

Fréjus



Fréjus has two different aspects: a medieval Roman city and a seaside resort. As well as being rich in history, culture and artistic qualities, Fréjus also boasts well-kept beaches, the sea and sporting facilities.

The church of St Maximinus, where the head of St Mary Magdalen is honoured, is an example of pointed architecture in the south of France. Forum Julii still has a lot of its ruins and an exceptional archaeological value. Fréjus is also home to the Roman Amphitheatre, arcades of the Oree Gate, and remains of the Aqueduct arches, as well as the Cathedral, Chapel Jean Cocteau, Aurelienne's villa and Aurelien's park.

Port Fréjus, which has a capacity of 750 moorings, is surrounded by beautiful fine sandy beaches. The town is very conscious of its natural heritage, having the massif de l'Esterel, (the Esterel hills) in the background. The Base Nature, situated on the sea edge close to the port, protects the area and its environment, and provides a venue for many sporting events.

There are plenty of walks to enjoy in the area, the most recommended walk is to see the famous 'Malpasset' dam, which in 1959 burst and partly destroyed the town, uprooting everything in its passage; only the ancient monuments withstood the torrential floodwaters. It also caused many deaths. Nowadays right along the length of the dam remains you can find all sorts of Mediterranean flora: heather, pine, oak and wild strawberry trees (arbousiers).

There are plenty of restaurants both around the port area of Fréjus and in the centre of the old town.

On the edge of the town towards St Tropez there is a go kart track for budding Hamiltons and a water park - Aqualand - a delight for water babies.

The Parc Zoologique de Fréjus was originally presented as a traditional zoo facility, but has now been redeveloped as a safari park in which visitors can drive around in their cars. The zoo has attempted to recreate the natural habitats of its animal residents in order to encourage them to reproduce and live as they would in the wild.

Markets are held on Saturday mornings at the Place de la Poste, Fréjus Plage, and on Sunday mornings along the length of the sea front.

Additionally, there is an Oriental market held on Saturday mornings close to the amphitheatre, and a car boot (vide grenier) on Sunday mornings at the end of Rue de Montourey.

St Raphaël



St Raphaël is a fishing port hosting a fish market every morning.

Water jousting events are held at the port a few times a year, and are very entertaining to watch.

Boat trips can be taken to St Tropez, Monaco and the Iles des Lérins.

Around the corner from the port is Jardin Bonaparte, where you can sit and relax in the Mediterranean sun. Below the garden is a car park with 800 places.

St Raphaël has many restaurants along the promenade. After a pleasant meal, why not try your luck in the casino, located opposite Jardin Bonaparte?

Markets are held every morning except Monday at the Place Victor Hugo and Place République, and the daily fish market is held in the Vieux Port.

Agay



Agay is located in a natural bay on the coast road between St Raphaël and Cannes, and is arguably one of the most picturesque towns on the Côte d'Azur.

It is believed Greek sailors settled in Agay around 500BC, and as you approach Agay, it is easy to see why. Tourists come from all over Europe to enjoy the quiet ambience.

The bay is about a kilometre wide and the two most popular sandy beaches are Agay Plage and Plage la Baumette.

An experience worth having is a trip on one of the Vision sous Marine boats. These are glass-bottomed boats from which you can see the various species of marine life.

A large antique sale is held during the summer evenings.

A market is held on Wednesday mornings at Place Giannetti.

Cannes



La Croisette in Cannes is a waterfront avenue lined with palm trees. It is famous for its picturesque beaches, both private and public, and also has many restaurants, cafés and several designer boutiques along its length. There are several private beach restaurants along La Croisette, and on the public beaches artists creating fabulous sand sculptures are often to be found. Many of the famous (and expensive!) hotels are on the Croisette, including the Carlton and the Martinez, amongst others. The Petit Trains (tourist trains, one taking in the old town and the other Cannes of the stars) leave from the Croisette at regular intervals throughout the day.

Situated at intervals along the entire length of the Cannes coastline are small food kiosks where you can buy a sandwich, panini, ice cream, cold drink etc.

The main shopping street in Cannes is the Rue d'Antibes. This is crowded with designer clothes shops, jewellers, etc. If home accessories are of interest both Bois & Chiffon and Sia are worth a visit, for make-up and beauty Sephora is the place to go, and for electricals/electronics try Fnac, which also has a rooftop café, or Darty.

Between the Rue d'Antibes and La Croisette there is a small market street selling traditional Provençal items, amongst other things.

Cannes has an impressive selection of museums and art galleries covering a wide variety of themes and historical periods. Housed in a classic 18th century mansion amid beautiful French gardens, the Musée d'Art et d'Histoire de Provence is home to a collection of artefacts that range from prehistoric to present times. The Musée de la Castre houses an exotic collection including objects from the Pacific Atolls, Peruvian relics and Mayan pottery. Other famous museums include the Musée de la Marine, Musée de la Mer, Musée de la Photographie and Musée International de la Parfumerie.

At Parc Phoenix, otherwise known as the Phoenix Botanical Gardens, visitors will find stunningly beautiful gardens that have been lovingly tended and are home to a large selection of plants and flowers, many of which are exotic in origin. A greenhouse, hailed as the largest in Europe, also houses a large collection of interesting and unusual plant specimens.

Galimard is a working perfumery offering tours giving an in-depth insight into the industry and providing the opportunity to create your own scent under the guidance of a master perfumer.

Boat trips can be taken from the port to visit the famous Lérins Islands as well as a variety of other destinations such as Monaco and St Tropez. A submarine trip in the bay of Cannes is also available, giving visitors the chance to see some of the local sea life.

Cannes is a hotbed of activity after sunset with night venues of every description. Casinos are a highly popular aspect of the city's evening entertainment scene and are full seven days a week with addicts, hopefuls and those doing a little controlled dabbling in the gambling scene. The most famous casinos in the city include Casino Croisette at the Palais des Festivals, Palm Beach Casino at Pointe de la Croisette, and Casino des Princes on boulevard de la Croisette. If a more traditional night out is your thing then you will find plenty of good bars in the city, with boulevard de la Croisette being a good place to head if you want to be guaranteed of finding a busy venue. Nightclubs appealing to all tastes can be found in the city centre and the gay scene is especially happening and popular. Most bars stay open until early morning, while nightclubs can still be busy well into dawn.

Throughout the year Cannes is host to a varied selection of cultural events, from the International Film Festival through to car and boat shows.

The Cannes Film Festival is considered one of the world's most prestigious film festivals and is a part of the history of Cannes. It is the highlight of the city's event calendar and is a two-week long event, usually held in May, that sees the city descended upon by major Hollywood actors and directors as well as a large number of independent film makers. Movies are screened throughout the period, and films are shown at open-air cinemas on the beach most evenings during the event.

The Allée des Étoiles (stars' walk) where 300 stars have placed autographed imprints of their hands is worth a visit at any time of the year.

Two of the most spectacular Cannes events occur in July, as Fireworks explode over the bay on the 4th for America's independence day, and again on the 14th (Bastille Day) for France. Also in July is Les Nuits Musicales du Suquet, a festival of music performances.

Carnival on the Riviera is an annual affair that sees a parade travel through the city's streets and various festivities to mark the 21-day period prior to Shrove Tuesday. Spectacular torchlight processions and masked balls are among the highlights of the event (February/March).

The International Festival of Games is an event that sees visitors converge and indulge their interests in bridge, belote, backgammon, chess, draughts and tarot-reading (February).

Festival de la Plaisance is an event for boating enthusiasts. Held in the Vieux Port, it sees all manner of recreational showboats showcased by various manufacturers (September).

The International Actors' Performance Festival sees various small venues around the city hosting comedic sketches and performances by fringe artists.

France has a reputation for excellence in its cuisine and Cannes is no exception, with restaurants across the city serving up some of the finest examples of the country's most popular dishes. With its coastal location, cuisine in Cannes is naturally based quite significantly around seafood. There is also a strong Italian influence in the cuisine of the area, due to its proximity to Italy. Meal prices vary massively depending on where you go, but mid-price establishments are comparable to UK restaurants - a favourite of ours is La Pizza on Quai St Pierre where as well as pizza and pasta dishes they also serve meat and fish. If, however you prefer to have a gourmet meal in Cannes you can easily pay a hundred Euros.

Markets are held every morning except Monday at Forville and Place Gambetta.

Îles des Lérins



Île Ste-Marguerite is the largest of the Lérins Islands at approximately 3km in length (East to West) and 900m across, and is only a fifteen-minute boat ride from Cannes.

The island is most famous for its fortress prison (the Fort Royal), in which the so-called Man in the Iron Mask was held in the 17th century. The historic Fort Royal now houses a youth hostel and a Museum of the Sea, featuring items recovered from ancient Roman and Saracen shipwrecks. Visitors are also able to view a number of former prison cells (including that occupied by the Man in the Iron Mask) and a Roman cistern room. Guided tours in English are available in summer.

Close to the Fort Royal is a small cemetery for French soldiers who died there when it was used for convalescence during the Crimean War, and alongside it is a cemetery for North African soldiers killed on the Allied side during World War II.

Île Ste-Marguerite is low in profile and heavily wooded with umbrella pines and eucalyptus. It also boasts several small, secluded coves. During the summer months, a large number of boats moor in the shallow, protected 'Plateau du Milieu', between the islands or on the landward side of Ste-Marguerite where there is more room for water skiing, parascending and other popular water sports.

The village of Ste-Marguerite is made up of about twenty buildings. Most of these are home to fishermen, but there is also a small boatyard and one or two establishments offering refreshments to tourists. The island's hotel has been closed down since the summer of 2005.

Île St Honorat houses a monastery, which is home to 30 Cistercian monks, and is a popular tourist attraction offering pleasant woodland surroundings, in common with its neighbour Île Ste-Marguerite. Points of interest include a number of disused chapels erected by monks on the island at different points in history, as well as the remains of a Napoleonic cannon ball oven and a Second World War gun emplacement.

The Abbey of Lérins and the 15th Century fortified monastery are open to visitors, and a monastery shop sells various monastic goods, including wine and honey produced on the island. The modern monastery is closed to visitors, although it is used as a Christian retreat.

The island is served all year round by a regular commercial ferry service from Cannes. Modest dress is required for visitors and smoking on the island is not permitted.

Mougins



Mougins is a pretty medieval perched village between the busy coastal town of Cannes and the back-country gateway town of Grasse. The village is surrounded by forests, such as the Valmasque forest, enhancing the environment in the village. The pines, olives and cypress trees in the village also add to the quality of the local environment, making the village popular with tourists in summer.

Mougins is picturesque and charming, with beautiful French architecture carefully restored. This scenery, colour and light quality has attracted many artists and celebrities to the village, such as Picasso, Cocteau, Winston Churchill and Christian Dior, as well as many others. Picasso spent the last 15 years of his life living in Mougins, and today the three floors of the Musée de la Photographie, at the Place de l'Église just inside the Medieval Porte Sarrazine, include a collection of ancient cameras and photographs of Picasso by famous photographers.

The Musée d'histoire locale on Rue Maréchal Foch, near the centre of Mougins Village, shows what the ancient village and its inhabitants looked like, and displays costumes and early tools.

The many studios and art galleries in Mougins make the village a relaxing place to visit, with its calming atmosphere and scenery.

The village of Mougins is today a collection of art galleries, estate agents and restaurants - with the emphasis on gourmet restaurants.

The Porte Sarrazine is the best remnant of the Medieval fortified walls of that earlier era.

The Rue de l'Église, bordered on one side by a narrow stepped canal, slopes up to the 11th-century St-Jacques-le-Majeur church - with recent remodelling in the 18th and 19th centuries.

Nice



Nice is the largest city in France that is not a regional capital.

The Promenade des Anglais ('Walk of the English') is a promenade along the sea front. Unlike most beaches in the region, Nice's beach is almost entirely pebbles and is not the most comfortable place to sunbathe.

The Hotel Negresco on the Promenade des Anglais was named after Henri Negresco (1868-1920) who had the palatial hotel constructed in 1912.

Nice has several squares where people gather, either to watch great shows, performances or public displays, or just to sit at a terrace and watch the world go by.

The main square in the city is Place Masséna. Bordered by red ochre buildings of Italian architecture and lined with palm trees, the square has recently undergone an extensive modernisation programme including the routing of the new tramway system through the centre. Since its construction, Place Masséna has always been the spot for great public events, including the military procession of 14 July (Bastille Day).

Place Masséna is a two-minute walk from Promenade des Anglais, the old town, town centre, and Albert I Garden (Jardin Albert Ier). It is also a large crossroads between several of the main streets of the city: avenue Jean Médecin, avenue Felix Faure, boulevard Jean Jaurès, avenue de Verdun and rue Gioffredo.

Place Garibaldi also stands out for its architecture and history. It is named after Giuseppe Garibaldi, hero of the Italian unification. A Statue of Garibaldi is erected in the centre of the place. It is a crossroads between the Vieux Nice (old town) and town centre. Place Garibaldi is close to the eastern districts of Nice, Port Lympia (Lympia Harbour), and the TNL commercial centre. This square is also a crossroads of important streets: the boulevard Jean Jaurès, the avenue de la république, the rue Cassini and the rue Catherine Ségurane.

Place Rosetti is located in the heart of the old town. It is entirely enclosed and pedestrianised, with typical buildings in red and yellow ochres surrounding the square, the cathédrale Ste-Réparate and the fountain in the centre, and is a must-see spot in the old town. By day, the place is invaded by the terraces of traditional restaurants and the finest ice-cream makers. By night, the environment changes radically, with tourists and youths flocking to the square, where music reverberates on the walls of the small square. The square's lighting at night gives it a magical aspect.

Cours Saleya, with its daily flower market, is probably the most traditional square of the town. There are several restaurants here serving typical Niçois cuisine. It is situated parallel to the Quai des États-Unis.

Place du Palais is, as its name suggests, where the Palais de Justice (law courts) of Nice is located. Palais Rusca, which also belongs to the justice department (home of the tribunal de grande instance), can also be found on this square. The square is also notable due to the presence of the city clock.

It is situated halfway between Cours Saleya and Place Masséna.

The Observatoire de Nice (Nice Observatory) is located on the summit of Mont Gros. Gustave Eiffel designed the main dome of the Observatoire, and the architect was Charles Garnier.

Nice also has numerous museums of all kinds: Musée Chagall, Musée Matisse (arenas of Cimiez where one can also see Roman ruins), Musée des Beaux-Arts Jules Chéret, Museum of Naïve arts, Musée Terra-Amata, Museum of Asian Art, Museum of Modern Art and Contemporary Art which devotes a broad place to the famous 'École of Nice', Museum of Natural History, Musée Masséna, Naval Museum and Galerie des Ponchettes.

The cuisine of Nice uses both produce of the local countryside (olive oil, anchovies, fruit and vegetables) and also from more remote regions, in particular those from Northern Europe.

Local meat comes from neighbouring valleys, such as the sheep of Sisteron. Local fish, such as mullets, bream, sea urchins, and anchovies (alevins) are used to a great extent, so much so that it has given birth to a proverb: 'fish are born in the sea and die in oil'. Naturally, this refers to the olive oil made in the Nice hills. Seafood is generally much appreciated in the delicate and healthy cuisine of Nice.

Boats of all sizes are to be found at the port, ranging from the Corsica ferry and cruise ships to small tenders.

A tour of Nice can be taken either on the Petit Train or open-top tourist bus, both of which provide a commentary in several languages.

Nice Côte d'Azur International Airport, situated on the Promenade des Anglais, is France's third largest airport after Charles de Gaulle and Orly, both in Paris. The airport is capable of handling 52 movements (26 landings and 26 take-offs) per hour, and often air traffic can be seen 'queueing up' in the sky ready to land.

Markets are held daily except Mondays at Cours Saleya (fruit, vegetables and flowers), Place St François (fish) and St Roch.

Biot



Biot is located near Antibes and between Cannes and Villeneuve-Loubet. It is situated on the top of a hill, and it overlooks the Mediterranean Sea.

Biot was a pottery centre from the beginning of the 16th century until the 18th century.

In the middle of the 20th century, Biot once again became famous for its pottery (decorative pottery and glassworks).

Today, Biot is well known for its glassblowers and bubble glass products. Eloi Monod started the village's glass-blowing tradition.

The Fernand Léger museum stands at the foot of the village.

A market is held on Tuesday mornings at Place de Gaulle.

Grasse



Grasse is the centre of the French perfume industry and is known as the world's perfume capital (la capitale mondiale des parfums). Many 'noses' are trained or have spent time in Grasse. It produces over two-thirds of France's natural aromas (for perfume and for food flavourings).

The old town ('vieille ville') is large, old, and extremely interesting. Tiny streets wind forever between the 17th and 18th century buildings, up and down ancient steps, passing through arched tunnels and sometimes opening out onto large squares.

The principal square near the top of the old town is Place aux Aires. A pretty, three-tiered fountain splashes in the centre and arcades line one long side. In the old village a narrow street comes out onto Place du Petit Puy (and through the archway into Place Godeau) with the Notre Dame du Puy cathedral and its huge clock tower. Inside the cathedral are three paintings by Rubens, commissioned from the then-unknown artist in 1601 by the Archduke Albert for the Santa Croce di Gerusalemme in Rome, and offered to Grasse in the 19th century. There's also the 1754 painting Christ Washing the Feet of the Apostles by Jean-Honoré Fragonard. Also in the Place Godeau is 12th-century 'Tour de Guet' (watch tower) at the Mairie, which was the Bishop's Palace.

The Musée d'Art et d'Histoire de Provence, which is located in the old 'hôtel particulier' (town house) of the Marquise de Clapier-Cabris, features archaeology and ethnology as well as painting, pottery and history.

The Musée International de la Parfumerie houses information about the entire process of creating perfume and antique items relating to 3000 years of perfumery. The key treasure is Marie Antoinette's travel case, and there is also a very fragrant greenhouse here growing aromatic plants.

The Jean-Honoré Fragonard museum is located in the 17th-century Villa Fragonard, where the painter and his family stayed while visiting Grasse in March 1791.

The Musée de la Marine - Amiral de Grasse (Navy Museum) is in the old 18th century Hôtel Pontevès-Morel, at the top of the steps leading down past the pretty little park at the bottom of boulevard du Jeu de Ballon (the main street through Grasse). Featured is the career of the Amiral de Grasse who fought actively in America's war of independence, especially in winning the battle of Yorktown.

There is an annual Fête du Jasmin or La Jasminade, at the beginning of August. The first festival was on 3-4 August 1946. These days, it is a big event; decorated floats drive through the town, with young women in skimpy costumes on board, throwing flowers onto the crowds. This is known as the 'flower battle' and everyone gets soaked by the natural perfume of the flowers. There are also fireworks, free parties, folk music groups and street performers. There is also an annual international exhibition of roses ('Expo Rose').

A market is held every morning except Monday at the Place aux Aires.

Èze



Èze has been described as an 'eagle's nest' because of its location overlooking a high cliff located 427m above sea level. The high elevation enables the village and the light ochre church within (Notre Dame de l'Assomption built in 1764) to be seen from afar. Inside the church, an Egyptian cross acts as a reminder that the roots of the village date back to the time of the Phoenicians, when they erected a temple there to honour the goddess Isis.

Èze is a renowned tourist site and is famous worldwide for the gorgeous view of the Mediterranean Sea from the top of its hill.

The oldest building in the village is the Chapelle de la Ste Croix, which dates back to 1306. Members of the lay order of the White Penitents of Èze, in charge of giving assistance to plague victims, would hold their meetings there. The shape of the bell-turret is an indication that the village once belonged to the Republic of Genoa.

This small medieval village is famous for its beauty and charm. It has many shops, art galleries, hotels and restaurants that attract a large number of tourists and honeymooners. As a result Èze has become a 'museum village' with few local residents living there. From Èze you have gorgeous views of the Mediterranean Sea. The Fragonard perfume factory has a sales outlet here.

A market is held on Tuesday mornings at Place Colette.

Bono, lead singer of U2, owns a villa in Èze along with U2's lead guitarist, The Edge. The band filmed a music video in Èze for 'Beautiful Day' and 'Electrical Storm' in 2000 and 2002, respectively.

Monaco/Monte Carlo



Monte Carlo is one of Europe's leading tourist resorts, although many of the key tourist destinations are located in other parts of Monaco, including such attractions as Monaco Cathedral, the Napoleon Museum, the Oceanographic Museum and Aquarium, and the Prince's Palace, all of which, together with several designer clothing shops and the famous Hôtel de Paris and Café de Paris, are located in Monaco-Ville. If the steep climb does not appeal to you, this area can be reached by the 'Petit Train', which offers commentaries in several languages.

In 2001, a major new construction project extended the pier used by cruise ships in the main harbour.

Since 1929, the Monaco Grand Prix has been held annually in the streets of Monaco. It is widely considered to be one of the most prestigious automobile races in the world, along with the Indianapolis 500 and the 24 Hours of Le Mans. The erecting of the circuit takes six weeks to complete, and the removal after the race another three weeks. The circuit has many elevation changes and tight corners, along with a tunnel. This, together with it being incredibly narrow, make it perhaps the most demanding Formula One track. Only two drivers have ever crashed into the harbour, the most famous being Alberto Ascari in 1955 (Ascari would lose his life four days later at Monza). The other was Paul Hawkins during the 1965 event. Why not take a dip (without your car) in the famous swimming pool alongside the Grand Prix circuit?

Monte Carlo is the wealthiest of Monaco's various administrative areas, sometimes erroneously believed to be the country's capital, even though it does not formally have one. Monte Carlo is known for its casinos, gambling, glamour, and for sightings of famous people. Monte Carlo quarter includes not only Monte Carlo proper where the casino is located, but also the neighborhoods of St Michel, St Roman/Tenao, and the beach community of Larvotto. It borders the French town of Beausoleil (formerly known as Haut-Monte-Carlo).

Monte Carlo also hosts world championship boxing bouts, the Monte Carlo Masters, European Poker Tour Grand Final, fashion shows and other events. The Monte Carlo Rally is one of the longest running and most respected car rallies, and marks the start of each rally season as the first event on the World Rally Championship calendar.

Markets are held every morning at the Place d'Armes and daily (closed for lunch) at the Avenue St Charles.

Menton



Menton is located on the Franco-Italian border, within the confines of the Côte d'Azur and the Ligurian Alps. It boasts a warm micro-climate favourable to lemon, tangerine and orange groves.

There are nearly a dozen private beaches in Menton, where you rent can sun loungers and have bar service and a handy restaurant for lunch. In addition to the private beach areas, there are many free beaches (such as the Plage des Sablettes), and the entire beach front along the water is open to public access.

Menton is famous for its gardens, including the Serre de la Madone, le Val Rahmeh, the Fontana Rosa, and the Maria Serena garden. Le Val Rahmeh was established in 1905 by Englishman Sir Percy Radcliffe, the first owner of the gardens, and named for his wife. Villa Fontana Rosa was built in 1922 by Blasco Ibáñez, a Spanish novelist, and the gardens of the villa are now open to the public.

The baroque basilica of St-Michel-Archange, with its bell-tower, is one of the most beautiful spots of the area. The Musée Jean Cocteau is located in the town.

The Lemon Festival takes place every February. The festival follows a given theme each year; past themes include Viva España, Disney, Neverland and India. The festival lasts several days, with different bands passing through Menton's streets on foot or on truck trailers. The Casino Gardens in the centre of town are decorated in the theme of the festival, using lemons to cover the exhibits, and huge temporary statues are built and covered with citrus fruit.

The Casino Gardens are also the location for Menton's Christmas Festival.

The Menton Classical Musical Festival is held every year in the centre of the old town.

Markets are held every morning at the Gare Routière and Saturday morning Près du Port.

Ste Maxime



Ste Maxime is a Mediterranean seaside town located directly opposite St Tropez, across the Gulf of St Tropez.

The town boasts 5km of south-facing white sandy beaches along the coast offering a range of water sports, together with the forested hills of the Maures providing protection from the winds and wonderful areas for walking and hiking.

It has many restaurants, cafés and bistros.

There is a regular ferry to St Tropez from the marina, a journey of 15 minutes.

Some of the medieval aspects of Ste Maxime have been retained. The town hall (mairie) is still visibly a 15th-century chateau, and the defensive Tour Carrée dates from the 16th century.

Markets are held every morning on Rue Fernand Bessy, near the market place (marché couvert, or covered market), every Monday morning on Avenue George Clemceau (food market), Thursday mornings at Place des Sazzarins (regional produce, fruit and vegetables) and Fridays at Place Jean Mermoz (a large mixed market).

Grimaud/Port Grimaud



The village of **Grimaud** is a perched village in the midst of fabulous views, with historical links to the Grimaldi family. It contains beautiful old houses that have been renovated whilst retaining the medieval character of the village.

Nestled in the heart of the Maures Mountains and bordering the Gulf of St Tropez, Grimaud has maintained its medieval character.

The village is most appealing with its paved and flowered streets winding about all the way from the Romanesque church to the ruins of the feudal castle.

Port Grimaud is part of Grimaud and is located a few kilometres lower down on the coast. This seaside town was created by architect François Spoerry in the 1960s based around the marshes of the river Giscle on the bay of St Tropez. Built in a Venetian style, the town is popular with boat owners as most properties - no two of which are the same - come with their own berth. The success of the first phase of the development meant that Port Grimaud 2 (extending the town further east) was started in the 1990s. The Church of St Francis of Assisi in the main Place d'Église contains stained glass by Victor Vasarely.

Cars are only allowed into Port Grimaud to make deliveries, so visitors must park in car parks just outside the village and enter on foot. The islands making up the village are linked by a network of quaint bridges, and a walk around Port Grimaud in the summer is very pleasant. To see the island from a different angle, water taxis are available to rent and electric boats are available to hire. Port Grimaud has two main squares, both full of shops and restaurants, as well as a weekly market. In summer, the waterside bars and restaurants are very popular with both residents and tourists.

For anyone who owns a yacht, there are plenty of guest berths in Port Grimaud. There are regular ferry services from Port Grimaud to St Raphaël and St Tropez, which is by far the quickest way to travel in the summer, when driving a few miles along the coast road can literally take hours.

Port Grimaud has its own large, sandy beach where all water sports facilities are available. The beach overlooks the bay of St Tropez with the famous town in the distance. The view from here is spectacular, particularly during the early evening when the setting sun turns St Tropez a wonderful shade of orange.

St Tropez



St Tropez is a playground for the rich and famous, many of whom (or rather their crew) moor up their large, expensive yachts either in the port or just off the coast.

Around the port area, from where it is possible to take a boat trip around the coastline, many artists sell their works from the pavement.

The Musée de l'Annonciade (Annunciation Museum), established within the confines of a 16th century chapel, features work by artists who painted in St-Tropez and its environs, beginning with Paul Signac, but also including Bonnard, Matisse, Marquet, Dufy, Derain, Vlaminck, and Van Dongen. The museum also includes Fauvist work, including Braque's *L'Estaque*.

In early October each year, a regatta is held in the bay of St Tropez. This is a draw for many yachts, some up to 50 metres in length. Many tourists come to the location for this event or as a stop on their trip to Cannes, Marseille or Nice.

Tropezien beaches are located along the coast in the Baie de Pampelonne, also known by the residents as Grania (pronounced granny-ay), which lies south of St Tropez and east of Ramatuelle. Pampelonne offers a collection of beaches along its five-kilometre shore. Each beach is around thirty metres wide with its own beach hut and private or public tanning area.

Many of the beaches offer windsurfing, sailing and canoeing equipment for rent, while others offer motorized water sports, such as power boats, jet bikes and water skiing.

Some of the private beaches are naturist beaches.

Despite the thousands of tourists that descend on the town every day in the season, St Tropez has been able to uphold a certain institution: Le Sénéquier café. Its red chairs and red sun shades have been part of the port front for many decades. Many consider the deck-chairs and three-sided tables at Le Sénéquier to be an ideal location for people watching. Sitting in the café, one can watch the world go by: people having lunch on exclusive yachts, elegant blondes going about their daily shopping rituals and wives of American millionaires strolling along the pavement.

The traffic to St Tropez can be extremely heavy in summer, therefore it may be advisable to drive to either St Raphaël or Ste Maxime and visit St Tropez by boat. The boat journey from St Raphaël takes around 45 minutes, and from Ste Maxime around 15 minutes.

Markets are held on Tuesday and Saturday mornings on part of the Parking du Port.

Gorges du Verdon



The Gorges du Verdon, also known as 'The Grand Canyon of France' is renowned for being the most beautiful canyon in Europe. It is the world's second largest gorge, at about 25 kilometres in length and more than 300 metres deep. It was formed by the Verdon River, which is named after its startling turquoise-green colour, one of the canyon's most distinguishing characteristics. The most impressive part lies between the towns of Castellane and Moustiers-Ste-Marie, where the river has cut a ravine more than 300 metres down through the limestone mass. At the end of the canyon, the Verdon river flows into the Lac de Ste-Croix, which is the largest reservoir in France, and here you can hire pedalos, canoes or electric boats to appreciate the beauty of the gorge from a different angle.

The Gorges du Verdon is narrow and deep, with depths of 250 to 700 metres and widths of 6 to 100 metres at the level of the Verdon river, and 200 to 1500 metres from one side of the gorge to the other at the summit.

It is easily accessible on its right bank from the north (via route D952 from Castellane to Moustiers-Ste-Marie), and on its left bank from the south (via routes D71, D90 and D995 from Aiguines to Castellane).

The southern route offers views of the Col d'Illuire, the summits of Plein Voir, le Pavillon (1624 metres), la cime de Barbin (1560 metres) and le Mourre de Chanier (1930 metres), and the St-Croix reservoir. When the road passes through the Tunnel du Fayet, there are openings cut into the tunnel to afford a view. The road then crosses the Artuby River over a bridge known either as Pont de l'Artuby or Pont de Chauvière; soon after, at the relais de Balcon, the Artuby flows into the Verdon. This area is also known as the 'Mescla,' meaning 'mixture' in Provençal.

The Gorges du Verdon includes more than 1500 climbing routes on good limestone rock, so is an appreciated destination for rock climbers. It is also a favoured destination for fishermen, particularly for fly fishing.

Antibes



There is much to see in the old town of Antibes with its fortifications along the coast, tiny lanes lined with lovely shops selling all sorts of curios, sidewalk cafés and restaurants.

There are 48 beaches along the coastline surrounding Antibes and neighbouring Juan les Pins, each having its own unique character and atmosphere. These range from small family beaches where children can play to sporting beaches offering all the popular water activities and long beaches with fine golden sand for those who enjoy sunbathing. Many of the beaches are private, but access to these can be gained by renting a sun lounger for the day, which is often a good idea during the summer months when the public beaches become very crowded. Most of the private beaches have restaurants on site serving delicious fresh seafood.

Port Vauban is the largest yachting harbour in Europe, having over 2000 moorings, and can accommodate craft of more than 50 metres. This old port was the heart of the ancient Greek city of Antipolis and has a long and colourful history which includes Ligurians, Romans and Crusaders on their way to the Holy Land. Today, it is the largest marina in Europe and is full of life. Local fishing boats are moored next to luxury yachts and the docks are lined with fresh fish stands.

The cuisine along the coast is mainly standard French fare, with most of the restaurants in Antibes sticking to traditional dishes. There are, however, a few inventive places offering interesting fusion cuisine.

Antibes hosts a number of festivals, mainly during the summer months, mostly focusing on music and contemporary activities.

The Antique Show of Antibes attracts thousands of treasure seekers for two weeks in April. It is one of the largest shows of its kind in France.

Voiles d'Antibes is one of the world's biggest gatherings of beautiful old teak and brass sailing vessels. They converge on the port for one of the most regal regattas in the Mediterranean (June).

The Festival of St Peter is the annual celebration of this patron saint of fishermen. A colourful procession through the town is followed by all the local fishermen adorning their boats and floating along the coast (June).

A market is held daily at Cours Massèna.

Juan les Pins



Juan les Pins is the hub of nightlife in the Antibes area, having the most fashionable nightclubs which open late to cater for the partying crowd. For those looking for a quieter night out, a few piano bars and British pubs offer something milder. The gaming tables and slot machines at l'Eden Casino will keep gamblers busy for hours on end, and during the summer months there are a number of special outdoor events with music concerts and fireworks.

Juan-les-Pins is famous for its annual jazz festival in July. New Orleans is a sister city, something which for a series of years was manifested with carnival festivities in the streets of Juan-les-Pins, with both local and New Orleans jazz bands parading.

The beaches of Juan les Pins, which are made of fine grained sand, are not straight but instead are cut with small inlets.

A big contract bridge tournament is organised every year in early spring.

Along the street behind the seaside stage where the annual jazz festival 'Jazz à Juan' is held, fine ceramic tiles are laid into the pavement with handprints of more than 50 jazz musicians who have played at this festival, including Al Jarreau, BB King, Chick Corea, Clark Terry, Dave Brubeck, Dee Dee Bridgewater, Eddy Louiss, Elvin Jones, Fats Waller, George Benson, Hank Jones, Jack DeJohnette, Joshua Redman, Little Richard, Milt Jackson, Oscar Peterson, Pat Metheny, Ravi Coltrane, Ray Charles, Richard Galliano, Roy Haynes, Shirley Horn, Sonny Rollins, Stephane Grapelli and Wynton Marsalis.

Outside festival periods or other public arrangements, pétanque players every afternoon use the area in front of the tall steel 'jazz monument' for their games under the stone pine trees.