

Cannes Area



Glitzy, showbizzy Cannes sets camera flashes popping at its International Film Festival in May, when stars of cinema pose in evening gowns on the red carpet of La Croisette, fine-dine with the famous and drink 'til dawn in the 'magic square'. Hotels and roads are hideously chocka, making Cannes for anyone who doesn't have the right badge heaven (if you get to see your star) or hell (if stars don't do it for you).

But it's the fame of these 10 glorious, short-lived days in which this seaside resort basks for the rest of the year. Elegant architecture on the most photographed prom, parasol-packed sandy beaches and fascinating inhabitants: the town *is* a celebrity – albeit one with few concrete attractions, which can be a disappointing anticlimax for the less starstruck. Beneath its dazzling white smile, though, there are the Îles de Lérins, two Robinson Crusoe islands jam-packed with history in the Baie de Cannes; or the unexpected kaleidoscope of flowery meadows, dashing red rocks and untouristed hilltop villages that unfolds along the slow road out of town. And perfumeries fill the air with scent in Grasse.

Northeast along the coast is beautiful Antibes, a nugget of a medieval harbour with a stunning green cape attached and a wealth of priceless art. Picasso territory, aka Vallauris and Golfe-Juan, sparkles next door. Then there's that extraordinary cluster of inland villages crowned with Matisse's Vence, Chagall's St-Paul de Vence and Renoir's Cagnes-sur-Mer. Art-lovers will love it.

HIGHLIGHTS

- Revel in the glitz and glam of starstruck Cannes: strut along **La Croisette** (p301) and drink and dine on the **sand** (p307) or in the **'magic square'** (p308)
- Take a slow boat to the **Îles de Lérins** (p310) to see where the mysterious Man in the Iron Mask was imprisoned, or explore Cannes' hinterland on a **slow-road itinerary** (p298)
- Learn how roses and jasmine are cultivated and revel in them blooming at a flower farm near **Grasse** (p325)
- View world-famous art à la Matisse in **Vence** (p321), à la Picasso in **Antibes** (p312) and **Vallauris** (p310) and à la Renoir in **Cagnes-sur-Mer** (p318)
- Hang out like an artist in **Mandelieu-La Napoule** (p328): revel in the eccentricity of **Château de la Napoule** followed by a simple or sophisticated **lunch** (p330)



ITINERARIES

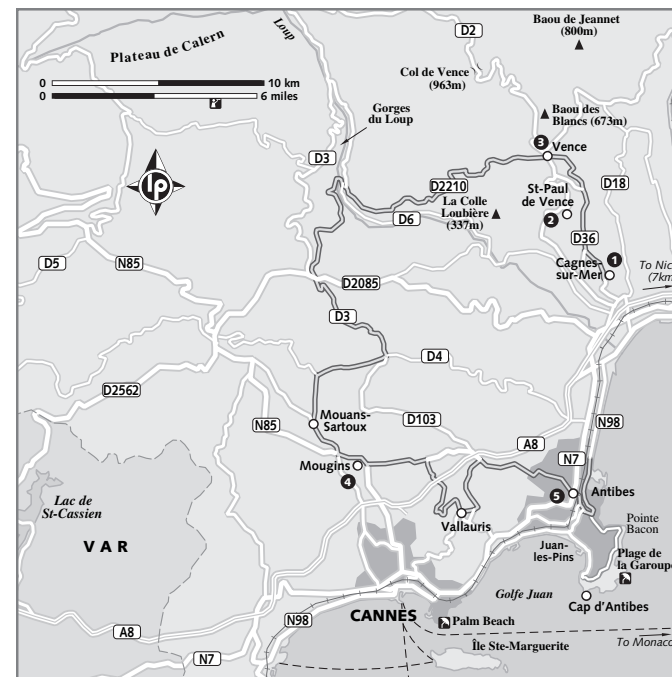
ARTISTS' TRAIL

Three Days / Cagnes-sur-Mer to Antibes

From cutting-edge art spaces to designer chapels, the area around Cannes is essential viewing for anyone crazy about 20th-century art.

Pick up the trail at Renoir's former studio, **Musée Renoir** (p319) in **Cagnes-sur-Mer** (1; p318). Then meander north to **St-Paul de Vence** (2; p319) where the **Fondation Maeght** (p320) and other outstanding **art galleries** (p322) beckon. Legendary artists' haunt **La Colombe d'Or** (p321) is the hot lunch date; reserve in advance. Afterwards, stroll along the gallery-studded street of the **village** (p319) where Chagall lived: visit his grave, then head back along the ramparts and drive to **Vence** (3; p321), home to the Matisse-designed **Chapelle du Rosaire** (p321). Next morning chat art over breakfast with Thierry at **Maison du Frêne** (p323).

Devote day two to Picasso: the scenic westbound D2210 and southbound D3 take you past a couple of inspiring hilltop villages to **Mougins** (4; p324) where Picasso lived, worked and was endlessly photographed. Take a side trip to the **Espace de l'Art Concret** (p326) and/or lunch lazily amid priceless art at **Le Moulin de Mougins** (p325); or forget both and push on to Vallauris' **Musée National Picasso** (p311) and **Galerie Madoura** (p312), afterwards grabbing something quick to eat (oysters?) at **Auberge Provençal** (p316) in neighbouring **Antibes** (5; p312). Art-lovers in a hurry can squeeze in Antibes' **Musée Picasso** (p313) before dinner at **Hôtel du Cap – Eden Roc** (p314). Otherwise, spend the time did – as Picasso, Chagall and other great artists of their time did – at the Riviera legend and savour Antibes' art treasures the next day.

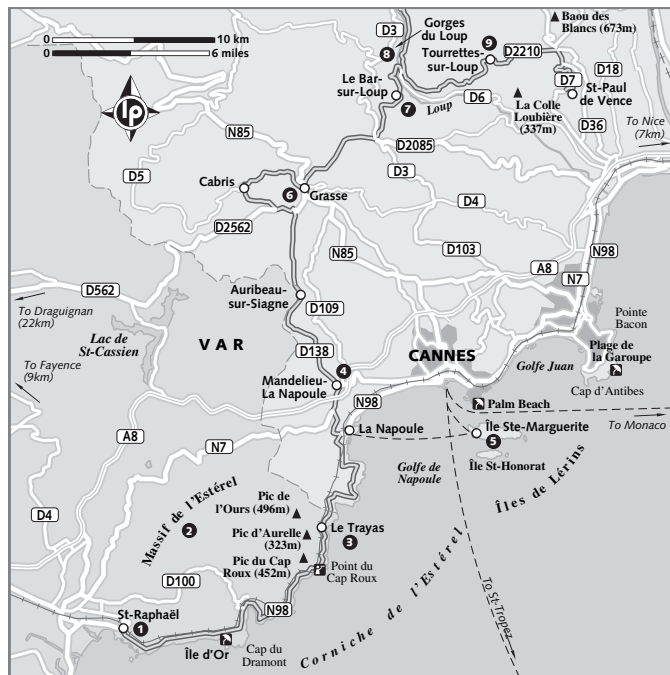


SLOW ROAD**Two Days / St-Raphaël to St-Paul de Vence**

It's not all fast-paced, lights-flashing, body-packed coastal madness. Take the slow road inland and a hear-the-silence mirage of pine-scented mountains, cut-throat gorges and flowery meadows guarded by hilltop villages unfolds.

Get into 'go-green' gear in **St-Raphaël** (1; p331), from where the eastbound **Corniche d'Or** (p328) skirts the **Massif de l'Estérel** (2; p328), a red-rock massif that soars like needles out of the sea. Pull in at the observation point south of **Le Trayas** (3; p330) to digest its full majesty, then continue to folly-clad **Mandelieu-La Napoule** (4; 328) for lunch in an oasis of green at **L'Oasis** (p331); picnic buddies can buy gourmet supplies here. Spend the afternoon on a boat bound for **Île Ste-Marguerite** (5; p310) or push inland for a scenic drive along the wiggly D138 to untouched Auribeau-sur-Siagne and beyond to Cabris where **Le Mas du Naoc** (p327) ensures a peaceful night's sleep.

Next day, breakfast lazily then motor east for an orgy of hilltop villages: stop en route in **Grasse** (6; p325) to learn about the perfume industry and visit a **flower farm** (p326). In **Le Bar-sur-Loup** (7; p323) follow the 'red' walk to see Corsica, and lunch at **L'Hostellerie du Château** (p324) – in whichever order you fancy. Fill what time you have left with a drive along the **Gorges du Loup** (8; p322) or meander east to pretty **Tourrettes-sur-Loup** (9; p323) where **Wayne** (p324) teems with dinner. Spend the night with frogs, squirrels and dragonflies in a tree-house at St-Paul de Vence's **Les Cabanes d'Orion** (p320).

**CANNES TO NICE**

Heavily developed is an understatement, but the 32km-long wedge of coast between Cannes and Nice is packed with intriguing finds: after WWII, Picasso had a studio in upmarket Antibes, lived in the neighbouring potters' village of Vallauris and lunched with Matisse, Chagall and Fernand Léger in hilltop St-Paul de Vence.

CANNES

pop 68,000

It's the banknotes of the affluent, spent with absolute nonchalance, that keep Cannes' exorbitant hotels, restaurants, fashion boutiques, nightclubs and liner-sized yachts afloat. The wealth is hypnotic, and revelling in it, even if it is secondhand, is a prime pastime: gawping at the unbelievable prices displayed in the windows of Cartier or riding an open-top double-decker bus along the Riviera's poshest promenade can really be quite fun!

For those who simply aren't seduced by Cannes' hedonistic air, there's enough natural beauty to make a trip worthwhile: the harbour, the bay, the clutch of islands off the coast and the old quarter, Le Suquet, all spring into life on a sunny day.

The world over best knows Cannes for its International Film Festival (p302), which sees the city's population treble overnight and packs out every last hotel room. Don't even consider turning up unless you have an advance reservation.

Orientation

Don't expect glitz n' glamour the second you hop off the train: things don't glam up until

rue d'Antibes, the main shopping street a couple of blocks south. Several blocks south again is Palais des Festivals, east of Vieux Port at the start of Cannes' famous promenade, blvd de la Croisette, which follows the shore eastwards along Baie de Cannes to Pointe de la Croisette.

Perched on a hill just to the west of Vieux Port and of the bus station is the old quarter of Cannes: the quaint, pedestrianised Le Suquet.

Information**BOOKSHOPS**

Cannes English Bookshop (☎ 04 93 99 40 08; 11 rue Bivouac Napoléon; ☎ 10am-6.30 or 7pm Mon-Sat)

INTERNET ACCESS

Cafe @ to z.net (caféatoz@wanadoo.fr; 46 rue des Serbes; per hr €3; ☎ 10am-10pm Mon-Sat)

Cap cyber (☎ 04 93 38 85 63; 12 rue du 24 Août; per hr €3; ☎ 10am-10pm Mon-Sat)

INTERNET RESOURCES

www.cannes.com Tourist office.

www.palaisdesfestivals.com Festival Palace online.

LEFT LUGGAGE

Train station (rue Jean Jaurès; small/medium/large locker €4/6.50/8; ☎ 8.30am-8.30pm)

MEDICAL SERVICES

SOS Médecins (☎ 04 93 38 39 38; ☎ 24hr) Emergency doctor service.

MONEY

Banks and ATMs stud rue d'Antibes, rue Buttura and elsewhere.

POST

Post office (22 rue Bivouac Napoléon)

MARKET DAY

Monday Cannes, St-Raphaël

Tuesday Antibes (Sep-May), Biot, Cagnes-sur-Mer, Cannes, Fréjus Ville (Jun-Sep), Grasse, Mouans-Sartoux, St-Raphaël, Vallauris, Vence

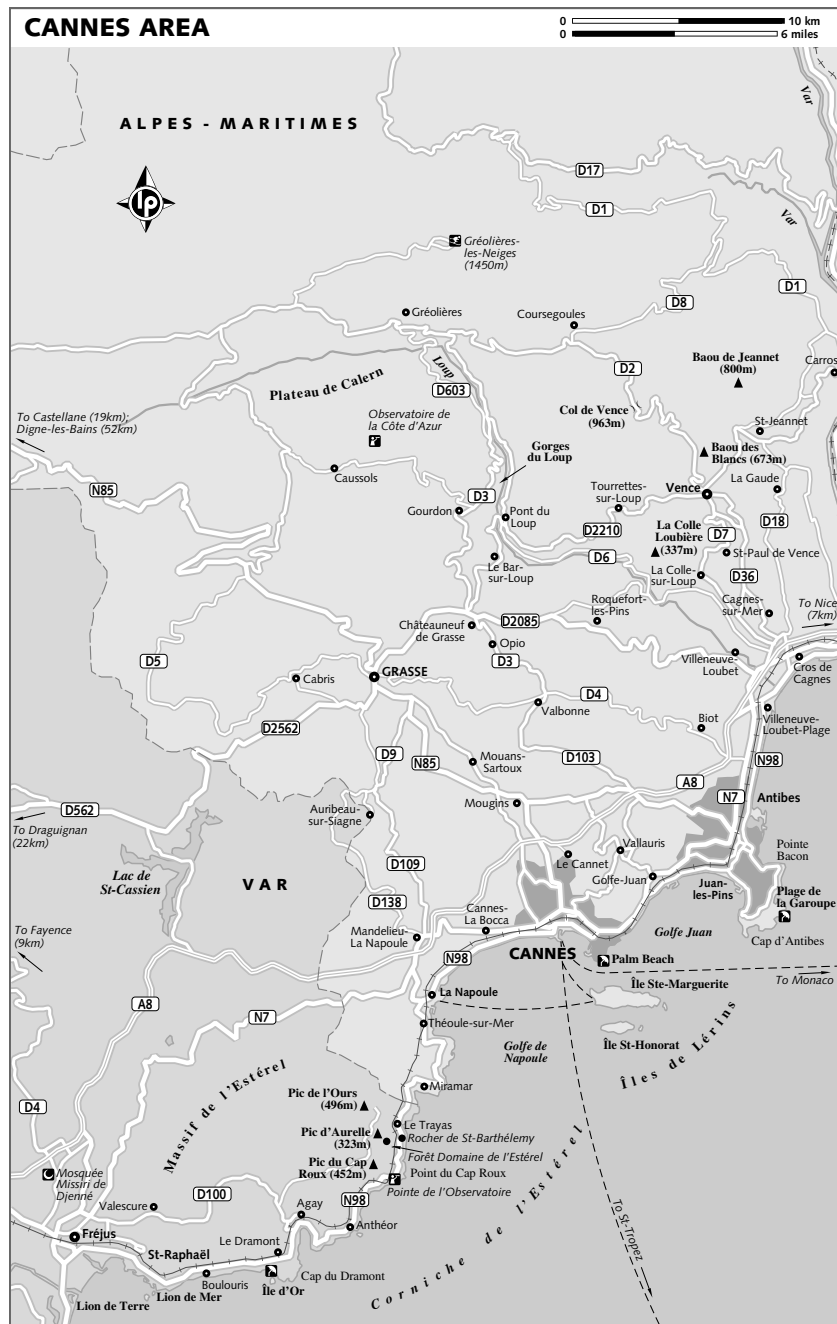
Wednesday Antibes (Sep-May), Cagnes-sur-Mer, Cannes, Fréjus Ville, Grasse, Mouans-Sartoux, St-Raphaël, Vallauris

Thursday Antibes (Sep-May), Cagnes-sur-Mer, Cannes, Fréjus Ville (Jun-Sep), Grasse, St-Raphaël, Vallauris

Friday Antibes (Sep-May), Cagnes-sur-Mer, Cannes, Fréjus Ville (Jun-Sep), Grasse, St-Raphaël, Vallauris, Vence

Saturday Antibes (Sep-May), Cagnes-sur-Mer, Cannes, Fréjus Ville, Grasse, Mouans-Sartoux, St-Raphaël, Vallauris, Vence

Sunday Antibes (Sep-May), Cagnes-sur-Mer, Cannes, Fréjus Ville (Jun-Sep), Grasse, St-Raphaël, Vallauris, Vence



LITERARY CANNES

- *Perfume* (Patrick Süskind) Evocation of the horrors of the 18th-century perfume industry in steamy Grasse: a quest to create the perfect perfume from the scent of murdered virgins.
- *Tender Is the Night* (F Scott Fitzgerald) A vivid account of life on the Riviera during the decadent 1920s Jazz Age; set on Cap d'Antibes with day trips to Cannes.
- *Bits of Paradise* (F Scott & Zelda Fitzgerald) Twenty-one short stories by one of the Riviera's most notorious couples; Scott's *Love in the Night* (1925), set in Cannes, is the ultimate romance.
- *Perfume from Provence, Sunset House and Trampled Lilies* (Lady Fortescue) A lady's life, stretching from the purchase of a house outside Grasse to her final flight back to the UK at the start of WWII.
- *May We Borrow Your Husband* (Grahame Greene) A collection of short 'comedy of sexual life' stories, kicking off with two homosexuals' pursuit of a newly wed groom while honeymooning in Antibes with his virgin wife. Written by Greene in Antibes.
- *Super Cannes* (A G Barrad) Fast-paced action in Edem-Olympia (aka Sophia Antipolis), a work-obsessed technology park on the Med near Cannes; an insightful, satirical, essential read by one of the most important names in contemporary British literature.

TOURIST INFORMATION

Tourist office (☎ 04 92 99 84 22; blvd de la Croisette; ☎ 9am-8pm Jul & Aug, 9am-7pm Mon-Sat Sep-Jun) On the ground floor of Palais des Festivals.

Tourist office annexe (☎ 04 93 99 19 77; rue Jean Jaurès; ☎ 9am-7pm Mon-Sat) Next to the train station.

Sights & Activities

People-watching is the primary pastime on the Riviera's poshest prom, palm-shaded **blvd de la Croisette** (aka La Croisette). Start at the eastern end with tea on the terrace of the **Carlton InterContinental** (p305); its twin cupolas, erected in 1912, were modelled on the breasts of the courtesan La Belle Otero, infamous for her string of lovers – Tsar Nicholas II and Britain's King Edward VII among them.

Continue west and pick yourself a dream mansion (to buy or rent) in the windows of 140-year-old estate agency **John Taylor & Son** (☎ 04 97 06 65 65; www.john-taylor.fr; 55 blvd de la Croisette). Several million euros lighter, walk two blocks to **La Malmaison** (☎ 04 97 06 44 90; 47 blvd de la Croisette; adult/under 18yr/18-25yr €4/free/2; ☎ 10am-1pm & 3-7pm Tue-Sun Jun-Aug, 10am-1pm & 2.30-6.30pm Tue-Sun Apr, May & Sep, 10am-12.30pm & 2.30-6pm Tue-Sun Oct-Mar), a seaside pavilion in the former games and tea room of Cannes' grandest hotel of the 1860s, the **Grand Hôtel** (opened in 1864, shut in 1950, demolished and rebuilt in the 1960s). Modern art exhibitions fill part of La Malmaison today.

A 400m stroll further along La Croisette is the legendary **Palais des Festivals** (Festival Palace; ☎ 04 93 39 01 01; blvd de la Croisette), a ferociously ugly concrete beast where beauties gather and films are screened during the film festival. Pose for a photograph on the 22 steps leading up to the entrance, then wander along **allée des Étoiles du Cinéma**, a path of celebrity hand imprints in the pavement.

Yachts frame nearby **Vieux Port**, and across the busy street players of *pétanque* (a game like lawn bowls) spin balls on **sq Lord Brougham**. Half the town hangs out here: kids ride the merry-go-round, teens drink shakes outside McDonald's and a **flower market** blooms across the northern side of the square each morning.

Walk diagonally across sq Lord Brougham and join rue Félix Faure. Pass the back of the **Hôtel de Ville** (town hall) to get to the bus station building, jazzed up with the trompe l'oeil fresco, **Cinéma Cannes**, featuring 34 faces from Cannes' cinematic heritage. Across the road, restaurant-crammed rue St-Antoine snakes into hilly **Le Suquet**, the city's oldest quarter. British chancellor Lord Brougham – the first foreigner to live in Cannes – built **Villa Eleanor** (1862) here; locals thought he was crackers when he insisted on laying a pea-green lawn around his abode.

Atop the hill is 12th-century **Église Notre Dame d'Esperance** (☎ 9am-noon & 3-7pm summer, 9am-noon & 2.15-6pm Tue-Sun autumn & spring, to 4pm Mon winter) and **Musée de la Castre** (☎ 04 93 38 55 26;

adult/under 18yr/18-25yr €3/free/2, 1st Sun of month free; ☎ 10am-7pm Thu-Tue, 10am-9pm Wed Jul & Aug, 10am-1pm & 2-6pm Tue-Sun Apr, Jun & Sep, 10am-1pm & 2-5pm Tue-Sun Oct-Mar), home to a diverse collection of art, antiquities and ethnographical oddities.

BEACHES

Cannes is blessed with sandy beaches, although much of the stretch along blvd de la Croisette is for guests of top-notch hotels or those prepared to pay for the luxury of having a strip of carpet leading to the water's edge: rates range from €15/19 per half-/full day for a mattress and yellow-and-white parasol on **Plage du Gray d'Albion** (☎ 04 92 99 79 99; ☎ 10am-6pm) – it has a water-skiing school – to €30/38/44 for a back-row/front-row seat/spot on the pier of exclusive **Carlton Beach**; look for the stylish sand-coloured parasols.

For the ultimate beach experience, flop beneath a pearl-white beach umbrella on **Z Plage** (front row/other rows/pier €28/24/32; ☎ 9am-6pm),

the beach of **Hôtel Martinez**. Its *Zzzz* day package (€88) includes lounger, parasol, a 25-minute massage in a beach cabin and a two-course lunch in its trendy, superstylish beach bar (p307).

This arrangement leaves only a small cheap strip of sand near the Palais des Festivals for the bathing hoi polloi, although free public beaches **Plage du Midi** and **Plage de la Bocca** stretch for several kilometres west from Vieux Port along blvd Jean Hibert and blvd du Midi.

BOAT EXCURSIONS

The Îles de Lérins – a 20-minute skip across the bay – make a fine day out; see p310.

Tours

Le Petit Train (☎ 06 14 09 49 39; www.cannes-petit-train.com; ☎ 9am-11.30pm Jul & Aug, shorter hours winter) sets off opposite **Hôtel Majestic Barrière** and chugs along La Croisette and rue d'Antibes

STARRING AT CANNES

For 10 days in May, all eyes turn to Cannes, centre of the cinematic universe where more than 30,000 producers, distributors, directors, publicists, stars and hangers-on descend to buy, sell or promote more than 2000 films. As the premier film event of the year, the festival attracts some 4000 journalists from around the world, guaranteeing a global spotlight to anyone with enough looks or prestige to grab it.

At the centre of the whirlwind is the colossal, 60,000-sq-metre Palais des Festivals, on legendary La Croisette, where the official selections are screened. Hand prints and autographs of celebrities frame its stark concrete hulk, dubbed the 'bunker' by locals, who are the first to acknowledge the sheer ugliness of the far-from-fairy-tale Festival Palace.

The palace opened in 1982, replacing the original Palais des Festival – since demolished – built where the Noga Hilton Hotel now sits to accommodate the first Cannes Film Festival. The inaugural festival was scheduled for 1 September 1939, as a response to Mussolini's Fascist propaganda film festival in Venice, but Hitler's invasion of Poland brought the festival to an abrupt end. It restarted in 1946 – and the rest is history.

Over the years the festival split into 'in competition' and 'out of competition' sections. The goal of 'in competition' films is the prestigious Palme d'Or, awarded by the jury and its president to the film that best 'serves the evolution of cinematic art'. Notable winners include Francis Ford Coppola's *Apocalypse Now* (1979), American activist Michael Moore's anti-Bush administration polemic *Fahrenheit 9/11* (2004) and Ken Loach's *The Wind that Shakes the Barley* (2006).

The vast majority of films are 'out of competition'. Behind the scenes the **Marché du Film** (Film Market; www.marchedufilm.com) sees €150 million worth of business negotiated in distribution deals. And it's this hard-core commerce combined with all the televised Tinseltown glitz that gives the film festival its special magic. For a concentrated dose, don your glad rags, stand up tall and strut into the bar of one of the posh hotels as if you own the place.

Tickets to the Cannes Film Festival are governed by a complex system of passes, and unless you're a high-flyer in the film industry, you're unlikely to get one. What you can get are free tickets to selected individual films, usually after their first screening. Look for the **Cannes Cinéphiles** (☎ 04 97 06 44 90; www.cinema-cannes.com in French; ☎ 9am-5.30pm) ticket booth outside the Palais des Festivals. For the film festival programme, consult the official website, www.festival-cannes.org.

(adult/child three to 10 years old €6/3) or up to Le Suquet (€6/3). Visiting both destinations costs €9/6.

Festivals & Events

The **Festival International du Film** (opposite) lasts 10 days in May. In mid-July classical orchestras and soloists from around the world gather for the 10-day **Nuits Musicales du Suquet**; concerts are held on the square in front of Église Notre Dame d'Espérance.

Sleeping

Hotel prices soar to astronomical, undisclosed rates during the May film festival and congress periods. Snagging a room at these times is near impossible unless you've booked months in advance. The rest of the year, reserve through **Cannes Réservation** (☎ 08 26 00 06 06; www.cannes-reservation.com; 8 blvd d'Alsace; ☎ 7am-7pm Mon-Sat).

Chambres d'hôtes scarcely exist in affluent Cannes: **Cottage Bellevue** (☎ 06 20 02 13 38, 04 93 68 37 29; www.cottage-bellevue.com in French; 7 traverse Sunny Bank; d low/high/festival season €55/80/100; ☎), a terraced family house on a hill above Cannes, is an option.

BUDGET

Le Chalit (☎ 04 93 99 22 11; www.le-chalit.com; 27 av du Maréchal Galliéni; dm from €20, sheets €3; ☎ reception 8.30am-1pm & 5-8.30pm; ☎) Around 300m north-west of the station, this private hostel sports a kitchen with food and drinks machine, decent dorms and no curfew. Minimum stay is three nights from July to September.

Le Chantedair (☎ 04 93 39 68 88; 12 rue Forville; d with shower from €37, with shower & toilet from €50; ☎ Jan-mid-Oct) In the heart of Le Suquet and moments from the market, this sweet 15-room place has an enchanting courtyard garden. There's usually a two-night minimum stay.

Hôtel Atlantis (☎ 04 93 39 18 72; www.cannes-hotel-atlantis.com; 4 rue du 24 Août; d from €45, with air-con from €59; ☎) Run by the friendly Jean-Michel and Christian, the Atlantis has been in the Carre family since 1958 and provides cheerful, basic rooms with hairdryers, telephones and TVs. Unusually for a two-star hotel, there's a sauna and a weights room for guests. Wi-fi access costs €5 a day.

Hotel l'Estérel (☎ 04 93 38 82 82; www.hotellestere.com; 15 rue du 24 Août; s/d low season €46/58, high season €60/71; ☎) This huge block couldn't be handier for the station, its 55 modern two-star rooms

THE AUTHOR'S CHOICE

Château de la Tour (☎ 04 93 90 52 52; www.hotelduchateauelatour.com; 10 av Font-de-Veyre; d low/high season from €115/165; ☎ ☎ ☎)

Set in a garden full of fountains and flowers 2km west of the centre, this charming hotel is nestled in part of an 18th-century turreted chateau. But check your room first: the décor veers wildly from tasteful to chintzy. Rooms with sea views cost a few more euros than those facing the gardens (though booking online yields an immediate discount on advertised rates). A spa and swimming pool add to the air of luxury, and families are warmly welcomed. The nearest sandy beach is a handy 350m stroll away. Parking costs €10 per day.

being spare, simple and unlikely to offend anyone's sensibilities. But breakfast overlooking the rooftops of Cannes in the 6th-floor glass breakfast room with terrace is stunning.

Hôtel des Allées (☎ 04 93 39 53 90; www.hotel-des-alles.com; 6 rue Émile Négrin; s/d low season €49.25/68.50, high season €69.25/88.50; ☎) Annelis and Fritz Wälti-Hoog are the Swiss couple behind this Swiss-clean, comfortable hotel wedged between restaurants on a pedestrian street. Rooms have TV, phone, hairdryer and safety box, and the best have a tiny wrought-iron balcony with snatches of sea view. Wi-fi access is free.

MIDRANGE

La Villa Tosca (☎ 04 93 38 34 40; www.villa-tosca.com; 11 rue Hoche; s/d/tr/q low season €61/75/99/119, high season €89/99/129/149; ☎) This elegant bourgeois town-house is a great choice for serious shoppers keen to sleep on Cannes' busiest commercial street – fall out of bed and into the shops. Three-/seven-day stays yield a 25/50% discount on the last night.

Hôtel des Orangers (☎ 04 93 39 99 92; www.charmhotel.com; 1 rue des Orangers; s/d/tr low season from €64/71/97, high season €97/109/148; ☎ ☎ ☎) Right in the heart of quiet Le Suquet, this 52-room place has shady gardens and rooms that, though '80s in feel, are decent sized. Some have sea views.

Hôtel Molière (☎ 04 93 38 16 16; www.hotel-moliere.com; 5 rue Molière; s/d low season €72/83, high season €84/104; ☎) Majestic white pillars prop up the pastel-pink wedding-cake façade of this

Eating RESTAURANTS

Less-expensive restaurants line rue du Marché Forville, and eating options abound along pedestrian rue St-Antoine and rue du Suquet. For informal dining or hybrid drinking-dining with the hip set, hit Cannes' 'magic square' (p308).

Le Riad (☎ 04 93 38 60 95; 6 impasse Florian; dishes €15; ☺ lunch & dinner Tue-Sat) Kacem Laraki, the man behind this opulent Moroccan garden down a car-free dead end, scouted out his chef himself in Fez. A fountain, rose petal-sprinkled pool, mosaic floors, cushioned seating and several eating areas on different levels meet every mood.

Aux Bons Enfants (80 rue Meynadier; menu €17; ☺ closed Sat dinner & Sun Oct-Jun) A people's-choice place since 1935, this old-town bistro cooks up regional dishes such as aioli *garni* (aioli with vegetables), marinated herrings, and calf liver with onions and balsamic vinegar, all in a convivial atmosphere. Make no plans for the afternoon after lunching here. No credit cards.

L'Ardoise (☎ 04 93 39 09 02; 5 rue Rouguière; plat/menu du jour €10/20; ☺ lunch Mon-Sat; ☒) The menu changes every fortnight at this 1930s bistro tucked down a pedestrian alley. Fresh red and white roses in vases are about the only excess in the dark wood and red interior where regulars take their pick from four or five market-inspired dishes. No credit cards.

Da Laura (☎ 04 93 38 40 51; 8 rue du 24 Août; pasta €11-15; ☺ lunch Mon-Sat) Cannois flock to this busy trattoria with bustling pavement terrace

for authentic Italian cooking. Pasta portions are larger than traditional *primi* (first course) size – making them a wholesome stand-alone meal – and the star of the show is the largest pepper mill you've ever seen.

La Cave (☎ 04 93 99 79 87; www.restaurant-lacave.com; 9 blvd de la République; lunch menu €22.50; ☺ lunch & dinner Mon-Sat Sep-Jul) The Wine Cellar is a dramatic contrast to most Cannois eating spaces: lace curtains hang at the windows, and roast veal loin with basil tomatoes, calf kidneys and other French classics are served in an intimate, old Parisian bistro setting.

Astoux & Brun (☎ 04 93 39 21 87; www.astouxbrun.com in French; 21 rue Félix Faure; seafood platters €22-92, oysters €9-12 for 6; ☺ lunch & dinner) Every type/size of oyster is available alongside lobster, crab, sea urchins, scallops, stuffed mussels and magnificent seafood platters at this temple to seafood founded in 1953. Chefs draw the crowds by preparing the shellfish out the front in summer.

L'Annexe (☎ 04 93 68 18 71; 5 rue Louis Blanc; ☺ 9am-midnight) Located around the corner from its big brother, Astoux & Brun, L'Annexe offers diners informal *dégustation* (tasting) all hours at the bar.

Mantel (☎ 04 93 39 13 10; noel.mantel@wanadoo.fr; 22 rue St-Antoine; lunch/dinner menus from €25/35; ☺ lunch & dinner Thu-Tue) Discover why Noël Mantel is the hotshot of the Cannois gastronomic scene at his refined old-town restaurant with white tablecloths and silver settings, and homemade jam and chutney tempting diners in the entrance. The bread is also Mantel-baked.

Le Mesdun (☎ 04 93 99 45 19; www.lemesdun-restaurant.com; 16 rue St-Antoine; menu €35; ☺ dinner Mon-Sun, reduced hours winter) The menu here titillates taste buds: wild turbot baked in champagne with summer truffles and mushrooms; langoustine roasted in coriander-flavoured butter and spiced with tomato, courgette, olive and mango; or roast duck breast with spiced honey, a pear in red wine and a peach in olive oil. Dining is refined and artful.

Barbarella (☎ 04 92 99 17 33; 14-16 rue St-Dizier; menu €40; ☺ dinner Tue-Sun) Wok-cooked meat and fish crown the innovative menu at this eye-catching, gay-friendly establishment dressed Philippe Starck-style in Le Suquet.

Bâoli (☎ 04 93 43 03 43; www.lebaoli.com; meals €75; Port Pierre Canto, 50 blvd de la Croisette; ☺ 8pm-5am summer, 8pm-5am Fri & Sat winter) Film-festival stars go crazy about the chic seashore restaurant with dance floor and kitchen cooking up Asian (loads of

teppanyaki, sushi and sashimi) and fusion cuisine in an exotic Thai-temple setting.

CAFÉS

kiouisk 3.14 (☎ 04 93 39 52 94; 3 rue François Eineasy; breakfast/lunch/afternoon tea €6.50/13/5.50; ☺ 9.30am-8pm; ☒) It's just so design, darling, the café of 3.14 Hôtel (p305) a block down the road. Cream plastic or sofa seating provides a brilliant contrast to the smart emerald-green silk cushions sprinkled around the clean-cut space. It's nonsmoking from noon to 8pm.

Createurs Café (☎ 04 93 39 66 92; www.createurs-café.com; 41bis rue Hoche; starter/plat du jour €5/9, lunch menus €12.80 & €14.80; ☺ 8am-8pm Mon-Sat) Young, innovative and a window on the city's dynamic creative scene, this modern space is half café serving imaginative lunch dishes, half boutique selling limited lines by up-and-coming French designers.

La Tarterie (☎ 04 93 39 67 43; 33 rue Bivouac Napoléon; tart slices €3.50-4, with salad €9; ☺ 8.30am-6.30pm Mon-Fri) Sweet/savoury tarts and *clafoutis* (a batter cake with fruit) ensure there's always a queue at this good-value tart house. You can lunch on delicious homemade fare inside or out.

Citronelle (☎ 06 98 94 36 86; rue Bivouac Napoléon; sandwiches/salads €3.80/4.50; ☺ 10am-8pm Mon-Sat, 10am-3pm Sun) A lime façade sets the fresh tone of this pocket-sized bar serving imaginative and generous salads, sandwiches and freshly squeezed juices (strawberry, kiwi etc) to enjoy on the hoof.

Café Lenôtre (☎ 04 92 92 56 00; www.lenotre.fr; 63 rue d'Antibes; breakfast/lunch from €9/€20; ☺ 9am-6pm) Passionate chefs invest huge effort into exquisite presentation at this classy branch of the Parisian patisserie chain. Savour sublime cakes and pastries in a contemporary setting or learn how to make them during a half-day cake-making workshop.

SELF-CATERING

Food Market (place Gambetta; ☺ daily summer, Tue-Sun winter)

Marché Forville (rue du Marché Forville; ☺ Tue-Sun)

Monoprix (entrances rue Jean Jaurès, rue Maréchal Foch & rue Buttura)

Dining

Many bars are as much late-night dance venues as drinking holes, staying open until 2.30am or so. Likewise, several eating spaces, particularly in Cannes' 'magic square' (p308),

DRINKS ON THE SAND

Z Plage (☎ 04 92 98 73 00; 73 blvd de la Croisette; juice/smoothie €10/8, starters/mains from €9/15, lunch menu €30; ☺ 12.30-4pm & 6-11pm) Lunch at the beach restaurant-bar of Hôtel Martinez is an unforgettable experience. Languish on white-cushioned teak seating beneath white colonial-style umbrellas and sip unusual freshly squeezed juices (fancy a pineapple, litchi and raspberry juice? or how about strawberry, lemon, basil and pineapple, Madame?) and *fusions frappées* (smoothies). The Zen orange and peach purée with chai spices is Zen indeed, as are the Swedish massages (€50/90 per 25/50 minutes) and reflexology sessions (€45 per 25 minutes) that can be indulged in before or after lunch. In July and August, tapas is served in the company of cocktails and electro lounge jazz with DJ Max Léonidas & Sax from 6pm.

mutate into trendy bars come dusk. Or you can act like a star (or glimpse one) over an apéritif on the beach (see above) or in a classy hotel bar.

Carignan (☎ 04 93 39 71 14; sommelier.leandre@wanadoo.fr; 26 rue du Suquet; ☺ 5pm-12.30am) Taste wine safe in the knowledge that Léandre Piquet (a former sommelier at the Majestic) is an authority. Find him behind the bar in his pocket-sized *bar à vins* (wine bar) atop the hill in Le Suquet.

Chink's (☎ 04 92 99 19 09; www.lechinks.com; 88 rue Meynadier; ☺ lunch & dinner) At the foot of Le Suquet on a pedestrian street, this pavement terrace and interior decked out in a cosmopolitan 1950s theme combines Thai cuisine with cocktails, DJs and a trendy bar.

38 The Place (☎ 04 92 99 79 79; 38 rue des Serbes; ☺ 10.30-12.30am) Buzzword of the moment, the Place is the place to chink champagne (€12 a glass). Find it inside Hôtel Gray d'Albion.

Amiral Bar (☎ 04 92 98 73 00; www.hotel-martinez.com; 73 blvd de la Croisette; ☺ 11am-2.30am) A cocktail in the legendary piano bar of Hôtel Martinez is a must when in town. Punters rave about Jimmy the pianist, as much for his hugely amiable manner as for his keyboard skills.

Bar des Célebrités (☎ 04 93 06 40 06; 58 blvd de la Croisette; ☺ 11am-2.30am) The ground-floor bar of the Carlton InterContinental has a sea-facing terrace for all to see and be seen.

GASTRONOMIC SHOP

Go on, indulge yourself.

Caviar Volga (☎ 04 92 98 17 12; 5 rue Maréchal Joffre) Caviar emporium; €148/496 for 100g of French/Iranian caviar.

Fromager Ceneri (☎ 04 93 39 63 68; 22 rue Meynadier) Top cheese shop.

Gusti Italiani (3 blvd Carnot) Italian *traiteur* (caterer-delicatessen) with fabulous meat, cheese and ready-made savoury dishes.

Sun Shine (☎ 04 93 39 44 56; 5 rue Maréchal Joffre) Serious wine cellar; sells chilled magnums of champagne.

Oliviers & Co (☎ 04 93 39 00 38; 4 rue Macé) Olive-oil shop, with tastings.

THE MAGIC SQUARE

Some of Cannes' hippest haunts hang out in the *carré magique* (magic square), a patch of town bordered by rue Commandant André, rue des Frères Pradignac, rue du Batéguier and rue du Dr Gérard Monod. Places here are informal and trendy, and fuse dining with drinking.

On rue des Frères Pradignac, try lounge bar-cum-Lebanese restaurant **Harem** (☎ 04 93 39 62 70) at No 15; or restaurant-wine bar **Les 3 Portes** (The Three Doors; ☎ 04 93 38 91 70; www.3portes.com) at No 16, a design-led place with seating inside and out and cherry tomatoes on each table. **Le 4U** (☎ 04 93 39 71 21; www.bar4u.com; ☎ 6pm-2.30am) at No 6 is a hot evening venue.

Rue du Batéguier ushers in must-try lounge bar **Le Must** (No 14), where young beauties nibble €6 plates of mixed canapés; chintzy **Le Privé** (☎ 06 66 45 18 92; ☎ 6pm-2.30am), a tiny sushi bar at No 7 with sushi, cocktails and resident DJs; and 'before lounge' (as in before the clubs) **Cantine** (☎ 04 93 38 76 40) next door at No 9.

On rue du Dr Gérard Monod, a low-key American scene fills **Le Loft** (☎ 04 93 39 40 46; ☎ 10.30pm-2.30am) at No 13 while the pace is Zen at **Le Living Room** (☎ 04 93 99 34 82; 17 rue du Dr Gérard Monod; ☎ 6.30pm-2.30am), No 17.

Entertainment

Pick up the free monthly *Le Mois à Cannes*. Tickets for many events are sold at the **box office** (☎ 04 92 98 62 77; ☎ 10am-7pm Mon-Sat), inside the Palais des Festivals tourist office.

NIGHTCLUBS

DJs also mix 'til late in many bars.

Palais Club (☎ 04 92 99 33 33; www.palais-club.com; Palais des Festivals, blvd de la Croisette; admission incl 1 drink €26; ☎ 10pm-5am mid-Jul-late Aug) 'Dance your life' with the world's best DJs is the buzz at this summer club, which has taken Cannes by storm for the past couple of seasons – let's hope it's still around next year. Electronic music and dance is the sound. A 2600-sq-metre dance floor inside and

1500-sq-metre rooftop lounge terrace with glittering views of the Mediterranean is the space, while an affluent crowd of some 2500 clubbers is the set.

GAY & LESBIAN VENUES

Zanzibar (☎ 04 93 39 30 75; www.lezanzibar.com in French; 85 rue Félix Faure; ☎ 6pm-4am) The coast's oldest and most venerable gay bar, going strong since 1885, where people come to dance to house and admire erotic frescoes of well-built sailors.

Le 7 of Angels (☎ 04 93 39 10 36; www.discotheque-le7.com; 7 rue Rouguière; admission free-€20; ☎ 11.30pm-dawn) Known simply as '7' (*sept*), Cannes' premier gay disco is a high-camp place with drag cabarets etc.

A CANNOIS COUPLE

Name DJ Max and Charlotte.

Passion 70s kitsch.

Occupation Twiggy Production, a boutique with bubblegum-pink façade specialising in 1970s fashion (think snug-fitting T-shirts emblazoned with a slogan of your choice in glittering gold or retro velour) at 35 blvd Carnot, high street of the real Cannes.

Mode of transport A bright orange Vespa with his-and-her Burberry-covered seats.

Best beach Plage du Midi and Palm Beach.

Claim to fame Ran the massively popular, hugely hip Twiggy bar and record shop in Le Suquet from 1996 until 2005 when year-round late-night parties were traded in for a more family-friendly lifestyle shared with daughter Tara, aged seven.

Latest buzz Max has started his own production company: buy the *Cheez Twiggy* CD or discover the electronic lounge of Mike with the Twiggy-mixed album, *Castro de Maria*.

Music taste DJ Max is the man behind the legendary 'dig-out-your-platforms' Top 50 (disco with a dash of new wave) and Royal House (retro house 1985-2006) soirees that lured punters for miles around for a good six years or so. From time to time he's still the main man mixing at his...

All-time favourite club Le Klub (p276) in Nice, the best on the coast.

Vogue (☎ 04 93 39 99 18; 20 rue du Suquet; ☎ 8pm-6am Tue-Sun) This ambient bar in Le Suquet draws a young, trendy, predominantly gay crowd into electronic music.

CINEMAS

Catch a movie in English at **Cinéma Les Arcades** (☎ 08 92 68 00 39; 77 rue Félix Faure).

Getting There & Away

AIR

Nice Hélicoptères (☎ 04 93 43 42 42; www.nicehelicopteres.com; blvd de la Croisette; s from Nice/Cannes €94/77, return €157) flies from Nice to Héliport du Palm Beach (free shuttle to La Croisette) in seven minutes.

Otherwise charter a helicopter with **Azur Hélicoptère** (☎ 04 93 90 40 70; www.azurhelic.com) to fly to Nice (one way €330 for one to three passengers) or St-Tropez (€500).

BOAT

Compagnie Estérel Chanteclair (CMC; ☎ 04 93 38 66 33; www.iledelerins.com in French) runs trips from Cannes to Monaco (once weekly June to September) and St-Tropez (three weekly May, June and September, six weekly July and August). A return fare to either costs €30/15 per adult/child five to 10 years.

From June to September **Trans Côte d'Azur** (☎ 04 92 98 71 30; www.trans-cote-azur.com; quai Laubeuf) runs boat excursions (note that reservations are essential) to Corniche de l'Estérel (adult/child four to 10 years €17/10); Monaco (€32/16, mid-June to mid-September); and St-Tropez (€36/22).

BUS

The train is quicker and cheaper than buses for coastal journeys. Buses to Nice (€1.30, 1½ hours, every 20 minutes) and Nice-Côte d'Azur airport (€13.70 via A8, 40 minutes; €1.30 via regular road, 1½ hours; hourly 8am to 7pm) leave from the **main bus station** (place Bernard Cornut Gentille).

Buses to/from Grasse (€1.30, 45 minutes) via Mougins (€1.30, 20 minutes), Mouans-Sartoux (€1.30, 25 minutes) and Vallauris (€1.30, 30 minutes) depart every 20 minutes Monday to Saturday (hourly Sunday) from Cannes' **small bus station** (rue Jean Jaurès), next to the train station. **Rapides Côte d'Azur** (RCA; ☎ information office 08 20 48 11 11; www.rca.tm.fr in French; ☎ 7.30am-noon & 1.30-5pm Mon, Tue, Thu & Fri) has an information desk here.

TRAIN

Destinations within easy reach of Cannes **train station** (rue Jean Jaurès) include St-Raphaël (€7.90, 20 minutes, two per hour), from where you can get buses to St-Tropez and Toulon, Marseille (€26.70, two hours) and Nice (€5.60, 25 minutes) via Antibes (€2.40, eight minutes).

Getting Around

BICYCLE

Elite Rent a Bike (☎ 04 93 94 30 34; www.elite-rentabike.com; 32 av Maréchal Juin) rents out wheels (€12/18/22 a day for a road/mountain/electric bike).

Blue.loc (☎ 06 84 07 04 87; www.blueloc.com; ☎ 9am-7pm) rents out *trottinettes* (microscooters) for €10 a day, as well as bikes. It has no office but delivers to your hotel door.

BUS

Cannes and destinations up to 7km away are served by **Bus Azur** (☎ 08 25 82 55 99; www.busazur.com in French; place Bernard Cornut Gentille; ☎ 7am-7pm Mon-Fri, 8.30am-noon & 2-6.30pm Sat), with an information desk at the central bus station. A ticket/10-ticket carnet costs €1.40/9.40.

Bus 8 – served by sleek, open-top double-decker buses – cruises along the coast from quai Max Laubeuf to the port, La Croisette and Palm Beach Casino on Pointe de la Croisette. Departures are hourly 6.45am to 8am then at least every 15 minutes until 8pm. A return ticket valid for one hour on this route costs €2.

Buses 2 and 9 run from the train station, via the bus station, to/from the beaches in Cannes La Bocca, west of the centre. Bus 620 follows the same route but continues further south-west along the coast to Théoule-sur-Mer.

CAR & MOTORCYCLE

Bike-hire companies also rent out 50cc scooters/125cc motorcycles from €35/55 per day. If you absolutely have to get noticed cruising along La Croisette, pick up a chauffeured limo from **Limousine Services** (☎ 04 93 39 60 20; www.limousine-service.fr; 7 rue LaFontaine; ☎ 10am-1pm & 3-7.30pm Mon-Sat). For bog-standard rentals:

Avis (☎ 04 93 94 15 86; 69 blvd de la Croisette)

Budget (☎ 04 93 99 44 04; 160 rue d'Antibes)

Hertz (☎ 04 93 99 04 20; 145 rue d'Antibes)

National Citer (☎ 04 93 43 58 82; 160 rue d'Antibes).

TAXI

Call ☎ 04 93 38 91 91 or ☎ 04 93 49 59 20.

ÎLES DE LÉRINS

The two islands making up Lérins – Île Ste-Marguerite and Île St-Honorat – lie within a 20-minute boat ride of Cannes. Known as Lero and Lerina in ancient times, these tiny, traffic-free oases of peace and tranquillity remain a world away from the glitz, glamour and hanky-panky of cocky Cannes.

Wild camping, cycling and smoking are forbidden on these islands. There are no hotels or camp sites and St-Honorat, the smaller of the two, has nowhere to eat; bring a picnic and a good supply of drinking water.

Beaches are not the reason to come here, although pretty coves can be found on the southern side of Ste-Marguerite (a 45-minute walk from the harbour). On the northern side, sun worshippers lie on rocks and mounds of dried seaweed.

Île Ste-Marguerite

Covered in sweet-smelling eucalyptus and pine, this island, just 1km from the mainland, served as the prison of the enigmatic Man in the Iron Mask in the late 17th century. It makes a great day trip.

Ste-Marguerite is dominated by the 17th-century **Fort Royal**, built by Richelieu to defend the islands from the Spanish (who occupied the fort anyway from 1635 to 1637), with later additions by Vauban. Today it houses **Musée de la Mer** (☎ 04 93 43 18 17; adult/under 18yr/18-25yr €3/free/2, 1st Sun of month free; ☎ 10.30am-1.15pm & 2.15-5.45pm Tue-Sun Apr-Sep, to 4.45pm Oct-Mar), with exhibits on the fort's Greco-Roman history.

A door to the left in the museum's reception hall leads to the **state prison**, built by Louis XIV. Steamboat inventor Claude François Dorothee was imprisoned here between 1773 and 1774; he came up with his idea while watching slaves row the royal galley to the island. Other inmates included six Huguenots, put into solitary confinement for life in 1689 for refusing to renounce their Protestant faith – look at the triple-grilled windows and you'll understand why they went insane.

Ste-Marguerite is encircled and crisscrossed by walking trails. There's also an underwater snorkel trail off the west coast of the island.

GETTING THERE & AWAY

Compagnie Estérel Chantclair (☎ 04 93 38 66 33; www.iledelerins.com in French) and **Trans Côte d'Azur** (☎ 04 92 98 71 30; www.trans-cote-azur.com) run year-round daily ferries at least hourly (7.30am to 5.15pm)

from Cannes to Ste-Marguerite. All charge €10/5 return per adult/child five to 10 years and the journey time is 20 minutes. Ticket offices and boats are on quai Max Laubeuf.

Île St-Honorat

Forested St-Honorat was once the site of a powerful monastery founded in the 5th century. Now it's home to 25 Cistercian monks who own the island but welcome visitors to their monastery and four of the seven chapels dotted around the island, which have drawn pilgrims since the Middle Ages. At 1.5km by 400m, St-Honorat is the smallest (and most southerly) of the two Lérins islands.

The **Monastère Fortifié** (☎ 04 92 99 54 00; www.abbayedelerins.com in French; admission Jul-Sep €2, Oct-Jun free; ☎ 10.30am-4pm mid-Jun–mid-Sep, 10.30am-12.30pm & 2.30-4pm mid-Sep–mid-Jun) guarding the island's southern shores is all that remains of the original monastery. Visits from July to September are by guided tour only. Built in 1073 to protect the monks from pirate attacks, its entrance stood 4m above ground level and was accessible only by ladder (later replaced by the stone staircase evident today). The elegant arches of the vaulted prayer cloister on the 1st floor date from the 15th century, and there's a magnificent panorama of the coast from the donjon terrace.

In front of the donjon is the walled, 19th-century **Abbaye Notre Dame de Lérins**, built around a medieval cloister. In the souvenir shop you can buy the 50% alcohol Lérina, a ruby-red, lemon-yellow or pea-green liqueur concocted by the monks from 44 different herbs.

The Byzantine-inspired **Chapelle de la Trinité** (☎ visits by guided tour only 10.30am-12.30pm & 2.30-4.45pm Mon-Sat, 2.30-4.45pm Sun Jul-Sep) was built between the 9th and 10th centuries on the island's eastern tip.

GETTING THERE & AWAY

Boats to St-Honorat leave from quai des Îles. They are run by the abbey boat service **Planaria** (☎ 04 92 98 71 38; www.abbayedelerins.com; return fare adult/child 5-10yrs €11/5). Boats run almost hourly from 8am to 5.30pm May to September, and every one to two hours from 8am to 4.30pm October to May.

VALLAURIS & GOLFE-JUAN

pop 26,000

Potters' town Vallauris is worth an afternoon for the artistic vestiges left behind by Picasso,

THE MAN IN THE IRON MASK

'More than 60 names have been suggested for this prisoner whose name no one knows, whose face no one has seen: a living mystery, shadow, enigma, problem.'

Victor Hugo

The Man in the Iron Mask was imprisoned by Louis XIV (1661–1715) in the fortress on Île Ste-Marguerite from around 1687 until 1698, when he was transferred to the Bastille in Paris. Only the king knew the identity of the man behind the mask, prompting a rich pageant of myth and legend to be woven around the ill-fated inmate.

Political and social satirist Voltaire (1694–1778) claimed the prisoner was the king's brother – a twin or an illegitimate older brother. In 1751 he published *Le Siècle de Louis XIV*, which attested that Louis XIV's usurped brother, face shrouded in iron, arrived on the island in 1661, was then personally escorted to the Bastille by its new governor in 1690, and died in 1703 aged around 60. His featureless mask was lined with silk and fitted with a spring mechanism at the chin to allow him to eat. Prison guards had orders to kill anyone who dared remove his iron mask.

More than 60 suggested identities have been showered on the masked prisoner, among them the Duke of Monmouth (actually beheaded under James II), the Comte de Vermandois (son of Louis XIV, said to have died from smallpox in 1683), the Duc de Beaufort (killed by the Turks in 1669) and Molière. Some theorists claimed the man in the iron mask was actually a woman.

The storming of the Bastille in 1789 fuelled yet more stories. Revolutionaries claimed to have discovered a skeleton, the skull of which was locked in an iron mask, when plundering the prison, while others focused on a supposed entry found in the prison register that read *détenu 64389000: l'homme au masque de fer* (prisoner 64389000: the man in the iron mask). Others provoked a storm with their allegations that there was *no* iron mask entry in the prison register – just a missing page. In 1855 an iron mask was found in a scrap heap in Langres, north of Dijon, and subsequently displayed in the town museum.

With the 1850 publication of Alexandre Dumas' novel *Le Vicomte de Bragelonne*, the royal crime became written in stone: in 1638 Anne of Austria, wife of Louis XIII (1617–43) and mother of Louis XIV, gives birth to twins; one is taken away from her, leaving her to bear the secret alone until the terrible truth is discovered. Dozens of iron mask films were made last century, including the 1976 version starring Richard Chamberlain and a 1998 film starring Leonardo DiCaprio.

who lived here with Françoise Gilot between 1948 and 1955.

The odd statue of a dour bronze figure clutching a sheep, **L'Homme au Mouton**, on place Paul Isnard (adjoining place de la Libération) was the gift Picasso made to the town after moving his studio here in the 1940s, unwittingly sealing the survival of Vallauris' pottery trade by his actions.

The satellite resort of Golfe-Juan, 2km south on the coast, is where Napoleon landed following his return from exile in 1815. The main reason for visiting today is to catch a boat (summer only) to the Îles de Lérins.

Orientation & Information

Vallauris bus station adjoins place de la Libération, the central square in the northern part of town. From here av George Clémenceau, the main pottery-stuffed street, runs 1.5km south to the **tourist office** (☎ 04 93 63 82 58; www.vallauris-golfe

-juan.fr in French; square du 8 Mai; ☎ 9am-12.15pm & 1.45-6pm Mon-Sat), in a car park off the D135.

The closest train station is in Golfe-Juan. From Vallauris' tourist office head south along the D135 to Golfe-Juan's central square Nabonnand, then continue south along av de la Gare to Golfe-Juan train station. Golfe-Juan's **tourist office** (☎ 04 93 63 73 12; av des Frères Rouston; ☎ 9am-7pm Jul & Aug, 9am-12.15pm & 1.45-6pm Mon-Fri Sep-Jun) is past the train station at the seafront.

Sights & Activities

CHÂTEAU MUSÉE DE VALLAURIS

The **Vallauris Castle Museum** (☎ 04 93 64 16 05; contact.musee@ville-vallauris.fr; place de la Libération; adult/under 16yr €3.20/free; ☎ 10am-12.15pm & 2-6pm Wed-Mon mid-Jun–mid-Sep, 10am-12.45pm & 3-6.45pm mid-Sep–mid-Jun) hosts three museums: the **Musée National Picasso**, based around the Picasso-decorated Chapelle La Guerre et La Paix (War and Peace Chapel); the **Musée Magnelli**, devoted to the works of

Italian artist Albert Magnelli (1899–1971); and the **Musée de la Céramique** (Ceramic Museum), in which the history of Vallauris' age-old craft is unravellled.

Picasso (1881–1973) was 71 when he started work on his *temple de la paix* (temple of peace) in a disused 12th-century chapel. Dramatic murals painted onto plywood panels are tacked to the church's stone walls. In *War*, on the left, a hideous figure clutches a bloody sword, a sack of skulls and a basket of bacteria (representing germ warfare); books are trampled under the hooves of a black horse. The themes are reversed in *Peace*, on the right: figures gather in harmony, a man writes in a book and a child ploughs the sea with a winged white horse.

The museum is next to Vallauris bus station; steps lead from the station to place de la Libération.

GALERIE MADOURA

A handful of licensed copies of ceramics cast by Picasso are on sale at **Galerie Madoura** (☎ 04 93 64 66 39; www.madoura.com; rue Georges et Suzanne Ramié; admission free; ☎ 10am–12.30pm & 3–6pm Mon–Fri), the workshop where Picasso dabbled with clay under the guidance of local potters Georges and Suzanne Ramié in 1946. He consequently granted the Ramiés exclusive rights to reproduce his work, resulting in a limited edition of 633 Picasso pieces cast between 1947 and 1971.

From the bus station, walk south along av George Clémenceau, then west along av Suzanne Ramié.

MAISON DE LA PÉTANQUE

Everything from *pétanque's* invention to its reigning champions is covered in the **Maison de la Pétanque** (Provençal Boules House; ☎ 04 93 64 11 36; www.maisondelapetanque.com; 1193 chemin de St-Bernard; adult/under 18yr €3/free; ☎ 9am–noon & 2–6.30pm Mon–Sat Apr–Sep, Mon–Fri Oct–Mar), a museum dedicated to the region's most popular sport. Amateurs can have a spin on the *pétanque* pitch, and enthusiasts can get their own set of made-to-measure boules.

The museum is 2km north of Vallauris bus station. From the station, head north along av de Grasse and at the roundabout bear east along chemin St-Bernard.

Getting There & Around

Golfe-Juan train station, from where trains serve the coast, is 3km south of Vallauris town,

making bus the most convenient way of getting to/from Vallauris.

From the **bus station** (☎ 04 93 64 18 37; cnr av de la Grasse & av Aimé Berger), buses run to/from Cannes train station (€1.30, every 30 minutes) and Antibes (€1.30, 10 per day). Buses are less frequent on Sundays.

Shuttle buses link Vallauris bus station and Golfe-Juan train station (€1, 11 minutes, every 20 minutes Monday to Saturday, every 35 minutes Sunday).

ANTIBES

pop 72,500

With its boat-bedecked port, 16th-century ramparts and narrow cobblestone streets festooned with flowers, lovely Antibes is the quintessential Mediterranean town. Picasso, Max Ernst and Nicolas de Staël were captivated by Antibes, as was a restless Graham Greene (1904–91) who settled here with his lover, Yvonne Cloetta, from 1966 until the year before his death.

Greater Antibes embraces Cap d'Antibes, an exclusive green cape studded with luxurious mansions, and the modern beach resort of Juan-les-Pins. The latter is known for its seemingly extra-sandy 2km-long beach and nightlife, a legacy of the sizzling 1920s when Americans swung into town with their jazz music and oh-so-brief swimsuits. Party madness peaks during Jazz à Juan, a week-long jazz festival in late July that attracts musicians and music lovers from all over the world.

Orientation

Antibes is divided into three areas: the commercial centre around place du Général de Gaulle, Vieil Antibes (old Antibes) south of Port Vauban and the Vieux Port, and Cap d'Antibes to the southwest, including the contiguous community of Juan-les-Pins.

Av Robert Soleau links Antibes train station with place du Général de Gaulle, where the tourist office is located. From here, Juan-les-Pins is a straight 1.5km walk along blvd du Président Wilson, which runs southwest off Antibes' central square.

Information

BOOKSHOPS

Heidi's English Bookshop (☎ 04 93 34 74 11; 24 rue Aubernon) English books.

Sorbonne (8 av Robert Soleau) The best selection of maps and local/regional guides and reference books.

INTERNET ACCESS

ASA Internet Café (☎ 04 93 34 55 84; 6 rue du Marc; ☎ 10am–1pm & 4–7pm Tue–Sat)

Xtreme Cybercafé (☎ 04 93 34 14 37; Galerie du Port, 8 blvd d'Aguillon; per hr €5; ☎ 10am–8pm Mon–Sat, 10am–4pm Sun) Meet other English-speaking travellers here; there are loads of ads for apartments/jobs etc on the notice board.

LAUNDRY

Laundrette (Av du 24 Août; per 6kg €4.20; ☎ 7.30am–8pm Mon–Sat)

MONEY

Commercial banks dot the length of av Robert Soleau.

POST

Antibes post office (☎ 04 92 90 61 00; place des Martyrs de la Résistance)

Juan-les-Pins post office (sq Pablo Picasso) Cyberposte.

TOURIST INFORMATION

Antibes tourist offices place de Gaulle (☎ 04 92 90 53 00; www.antibes-juanlespins.com; 11 place du Général de Gaulle; ☎ 9am–7pm Jul & Aug, 9am–12.30pm & 1.30–6pm Mon–Fri, 9am–noon & 2–6pm Sat Sep–Jun); train station (☎ 04 92 90 53 00; place Pierre Semard; ☎ 9am–noon & 1.30–5pm Mon–Fri)

Juan-les-Pins tourist office (☎ 04 92 90 53 05; 55 blvd Charles Guillaume; ☎ 9am–7pm Jul & Aug, 9am–noon & 2–6pm Mon–Fri, 9am–noon Sat Sep–Jun)

Sights & Activities

VEIL ANTIBES

Because of Antibes' position on the border of France and Savoy, it was fortified in the 17th and 18th centuries, but these fortifications were ripped down in 1896 to give the city room to expand. From the tourist office on place du Général de Gaulle, bear east along rue de la République to **Porte de France**, one of the few remaining parts of the original city walls.

The **Musée Peynet et du Dessin Humoristique** (☎ 04 92 90 54 30; musee.peynet@ville-antibes.fr; place Nationale; adult/under 18yr €3/free; ☎ 10am–6pm Tue–Sun mid–Jun–mid–Sep, to 8pm Wed & Fri Jul & Aug, 10am–noon & 2–6pm Tue–Sun mid–Sep–mid–Jun) features displays of more than 300 pictures, cartoons, sculptures and costumes by Antibes-born cartoonist Peynet, best known for his Lovers series: you'll realise you know him when you see his work. In addition, the museum has good temporary exhibitions by other illustrators and cartoonists.

BARGAIN BOX

If you're visiting all of Antibes' museums, buy a **combined ticket** (€10), valid for seven days, at the tourist office or the six places covered: the Peynet, de la Tour, Archaeology, Picasso and Napoleonic museums, and Fort Carré.

At the southern end of market-busy cours Masséna, 19th-century Tour Gilli houses **Musée de la Tour** (☎ 04 93 34 13 58; 2 rue de l'Orme; admission free; ☎ 4–7pm Wed, Thu & Sat Jun–Sep, 3–5pm Wed, Thu & Sat Oct–May), a small arts and traditions museum.

To the east is **Cathédrale d'Antibes** (rue de la Paroisse), built on the site of an ancient Greek temple. It has an ochre neoclassical façade and its tall, square Romanesque bell tower dates from the 12th century.

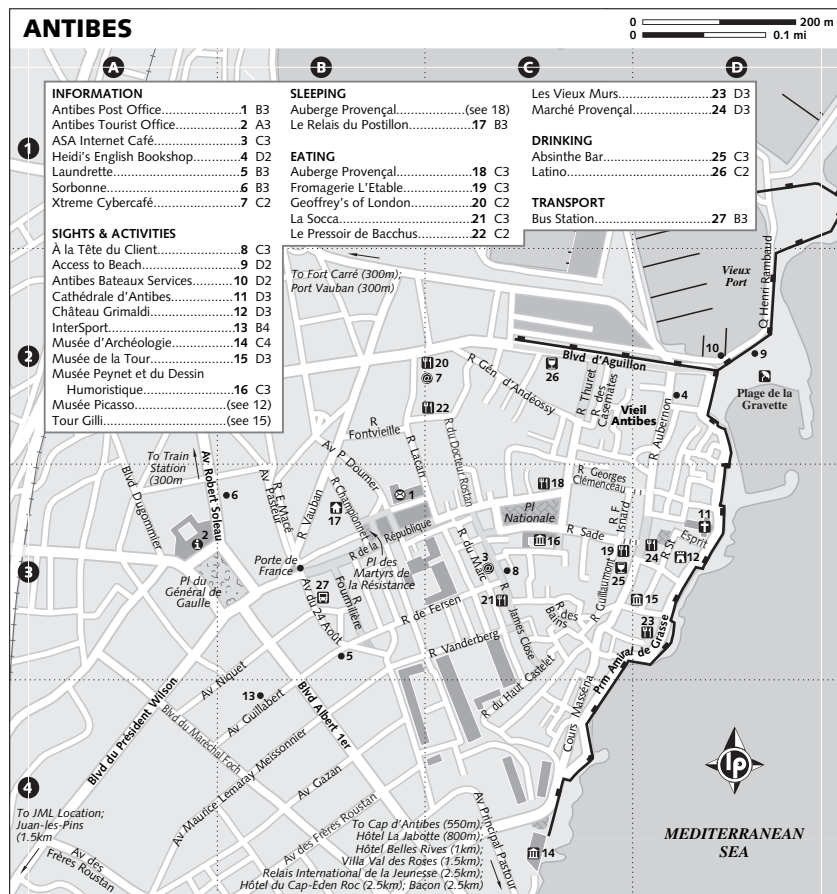
Antibes' Greek history is the focus of the **Musée d'Archéologie** (☎ 04 93 34 00 39; Bastion St André; adult/under 18yr €3/free; ☎ 10am–6pm Tue–Sun mid–Jun–mid–Sep, to 8pm Wed & Fri Jul & Aug, 10am–noon & 2–6pm Tue–Sun mid–Sep–mid–Jun), inside the Vauban-built Bastion St-André.

MUSÉE PICASSO

Spectacularly positioned overlooking the sea, 14th-century **Château Grimaldi** served as Picasso's studio from July to December 1946. What is now Antibes' star museum, **Musée Picasso** (☎ 04 92 90 54 20; place Mariejol), will reopen after extensive renovations in late 2007. An excellent collection of Picasso's paintings, lithographs, drawings and ceramics form the main collection, as well as a photographic record of the artist at work. Particularly poignant is Picasso's *La Joie de Vivre* (The Joy of Life), one in a series of 25 paintings from *The Antipolis Suite*. The young flower girl, surrounded by flute-playing fauns and mountain goats, symbolises Françoise Gilot, the 23-year-old lover of Picasso, with whom he lived in neighbouring Golfe-Juan.

FORT CARRÉ & PORT VAUBAN

The impregnable 16th-century **Fort Carré** (☎ 06 14 89 17 45; rte du Bord de Mer; guided tour adult/under 18yr €3/free; ☎ 10am–6pm Tue–Sun mid–Jun–mid–Sep, 10am–4.30pm Tue–Sun mid–Sep–mid–Jun), enlarged by Vauban in the 17th century, dominates the approach to Antibes from Nice. **Port Vauban**, one of the first pleasure ports to be



established on the Med, is between the fort and Vieil Antibes.

Inside the fortress, a pedestrian walkway takes visitors around the stadium hidden within the star-shaped walls. The tourist office has tour details.

CAP D'ANTIBES

You feel like a shrunken Alice in Wonderland on this millionaire's peninsula: pine trees and larger-than-life villas loom at every turn, and the frenzied sound of cicadas (p79) provides an unearthly soundtrack to a cape meander.

Its southwestern tip is crowned by legendary **Hôtel du Cap – Eden Roc** (p317), the Côte d'Azur's most exclusive hotel and the owner of the coast's first open-air swimming pool

(built in 1914 for WWI servicemen). Dating from 1870, it hit the big time just after WWI when a literary salon held here one summer (previous guests had come for the winter season only) was attended by Hemingway, Picasso et al. The icing on the cake was the immortalisation of the hotel (as the thinly disguised, fictional *Hôtel des Étrangers*) by F Scott Fitzgerald in his novel *Tender Is the Night* (1934).

Other notable names on Cap d'Antibes' guest book include novelist Jules Verne (1828–1905), who lived at **Les Chènes Verts** (152 blvd John F Kennedy), and Cole Porter who, in 1922, rented **Château de la Garoupe**, now owned by one of the many Russian *nouveaux riches* settled on the Côte d'Azur today. Russia's first billionaire,

oligarch Boris Berezovski (who amassed his fortune taking control of state assets after communism's collapse), bought the pad for €22 million in 1996.

Immediately northwest of Eden Roc is the **Musée Napoléonien** (☎ 04 93 61 45 32; blvd Kennedy; adult/under 18yr €3/free; ☎ 10am–5.30pm Tue–Sat mid-Jun–mid-Sep, 10am–4.30pm Tue–Sat mid-Sep–mid-Jun), a naval museum inside Tour Sella, which documents Napoleon's return from exile in 1815.

The beautiful **Jardin Botanique de la Villa Thuret** (☎ 04 93 67 88 66; http://jardin-thuret.antibes.inra.fr; 62 blvd du Cap; admission free; ☎ 8am–6pm Mon–Fri Jun–Sep, 8.30am–5.30pm Mon–Fri Oct–May), 3.5 hectares of botanical gardens dating from 1856 and embracing 1600 species, dominates the centre of the cape.

Another lovely garden is the 11-hectare landscaped park around **Villa Eilenroc** (☎ 04 93 67 74 33; av de Beaumont; admission free; ☎ villa 9am–noon & 1.30–5pm Wed Sep–Jun, park 9am–noon & 1.30–5pm Tue & Wed Sep–Jun), on the southern tip of Cap d'Antibes. The villa was designed by Garnier in 1867 for rich Dutchman, Hugh Hope Loudon, who reversed the name of his wife Cornélie to come up with the villa's name. It was not until the 1870s, however, when rich Scotsman James Wyllie bought Eilenroc, that its fabulous gardens were landscaped.

Sweeping views of the coastline from St-Tropez to Italy can be enjoyed from **Chapelle de**

la Garoupe (chemin du Phare; ☎ 3–5pm). The neighbouring lighthouse can't be visited. From here steps lead downhill to av Aimé Bourreau; bear right, then turn left along av Guide to get to sandy Plage de la Garoupe. From the far end of the beach, a 2.7km-long scenic coastal path snakes to **Cap Gros**, the cape's southeasternmost tip, and beyond.

BEACHES & BOATS

Antibes has a small sandy beach, **Plage de la Gravette** (quai Henri Rambaud) and the substantially larger beach, **Plage de la Salis**, with unbeatable views of old Antibes, a 20-minute walk along the ramparts towards Cap d'Antibes. For seemingly endless golden beaches that buzz from sunrise to sunset, Juan-les-Pins is the place.

The stretch of coast between Plage de la Salis and Cap d'Antibes, especially the section around **Pointe Bacon**, is fringed with romantic coves and rocks from which snorkellers frolic in clear waters. On the cape itself, **Plage de la Garoupe** was famously first raked clear of seaweed in 1922 by Cole Porter and American artist Gerald Murphy to create a sandy beach. Far from an idyllic paradise today, it is filled with sun-loungers rammed so tightly together that two pontoons have been built to extend body-frying space. Pay €19/21 a day for a lounge on the sand/pontoon run by the two

À LA TÊTE DU CLIENT

Holui is a true street artist. The skilled, 50-year-old Shanghai-born sculptor came to France in his early 20s to study fine art in Paris, but subsequently moved to Antibes because 'it was easier to work on the street'.

'I now have my own atelier, but I still go to blvd d'Aguillon in the evening. I have to. I have clients who've known me for 20 years, who I've sculpted from inside their mother's tummy to childhood and so on. People need to know where to find me. So every year, I'm always on the same spot in the same street.'

Holui lures the crowds with a giant pair of silver-painted wooden scissors (secretly embedded with a real pair of scissors), with which he deftly cuts out an uncannily accurate side-profile Chinese shadow of his subject from black paper – in seconds flat.

'The scissors are part of the street act. I made them initially to attract people, but now they're essential to my work. People aren't accustomed to being an artist's model; they need something to look at and also don't like people watching them. So everyone looks at the scissors,' explains Holui, who rings an old microwave bell when his cut-out is done.

And Antibes? What's the best thing about the place?

'There are two things: the *lavoir* (washhouse) and Daniel, Daniel Klemex. If I have a question, I ask him. He is an artist who lives in Antibes and has his studio in Cagnes-sur-mer.'

Find Holui at his studio, **À La Tête du Client** (☎ 04 93 34 62 49; 12 rue James Cluse; ☎ 10am–1pm & 2–8pm in season) – there's no sign, just look for the scissors – or on blvd d'Aguillon from 8pm 'til late. A postcard-sized, Chinese-shadow portrait costs €5.

adjoining beach restaurants (full of hobnobbing English), or squeeze your bum onto the tiny patch of sand left for nonpaying folk.

In old Antibes, rent a 6cv boat (without licence) at **Antibes Bateaux Services** (☎ 06 15 75 44 36; www.antibes-bateaux.com; quai Henri Rambaud) for €100/140 per half-/full day (plus a €700 deposit).

Enjoy alternative views of wealthy Cap d'Antibes aboard **Visiobulle** (☎ 04 93 67 02 11; www.visiobulle.com; pontoon Courbet, blvd Guillaumont; adult/2-11yr €12/6; ☞ Apr-Sep), a glass-bottomed boat that sails around the cape four to seven times daily. Tours last one hour and depart from the jetty opposite the tourist office in Juan-les-Pins.

INLINE SKATING

Hire skates for €12 per day at **InterSport** (☎ 04 93 34 20 14; 10 av Guillaumont; ☞ 9.30am-12.15pm & 2.30-7pm Mon-Sat).

Festivals & Events

Cap d'Antibes' premier occasion is **Jazz à Juan** (Festival de Jazz d'Antibes Juan-les-Pins), a week-long festival in late July. There's always a first-rate line-up, and the venues, Juan-les-Pins' **Eden Casino** (☎ 04 92 93 71 71; blvd Édouard Baudoin) and the gardens fronting the beach on sq Gould, are superb.

Sleeping

Unless noted otherwise, the following are in Antibes.

CHAMBRES D'HÔTES

Villa Val des Roses (☎ 06 85 06 06 29; www.val-des-roses.com; 6 chemin des Lauriers; d/tr/q from €160/210/250; ☞ Jan-Oct; ☞ ☞ ☞ ☞) This cream, bourgeois villa with marble floors, laptop and flat-screen TV in each room, white walls and a choir of cicadas outside is a 20-minute stroll along the ramparts from the old town. But it's a mere moment from sandy Plage de la Salis, and its walled garden is an oasis of peace. Belgian Filip runs the house; should you fall madly in love with the place, his brother Frederik is opening another Val des Roses by the beach in Kenya! Parking costs €10 a day; breakfast is €16.

HOTELS

Le Relais du Postillon (☎ 04 93 34 20 77; www.relaisdupostillon.com; 8 rue Championnet; d €46-85; ☞) This 17th-century coach house has seen better

days but its 16 rooms overlooking a quiet courtyard or children's park remain comfortable enough. Rooms on the 1st floor are named after Italian towns and those on the 2nd after German ones, reflecting the owner's travels.

Hôtel La Jabotte (☎ 04 93 61 45 89; www.jabotte.com; 13 av Max Maurey; s/d low season from €63.50/71, high season from €85.50/93; ☞ ☞) Beach bunnies will like this hotel, a minute's walk from Plage de la Salis, 1km south of Antibes' old town. Eat your breakfast in the little courtyard, shaded by a handsome orange tree; check in early to snag one of the five free parking spaces out front.

Auberge Provençal (☎ 04 93 34 13 24; www.aubergeprovencale.com; 61 place Nationale; s/d/tr/q low season from €80/95/105/140, high season from €100/110/125/170) Fabulous dining venue (see below) first and foremost, this old Provençal inn – in true coach-inn style – has six romantic rooms up top, each named after a different gal (or guy in the case of Romeo). Ornate canopied or four-poster beds, beamed ceilings, period furnishings and freshly cut flowers mean Juliette will be well pleased.

HOSTELS

Relais International de la Jeunesse (☎ 04 93 61 34 40; 60 blvd de la Garoupe; dm incl breakfast €15, sheets €3; ☞ Mar-Oct, reception 8-11am & 5.30-11pm) Antibes' cheapest option, this hostel is beautifully located on the Baie de la Garoupe (3km south of Antibes' centre) in Cap d'Antibes. It's possible to pitch a tent on site for €8, not including breakfast. Take bus 2A from Antibes' bus station to L'Antiquité stop.

Eating

Terrace restaurants and cafés lace Antibes' old-town streets; blvd d'Aguillon along the ramparts is a gastronomic line-up.

La Socca (☎ 04 93 34 15 00; 1 rue James Close; socca per slice €2.50, salads & pizza €7.50; ☞ lunch & dinner) Otherwise known as Chez Jo, there is no cheaper, more cheerful place than this. Grab a chair and enjoy a quick-eat lunch of Niçois *socca* (chickpea pancake), *pissaladière* (savoury tart) or pizza. Don't be surprised if your neighbour strikes up a conversation with you.

Auberge Provençal (☎ 04 93 34 13 24; www.aubergeprovencale.com; 61 place Nationale; lunch menus €14.50 & €19.50, dinner menus €34.50 & €44.50; ☞ lunch & dinner) The local press has raved about this place, one of Antibes' oldest, since its face-

lift at the hands of Sofia and Serge Buga. The teasing oyster bar with a handful of high tables and bar stools at the entrance is hard to resist (six oysters, bread and a glass of wine for €10) but one glimpse of the pretty interior courtyard out the back and you'll be transfixed.

Les Vieux Murs (☎ 04 93 34 06 73; www.lesvieuxmurs.com; promenade Amiral de Grasse; menus €42 & €60, lunch/dinner mains €20/35; ☞ lunch & dinner Jun-Aug, lunch & dinner Wed-Mon mid-Sep-May) The setting of the Old Walls is just that – wedged in the former fortifications of old Antibes, across the street from crashing waves. Its kitchen staff are no slouches, serving up highly rated French and Provençal cuisine.

Bacon (☎ 04 93 61 50 02; blvd de Bacon, Cap d'Antibes; menus €49 & €79; ☞ lunch & dinner Wed-Sun, dinner Tue) Nothing to do with pork – rather fish, lots of it, either grilled with fennel, steamed or cooked in a *papillote* (a greased wrapping of parchment paper in which the fish is baked) and dressed in warm olive oil, basil butter, chive butter or broth. *Bouillabaisse* (Marseillais fish stew) is the other dish to revel in at this known-far-and-wide fish restaurant on Pointe Bacon. Hot tip: after lunch, cross the road and sleep off your lunch in one of the rocky coves on the Med.

For self-caterers:

Fromagerie L'Etable (cnr rue Sade & rue Guillaumont) Pongy cheese.

Geoffrey's of London (☎ 04 93 34 55 70; www.geofreysoflondon.com; Galerie du Port, rue Lacan; ☞ 9am-7.30pm Mon-Sat) British supermarket: Heinz beans to Walkers salt'n'vinegar crisps.

Le Pressoir de Bachus (☎ 04 93 74 93 25; 9 rue Fontvieille) Wine cellar.

Marché Provençal (cours Masséna; ☞ 6am-1pm Jul & Aug, 6am-1pm Tue-Sun Sep-Jun) Fabulous outdoor food market.

Drinking

Pedestrian blvd d'Aguillon heaves with merrily piddled Anglophones falling out of the busy 'English' and 'Irish' pubs here.

Absinthe Bar (☎ 04 93 34 93 00; 1 rue Sade; ☞ 9am-11pm) Flirt with the green fairy at this dedicated absinthe bar, the only one of its kind in France, with an original 1860 zinc bar and five round tables with all the accessories (four-tapped water fountain, sugar cubes etc). Pick from 25 brain-pickling absinthe varieties (€4 per glass).

Latino (☎ 04 93 34 44 22; www.lelatino.com in French; 24 blvd d'Aguillon; tapas platters €13-18; ☞ 7pm-2am) Indulge in that essential early-evening apéritif at this busy tapas bar where mixed Mexican, Spanish and vegetarian tapas platters, enchiladas and battered fried squid keep most punters here all night. DJ-spun lounge and house live mixes kick in most weekends.

Getting There & Away

BUS

From Antibes **bus station** (☎ 04 93 34 37 60; ☞ information desk 7.30am-7pm Mon-Fri), just off rue de la République, buses leave/arrive every 20 minutes or so between 6am and 8pm to/from Nice (50 minutes), Cagnes-sur-Mer (20 minutes), Golfe-Juan (15 minutes), Cannes (30 minutes), Biot (25 minutes, seven to 10 buses daily) and Vallauris (30 minutes, seven to 10 buses daily). Fares are a flat €1.30.

RIVIERA LEGENDS

Revel in good old-fashioned Riviera glamour and romance at these ravishingly gorgeous seaside villas, loaded with history and loaded guests.

Hôtel Belles Rives (☎ 04 93 61 02 79; www.bellesrives.com; 33 blvd Édouard Baudoin; d low/high season from €130/240, menus €75 & €90; ☞) F Scott and Zelda Fitzgerald stayed at Hôtel Belles Rives – then a house called Villa St-Louis with sea view and untouched beach – in 1926. Three years later a Russian called Boma Esténe bought the villa and turned it into a small hotel: much of the original 1930s furniture and Art Deco interior remains today, although the nautical blue carpets, opulent rooms and marbled bathrooms are of a more recent vintage.

Hôtel du Cap – Eden Roc (☎ 04 93 61 39 01; www.edenroc-hotel.fr; blvd Kennedy; s/d low season from €240/350, high season €360/450; ☞ ☞ ☞) The list of celebrities who've slumbered here is alphabetised and includes names under every letter bar 'X' (name a famous guest beginning with Q). Exquisite and impeccable in taste, the hotel comprises the original Grand Hôtel du Cap (1889) and Eden Roc, the old tearoom built in 1914 around which the world's most beautiful swimming pool was dug from rock. The really truly filthy rich are treated to the Eden Roc suite, with a 250-sq-metre terrace.

TRAIN

From Antibes **train station** (place Pierre Semard), at the end of av Robert Soleau, there are frequent trains to/from Nice (€3.70, 30 minutes) and Cannes (€2.40, 15 minutes).

Unlike Antibes, where many TGVs stop, the smaller **train station** (av de l'Estérel) located in Juan-les-Pins is only served by local trains.

Getting Around

City buses are run by **Enivbus** (☎ 04 89 87 72 00; www.enivbus.fr in French). Tickets valid for one hour cost €1/8 for a one/10-ticket carnet, and a one-day individual/family pass costs €3/5. Buses link Antibes bus station and place du Général de Gaulle with sq du Lys in Juan-les-Pins (15 minutes) every 10 to 20 minutes. Bus 2 from Antibes goes to Eden Roc on Cap d'Antibes (every 30 minutes). Between 15 June and 15 September this bus circles the cape, continuing along the coast from Eden Roc to Juan-les-Pins before returning to Antibes.

BIOT

pop 9000

This charming 15th-century hilltop village perched on an old volcano was once an important pottery-manufacturing centre specialising in large earthenware oil and wine containers. Metal containers brought an end to this, but Biot is still active in handicraft production, especially glassmaking and ceramics. The village was also the one-time HQ (1209–1387) of the Knights Templars, then the Knights of Malta: fragments of their presence remain in the quaint streets. Get here early to beat the hordes.

A list of *verreries* (glass-blowing workshops) is available at the **tourist office** (☎ 04 93 65 78 00; www.biot-coteazur.com; 46 rue St-Sébastien; ☎ 10am–7pm Mon–Fri, 2.30–7pm Sat & Sun Jul & Aug, 9am–noon & 2–6pm Mon–Fri, 2–6pm Sat & Sun Sep–Jun).

Sights & Activities

One of the largest of the workshops is **Verrerie de Biot** (☎ 04 93 65 03 00; www.verrieriebiot.com; chemin des Combes; admission free, 45min English guided tour €6; ☎ 9.30am–8pm Mon–Sat, 10am–1pm & 3–7pm Sun Jul & Aug, 9.30am–6pm Mon–Sat, 10.30am–1pm & 2.30–6.30pm Sun Sep–Jun), 1km from the centre at the foot of the village, where you can watch the glass-blowers at work, buy the end results, admire on-site art galleries or have lunch at the terrace restaurant.

In town, the **Musée d'Histoire et de Céramique Botoises** (☎ 04 93 65 54 54; 9 rue St-Sébastien; adult/under 15yr €2/free, 1st Sun of month free; ☎ 10am–6pm Wed–Sun Jul–Sep, 2–6pm Wed–Sun Oct–Jun) displays ancient pottery. A little further along the street, picturesque **place des Arcades**, dating from the 13th and 14th centuries, is worth a peek.

MARINELAND

Down the hill from the village, on the coast, is **Marineland** (☎ 04 93 33 49 49; www.marineland.fr; RN7; adult/3–12yr €34/25; ☎ 10am–10.30pm Jul & Aug, 10am–8pm Sep–Dec & Feb–Jun), an impressive water park with killer-whale and dolphin shows, shark tunnels and an aquarium. On the same site, **Aquasplash** (a water park with slides; adult/child €21/17), **La Petite Ferme du Far West** (a cowboy-themed farm with funfair rides and amusements; adult/child €13/10) and **Adventure Golf** (crazy golf; adult/child €10/8) provide additional entertainment, although it's hard to squeeze in more than two parks in a day. Combined tickets for two are available. Child prices are for kids aged three to 12 years.

Take bus 10 from Antibes bus station to the Marineland stop. By train, turn right out of Biot train station, walk 50m along rte de Nice (N7), then turn right along the D4 signposted 'Marineland & Biot'.

Sleeping & Eating

Restaurant des Arcades (☎ 04 93 65 01 04; 16 place des Arcades; d €70–100, mains €25–30; ☎ lunch & dinner Tue–Sat, lunch Sun) Dining at this bistro, lovingly run by Mimi and Dédé Brothier as in a bygone era, not only means fabulous regional food: it also snags you a viewing of the Brothier's private collection of art and glass, donated by artists (among them César, Novaro, Vasarely and Folon) as payment for food and lodging. Advance reservations are essential for the restaurant and its 14 period rooms up top. The bistro is on Biot's loveliest and oldest square.

Getting There & Away

Biot village is a steep 4km from Biot train station. From Antibes take bus 10 from the bus station or place du Général de Gaulle to Biot (€1, 25 minutes, seven to 10 buses daily).

CAGNES-SUR-MER

pop 45,000

This is where Renoir spent the last 12 years of his life. His old house and studio have been

preserved as a museum dedicated to the artist. Cagnes-sur-Mer is three pockets welded together: Haut de Cagnes, the medieval hilltop town, Cagnes Ville, the modern quarter, and Cros de Cagnes, an age-old fishing village by the beach.

The **tourist office** (☎ 04 93 20 61 64; www.cagnes-tourisme.com in French; 6 Blvd Maréchal Juin; ☎ 9am–7pm Mon–Sat, 9am–noon & 3–7pm Sun Jul & Aug, 9am–noon & 2–7pm Mon–Sat Jun & Sep, 9am–noon & 2–6pm Oct–May), just off the A8 in Cagnes Ville, runs annexes in **Haut de Cagnes** (☎ 04 92 02 85 05; place du Château) and **Cros de Cagnes** (☎ 04 93 07 67 08; 20 av des Oliviers).

Sights & Activities**CHÂTEAU-MUSÉE GRIMALDI**

Built around 1300 by the Grimaldis, **Château-Musée Grimaldi** (☎ 04 92 02 47 30; place Grimaldi; adult/under 18yr €3/free; ☎ 10am–noon & 2–6pm Wed–Mon), atop the old town, was sold during the French Revolution and bought in 1873 by a doctor who restored it to its 1620s glory. Baroque influences are evident in the grandiose banquet hall and arched galleries, and the old Grimaldi boudoir is filled with a bizarre collection of portraits of Suzy Solidor (1900–85), a Parisian cabaret singer and favourite artists' model who spent the last 25 years of her life living in Cagnes-sur-Mer. Among the 40 portraits are pieces by Brayer, Cocteau, Dufy, Kisling and van Dongen.

The castle also houses a **Musée de l'Olivier** (Olive-Tree Museum) featuring paintings of olive groves and oily paraphernalia and a **Musée d'Art Méditerranéen Moderne** (Museum of Modern Mediterranean Art).

MUSÉE RENOIR

La Domaine des Collettes, today the **Musée Renoir** (☎ 04 93 20 61 07; chemin des Collettes; adult/under 18yr €3/free; ☎ 10am–noon & 2–6pm Wed–Mon summer, to 5pm winter), was home and studio to an arthritis-crippled Renoir (1841–1919), who lived here with his wife and three sons from 1907 until his death. The artist painted, with a brush bandaged to his fingers, in the north-facing, 2nd-floor studio. The chicken wire covering the window protected Renoir from his children's mis-hit tennis balls.

Works of his on display include *Les Grandes Baigneuses* (The Women Bathers; 1892), a re-working of the 1887 original, and rooms are dotted with photographs and personal possessions. The magnificent olive and citrus groves around the Provençal *mas* (farmhouse) and

bourgeois house are as much an attraction as the museum itself.

From Cagnes bus station on place du Général de Gaulle, walk east along av Renoir and its continuation, av des Tuilières, then turn left (north) onto chemin des Collettes. From here the museum is 500m uphill.

Getting There & Around

Cagnes-sur-Mer is served by Le Cros de Cagnes and Cagnes-sur-Mer train stations. Most Cannes–Ventimiglia trains stop at both (they're two to three minutes apart).

Cannes–Nice buses (every 20 minutes) stop outside Cagnes-sur-Mer (52 minutes) and Le Cros de Cagnes (one hour) train stations, and at Cagnes' central bus station on place du Général de Gaulle. The Grasse–Nice bus only stops outside Cagnes-sur-Mer train station (35 minutes, about 10 daily). From Vence, bus 400 departs every 30 minutes for Cagnes-sur-Mer (20 minutes) via St-Paul de Vence. A single fare is €1.30.

A frequent, free shuttle bus trundles tourists up and down between Cagnes Ville bus station and Haut de Cagnes.

ST-PAUL DE VENCE

pop 2900 / elev 125m

Once upon a time St-Paul de Vence, 10km north of Cagnes-sur-Mer, was a small medieval village atop a hill looking out to sea. Walls encircled it in the 16th century, and in the 1960s artists such as Belarusian painter Marc Chagall moved in, marking the start of its new life as art-gallery city. African-American novelist James Baldwin (1924–85) spent the last years of his life here.

When the tourist-clogged village gets too much, flee to the Fondation Maeght, where real nuggets of truly fine modern art lie.

Orientation & Information

Rue Grande, the village's backbone, leads from the main gate to the cemetery.

The **tourist office** (☎ 04 93 32 86 95; www.saint-paulvence.com; 2 rue Grande; ☎ 10am–7pm Jun–Sep, 10am–6pm Oct–May) is on the right as you enter the walled village.

Sights & Activities
VILLAGE

Strolling the narrow streets is how most visitors pass time in St-Paul. No less than half of its 60-odd **art galleries** are on rue Grande. Steps

from rue Grande lead east to place de l'Église, pierced by **Église Collégiale** (containing a hotch-potch of religious icons), adjoining **Chapelle des Pénitents** (with free organ recitals July and August) and the **Musée d'Histoire Locale** (place de l'Église; adult/6-16yr €3/2; ☎ 10am-noon & 2-5.30pm Wed-Sat Dec-Oct), a zoom-in on local history.

Marc Chagall (p61), who moved to St-Paul with his wife, Vava, in 1966, is buried in the **cemetery** at the village's southern end. At the cemetery entrance, turn right, then left to find the couple's simple graves – the third on the left with beach pebbles scattered over them.

Across from the entrance to the fortified village, the **pétanque** pitch, where many a star has had a spin, is the hub of village life. The tourist office rents out balls (€3) and runs one-hour *pétanque* discovery tours (€8).

FOUNDATION MAEGHT

The region's finest art museum is **Fondation Maeght** (☎ 04 93 32 81 63; www.fondation-maeght.com; adult/under 10yr/10-18yr €11/free/9; ☎ 10am-7pm Jul-Sep, 10am-12.30pm & 2.30-6pm Oct-Jun), inaugurated in 1964 in a purpose-built futuristic building. It hosts an exceptional permanent collection of 20th-century works by Braque, Bonnard, Chagall, Giacometti, Matisse, Miró and Léger, exhibited on a rotating basis, as well as temporary exhibitions. Behind the gallery, the **Miró Labyrinth**, created by Spanish surrealist Joan Miró (1893–1983), zigzags through beautiful terraced gardens studded with gigantic sculptures, comical faces, mosaics and pools of water.

The centre, signposted from rond-point St-Claire, is 800m from the bus stop. A steep driveway leads up to the Foundation. Approaching St-Paul by car, turn left off the D7 from La Colle-sur-Loup.

Sleeping & Eating

Accommodation and dining – often rolled into one – is pricey but classy. Be it pre- or post-lunch, a drink at quintessential village kaf and bar, **Café de la Place** (☎ 04 93 32 80 03; place de Gaulle; plat du jour €9.50; ☎ 7am-midnight summer, 7am-8pm winter), overlooking the *pétanque* pitch, is a must.

CHAMBRES D'HÔTES

Villa St-Maxime (☎ 04 93 32 76 00; www.villa-st-maxime.com; 390 rte de la Colle; d low/high season from €145/160; ☎ ☎ ☎ ☎) James Bond would stay here. Run with a certain American opulence by

Europe veterans Ann and John (they left the USA for Luxembourg 24 years ago and spent holidays in St-Paul since 1983 when they bought a house in the village), this *maison d'hôte* (upmarket *chambre d'hôte*) is vast, airy and full of architectural flair. No two rooms are on the same level (five marbled steps separate the seven levels); the sky-high lobby with whitewashed stone walls lends the villa a cha-teaulike air; and the sweeping view of hilltop St-Paul, Cap d'Antibes and the Med from the breakfast terrace, pool and most rooms is unbeatable. But the *pièce de résistance* (actually there are two) is the 007 glass roof that slides open, and the champagne breakfast cooked up by a sabre-wielding John. Guests can buy the art on the walls, and rates include evening apéritifs. Find Villa St-Maxime behind a high green hedge down the hill from the village on the D7 to La Colle-sur-Loup.

Les Cabanes d'Orion (☎ 06 75 45 18 64; www.orionbb.com; impasse des Peupliers, 2436 chemin du Malvan; d from €150; ☎ Apr-Dec; ☎ ☎) At the opposite end of the mood and ethos spectrum is this equally superb, ecological B&B. Dragonflies flit above water lilies in the emerald-green swimming pool (filtered naturally), while guests slumber up top amid a chorus of frogs and cicadas in luxurious cedar-wood tree-houses perched in the trees. Breakfast is served in the shade of a 200-year-old *bergerie* (sheepfold), guests can BBQ their own evening meal, and catching frogs, playing skittles/boules or frolicking with squirrels or black labrador Lucas and his feline friends are childish pleasures. From the village, follow rte des Serres (behind the *pétanque* court) for 2km, turn sharply left onto chemin de la Pouchounière, continue downhill for 500m and after the bridge turn left onto chemin du Malvan. The steep gravel track leading up to Les Cabanes is signed 500m along this road, opposite the traffic mirror.

HOTELS

The list (the tourist office has one) of four-star places is endless.

Hostellerie Les Remparts (☎ 04 93 32 09 88; www.hotel-les-remparts.net; 72 rue Grande; d €54-80, tr/q €80/91, menus from €30; ☎ ☎) The cheapest four-star option. Rooms are named after flowers typical to Provence at this medieval *maison de village* right on St-Paul's main drag. Rates reflect amenities: *Cyclamen* shares a bathroom and *fleur des champs* has no air-con, while *lilas* has air-con and valley-facing balcony. Its terrace

restaurant cooks up regional cuisine and has a jaw-dropping panorama.

Getting There & Away

St-Paul de Vence ('St-Paul' on bus timetables and road signs) is served by bus 400 running between Nice (€1.30, one hour) and Vence (€1.30, 15 minutes).

VENCE

pop 17,184 / elev 325m

Vence, a pleasant town 4km north of St-Paul de Vence, has a medieval centre made for strolling, but its most noteworthy feature is out of town: Matisse's otherworldly **Chapelle du Rosaire**.

Music fills central place du Grand Jardin during July's three-week festival, **Nuits du Sud** (www.nuitsdusud.com in French). A fruit and veg market fills the square several mornings a week (see p299), with antiques on Wednesday.

Orientation & Information

The **tourist office** (☎ 04 93 58 06 38; www.ville-vence.fr in French; 8 place du Grand Jardin; ☎ 9am-1pm & 2-7pm Mon-Sat Jul & Aug, 9am-12.30pm & 2-6pm Mon-Sat Sep-Jun) is on Vence's central square. Rue Marcellin Maurel, which touches its northeastern corner, skirts the medieval city's southern wall. Port du Peyra, the main gate, is at the western end of rue Marcellin Maurel.

Sights & Activities

MEDIEVAL VENCE

Porte du Peyra, the main gate of the 13th-century wall encircling the old city, leads to place du Peyra and its **fountain** (1578). Gate and square are named after the old execution block. Imposing **Château de Villeneuve** and its adjoining 12th-century **watchtower** dominate the western edge of the square. Round the back of the castle is **Fondation Émile Hughes** (☎ 04 93 24 24 23; 2 place du Frêne; adult/12-18yr €5/2.50; ☎ 10am-6pm Tue-Sun Jul-Sep, 10am-12.30pm & 2-6pm Tue-Sun Oct-Jun), a cultural centre with wonderful 20th-century art exhibitions.

Leading east from place du Peyra is narrow rue du Marché, once the stables for the town and now dotted with small food shops. Cut along rue Alsace-Lorraine to reach place Clémenceau, where there's a **market** on Tuesday and Friday mornings. The **Romanesque cathedral** on the eastern side of the square was built in the 11th century on the site of an old Roman temple. It contains Chagall's **mosaic**

of Moses (1979), appropriately watching over the baptismal font.

CHAPELLE DU ROSAIRE

Matisse was 81 when he completed **Chapelle du Rosaire** (☎ 04 93 58 03 26; 466 av Henri Matisse; adult/6-16yr €2.80/1.50; ☎ 2-5.30pm Mon, Wed & Sat, 10-11.30am & 2-5.30pm Tue & Thu, plus 2-5.30pm Fri during school holidays, Sunday mass 10am, closed mid-Nov–mid-Dec), floodlit by the most extraordinary stained-glass windows, in 1951.

An ailing Matisse moved to Vence in 1943 where he fell under the care of his former nurse and model Monique Bourgeois, who had since become a Dominican nun. She persuaded him to design the extraordinary chapel for her community: it took Matisse four years to do so and the Dominican nuns of the Rosary still use it today.

From the road, all that you can see are the blue-and-white ceramic roof tiles and a wrought-iron cross and bell tower. Inside, light floods through the glorious stained-glass windows, painting stark white walls with glowing blues, greens and yellows. To achieve this effect, Matisse set up camp 200m down the road at **Le Rêve** (The Dream), a private house opposite 320 av Henri Matisse, so he could visit the chapel site throughout the day and observe the sun's position before signing off on the architectural plans.

THE AUTHOR'S CHOICE

La Colombe d'Or (☎ 04 93 32 80 02; www.la-colombe-dor.com in French; place de Gaulle, St-Paul de Vence; d from €265, mains €25-35; ☎ 12.30-2.30pm & 7.30-10.30pm; ☎ ☎ ☎) The mosaic mural by Fernand Léger, *Les Femmes au Perroquet* (Women with a Parrot), in the courtyard is among the original modern artworks at the Golden Dove, a legendary world-renowned restaurant where impoverished artists Braque, Chagall, Dufy and Picasso paid for meals with their creations – today forming one of France's largest private art collections. Dining is beneath fig trees in a walled courtyard laden with art; a monumental Calder mobile steals the show at the swimming pool; and service is surprisingly uncomplicated. Viewing is strictly for diners or guests staying in one of the luxurious village inn's 26 rooms. Reserve tables and rooms months in advance.

TOP FIVE ART GALLERIES

Vence and St-Paul chalk up at least 100 galleries between them. Our top five:

Fondation Maeght (p320) By far the region's most formidable.

Galerie Catherine Issert (☎ 04 93 32 96 92; www.galerie-issert.com; 2 rte des Serres, St-Paul) Window on the crème of international avant-garde since 1975.

Galerie Guy Pieters (☎ 04 93 32 06 46; www.guypietersgallery.com; chemin des Trioux, St-Paul) Contemporary pieces to stagger home with, plus Warhols, Arman etc (not for sale) to ogle at.

Galerie Bretttrn.com (☎ 04 93 58 53 55; www.bretttrn.com; 6 rue du Peyra, Vence) Pieces by self-taught British painter, sculptor and stained-glass artist Brett Rhodes-Neal (b 1962); dogs all colours of the rainbow were showcased when we visited.

Centre International d'Art Contemporain (☎ 04 93 29 37 97; place Augustin Capel, Carros) Escape the crowds: drive 16km northeast to Carros, a medieval village few seem to know about. Its streets are tourist-free and the modern-art exhibitions inside its hilltop chateau are superb.

A line image of the Virgin Mary and child is painted on white ceramic tiles on the northern interior wall. The western wall is dominated by the bolder *Chemin de Croix* (Stations of the Cross), numbered in Matisse's frenzied handwriting. St Dominic overlooks the altar. Matisse also designed the chapel's stone altar, candlesticks, cross and the way-out priests' vestments (displayed in an adjoining hall).

Find the chapel 800m north of Vence on rte de St-Jeanet (the D2210). From place du Grand Jardin, head east along av de la Résistance then turn right (north) along av Tuby. At the crossroads, turn right onto av Henri Matisse, from where the chapel is signposted.

Sleeping & Eating

Auberge des Seigneurs (☎ 04 93 58 04 24; place du Frêne; d €70, menus €31, €35 & €42; ☞ mid-Mar–mid-Nov) This enchanting little hotel-restaurant, in a 15th-century building, is the only accommodation within the medieval walls. Some rooms have mountain views.

La Maison d'Accueil Lacordaire (☎ 04 93 58 03 26; http://perso.orange.fr/maison.lacordaire; 466 av Henri Matisse; half-/full board per person €30/40; reception ☞ 9am–6pm Mon–Sat) Adjoining the Chapelle du Rosaire, this 24-room house with pretty water garden belongs to the Dominican nuns, who offer beds for the night. Rooms with toilet and shower must be reserved three to eight days in advance and the minimum stay is three nights.

Le P'tit Provençal (☎ 04 93 58 50 64; 4 place Clémenceau; menus €16, €18 & €24.30; ☞ lunch & dinner Wed–Sun) Beside the town hall in the heart of medieval Vence, Little Provençal cooks up local cuisine to thrill on a table-tight pavement terrace. Try pig-cheek stew followed

by chocolate pie with cherry marmalade and liquorice ice-cream, or cold peach soup with sweet Muscat, mint and green tea sorbet.

The old town is crammed with touristy restaurants.

Getting There & Away

Bus 400 to and from Nice (€1.30, 50 minutes, at least hourly) stops on place du Grand Jardin.

AROUND VENCE

The northbound D2 from Vence leads to the **Col de Vence** (963m), a mountain pass 10km north offering good views of the *baous* (rocky promontories) typical of this region. At the foot of the pass is the **Baou des Blancs** (673m), crowned by the stony remains of the **Bastide St-Laurent**, inhabited by the Templars in the 13th century. Marked walking trails around the pass follow part of the GR51.

Coursegoules (population 323, elevation 1020m), 6km north along the D2, is a hilltop village with 11th-century castle ruins and fortifications. From here, head west along the D2 to photogenic **Gréolières** (population 455). Walkers can follow the GR4 north to **Gréolières-les-Neiges** (elevation 1450m), a small ski station equipped with 14 lifts on the northern face of Montagne Cheiron; the GR4 scales Cheiron's 1778m-high peak.

From Coursegoules and Gréolières, you can hook up with the dramatic **Gorges du Loup**, 7km south along the D603. The road along the western side of the gorges (the D3) crescendos with the village of **Gourdon** (population 384, elevation 758m). Here Art Deco works, including pieces from designer Eileen Gray's Paris apartment and her seaside villa on Cap

Martin (see p65), can be enjoyed in the **Musée des Arts Décoratifs et de la Modernité** (☎ 04 93 09 68 02; place du Château; admission €10; ☞ 1½hr guided tour by appointment only) in Château de Gourdon (no children). Aspiring 'noses' can see what happens to freshly picked lavender, genista, thyme and orange-tree leaves at **La Source Parfumée** (☎ 04 93 09 68 23; lasourceparfumee@wanadoo.fr; rue Principale; admission free; ☞ 10am–5.30pm), a distillery run by the Galimard perfumery (p326).

Further south along the D3, hilltop **Le Barsur-Loup** (population 2540, elevation 320m) pops out to the horizon. Bitter orange trees are cultivated in terraces around the beautifully intact medieval village. One of three marked walks proffers (on clear days) a startling view way down the coast and across to Corsica; ask at the **tourist office** (☎ 04 93 72 72 21; tourisme@lebarsurloup.fr; place Francis Paulet) next to the chateau for the 'three walks' brochure.

Rumbling tummies can lunch chateau-style in Bar or cross the D2085 and continue south to pinprick **Opio** to shop for olive oil at 19th-century **Moulin de la Brague** (☎ 04 93 77 23 03; www.moulin-opio.com; 2 rte de Châteauneuf; ☞ 9am–noon & 2–6pm Mon–Sat) and lunch country-style at Le Mas des Géraniums (p324) instead.

Otherwise, bear east from Bar to **Pont du Loup**; the prime attraction is the sweet **Confiserie Florian Factory** (☎ 04 93 59 32 91; www.confiserieflorian.com; ☞ 9am–noon & 2–6pm) where jams, crystallised fruits and flowers are cooked up in a 19th-century flour mill. Free 10-minute tours show you how.

From Pont du Loup the eastbound D2210 snakes east to Tourrettes-sur-Loup, passing goat farm **Ferme des Courmettes** (☎ 04 93 59 31 93; www.chevredescourmettes.com) en route where you can taste/buy organic cheese.

SLEEP DREAM ART

La Maison du Frêne (☎ 04 93 24 37 83; www.lamaisondufrene.com; 1 place du Frêne, Vence; d low/high season €140/180; ☞ Feb–Dec; ☞ ☑) This *demeure d'art et d'hôtes* (art guesthouse) is quite astonishing. Yes, that Niki de Saint Phalle is an original. And yes, the César too. The love child of Vence-born Parisian hairdresser Thierry and partner, Guy, this guesthouse across from the Fondation Émile Hughes is an essential sleeperover on any true art-lover's itinerary. Thierry and Guy – avid collectors for years (Thierry: 'For 20 years I had no car but I did have a Niki de Saint Phalle') – are passionate about modern art, know everything there is know about the local art scene (did you know Lithuanian-born French expressionist Soutine painted, unusually, their house?) and are happy to chat and chat and chat about their greatest passion in life. Rooms are superbly decorated with contemporary designer furniture, original works of art and plenty of reference books to read up on what's around you. Marilyn dominates the Pop Art suite. Understandably, given the priceless interior, child guests must be at least 12.

Tourrettes-sur-Loup (population 3900, elevation 400m), dubbed the 'city of violets', is a postcard-perfect 15th-century hilltop village overflowing with art galleries and boutiques selling violet tea, ice cream, melon syrup etc. Its **Fête des Violettes** (Violet Festival) on the first or second Sunday in March closes with a flower battle. The **tourist office** (☎ 04 93 24 18 93; www.tourrettesurloup.com; 2 place de La Libération; ☞ 9.30am–12.30pm & 2.30–6.30pm May & Jun, 10am–6.30pm Mon–Sat, 10am–6pm Sun Jul & Aug, 9.30am–12.30pm & 2.30–6.30pm Mon–Sat Sep–Apr) has details.

From the eastbound D2210 you can also pick up the scenic eastbound D6 to **La Colle-sur-Loup** (population 6670), a less explored village with some interesting sleeping and eating options, the thriving **Maison des Arts** (p60) and an outstanding **tourist office** (☎ 04 93 32 68 36; www.ot-lacolle@atsat.com; 28 rue Maréchal Foch; ☞ 9am–7pm Mon–Fri, 9am–noon & 3–7pm Sat & Sun mid-Jun–mid-Sep, 9am–noon & 2–6pm Mon–Sat mid-Sep–mid-Jun) opposite the church, which stocks the best information on the area.

Sleeping & Eating

Bastide Saint Donat (☎ 04 93 32 93 41; rte du Pont de Pierre, La Colle-sur-Loup; d incl breakfast €65–95; ☑) Aircon is not a necessity at this stone *bergerie* (sheepfold) where 50cm-thick walls keep things cool. An immaculate garden – scamperring ground for Miette the Yorkshire terrier – frames the family house (1850), which comprised four ruined walls when Yvonne and Alphonse Rosso bought it half a century ago. Rooms are beautifully prepared with freshly cut flowers; a pair of olive trees and Monsieur's amber-coloured Fiat 500c marks the entrance. Find it a couple of kilometres from La Colle on the D6 to Grasse.

WAYNE'S WORLD

Something of a legend in Nice, where the hugely successful pioneering bar he opened all those years ago still trades under his name, Wayne is now a country man. Find him and wife Cécile in Tourrettes-sur-Loup at gastronomic dining spot **Le Relais des Coches** (☎ 04 93 24 30 24; www.lerelaisdescoches.com; 28 rte de Vence; plat du jour €12, lunch menus €16 & €25, dinner menus €38; 🍷 lunch & dinner Tue-Sun), an atmospheric medieval house with beautiful village-facing terrace, and happening music club **La Cave du Relais** (🍷 dinner Thu-Sat Mar-Aug, event-driven Sep-Feb) in its basement where discerning punters dine to the sound of live soul, jazz, and rhythm and blues.

Those who find Wayne and Cécile truly irresistible can check in to their **Auberge de Tourrettes** (☎ 04 94 59 30 05; www.aubergedetourrettes.fr; 11 rte de Grasse; s/d from €108/120), a charming eight-room boutique inn with contemporary Provençal décor.

Le Mas des Cigales (☎ 04 93 59 25 73; www.lemasdes cigales.com; 1673 rte des Quenières, Tourrettes-sur-Loup; d incl breakfast low/high season €72/92, dinner €20; 🍷 🍷 🍷 🍷) Marc and Davide (who ran a bar in Paris before taking the first step towards retirement in Tourrettes) are the dynamo behind this peaceful *chamber d'hôte*, which induces guests to be dreadfully lazy. Two rooms have gardens out the front and the other three open onto the poolside. A Jacuzzi, tennis courts, bicycles, a flowery garden and dinner cooked by Davide twice a week complete the pretty picture, found 1.6km from Tourrettes village.

L'Hostellerie du Château (☎ 04 93 42 41 10; www.hostellerie duchateau.com; 6-8 place Francis Paulet, Le Bar-sur-Loup; d low/high season from €100/155; 🍷 café & restaurant lunch & dinner Tue-Sun) Château du Bar crowns Bar village; it was in the hands of the counts of Grasse from 1235 until the French Revolution. Lunch around bright-orange bistro tables on the terrace of Café du Château (plat du jour €14, menus €18 to €22) or dine up top in the more formal, very romantic Le Bigaradie (menus €27 to €59), named after the *bigaradie* (bitter orange tree) Bar is known for. Views are sterling and décor is discrete and contemporary.

Le Mas des Géraniums (☎ 04 93 77 23 23; www.le-mas-des-geraniums.com; 7 rte de Nice, Opio; menus €18, €25, €34 & €40; 🍷 lunch & dinner Jul & Aug, lunch & dinner Thu-Mon Sep-Jun) Colette and Michel Creusot run this baby-blue shuttered house on a hill overlooking Opio with love and tender care. Dining is country style, alfresco in a vast flowery garden, and parking is in an olive grove. Fresh artichoke hearts, scorpion fish pâté, snails and crayfish are among the mixed bag of market goodies. Reservations essential.

Also recommended is **L'Abbaye** (☎ 04 93 32 68 34; www.hotelabbaye.com; 541 blvd Honoré Teisseire, La Colle-sur-Loup; d low/high season from €80/100, mains €13-

20; 🍷 restaurant lunch & dinner Tue-Sun; 🍷 🍷 🍷 🍷), a boutique hotel in a 12th-century manor with a 10th-century chapel and cutting-edge restaurant, L541.

Getting There & Away

In short, your own two or four wheels is the only way there, away and around.

INLAND TO GRASSE

From Cannes, an inland journey takes you along the same road Napoleon Bonaparte trod on his return from exile in 1814. From the island of Elba, he landed at Golfe-Juan, from where he and a clutch of faithful followers marched for six days north to Lyons. Now called the rte Napoléon (the N85 today), at that time it was a remote road passing through a couple of medieval villages, including Grasse with its skilled perfumers, then into the mountains of Haute-Provence.

MOUGINS

pop 16,287 / elev 260m

Elite, elegant Mougins prides itself on its arty connections and luxury wining and dining options. Picasso discovered the medieval village in 1935 with lover Dora Marr, and lived here with his final love, Jacqueline Roque, from 1961 until his death. His former house (across the valley from the tourist office) is a private residence and can't be visited, but there are fascinating black-and-white photos of the artist at work and play, snapped by André Villers, in the **Musée de la Photographie** (☎ 04 93 75 85 67; 67 rue de l'Église; adult/child €2/1; 🍷 10am-8pm Jul-Sep, 10am-6pm Mon-Fri, 11am-6pm Sat & Sun Oct & Dec-Jun), inside medieval Porte Sarrazine behind the church bell tower. Celebrated

Riviera photographer Jacques Henri Lartigue (1894-1986) is among the wealth of other famous snappers represented in the small but fabulous photography museum.

Local art can be viewed in the village's 19th-century **lavoir** (washhouse; 15 av Jean-Charles Mallet; admission free; 🍷 10am-7pm Mar-Oct) and in the overdose of galleries and artists' workshops filling the village: the **tourist office** (☎ 04 93 75 87 67; www.mougins-coteazur.org; Parking Moulin de la Croix; 🍷 9am-5.30pm Mon-Fri), in the car park at the foot of the village, and its **seasonal welcome centre** (15 av Jean-Charles Mallet; 🍷 5-10pm Mon-Fri, 9am-10pm Sat & Sun Jul & Aug), adjoining the old washhouse, have complete lists.

Motor fiends can ogle over auto art 5km south of town in the **Musée de l'Automobiliste** (☎ 04 93 69 27 80; www.musauto.fr.st in French; 772 chemin de Font de Currault; adult/under 12yr/12-18yr €7/free/5; 🍷 10am-6pm), a car museum just off the A8 where Bugatti, Rolls-Royce and Ferrari race into gear.

Sleeping

Hotel accommodation is minimum four-star and proffers much fine dining.

CHAMBRES D'HÔTES

The tourist office has a complete list.

Les Rosées (☎ 04 92 92 29 64; www.les-rosees.com; 238 chemin de Font Neuve; d low/high season €220/260; 🍷 🍷 🍷 🍷) Proof of the pudding that B&B is not necessarily a budget option, this stunning stone manor house with three hugely romantic guest suites, pool and century-old olive trees is a showcase for Danielle's upholstery and interior-design workshop. The Serguey suite with peephole on the open fire in the lounge is stunning. Breakfast is a copious organic affair.

HOTELS

Le Moulin de Mougins (☎ 04 93 75 78 24; www.moulin demougins.com; av Notre Dame de Vie; d €140 & €190, ste €300 & €320, lunch menus without wine €48, with wine €58 or €73, dinner menus €98 & €115; 🍷 restaurant lunch & dinner Tue-Sun; 🍷 🍷) Alain Lorca's illustrious place is in a 16th-century oil mill with lilac shutters dotted with original Césars and Armans. Spanish Andalusia alongside Provence provides the inspiration in the kitchen, and the menu invites diners to pick from *classique* (traditional), *contemporaine* (new and amazing) or *légère* (natural) creations. Find the mill 2.5km southeast of town off the D3.

Also guaranteed to please is **Le Mas Candille** (☎ 04 92 28 43 43; www.lemascandille.com; blvd Clément Rebuffel; d incl breakfast from €320; 🍷 🍷 🍷) Top 18th-century farmhouse with Shiseido spa.

Eating

Dining at the hotels listed above is a memorable experience. Simpler options:

Un Coin à Part (☎ 04 93 75 33 70; uncoinaipart@voila.fr; 24 rue Honoré Henry; menus €19 & €26; 🍷 lunch & dinner Fri-Tue) This hip little hole comes as a breath of fresh air in stiff Mougins. Vegetarian and organic creations are a strong feature of the Provençal menu cooked up by formidable team Stéphane and Sébastien. 'Zen attitude' is the house motto.

L'Amandier (☎ 04 93 90 00 91; place du Vieux Village; lunch menu €25, dinner menus €34 & €44; 🍷 10.30am-10pm) In a rustic 14th-century oil mill, the Almond Tree is a less expensive eating option. Feast on amazing mountain views and traditional Provençal fare from its warm, flower-bedecked stone terraces.

Getting There & Away

Mougins is on the Cannes-Grasse bus route. Buses depart every half-hour (hourly on Sunday) from the bus station next to Cannes train station for Mougins (€1.30, 20 minutes). Grasse is a 20-minute bus ride from Mougins (€1.30).

GRASSE

pop 43,000 / elev 250m

Terracotta roofs rise up pre-Alpine slopes at this old hilltop centre of perfume production surrounded by sprawling suburbs and a profusion of lavender, jasmine, centifolia roses, mimosa, orange blossom and violet fields cultivated to feed its sweet-smelling industry.

Founded by the Romans, Grasse was no more than a small republic exporting tanned hides and oil in the Middle Ages. But with the advent of perfumed gloves in the 1500s (the doing of France's queen, Catherine de Medicis, who detested the smell of raw leather on her hands), it discovered a new wealth. Glove-makers split from the tanners and set up their own perfumeries – a blooming business in the 18th century.

Contemporary Grasse is not glam. Its old city – small, mainly pedestrian and shabby – has seen better days: make a day trip here and overnight in a *chambre d'hôte* in a surrounding village.

ART HOT SPOT

Modern art and architecture lovers will kick themselves if they miss the **Espace de l'Art Concret** (Centre of Concrete Art; ☎ 04 93 75 71 50; www.crdp.ac-nice.fr/ea; place Suzanne de Villeneuve; adult/under 18yr €3/free; 🕒 11am-7pm Jul & Aug, 11am-6pm Tue-Sun Sep-Jun), 4km north of Mougins in Mougins-Sartoux. The contemporary art centre is housed in the 16th-century **Château de Mouans** and in the purpose-built **Donation Albers-Honegger** extension, a brilliant and brilliantly controversial lime-green concrete block ferociously juxtaposed with its historic surroundings. All the old familiars (Eduardo Chillida, Yves Klein, Andy Warhol, César, Philippe Starck) are here, along with lesser-known practitioners and temporary exhibitions.

Information

Tourist office (☎ 04 93 36 66 66; www.grasse.fr; Palais de Congrès, cours Honoré Cresp; 🕒 9am-7pm Mon-Sat, 9am-12.30pm & 1.30-6pm Sun Jul-Sep, 9am-12.30pm & 2-6pm Mon-Sat Oct-Jun) Information on B&Bs and guided walks in the area (walks adult/6-16yr/family €15/7.50/32).

Sights & Activities
PERFUMERIES

Don't expect to sniff out Chanel, Giorgio Beverly Hills or Guerlain here: Grasse's 40 or so *parfumeries* sell their essence to factories or by mail order and are practically unknown. Three allow visitors into their showrooms, where you're taken through every stage of perfume production, from extraction and distillation to the work of the 'nose' (p329). At the end you'll be squirted with scents, invited to purchase any number, and leave under a fragrant cloud. The perfumes are less expensive than store-bought smellies, where 60% of what you pay is for the fancy bottle.

The most convenient perfume house if you're on foot is **Fragonard** (☎ 04 93 36 44 65; www.fragonard.com; 20 blvd Fragonard; admission free; 🕒 9am-6pm Feb-Oct, 9am-12.30pm & 2-6pm Nov-Jan), named in 1926 after painter Jean-Honoré Fragonard. Visit the upstairs perfume museum then descend for a tour of the former 16th-century tannery. The real perfume production takes place at the modern **Fabrique des Fleurs** (Flower Factory; rte de Cannes; admission free; 🕒 9am-6pm Feb-Oct, 9am-12.30pm & 2-6pm Nov-Jan) on the southbound N85; and at the Fragonard plant in Èze (see p286).

Galimard (☎ 04 93 09 20 00; www.galimard.com; 73 rte de Cannes; admission free; 🕒 9am-6.30pm Jun-Sep, 9am-12.30pm & 2-6pm Oct-May), 3km from Grasse centre on the southbound N85, runs a nearby **Studio des Fragrances** (☎ 04 93 09 20 00; 5 rte de Pégomas; 2hr workshop incl 100ml bottle of perfume €35) where you can create your own unique fragrance (see

p329), and a flower distillery in Gourdon, La Source Parfumée (p323).

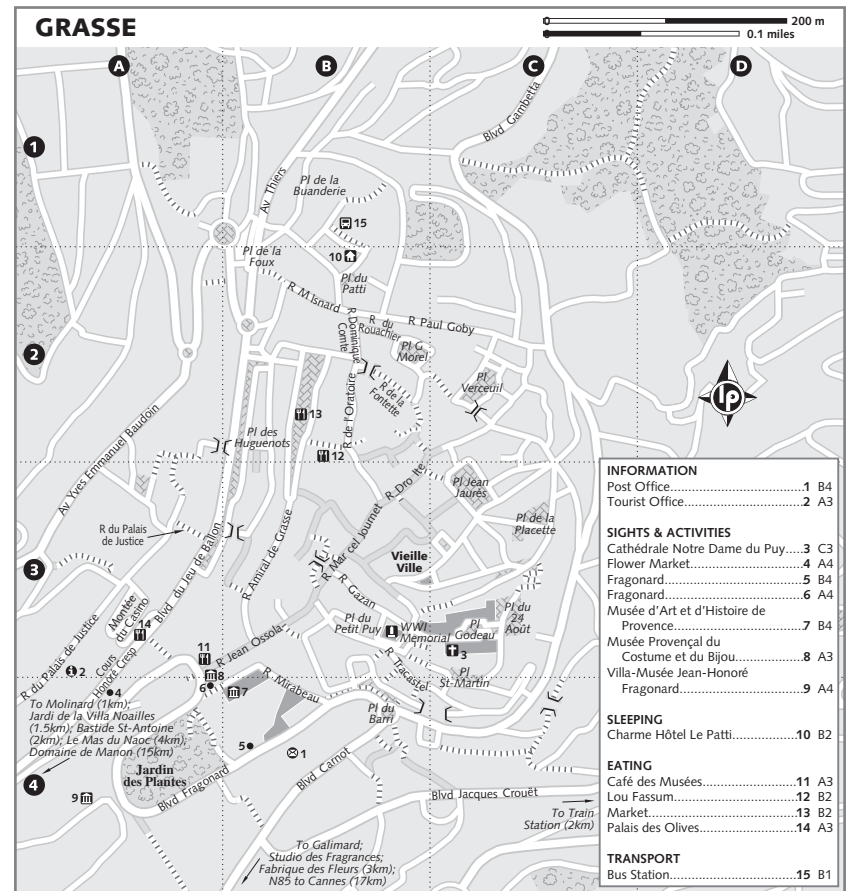
Ritzier **Molinard** (☎ 04 93 36 01 62; www.molinard.com; 60 blvd Victor Hugo; admission free; 🕒 9am-6.30pm Mon-Sat Jul-Sep, 9am-12.30pm & 2-6pm Mon-Sat Oct-Jun), 1km out of town, was founded in 1849 and displays old copper stills in its former Gustave Eiffel-designed distillery. Molinard likewise runs perfume creation **workshops** (incl 50ml bottle of perfume €40), which last 1¼ hours.

Curious noses can combine a perfumery session with a (literal) field trip in season to see rose and jasmine meadows, cultivated for three generations, at **Domaine de Manon** (☎ 04 93 60 12 76; www.domaine-manon.com; 36 chemin du Servan), a flower farm 15km southeast of Grasse in the village of Plascassier. Guided tours (roses 3pm May to mid-June, jasmine 9am August to October) last an hour and cost €6/free per adult/child under 12.

MUSÉE D'ART ET D'HISTOIRE DE PROVENCE

Everything from faïence pottery to toys, furniture, costumes and paintings evoke the past in this regional **Art & History Museum** (☎ 04 97 05 58 00; www.museesdegrasse.com; 2 rue Mirabeau; adult/10-16yr €3/1.50, during exhibitions €4/2; 🕒 10am-6.30pm Jun-Sep, 10am-12.30pm & 2-5.30pm Wed-Mon Oct & Dec-May), inside Hôtel de Clapiers Cabris. Former owner Jean-Paul de Clapiers loathed his mother, who lived opposite, so much that he had a Gorgon's head carved over his door to leer through her windows.

VILLA-MUSÉE JEAN-HONORÉ FRAGONARD His paintings shocked and titillated 18th-century France with their licentious love scenes. See why at the **Musee Jean-Honoré Fragonard** (☎ 04 97 05 58 00; www.museesdegrasse.com; 23 blvd Fragonard; adult/10-16yr €3/1.50, during exhibitions €4/2; 🕒 10am-6.30pm Jun-Sep, 10am-12.30pm & 2-5.30pm Wed-Mon Oct & Dec-May) in Grasse, where



the controversial Grasse-born artist Jean-Honoré Fragonard (1732–1806) lived for a year in 1790.

MUSÉE PROVENÇAL DU COSTUME ET DU BIJOU

Lace-capped dummies model 18th- and 19th-century clothes and jewellery in this **Provençal Costume & Jewellery Museum** (☎ 04 93 36 44 65; www.fragonard.com; 2 rue Jean Ossola; admission free; 🕒 10am-1pm & 2-6pm Feb-Oct, 10am-1pm & 2-6pm Mon-Sat Nov-Jan), run by Fragonard.

Festivals & Events

Grasse's two main events are **Exporose** in May, and **La Jasmnade**, a jasmine festival held the first weekend in August.

Sleeping

The sweetest options are a short drive away in Mougins and other neighbouring villages.

CHAMBRES D'HÔTES

Le Mas du Naoc (☎ 04 93 60 63 13; www.lemasdu-naoc.com; chemin du Migranié, Cabris; d low/high season from €100/120; 📞 📧 🚗) This renovated and vine-covered 18th-century pad in Cabris slumbers in the shade of century-old olive, jasmine, fig and orange trees – and fits the 'quintessentially Provençal' bill perfectly. Soft natural hues dress Sandra and Jérôme Maingret's five lovely rooms, and the coastal panorama from the pool is inspirational. Find signs for the *mas* 4km west of Grasse along the D4 to Cabris. No children under seven.

HOTELS

Charme Hôtel Le Patti (☎ 04 93 36 01 00; www.hotelpatti.com; place du Patti; d from €84; 🏠) Cheerful two-star Le Patti teeters on the old-town brink. Rooms are romantic and contain satellite TVs and DVD players. There's also a restaurant with a sunny terrace if you don't want to stray too far for food.

Bastide St-Antoine (☎ 04 93 70 94 94; www.jacques-chibois.com; 48 av Henri Dunant; d from €200; lunch menu €55, dinner menus €130, €140 & €180; 🍷 🍷 🍷) Overlooking a vast olive grove 2km from town, this lavish four-star Relais & Châteaux pad is Grasse's most upmarket sleeping topped off with sensual menus created by leading French chef Jacques Chibois. Oysters with rose petals, anybody?

Eating

Café des Musées (☎ 04 92 60 99 00; 1 rue Jean Ossola; plat du jour €12; 🍷 8am-6pm) For a tasty quick lunch, the Museum café is best. Sit on a citron-yellow Jacobsen chair and dine on a Mediterranean-inspired no-fuss platter.

Lou Fassum (☎ 04 93 42 99 69; www.loufassum.com; 5 rue des Fabriques; menu €32; 🍷 lunch & dinner Tue-Sat) This is the gourmet choice in Grasse, tucked down the most unassuming of alleys and sporting a wholly seasonal menu that changes every month.

Palais des Olives (☎ 04 93 36 57 73; www.palais-des-olives.com; blvd du Jeu de Ballon) Gourmet-filled meat and fish wraps and sandwiches to take away in addition to olive oil to taste or buy.

A morning market fills place aux Aires from Tuesday to Sunday.

Getting There & Around

From the **bus station** (☎ 04 93 36 08 43; place de la Buanderie) there are eight to 10 buses daily to/from Nice (€1.30, 1¼ hours) and Cannes (€1.30, 45 minutes) via Mouans-Sartoux and Mougins.

Grasse train station, 2km south of the centre, is served by trains to/from Cannes (€3.40, 25 minutes) and Nice (€7.70, one hour). Free shuttle buses shunt passengers between the station and the old town.

MASSIF DE L'ESTÉREL

This range of red porphyritic rock scented with pines, oak and eucalyptus trees is one of the coast's most stunning natural features –

prime walking terrain. Find it southwest of Cannes, wedged between Mandelieu-La Napoule (to the north) and St-Raphaël (to the south). The latter, together with its Roman neighbour, Fréjus, is the main gateway to the Massif des Maures and St-Tropez.

Dozens of trails crisscross the massif; buy a decent map such as IGN's Série Bleue (1:25,000) No 3544ET *Fréjus, Saint-Raphaël & Corniche de l'Estérel* before setting out. Those not keen to forge out alone can link up with an organised guided walk: tourist offices mentioned in this section have details.

CORNICHE DE L'ESTÉREL

A walk or drive along the winding Corniche de l'Estérel (also called Corniche d'Or, 'Golden Coast'; the N98) is not to be missed. The views are spectacular, and small summer resorts and dreamy inlets (perfect for swimming), all of which are accessible by bus or train, are dotted along its 30km length.

The Corniche de l'Estérel gets busy in summer: to escape the crowds, choose the inland N7, which runs through the hills and takes you through a whole different world.

Mandelieu-La Napoule

Wonderfully eccentric, turreted, 14th-century **Château de la Napoule** (☎ 04 93 49 95 05; www.chateau-lanapoule.com; av Henry Clews; adult/under 7yr/7-18yr château & gardens €6/free/4, gardens only €3.50/free/3.50; 🍷 10am-6pm Feb-Oct, 2-5pm Mon-Fri, 10am-5pm Sat & Sun Nov-Jan) forms the centrepiece of this small seaside resort. American eccentrics Henry and Marie Clews arrived on the coast in 1918 and spent 17 years rebuilding the sea-facing Saracen tower and decorating it in twisted-fairy-tale style: the effect is Gormenghast-by-the-Sea. Henry Clews' (1876-1937) grave in a tower in the grounds reads 'Poet, Sculptor, Actor, Grand Knight of La Mancha, Supreme Master Humormystic, Castelan of Once upon a Time, Chevalier de Marie'. In a macabre twist, his tomb and Marie's hang open, as though the two corpses have sought each other out after death.

The chateau's interior can only be visited by guided tour (hourly), but the beautiful gardens (with tearooms and treasure hunt for kids), designed by Marie in a classic French formal style, can be wandered freely. Dozens more of Henry's creations sit alongside challenging works by contemporary sculptors in the chateau and gardens. Pride of place in

A HAPHAZARD AFFAIR *Nicola Williams*

'Perfumery is an art, an innovation. You have to have a vision.'

Jacques Maurel, Galimard perfumer

I don't wear perfume. Never have. The most I can stomach is a quick dash of Clarins' *Eau Dynamisante* before dashing out. Even then, mood depending, the scent makes me nauseous. So creating my own perfume was a prime opportunity to hit upon a scent that didn't make me want to leap in the shower after 10 minutes.

Sitting at my allotted 'organ' faced by a mesmerising line-up of 127 'notes' (miniature ginger-glass bottles of scent), I instantly had to pick two of nine – 'quickly, with no hesitation' explained Galimard perfumer Jacques Maurel. A *nez* (nose) for 43 years and more Grassois than Grasse (his grandfather was a *nez*), Monsieur Maurel entered his first factory when he was 22. Professional noses, of which there are 250 worldwide, combine a natural gift with several years of very hard study and a monklike lifestyle (no alcohol, smoking, coffee, garlic and spicy food) to identify – from no more than a whiff – 6000 or so scents.

My choice of two sealed the 'families' of notes my perfume would be created from: *boisée* (woody) and *fleurie* (flowery). From there on, it was a mere matter of selecting three *fond* (base) notes to fix the fragrance and ensure it lingered, three middle (heart) notes to create its unique and naturally irresistible character, and three top (peak) notes to create that vital first impression when the perfume touches the skin.

On paper, the architecture of a perfume is simple. In reality, I'd clearly smoked far too many cigarettes at university, gorged on too much late-night chicken madras, and drunk way over the odds. After five minutes, my nostrils were reeling: green amber, sandalwood, vanilla, hyacinth, lily of the valley, civet (nose shock or what), hare (unpleasant animal smell, extracted from the secretion of a cat's gland according to the poster on the wall), rose petals (sickly sweet), woody complex, sweet muse, Bavaria mousse. The fact that many of the bottles contained not one, but several scents premixed did little to aid my increasing olfactory bewilderment. At the 'organ' behind me, two little girls were picking names for their perfectly honed perfumes: *Belle* (Beautiful), *Les 2 Princesses* (The Two Princesses), *Les Fées* (The Fairies)...

'Hmm. It's good. Add a rose for fullness' commanded Monsieur Maurel, plucking a bunch of rose-based bottles from my organ and plonking them in front of me. Wild rose, oriental rose, rose petals...my nose felt it had roses coming out of its ears. 'Hmm. It's fuller now,' he observed, 5ml of oriental rose into the glass beaker later, before striding off to leave me floundering in heart notes.

It must have been more straightforward for early perfumers. They quite simply left fresh flower petals to swim in animal fat for three months then mixed the fatty mess with alcohol to extract the essences. Unlike today (synthetic products are used in the main), they created perfumes exclusively from flowers: 600kg of fresh flower petals for every 1L of essence.

'Fresh and fruity with strong amber overtones – very modern' was Monsieur Maurel's analysis of my finished fragrance, which, he informed me – actually contained between 100 and 500 different products, most of which would have macerated for a month already. 'Leave it to rest for another 10 days to complete the maceration process,' he added as I jaunted off with my 100ml glass bottle of exclusively designed, one-of-a-kind perfume that I'd never wear. *Haphazard*, the label read.

the chateau's courtyard is creepy *The God of Humormystics* – Henry's wedding present to his wife!

Outside the chateau wall, coastal paths lead from sandy **Plage du Château** to **Plage de la Raguette** (10 minutes) and **Plage de la Rague** (30 minutes). Inland, a 3.4km-long botanical trail uncovers flora and fauna on **San Peyre**, a hill

above La Napoule; the **tourist office** (☎ 04 93 49 95 31; www.ot-mandelieu.fr; 272 av Henry Clews; 🍷 10am-12.30pm & 2-6pm Mon-Fri) has details.

From adjacent pleasure-boat harbour Port de la Napoule, **Compagnie Maritime Napouloise** (☎ 04 93 49 15 88; adult/4-6yr return €12/7; 🍷 1 to 3 daily Apr-Sep) runs seasonal boats to/from Île Ste-Marguerite.

Théoule-sur-Mer

Neighbouring Théoule-sur-Mer, 2.5km south along the coast, is dominated by **Château de la Théoule**, another privately owned folly (and ex-18th-century soap factory) built in the same architectural style as Château de la Napoule. Even more eccentric is bubblelike **Palais Bulles** (think Teletubby house crossed with old diving helmets), hidden amid trees 5km west of the small seaside resort. Hungarian architect Antti Lovag designed it in the 1960s and couturier Pierre Cardin bought it in 1989. Unfortunately, the only chance to get a glimpse of its interior is during July's **Festival International du Palais Bulles** (www.palaisbulles.com; tickets €20), which brings concerts and other cultural events to a theatre inside; the **tourist office** (☎ 04 93 49 28 28; www.theoule-sur-mer.org; 1 corniche d'Or; ☎ 9am-7pm Mon-Sat, 10am-1pm Sun) has details.

Le Trayas

Needles of red rock tumble into the sea at Le Trayas, a pretty seaside resort and the highest point of the corniche, 7km south of Théoule-sur-Mer. The road gets more dramatic as it twists and turns along the coastline past the **Forêt Domäne de l'Estérel**. There are several parking areas along this stretch of the corniche where you can stop to picnic, and there are good views of the spectacular **Rocher de St-Barthélemy** (St-Bartholomew's Rock) and **Cap Roux** from the **Pointe de l'Observatoire**, 2km south of Le Trayas.

At the northern end of Le Trayas, a largish beach is tucked in **Anse de la Figueirette**. Stop here to picnic.

Agay

Agay, 10km or so south of Le Trayas, is celebrated for its fine views of the **Rade d'Agay**, a perfect horseshoe-shaped bay embraced by sandy beaches and abundant pine trees. Numerous water sports and boat excursions are offered at busy, central Plage d'Agay. The **tourist office** (☎ 04 94 82 01 85; www.agay.fr in French; place Giannetti; ☎ 9am-noon & 2-6pm Mon-Sat), opposite the beach, has details.

Agay is also a departure point for treks into the Massif de l'Estérel: follow rte de Valescure (which, out of town, turns into the D100) inland, from where various walking trails are signposted, including to **Pic de l'Ours** (496m), **Pic du Cap Roux** (452m) and **Pic d'Aurelle** (323m). All three peaks offer stunning panoramas. Forest

rangers lead guided **nature walks** (€10, three hours) into the massif: pick up an itinerary from the tourist office.

Le Dramont

A military semaphore crowns Cap du Dramont, aka Cap Estérel, at the southern end of the Rade d'Agay. From the semaphore there are unbeatable views of the Golfe de Fréjus, flanked by the **Lion de Terre** and the **Lion de Mer**, two red porphyritic rocks jutting out of the sea. Trails lead to the semaphore from **Plage du Débarquement** in Le Dramont on the western side of the cape. In Agay, a path starts from the car park near **Plage du Camp Long**, at the eastern foot of the cape. Both beaches are accessible from the N98.

From Plage du Débarquement you can sail (15 minutes) to **Île d'Or** (Golden Island), a pinprick island uninhabited bar a mock 'medieval' tower. Tintin fans may recognise it: the Île d'Or inspired Hergé's design for *The Black Island*. Catamarans and sailboards can be hired from the wooden hut on the beach here.

Overlooking Plage du Débarquement, 1km west of Boulouris on the Corniche de l'Estérel (N98), is a large **memorial park** (blvd de la 36ème DI du Texas) commemorating the landing of the 36th US Infantry Division on the beach here on 15 August 1944.

Sleeping

Le Relais des Calanques (☎ 04 94 44 14 06; rte des Escalles; d low/high season from €80/100, mains €15; ☎ restaurant lunch & dinner Wed-Sun; P ☎) One of the few places to stay along this dramatic coastal stretch, this old-world inn sits wedged, *les pieds dans l'eau* (feet in the water), between *calanques* (rocky inlets). From the poolside garden with palm and fig trees, or from the leather armchair in reception, views of the red-rocked sea are striking. Find it south of Le Trayas on the N98.

Eating

There are two wildly contrasting, local hot spots in La Napoule.

La Mandarin (☎ 04 93 49 98 83; 18 rue de la Poste; mains €10-15; ☎ dinner Thu-Tue) What you see is what you get at this reader-recommended, lovable eating spot run by a Dutch couple. It's cosy, friendly and cooks up quintessential Provençal fare at prices that keep locals hooked.

L'Oasis (☎ 04 93 49 95 52; www.oasis-raimbault.com; 6 rue Jean Honoré Carle; menus €80, €120, €145 & €155; ☎ lunch & dinner Tue-Sun, dinner Mon) Two shiny Michelin stars lure foodies from far and wide to this gastronomic temple, which is run with real panache by the Raimbault brothers (Stéphane cooks, François is the pastry chef). Dining at this oasis is between century-old plane trees in a romantic, lantern-lit patio garden, while the cuisine is Mediterranean with a generous dash of the Orient. Cakes, pastries and bread to die for are sold in the adjoining boutique.

Getting There & Away

BUS

RafaelBus (☎ 04 94 83 87 63) runs the 'Ligne de la Corniche d'Or' service along the Corniche de l'Estérel from St-Raphaël to Le Trayas (at least hourly). From Cannes, buses (five to eight daily) stop at Boulouris, Cap du Dramont/Le Dramont, Agay and Le Trayas. A single fare is €1.30.

TRAIN

Train stations at Mandelieu-La Napoule (4km north of La Napoule), Théoule-sur-Mer, Le Trayas, Agay and Le Dramont are served by the Nice-Cannes-St-Raphaël-Fréjus-Les Arcs-Druguignan train route. Trains run up to 11 times daily between St-Raphaël and Nice, stopping at all the smaller resort stations. From Les Arcs-Druguignan to Nice, only two trains a day stop at the resorts: change in St-Raphaël.

There are many more trains from Cannes to St-Raphaël, from where there are regular buses to the smaller places.

ST-RAPHAËL

pop 31,196

Once upon a time it was a fishing hamlet... until along came mayor Félix Martin (1842-99) who took advantage of the new railway to promote his seaside town and lure in tourists. It worked. By the 1920s St-Raphaël was a fabulous place to be seen: F Scott Fitzgerald wrote *Tender Is the Night* here, while wife Zelda spent her time drink-diving. During WWII it was a primary landing base of US and French troops.

St-Raphaël has lost some teeth and gained a potbelly since its glamour days. Its old town was bombed during the war, and the sprawling seafront suburbs have become

entangled with those of Fréjus, 2km away. Beaches, water sports and diving – it's one of France's leading centres – remain its prime assets.

A two-lane cycling track along the coast links St-Raphaël with Toulon, a good 100km away.

Orientation

The old town is off rue de la Liberté, and the new centre is neatly packed between rue Waldeck Rousseau and promenade de Latre de Tassigny, which leads west to the Vieux Port. St-Raphaël's beach activities sprawl as far east as Port Santa Lucia (a modern pleasure port 1.5km along the coast) and 2km west to Fréjus.

Information

Cyber Bureau (☎ 04 94 95 29 36; cyber.bureau@free.fr; 123 rue Waldeck Rousseau; per 30/60min €4/6; ☎ 9am-7pm Mon-Fri, 9am-noon Sat) Inside the train-station shopping centre.

Post office (☎ 04 94 19 52 00; av Victor Hugo)

Tourist office (☎ 04 94 19 52 52; www.saint-raphael.com; rue Waldeck Rousseau; ☎ 9am-7pm Jul & Aug, 9am-12.30pm & 2-6.30pm Mon-Sat Sep-Jun)

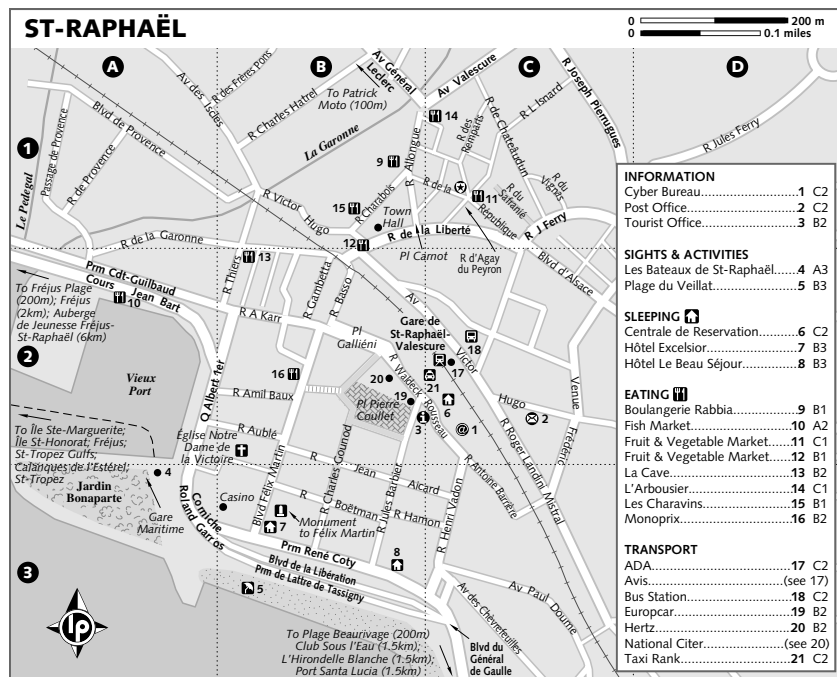
Activities

Pick from sand or shingle: **Plage du Veillat**, the main beach, has shining golden sand; to the east, **Plage Beurivage** is covered in small pebbles. From June to September you can water-ski, parascend or ride the waves in a rubber tyre from most beaches along this stretch of coastline. **Port Santa Lucia**, a hop east again, is a water-sports hub with plenty of places to rent windsurfers, kayaks and catamarans.

St-Raphaël is a leading diving centre, thanks to the many WWII shipwrecks off its coast. Diving club **Club sous l'Eau** (☎ 04 94 95 90 33; www.clubsousleau.com; ☎ 9am-2.30pm Apr-Nov, by appointment Dec-Mar) at Port Santa Lucia can help you zoom in.

BOAT EXCURSIONS

Les Bateaux de St-Raphaël (☎ 04 94 95 17 46; www.tmr-saintraphael.com; quai Amiral Nomy, Vieux Port) organises boat excursions to St-Tropez and Port Grimaud (p355); the Calanques de l'Estérel (adult/child two to nine years €13/7); along the Corniche de l'Estérel (€14/8); and to Île Ste-Marguerite (full day €23/12, half-day €16/9).



Festivals & Events

St-Raphaël's fishing community honours its patron saint, St Peter, every August with a two-day **Fête de la St-Pierre des Pêcheurs**. Local fishermen, dressed in traditional costume, joust Provençal-style from flat-bottomed boats moored in the harbour.

Every year St-Raphaël hosts a number of Provençal **jousting competitions**; members of the Société des Joutes Raphaëloises (Raphaëloises Jousting Society) practise in boats around the Vieux Port.

Sleeping

Book hotel and self-catering accommodation through St-Raphaël's **Centrale de Reservation** (☎ 04 94 19 10 60; reservation@saint-raphael.com; rue Waldeck Rousseau; ☎ 9am-7pm Jul & Aug, 9am-12.30pm & 2-6.30pm Mon-Sat Sep-Jun).

CHAMBRES D'HÔTES

The tourist office has around eight B&Bs on its books.

L'Hirondelle Blanche (☎ 04 94 11 84 03; www.hirondelle-blanche.fr; blvd de Général de Gaulle; d low/high season from €54/84; ☎ P) The pick of the bunch, an

elegant early-20th-century villa is the venue for this six-room *maison d'hôte* with period furnishings and crisp white walls inside and out. Even better, the White Swallow peers out to sea – as do all bar one of the rooms. Find it on the beachfront, a five-minute stroll from Port Santa Lucia.

HOTELS

Hôtel Le Beau Séjour (☎ 04 94 95 03 75; www.hotelbeau-sejour.fr; promenade René Coty; s/d/tr/q low season incl breakfast from €45/61/77/96, high season €58/72/87/119; ☎ Apr-Oct; ☎) Rates quoted are the cheapest rooms in the house at this peppermint-green and red two-star hotel on the seafront. Note: you'll be hard-pushed to squeeze large modern-day suitcases into the rattly old (albeit charming) lift. Superior rooms with sea view are almost twice the price. Parking costs €8.

Hôtel Excelsior (☎ 04 94 95 02 42; www.excelsior-hotel.com; promenade René Coty; d incl breakfast with town/sea view from €140/160; ☎) Further along the prom is the Excelsior, an elegant old pile near the casino. It's graced with a beautiful tea terrace overlooking the sea, two restaurants and an English-style pub.

HOSTELS

Auberge de Jeunesse Fréjus-St-Raphaël (☎ 04 94 53 18 75; frejus-st-raphael@fuj.org; chemin du Couillier; dm incl breakfast €15; ☎ reception 8-11am & 5.30-8.30pm Mar-mid-Nov) Set in a seven-hectare park of umbrella pines near Fréjus Ville, this rambling manor house of an HI-affiliated hostel is prime backpacker material. Arriving by train, get off at St-Raphaël (6km away), take bus 7, 10 or 13 to the 'Les Chênes' stop, cross the roundabout and pick up chemin du Couillier.

Eating

Les Charavins (☎ 04 94 95 03 76; 36 rue Charbois; mains €14-24; ☎ lunch & dinner Thu & Fri, lunch Sat & Sun) What a treasure this quaint, old-world wine bar is! Sit around a Parisian bistro table and admire the floor-to-ceiling rows of vintages (300-odd to taste in all), while tucking into delicious *cuisine du marché* cooked to a turn by top Belgian chef (who once ran a Michelin-starred inn) Philippe Furnémont.

La Cave (☎ 04 94 95 79 62; cnr rue de la Thiers & rue Garonne; menus €28 & €38; ☎ lunch & dinner Tue-Sun) A striking modern façade makes the Cellar stand out. Inside, an equally contemporary design frames creative dishes such as *nems de thon rouge* (red tuna spring rolls) and *escalopes de ris de veau en croûte de noisette* (veal sweetbreads encrusted with hazelnuts).

L'Arbousier (☎ 04 94 95 25 00; 4 av Valescure; lunch menu €28, dinner menus €36, €46 & €58; ☎ lunch & dinner Wed-Sun) Its fabulous flowery garden is equal to the reputation of the town's top gastronomic choice. Chef Philippe Troncy cooks up traditional seasonal fare in a staunchly traditional setting – his *carpaccio de langoustines* (wafer-thin slices of raw saltwater lobster) and other shellfish creations are sublime.

Self-catering:

Fruit & Vegetable Markets (place de la République & place Victor Hugo) Daily.

Fish Market (cours Jean Bart) Catch of the day, fresh each morning, at the Vieux Port.

Boulangerie Rabbia (☎ 04 94 95 07 82; 29 rue Al-longue) Family bakery since 1885 selling *tarte Tropézienne* and *farinette Niçois* (bread stuffed with olives, bacon bits, anchovy or goat cheese).

Monoprix (58 blvd Félix Martin)

Getting There & Away BUS

St-Raphaël's **bus station** (☎ 04 94 83 87 63; av Victor Hugo), located behind the train station (accessible via the escalators on the station platforms),

doubles as Fréjus' main bus station. For information on buses to/from Fréjus, see p336.

Services include buses running to and from St-Raphaël and Draguignan (€5, 1¼ hours, hourly Monday to Saturday, six per day Sunday) via Fréjus; along the Corniche de l'Estérel to Le Trayas; and St-Tropez (€10.20, 1¼ hours, six to eight daily) via Grimaud (€8, 55 minutes) and Ste-Maxime (€6, 35 minutes). Services are less frequent in winter.

TRAIN

The Nice-Marseille train line runs through Fréjus and St-Raphaël's **Gare de St-Raphaël-Valescure** (rue Waldeck Rousseau). Some trains to/from Nice (€9.60, 45 minutes, every 30 minutes) stop at the villages along the Corniche de l'Estérel. There's also a direct service to Les Arcs-Draguignan.

Getting Around

Patrick Moto (☎ 04 94 53 65 99; 199 av Général Lederc) rents out mountain bikes (summer only) for around €15 per day. Pick up a taxi in front of the train station or call ☎ 04 94 83 24 24.

Car-rental agencies:

ADA (☎ 04 94 95 01 83; train station)

Avis (☎ 04 94 95 60 42; train station)

Europcar (☎ 04 94 95 56 87; 56 rue Waldeck Rousseau)

Hertz (☎ 04 94 95 48 68; 36 rue Waldeck Rousseau)

National Citer (☎ 04 94 40 27 89; 20 rue Waldeck Rousseau)

FRÉJUS

pop 48,000 / elev 250m

Roman ruins are the trump card of Fréjus, settled by Massiliots (Greek colonists from Marseille) and colonised by Julius Caesar around 49 BC as Forum Julii. Its appealing old town is a maze of pastel buildings, shady plazas and winding alleys, climaxing with extraordinary medieval paintings in an episcopal complex wedged between a trio of market-busy squares. Come dusk, concerts and plays fill the ruins of its Roman theatre with magic during July's Les Nuits Aureliennes.

By the water, sandy Fréjus Plage sits on the fringe of the chic new port, full of seafood restaurants with grossly inflated prices. An evening market spills across the sand most nights in season.

Orientation

Fréjus comprises hillside Fréjus Ville, 3km from the seafront, and Fréjus Plage, on the

Golfe de Fréjus. The modern port is at the western end of Blvd de la Libération and its continuation, Blvd d'Alger. The Roman remains are mostly in Fréjus Ville.

Information

Post office (264 av Aristide Briand)

Tourist office (☎ 04 94 51 83 83; www.frejus.fr in French; 325 rue Jean Jaurès; ☎ 10am-noon & 2.30-6.30pm Mon-Sat, 10am-noon & 3-6pm Sun Jul & Aug, 10am-noon & 2-6pm Mon-Sat Sep-Jun)

Tourist office kiosk (summer) By the beach, opposite 11 Blvd de la Libération.

Sights

GRUPE ÉPISCOPAL

Fréjus' star sight is the **Groupe Épiscopal** (Cathedral Close; ☎ 04 94 51 26 30; 58 rue de Fleury; adult/under 18yr €5/free; ☎ 9am-6.30pm Jun-Sep, 9am-noon & 2-5pm Tue-Sun Oct-May), slap bang in the centre of town on the foundations of a Roman temple. At the heart of the complex is an 11th- and 12th-century **cathedral**, one of the first Gothic buildings in the region (although it retains certain Roman features).

The beautiful carved wooden doors at the main entrance were added during the Renaissance. The octagonal 5th-century **baptistry** (which incorporates eight Roman columns into its structure) is one of the oldest Christian buildings in France, and is exceptionally well preserved.

Stairs from the narthex lead up to the **cloister**, which looks onto a fine courtyard with a well-tended garden and well. Here you'll find the most stunning feature of the complex – its utterly unique 14th- and 15th-century painted **wooden ceiling panels**; 500 of the original 1200 survive. Angels, devils, hunters, acrobats, monsters and a cheery-looking man riding a pig gallivant round the vivid comic-book frames: bring binoculars for a better view or rent a pair at the ticket desk for €1.

ROMAN RUINS

West of the old town, past the ancient **Porte des Gauls**, is the mostly rebuilt 1st- and 2nd-century **Les Arènes** (☎ 04 94 51 34 31; rue Henri Vadon; adult/under 12yr €2/free; ☎ 9.30am-12.30pm & 2-6pm Tue-Sun May-Oct, 9.30am-12.30pm & 2-5pm Tue-Sun Nov-Apr). It was one of Gaul's largest amphitheatres (seating 10,000 spectators) and is used for concerts today.

At the southeastern edge of the old city is the 3rd-century **Porte d'Orée** (rue des Moulins), the

only remaining arcade of monumental Roman thermal baths. North of the old town are the ruins of a **Théâtre Romain** (☎ 04 94 53 58 75; rue du Théâtre Romain; adult/under 12yr €2/free; ☎ 9.30am-12.30pm & 2-6pm Tue-Sun May-Oct, to 5pm Nov-Apr). Part of the stage and the theatre's outer walls are all that remain.

Northeast, towards La Tour de Mare, you pass a section of a 40km-long **aqueduc** (aqueduct; av du 15 Corps d'Armée), which once carried water to Roman Fréjus. Continuing 500m further north, you reach **Villa Aurélienne** (☎ 04 94 52 90 49; av du Général d'Armée Calliès; admission free; ☎ villa 2-5pm during exhibitions, park 9am-7pm Mon-Fri, 9am-noon & 2-7pm Sat & Sun summer, 9am-5pm Mon-Fri, 9am-noon & 2-6pm Sat & Sun winter), a peachy manor built in 1880 that hosts temporary photography and art exhibitions. Its stunning 22-hectare park is crossed by another section – five moss-covered arches – of the aqueduct.

CHAPELLE NOTRE DAME DE JÉRUSALEM

Also known as the **Chapelle Cocteau** (☎ 04 94 53 27 06; av Nicolai, La Tour de Mare; adult/under 12yr €2/free; ☎ 9.30am-12.30pm & 2-6pm Tue-Sun May-Oct, to 5pm Nov-Apr), this was one of the last pieces of work embarked upon by Jean Cocteau (1889–1963), best known for the fishermen's chapel he decorated in Villefranche-sur-Mer (see p280). Cocteau began work on Chapelle Notre Dame in Fréjus in 1961, but it remained incomplete until the artist's legal heir, Édouard Dermit, finished his former companion's work in 1988. The altar is made from a millstone.

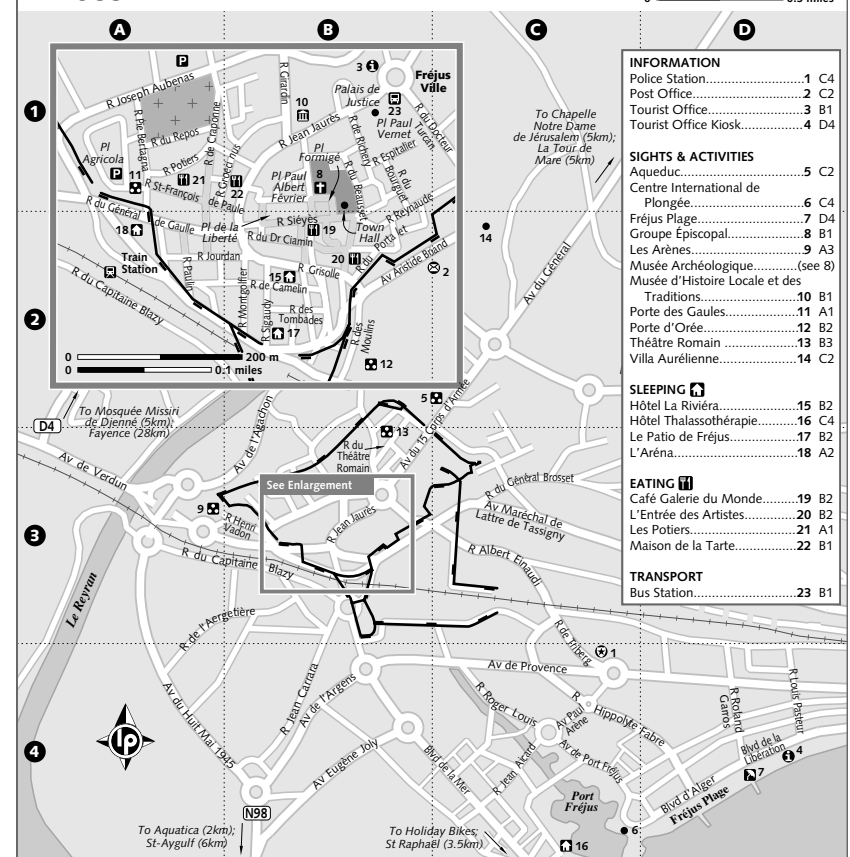
The chapel is about 5km northeast of the old city in the quarter of La Tour de Mare (served by bus 13), on the N7 towards Cannes.

MUSEUMS

Adjoining Fréjus' episcopal complex is the **Musée Archéologique** (☎ 04 94 52 15 78; place Calvin; adult/under 12yr €2/free; ☎ 9.30am-12.30pm & 2-6pm Tue-Sun May-Oct, 9.30am-12.30pm & 2-5pm Tue-Sun Nov-Apr), housing permanent pieces including a two-headed statue of Hermes and a magnificent 3rd-century leopard mosaic. It also puts on temporary exhibitions of finds from archaeological digs.

Local history and traditions are the focus of Fréjus' **Musée d'Histoire Locale et des Traditions** (☎ 04 94 51 64 01; 153 rue Jean Jaurès; adult/under 12yr €2/free; ☎ 9.30am-12.30pm & 2-6pm Tue-Sun May-Oct, to 5pm Tue-Sun Nov-Apr).

FRÉJUS



MOSQUÉE MISSIRI DE DJENNÉ

A collection of surprising war memorials and troop-related buildings lies scattered around Fréjus, including this **mosque** (rue des Combattants d'Afrique du Nord), which is a replica of one

in Djenné, Mali. It was built in 1930 for the Sudanese troops stationed at a marine base in Fréjus, and lies 5km north of town on the rte de Bagnols-en-Forêt (the D4 towards Fayence).

CENT SAVER

A seven-day **Fréjus'Pass** (€4.60) covers admission to the Roman amphitheatre and theatre, archaeological and local history museums, and Cocteau's chapel (otherwise, it's €2 per sight). To visit the Groupe Épiscopal as well but a seven-day **Fréjus'Pass Intégral** (€6.20) instead. Participating sights sells passes.

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TRANSPORT	
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Activities

Kids never tire of the giant water slides, rubber rings and ride-the-wave madness at **Aquatica** (☎ 04 94 51 82 51; www.parc-aquatica.com; adult/under 12yr €23/16.50; ☎ 10am-7pm Jul & Aug, 10am-6pm Jun & Sep), a giant water park out of town on the southbound N98. Children under 1m tall get in free.

Fréjus Plage, lined with 1950s architectural delights, is an excellent sandy beach. Next door at the new port, built in the 1980s, **Centre**

International de Plongée (☎ 04 94 52 34 99; www.cip-frejus.com; quai de la Foudre) is the local diving school.

Tours

The tourist office organises guided tours of Roman and medieval Fréjus (adult/child under 12 years €5/free, two hours) and seasonal nature walks (adult/child under 12 years €8/5, three hours) in the surrounding forests of the Massif de l'Estérel.

Sleeping

Fréjus has a dozen or so camp sites and plenty of hotels in town and by the sea; the tourist office has details.

CHAMBRES D'HÔTES

Le Patio de Fréjus (☎ 04 94 17 27 43; www.lepatio-frejus.com; 93 rue des Tombades; d incl breakfast €70) The Fréjus Patio is precisely that – a patio wrapped around an 18th-century *maison de village* (townhouse), before-breakfast strolling distance from the cathedral and central square. The *maison d'hôte* has just three rooms and is one of a kind in the old town; advance reservations are essential.

HOTELS

Hôtel La Riviéra (☎ 04 94 51 31 46; 90 rue Grisolles; d with washbasin/shower/shower & toilet €30/35/40) A backpackers hotel in the best sense, this rambling old building with mustard façade and blue shutters has rooms of all shapes, sizes and facilities.

L'Aréna (☎ 04 94 17 09 40; www.arena-hotel.com; 145 rue du Général de Gaulle; s/d/tr/q low season from €68/85/110/110, high season from €90/100/140/160, lunch menu €25, dinner menus €40 & €55; (P) (X) (A) (E)) A three-star hotel with flower-lined garden terrace and the reliable Logis de France hallmark, L'Aréna is the place to enjoy the most wonderful breakfasts, or to lounge by the pool and indulge in refined, imaginative cuisine in its highly rated restaurant: what about ravioli delicately stuffed with lobster, followed by nougat ice cream with almonds and caramelised ginger? Garage parking costs €10.

Hôtel Thalassothérapie (☎ 04 94 52 55 00; www.hotelthalasso-portfrejus.fr; Port-Fréjus West; d low/mid/high season from €72/88/110; (P) (X) (A) (E)) Cocoon yourself and your kids (the place has a babysitting service and special spa just for teenagers) in a heady whirl of essential-oil massages, seaweed

baths, hot jet showers and other treatments at this spa centre by the sea. True self-pamperers should trade in the nightly hotel rates for a package (minimum three nights). Parking costs €5.

Eating

Port Fréjus proffers plenty of cafés and restaurants with bobbing-boat views. In Fréjus Ville try place Paul Albert Février or place de la Liberté for a simple lunch or, for something a tad more sophisticated, try one of the following.

L'Entrée des Artistes (☎ 04 94 40 11 60; 63 place St-François de Paule; plat du jour €10, lunch menu €16, dinner menus €22 & €32; (X) lunch & dinner Tue-Sat) Johanna and Fabrice are the names behind the Artists' Entrance, which is a contemporary eating space with outside seating on an inconspicuous old-town square. The easiest way to find it from the cathedral is to walk from place Formigé along rue Désaugiers, then turn right down traverse Castelli, which is an alleyway.

Les Potiers (☎ 04 94 51 33 74; 135 rue Potiers; menus €23 & €34; (X) lunch & dinner Thu-Mon, dinner Wed; (X)) The cream of the town's restaurants, this quaint, civilised spot with a lime-green façade is tucked down a peaceful backstreet. Paintings by local artist Regis Sibris hang on the white walls and the fare is traditional French and Provençal.

Café Galerie du Monde (☎ 04 94 17 52 90; 49 rue Désaugiers/place Formigé; menus €12 & €19.50, salads/mains €8/14) This bustling café with mosaic tables beneath trees oozes atmosphere. Snag the table next to the fountain on place Formigé and admire the cathedral in the company of simple but hugely satisfying local fare cooked up by a pair of brothers.

For a picnic stop try **Maison de la Tarte** (☎ 04 94 51 17 34; 33 rue Jean Jaurès; (X) 6am-9pm Mon-Sat) for well-filled baguettes and a peachy array of decadent fruit tarts, sold by the slice (around €2).

Getting There & Away

BUS

From Fréjus **bus station** (AggloBus ☎ 04 94 53 78 46; place Paul Vernet) – a humble series of shelters around a roundabout – bus services run to St-Raphaël (€1.10, 20 to 35 minutes, every 15 or 20 minutes), Draguignan (€5, one hour, hourly), Nice and Marseille. Buses to/from St-Raphaël also stop at Fréjus train station.

TRAIN

The **train station** (rue du Capitaine Blazy) is on the Nice–Marseille train route, although few trains stop here beyond services to/from St-Raphaël (€1.20, two minutes, hourly).

Getting Around

Bus 6 (which leaves hourly) is the service that links the beaches of Fréjus Plage with

place Paul Vernet in Fréjus Ville. Bus 13 runs between Fréjus' train station and bus station and Cocteau's Chapelle Notre Dame de Jérusalem. Tickets can be purchased from bus drivers (€1.10/8.40 per ticket/carnet of 10).

Holiday Bikes (☎ 04 94 40 16 62; 238 av de Verdun) rents out bicycles/50cc scooters/125cc scooters for €12/30/55 per day.

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