 22, 23
 sea 18-19
 travel insurance 24

Les Trois Vallées 230-31
 Troyes 62, 63

U

UNESCO World Heritage Sites 147, 307, 319, 366
 Ungersheim 56
 Uzès 335

V

Vaison-la-Romaine 348, 349
 Val Thorens 230
 Vallée d'Ouche Steam Railway (Bligny-sur-Ouche) 202
 Vallon-Pont-d'Arc 232
 Van Gogh, Vincent 110, 118, 344, 345
 Vannes 168
 Vanoise 230
 Verdun 50-51
 Vers-Pont-du-Gard 334-5
 Versailles, Château de 124-7
 Vézelay 204-5
 Vézère river 262
 Le Viell Albi 274
 Vienne 222-3
 Vieux Pont (Albi) 274
 Villages Nature 133
 Villedieu-les-Poêles 154-5
 Villefranche-de-Conflent 329
 Villeréal 272-3
 24 Heures du Mans 15
 visas 24
 visitor information 26, 27
 Vogüé 234
 Voltaire 38, 39
 Vulcania (St-Ours-Les-Roches) 250-51

W

winter in France 17
 World War I 45, 50, 51, 73, 76, 183
 World War II 45, 52, 137, 148-9, 169, 177, 289

Y

Yvoire 226-7

Z

zoos
 Amazonian Greenhouse (Montpellier) 333s
 Parc Zoologique et Botanique (Mulhouse) 57
 Parc Zoologique de Champrépús 155
 Le Parc Zoologique de Thoiry 128
 Zoo d'Amnéville 52
 Zoo de La Palmyre 289
 Zoo du Mont Faron (Toulon) 353

Acknowledgments

Dorling Kindersley would like to thank the following people whose help and assistance contributed to the preparation of this book.

Main Contributors

Dana Facaros has lived in France since 1989. She is the author and co-author of over 40 guides. She and her husband, along with their two children, have travelled all over the world.

Leonie Glass has been a travel writer and editor for more than 25 years. She is the co-founder of *thehotelguru.com*, a successful online independent hotel guide.

Antony Mason is the author of about 80 books on travel, geography, exploration, history, the history of art and current affairs and has also contributed articles featured in publications by *Reader's Digest*, *National Geographic*, *The Daily Telegraph* and *Condé Nast Traveller*.

Mike Pedley is a freelance travel writer who has spent several years living and working in France, mainly in Provence, Languedoc-Roussillon and the Alps. He freelances as a writer for several French publications.

Ally Thompson is an ex-BBC producer based in Northern Ireland. She freelances as a journalist and travel guide author. She and her family like to spend the summers in the medieval town of Montcuq in the Lot region.

Rosie Whitehouse has spent over 20 years travelling with her five children. With family in Paris, Rosie has explored every nook and cranny of the French capital.

Editorial Consultant

Fay Franklin

Additional Photography

David Abram; Max Alexander; Marc Dubin; Philippe Giraud; Alex Havret; John Heseltine; Roger Hilton; Paul Kenward; Neil Lukas; Eric Meacher; Roger Moss; Ian O'Leary; John Parker; Cecile Treal and Jean-Michel Ruiz; Rough Guides: Demetrio Carrasco, Marc Dubin, Jean-Christophe Godet, James McConnachie, Greg Ward; Kim Sayer; Tony Souter; Clive Streeter; Rollin Verlinde; Alan Williams; Jerry Young.

Design and Editorial

PUBLISHER Vivien Antwi
LIST MANAGER Christine Stroyan
SENIOR MANAGING ART EDITOR Mabel Chan
SENIOR CARTOGRAPHIC EDITOR Casper Morris
CARTOGRAPHIC EDITOR Stuart James
SENIOR EDITORS Michelle Crane, Georgina Palfy
JUNIOR EDITOR Vicki Allen
JACKET DESIGN Tessa Bindloss, Louise Dick
ICON DESIGN Claire-Louise Armitt

SENIOR DTP EDITOR Jason Little
PICTURE RESEARCH Chloe Roberts, Ellen Root
PRODUCTION CONTROLLER Rebecca Short
READERS Nick Rider, Anna Streiffert
FACT CHECKERS Anna Brooke, Catherine Gauthier,
Robert Harnais, Lyn Parry
PROOFREADER Lucy Ratcliffe
INDEXER Vanessa Bird

Additional Editorial Assistance

Vanessa Cerchia, Shahnaaz Bakshi

Revisions Team

Louise Clegghorn, Vidushi Duggal, Anna Fischel, Lydia Halliday, Robert Harnais, Kaberi Hazarika, Lily Heise, Bharti Karakoti, Sumita Khatwani, Anwesha Madhukalya, Tanya Mahendru, Lyn Parry, Schchida Nand Pradhan, Marriane Petrou, Ankita Sharma, Cathy Skipper, Beverly Smart, Rituraj Singh, Avantika Sukhia, Ajay Verma

With thanks to Douglas Amrine for help in developing this series.

Photography Permissions

Dorling Kindersley would like to thank all the museums, galleries, churches and other sights that allowed us to photograph at their establishments.

58 Tour Eiffel, Aquarium at Cinéaqua, Le Café du Palais, The Castle of Fontainebleau, Château de Chenonceau, Château Fort de Sedan, Cité de l'Automobile, Cité des Sciences et de l'Industrie, Fort des Rousses, L'abbaye de la Chaise-Dieu, La Maison des Hommes, Les Machines de l'Île, Le Musée d'Art et d'Industrie, Musée d'Angoulême, Musée de l'Oliver, Musée Grévin, Nausicaâ, Nyons.

Works of art have been reproduced with the kind permission of the following copyright holders:
Birdie 1997, resin & fiberglass, polyurethane paint,
© Frederic Lanovsky, <http://www.lanovsky.com> 358cra.

Picture Credits

Key: a-above; b-below/bottom; c-centre; f-far; l-left; r-right; t-top

The publisher would like to thank the following for their kind permission to reproduce their photographs:
ALAMY IMAGES: A la poste 26bc; The Art Archive 125tc, 126cla; Camera Lucida Lifestyle 162cb; Culliganphoto 1c; Liz Garnett 166ca; Chris Hellier 189bl; Hemis 11br, 158cl, 174cl, 179bl, 233bl, 257br, 272c, 301; Eric James 183bl; JTB Photo Communications, Inc 12tr; Michael Juno 14br; Marion Kaplan 270br; Moviestore Collection Ltd 325cb; Noble Images 341; Photosilta 264c; Jordi Puig 266bc; Paul Shawcross 209ti; Kumar Sriskandan 132cl; Jack Sullivan 90crb; Gregory Wrona 342cra. Albirondack Park Camping Lodge et Camp: 278bl. L'atelier Du Chocolat: Paul Martinez 302crb. La Bastide de la Brague: 362bl.

THE BRIDGEMAN ART LIBRARY: *Vercingetorix Threw his Arms at the Feet of his Conquerors*, plate from *The Story of France* by Mary MacGregor, 1920 (coloured litho), Rainey, William (1852–1936) (after)/Private Collection/ The Stapleton Collection/36cr. Brittany Cottages: 170cl. Camping Indigo: 237tr. Camping La Coulelière: 363tr. Caverne du Pont d'Arc: Patrick Aventurier 36clb. Château de la Motte: 28bl, 299tc. Château Fort de Sedan: 64cra. Le Chatenent Brantôme: 278cra. Citadines Centre Mériadeck Bordeaux: 298cra. CORBIS: Aurora Open/R. Tyler Gross 219; Christophe Boisvieux 141bl; Macduff Everton 268bl; Hemis/ Arnaud Chicurel 92tl, / Sylvain Sonnet 8–9; JAI/Peter Adams 274cr, /Walter Bibikow 10b; Schlegelmilch 15bl; Stephane Reix/Fête de la Musique/France 2/For Picture 34bl; Symga/Cyrl Entzmann 324cr, /Alain Noguez 25bl; TDWsport.com/ Tim De Waele 15br; Xinhua Press/Wu Wei 33br. DISNEYLAND @ Paris: 130tr, 130cra, 130bl, 130br, 131tc, 131cla, 131clb, 131bc, 133tl, 133tr, 133br. DK IMAGES: Courtesy of CNHMS, Paris, Rough Guides/ James McConnachie 92bc; courtesy of Sacré-Coeur, Max Alexander 116tr, 116cl. DOMAINE DU RAYOL: 355tl. DOMAINE SAINT-ROCH: Véronique Hugot 66bl. GRAND SITES ARIÈGE/SESTA: 310cr, 311cb, 311bl, E. Demoulin 310c. GRÉGOIRE SIEUW: 306c. HOTEL A MADONNETTA: 374cra. HÔTEL AZUR: 66cra. HÔTEL DE LA POSTE & DU LION D'OR: 218bl. HÔTEL DES LICES: 364tr. HOTEL DIDEROT: 190cr. HOTEL KILINA: 375cra. HOTEL LE BRISTOL: 121tc. HOTEL LE MANOIR SAINT MICHEL: 171tr. HOTEL L'ORANGERAIE: 135bc. HOTEL MANALI: 237bl. HOTEL WILSON: 217tr. LA GRAND'MAISON: 78br. LATOUR-MARLIAC: 273c. LA MAISON DES GARDES: 217c. LA PALMYRE ZOO: 288tr. LE GABRIEL RESTAURANT: 295tl. LE MAZET: 340c. LE NATUROPTÈRE: Joseph Jacquin-Poretz 345c. LE SAINT-JEAN RESTAURANT: 325bl. LES GRILLONS HÔTEL RESTAURANT: 236cra. LE MANOIR D'AGNÈS: 315bl. MUSÉE DES DINO- SAURES: 326tl. MUSÉE EUGÈNE BOUDIN-HONFLEUR: H. Brauner 147cl. MUSÉE NATIONAL DE LA MARINE: Caroline Lamotte 353tc. MUSÉE TOULOUSE-LAUTREC: François Pons 274c. NUITS D'ESCAPE: armellephotographe.com 216cra. OCEANOPOLIS BREST: 162tr, 162cl. OFFICE DE TOURISME DE BÉZIERS MÉDITERRANÉE: Julien Gieules 330ca. OFFICE DE TOURISME DE LA ROCHELLE: Francis Giraudon 286tr, 286cl. OFFICE DE TOURISME LARUNS: 16–17bc. OFFICE DE TOURISME DE LARUNS-ARTOUSTE: 305tc. OFFICE DE TOURISME DE ST CLÉMENT DES BALEINES: JMCA 287c. OFFICE DE TOURISME DE SAINT-RAPHAEL: M. Angot 357tc. PARC ANIMALIER DES PYRÉNÉES: 308bc. PARC ASTÉRIX: 74cl, 74c, 74cr. PARC DU FUTUROSCOPE: 282cl, 282c, Futuroscope_Création (O HERAL-F JUILLE- JL AUDY-M VIMENET) /Fotolia /D LAMING, Architecte-Spectacle conçu et réalisé par Skertzo 282bl; JL AUDY /AEROPHILE /D VANICHE, Architecte (DVED) structure métallique /D LAMING, Architecte / Futuroscope 282tr, 283tl. PHOTOLIBRARY: 59, Age fotostock/Bruce Bi 350cla, /Mikel Bilbao 13b, / Christophe Boisvieux 270tl, 289tc, /JD. Dallet 254–255, /Hiroshi Higuchi 107bl, /ICP 259ca, /Yadid Levy 167tl, / Jose Fuste Raga 198bl, 284br, /SGM 2–3, 136–137, / Ivan Vdovin 199; Alamy/Andia/Aigle 48ca, /Andrzej Gorzkowski Photography 127bl, /Art Kowalsky 184cra, / Business 127tl, /Carlo Bollo 33bl, /Carolyn Clarke 78cra,

/David Gee 198ca, /John Kellerman 125clb, /Mike McEnnerney 18br, / Mediacolor's 47br, /Chris Pancewicz 48bl, /qaphotos.com 19br, /Sagaphoto.com/ Forget Patrick 142ca, /Alex Segre 32bc, /Shopping Mall 27bl, /Shout 260cra, /Peter Titmuss 19bl, /Wild Places Photography /Chris Howes 262cra; JW. Alker 18bl; Bios/Jean- Philippe Delobelle 230tr, /Olivier Seydoux 165tl; Egon Bömsch 20bl; The Bridgeman Art Library 37cb, 38clb, 111cl, /Giraudon 110c; Design Pics Inc/ Bilderbuch 82b; GTW 115bl; Hemis 306cl, /Chicurel Arnaud 83t, /Gardel Bertrand 40–41, 80–81, 137c, / Rieger Bertrand 288cl, /Moirenc Camille 322bc, / Boisvieux Christophe 261, 281, /Cormon Francis 272tl, /Sudres Jean-Danie 31bc, /Dozier Marc 262cr, 262clb, 263bl, /Escudero Patrick 258cl, 267bl; imagebroker.net/ Kevin Galvin 317c, /Juergen Hasenkopf 14bl, /Martin Siepmann 186cl, /Egmont Strigl 30br; Imagestate RM/ David Jerome Ball 139bl; Intro/Ingo Kuzia 157; De J 139r; Japan Travel Bureau/JTB Photo 17br, 187tc, 188cr; Günter Lenz 302clb; Look-fofo/Florian Werner 159bl; Mauritius/Mattes 62bl; Photononstop/Alain Le Bot 142bl, 175cl, /Joel Damase 239, /Gerard Gsell 160tc, /Christophe Lehenaff 98tr, 256b, / Brigitte Merle 264tl, 271ca, /Danièle Schneider 294clb, /Nicolas Thibaut 76tl, 273tl, /Leslie West 16bl, /Yvon-Lemanour 154br; Radius Images 87, 124cla; Robert Harding Travel/Richard Ashworth 143, /Peter Barritt 86bl; Saga Photo /Patrick Forget 188ca; Michael Schellinger 346cra, 346cr; Ticket/Elfi Kluck 123; The Travel Library 268bc, /Frank Fell 70br, 323; Bernd Tschakert 322cla; Universal Images Group/Universal History Archive 39cb, 98cb, 111c. PUY DU FOU: 13cr, 139cl, 177tl. SALON ANGELINA: 126br. SIXT ALPINE CHALET: 238c. TAPALOCAS: 343bl. THE GRANGER COLLECTION, NEW YORK: 38tr. THE KOBAL COLLECTION: Dreamworks 163cla. TRAIN À VAPUER DES CÉVENNES: M. Jones 27br. TRIANON PALACE VERSAILLES, A Waldorf Astoria Hotel: 135tl. VERT MARINE TOURISME: Arnaud Lombard 189cl. VILLE D'AVRANCHES: 153cb.

JACKET IMAGES: Front: AWL Images: Danita Delimont Stock cb, Shaun Egan tl; DORLING KINDERSLEY: Ruth Jenkinson tr; Dreamstime.com: Zawal tc; Back: ALAMY IMAGES: JTB Photo Communications, Inc tr; CORBIS: Pawel Libera tc; GETTY IMAGES: Photononstop/Godong/Pascal Deloche tl; Spine: SUPERSTOCK: age fotostock tc.

All other images © Dorling Kindersley
For further information see www.dkimages.com

SPECIAL EDITIONS OF DK TRAVEL GUIDES

DK Travel Guides can be purchased in bulk quantities at discounted prices for use in promotions or as premiums.

We are also able to offer special editions and personalized jackets, corporate imprints, and excerpts from all of our books, tailored specifically to meet your own needs.

To find out more, please contact:

(in the US) specialsales@dk.com
(in the UK) travelguides@uk.dk.com
(in Canada) specialmarkets@dk.com
(in Australia) penguincorporatesales@penguinrandomhouse.com.au

Phrase Book

Making Friends

Hello	Bonjour	boñzhoor
How are you?	Comment vas-tu?	kóm-moñ vah too
Very well,	Très bien,	treh byañ,
thank you.	merci.	mer-see
What is your	Comment t'appelles	kóm-moñ ta-pel
name?	tu?	too
My name is...	Je m'appelle...	zhuh ma-pel...
How old are you?	Quel âge as-tu?	kel ahzh a too
I am ... years old	J'ai ... ans	zhay ... ons
Do you speak	Est-ce que tu	parl oñg-lay
English?	parles anglais?	on-fon
child	enfant	gar-sonh
boy	garçon	fi
girl	filles	

Communication Essentials

Yes	Oui	wee
No	Non	noñ
Please	S'il vous plaît	señ voo play
Thank you	Merci	mer-see
Excuse me/I'm sorry	Excusez-moi	exkoo-zay mwah
Goodbye	Au revoir	oh ruh-vwar
Good night	Bonsoir	boñ-swar
Morning	le matin	luh matañ
Afternoon	l'après-midi	l'apreh-meedee
Evening	le soir	luh swar
Yesterday	hier	eeyehr
Today	aujourd'hui	oh-zhoor-dwee
Tomorrow	demain	duhmañ
Here	ici	ee-see
There	là	lah
What?	Quel, quelle?	kel, kel
When?	Quand?	koñ
Why?	Pourquoi?	poor-kwah
Where?	Où?	oo

In an Emergency

Help!	Au secours!	oh sekoor
Stop!	Arrêtez!	aret-ay
Call...	Appelez un	apuh-lay uñ
a doctor!	un médecin!	un medsañ
an ambulance	une ambulance!	une oñboo-loñs
the police!	la police!	lah poh-lees
the fire brigade!	les pompiers!	lay poñ-peeyay
Where is the	Où est l'hôpital	oo ay l'opeetal luh
nearest hospital?	le plus proche?	luh ploo prosh

Health

My child needs	Mon fils/ma fille a	mon fis/ma fi a
to see a doctor	besoin de voir un	beysoyñ d vwah
	médecin	uñ medsañ
asthma	l'asthme	las-zh-ma
allergy	l'allergie	al-er-gee
bandage	le pansement	pan-zay-men
cough	la toux	tooh
chicken pox	la varicelle	lah va-ree-sel
diarrhoea	la diarrhée	lah dee-ya-rey
fever	la fièvre	fi-ev-ra
vomit	le vomissement	vom-mi-smen

Useful Phrases

Where is/are...?	Où est/sont...?	oo ay/soñ
Which	Quelle est la	kel ay lah deer-
way to...?	direction pour...?	ek-syooñ poor
I don't	Je ne	zhuh nuh kom-
understand	comprends pas.	proñ pah
Do you speak English?	Parlez-vous anglais?	par-lay voo oñg-lay

Useful Words

bad	mauvais	moh-veh
beach	la plage	lah pla-zhuh
big	grand	groñ
closed	fermé	fer-meh
cold	froid	frwah
early	de bonne heure	duh bon urr
entrance	l'entrée	l'on-tray
exit	la sortie	sor-tee
far	loin	lwañ
good	bon	boñ
hot	chaud	show
late	en retard	oñ ruh-tar
left	gauche	gohsh
near	près	preh
open	ouvert	oo-veh

playground
right
roundabout
sandpit
slide
small
straight ahead
swimming pool
swing
toilet

l'aire de jeux
droit
le carrousel
le bac de sable
le toboggan
petit
tout droit
la piscine
la balançoire
les toilettes, les WC

ayer d zhuh
drwah
ka-roo-sel
bak a saar-blu
toh-bog-an
puh-tee
too drwah
pisin
bal-an-swah
twah-let, vay-see

Shopping

How much
 does this cost?
I would like ...
Do you have?
Do you take
 credit cards?

C'est combien
s'il vous plaît?
Je voudrais...
Est-ce que vous avez?
Est-ce que vous
acceptez les cartes
de crédit?

say kom-byañ
seel voo play
zhuh voo-dray
es-kuh voo zavay
es-kuh voo
zaksept-ay leh kart
duh krah-dee

This one
That one
expensive
cheap

Celui-ci
Celui-là
cher
pas cher,
bon marché
la taille
la peinture
le crayon de couleur
les jeux
le crayon
les jouets

suhl-wei-see
suhl-wei-lah
shehr
pah shehr,
boñ mar-shay
tye
pwañ-tur
cray-on de koo-ler
zhuh
crey-onh
zooch-eh

size, clothes
size, shoes
crayon
games
pencil
toys

Colours

black
blue
green
orange
pink
purple
red
white
yellow

noir
bleu
vert
orange
rose
violet
rouge
blanc
jaune

nwah
bluh
vehr
oh-ran-zhuh
roze
vee-oh-lay
roozh
bloñ
zhohwn

Types of Shops

bakery
bank
chemist
delicatessen
grocery
market
post office
supermarket

la boulangerie
la banque
la pharmacie
la charcuterie
l'épicerie
le marché
le bureau de poste
le supermarché

booloñ-zhuree
boñk
farmah-see
sharkoot-ree
epee-ser-ree
marsh-ay
booroh duh pohst
soo pehr-marshay

Eating Out

Have you
 got a table?
the bill please

Avez-vous une
table libre?
L'addition s'il
vous plaît
le menu, la carte
le menu à
prix fixe
le couvert
la carte des vins
chaise haute de
bébé

away-voò oon
tahbl leebr
l'adee-syooñ seel
voo play
men-oo, kart
men-oo ah
pree feeks
koo-vehr
kart-deh vañ
shay-zee ohte d
bey-bey

glass
bottle
knife
fork
spoon
breakfast

le verre
la bouteille
le couteau
la fourchette
la cuillère
le petit déjeuner

vehr
boo-tay
koo-toh
for-shet
kwee-yehr
puh-tee
deh-zhuh-nay
deh-zhuh-nay
dee-nay
plah doo zhoor

lunch
dinner
dish of the day

le déjeuner
le dîner
le plat du jour

Numbers

0
1
2
3
4
5
6
7
8
9
10

zéro
un, une
deux
trois
quatre
cinq
six
sept
huit
neuf
dix

zeh-roh
uñ, oon
duh
trwah
katr
sañk
sees
set
weet
neef
dees