

# France

## HIGHLIGHTS

- **Paris** No other city comes close to France's unmissable capital, with its world-class museums, magnificent monuments, buzzing bars and streetside cafés (p371)
- **The Côte d'Azur** Live the high life along France's sun-drenched Mediterranean Coast, especially in the vibrant cities of Nice (p429) and Marseille (p423)
- **The Loire** Check out the country's finest châteaux around the gorgeous Loire Valley (p400)
- **The Dordogne** Step back in time in the prehistoric caves of the Vézère Valley (p413)
- **Brittany** Escape the crowds along the windswept cliffs of Brittany's northwest coast (p398)

## FAST FACTS

- **Area** 551,000 sq km (twice the size of Britain)
- **Budget** €50-60 per day
- **Capital** Paris
- **Country codes** ☎ 33; international code ☎ 01 Paris, ☎ 02 Northwest, ☎ 03 Northeast, ☎ 04 Southeast & Corsica, ☎ 05 Southwest
- **Famous for** Paris, croissants, wine, cheese, terrible driving
- **Head of State** President Jacques Chirac
- **Language** French
- **Money** Euro (€); A\$1 = €0.60, CA\$1 = €0.68, ¥100 = €0.66, NZ\$1 = €0.51, UK£1 = €1.47, US\$ = €0.78
- **Phrases** *Bonjour* (hello), *au revoir* (goodbye), *s'il vous plait* (please), *merci* (thank you)



- **Population** 60.6 million
- **Visas** Not required for EU citizens and citizens of Iceland, Norway, Australia, the USA, Canada, New Zealand, Japan and Israel (see p440)

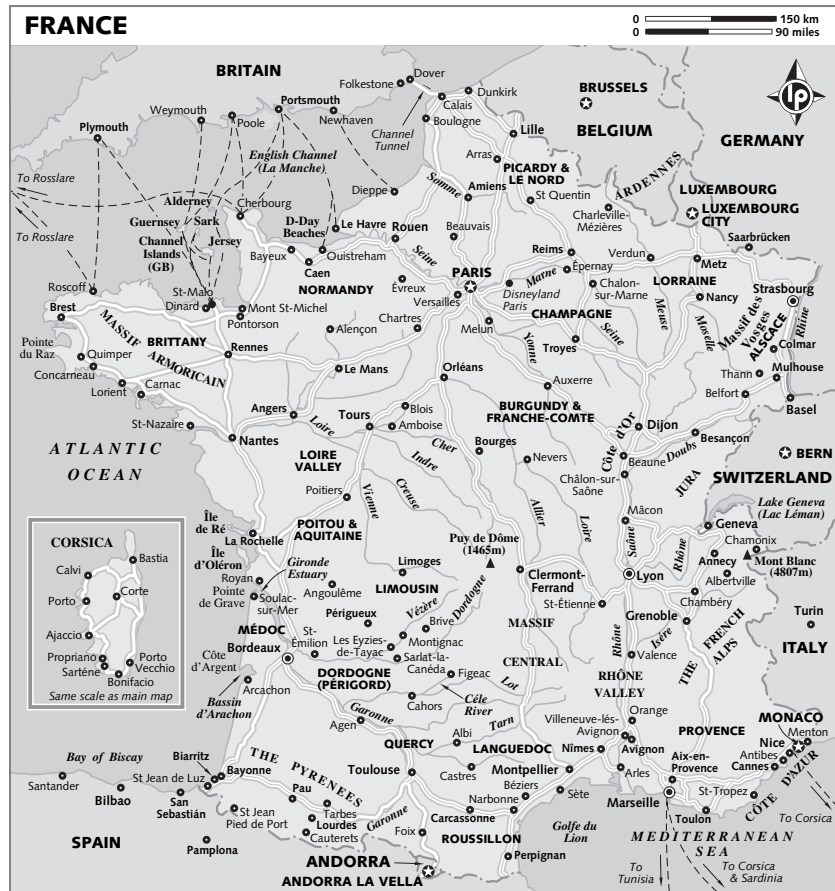
## TRAVEL HINT

All of France's public phones operate with a *télécarte*; get one with a scratch-off *code* for the best international rates. There are fantastic discounts on SNCF trains for under 25s and students – a *Carte 12-25* (€49) is an excellent investment if you're travelling a lot by train.

## ROAMING FRANCE

Paris is well positioned as a launch pad for exploring the north of France, including Normandy and Brittany, as well as the Loire Valley and Burgundy to the south. Base yourself in Nice for exploring the Côte d'Azur.

She might be a grand old dame, but *douce France* is still one of the belles of the European ball. Even if you've never set foot on French soil, it's a place that already seems familiar – every time you've gazed at an impressionist painting, watched a New Wave film or sipped on sparkling champagne, you've been letting a little bit of Gallic flair seep into your soul.



It's certainly a place where you can enjoy the finer things in life, whether that means wandering around one of France's world-class museums or indulging in some of the fabulous cuisine for which the country is justly famous. But modern-day France is a real melting pot, shot through with streaks of Celtic, Basque and North African culture, as well as a reputation for artistic invention and a fondness for the architectural avant-garde.

From the broad boulevards of Paris to the grand châteaux of the Loire Valley, this is the country for which the word *chic* was invented – seductive and aloof, old-fashioned and forward-looking, enthralling and exasperating in equal measures, but always characterised by a certain *je ne sais quoi*.

## HISTORY

France's early history is encapsulated in the *Astérix* comic books: the Celtic Gauls arrived between 1500 and 500 BC, and were under Roman rule from 52 BC until the 5th century. After the Roman Empire's decline, France was governed by a series of monarchs, includ-

ing Charlemagne (from 800). William the Conqueror extended French rule to England in 1066.

During the Reformation, fighting between Catholics and Protestants brought the French state close to disintegration. However, that paled beside the seismic events of the 1780s,

when the population rose up against Louis XVI and his queen, Marie Antoinette. On 14 July 1789, a Parisian mob stormed the Bastille, unleashing the French Revolution. The vicious Reign of Terror followed; thousands of aristocrats were publicly guillotined, a fate shared by Louis XVI and his queen in 1793.

A young Corsican general by the name of Napoleon Bonaparte assumed power in 1799 and embarked on a quest to conquer Europe. Initially defeated and exiled to the island of Elba, he staged a short comeback before meeting his final defeat at Waterloo in 1815.

The subsequent years were marked by civil strife and political unrest, with monarchists and revolutionaries vying for power. Napoleon's nephew Louis-Napoleon Bonaparte seized power in 1851, declaring himself Emperor Napoleon III, but proved no match for his uncle in terms of military prowess: he embroiled France in various catastrophic conflicts, including the Crimean War (1853–56) and the Franco-Prussian War (1870–71).

Central to France's entry into WWI was the desire to regain Alsace and Lorraine, lost to Germany in 1871. This was achieved but at immense cost: 1.3 million killed and almost one million crippled. The Treaty of Versailles, signed in 1919, demanded punitive reparations from Germany, causing long-lasting bitterness – a fact that was later ruthlessly exploited by an Austrian house painter called Adolf Hitler.

Following the outbreak of WWII, the German *blitzkrieg* swept west with astonishing speed; by 1940 France had capitulated and the country was divided into an occupied zone in the north and the collaborationist Vichy regime in the south.

France had to wait four long years for liberation. On 6 June 1944, US, British and Canadian troops stormed the beaches of Normandy and pushed east towards Paris. General Charles de Gaulle, leader of the French government-in-exile, returned to France and established a provisional government.

Political power see-sawed over the next fifty years, a period that saw the end of French colonies in Vietnam and Algeria and the elections of several important French presidents, including Georges Pompidou (1911–74) and François Mitterrand (1916–96).

In 1995 Jacques Chirac was elected president. Seven years later, Chirac unexpectedly won again. The president gained new fans –

and enemies – in 2003 by spearheading opposition to the US-led war in Iraq. The US retaliated by lobbing insults across the Atlantic, but by 2004 relations between the two countries had been smoothed over (a little).

In May 2005, a national referendum on the European Constitution was rejected by French voters, causing huge embarrassment to the government. In October and November 2005, the country was rocked by several weeks of running battles between police and gangs of disenfranchised young people across France. The riots started in the poor, ethnically diverse *banlieue* (suburbs) of Paris, but quickly spread to several of the country's major cities.

More recently, in early 2006, huge student demonstrations forced the government to shelve a new labour law designed to combat France's high unemployment rate (currently one of the worst in Europe).

## THE CULTURE

France is a country whose citizens have attracted more stubborn stereotypes than any other in Europe. Arrogant, rude, bolshy, bureaucratic, sexist, chauvinistic, super chic and stylish are among many tags – true or not – attached to the supposedly garlic-eating, beret-wearing French.

Most citizens are extremely proud to be French and staunchly nationalistic to boot, a result of the country's republican stance that places nationality rather than religion at the top of the self-identity list. The conflict of religion and nationality is a source of considerable tension, especially among France's growing Muslim population – something that was clearly demonstrated during the ethnic riots of 2005.

## ARTS Literature

The philosophical work of Voltaire (1694–1778) and Jean-Jacques Rousseau dominated the 18th century. A century on, the poems and novels of Victor Hugo – *Les Misérables* and *Notre Dame de Paris* (The Hunchback of Notre Dame) among them – became landmarks of French Romanticism.

In 1857 two literary landmarks were published: *Madame Bovary* by Gustave Flaubert (1821–80) and a collection of poems by Charles Baudelaire (1821–67), *Les Fleurs du Mal* (The Flowers of Evil). Émile Zola

(1840–1902) meanwhile strove to convert novel-writing from an art to a science.

The expression of mental states was the aim of symbolists such as Paul Verlaine (1844–96). Verlaine's poems, alongside those of Arthur Rimbaud (1854–91), are seen as French literature's first modern poems.

After WWII, existentialism developed around the lively debates of Jean-Paul Sartre (1905–80), Simone de Beauvoir (1908–86) and Albert Camus (1913–60) in Paris' Left Bank cafés.

## Cinema & TV

Cinema is known as the *septième art* (seventh art) in France, and the French have taken their cinema extremely seriously ever since the Lumière brothers shot the world's first-ever motion picture in March 1895.

France's best-known cinematic movement was the *nouvelle vague* (new wave), which emerged in the late 1950s and the 1960s. With small budgets and no big-name stars, filmmakers produced uniquely personal films using real-life subject matter: Claude Chabrol, Alain Resnais, François Truffaut and Jean-Luc Godard (who directed the classic *À Bout de Souffle*) were all pioneers of the movement.

Big-name stars and nostalgic narratives were the dominant motifs in the 1980s. Claude Berri's presentation of prewar Provence in *Jean de Florette* (1986); Jean-Paul Rappeneau's *Cyrano de Bergerac* (1990) and *Bon Voyage* (2003) set in 1940s Paris; and *Astérix et Obélix: Mission Cléopâtre* (2001) – all starring France's best known (and biggest-nosed) actor Gérard Depardieu – found huge audiences in France and abroad.

*La Haine* (1995) directed by Mathieu Kassovitz, documented the bleak reality of life in the Parisian suburbs, and looks even more relevant in the wake of the recent riots. At the other end of the spectrum, *Le Fabuleux Destin de Amélie Poulain* (Amélie; 2001) is a feel-good story about a Parisian do-gooder, directed by Jean-Pierre Jeunet.

## Music

Jazz hit 1920s Paris, while the *chanson française* was revived in the 1930s by Édith Piaf and Charles Trenet. In the 1950s the Left Bank cabarets nurtured *chansonniers* (cabaret singers) such as Léo Ferré, Georges Brassens, Claude Nougaro, Jacques Brel and Serge Gainsbourg.

French pop music has evolved massively since the 1960s *yéyé* (imitative rock) days of Johnny Halliday. Particularly strong is world music, from Algerian *rai* and other North African music (such as Natacha Atlas) to Senegalese *mbalax* (Youssou N'Dour) and West Indian *zouk* (Zouk Machine). One musician who combines many of these elements is Paris-born Manu Chao.

Another hot musical export is Parisian electronic music from bands such as Daft Punk and Air. French rap was spearheaded in the 1990s by Senegal-born rapper MC Solaar and is a popular genre today.

## Architecture

Southern France is the place to find France's Gallo-Roman legacy, including the amphitheatre in Nîmes (p421).

Impressive Gothic structures include Avignon's pontifical palace (p428), the cathedral at Chartres (p388), and of course the Notre Dame Cathedral in Paris (p375).

Under Napoleon, many of Paris' best-known sights – including the Arc de Triomphe (p376) and the Arc du Carrousel at the Louvre (p376) – were constructed.

Art Nouveau (1850–1910) combined iron, brick, glass and ceramics in new ways. See for yourself in Paris's noodle-like metro entrances and inside the Musée d'Orsay (p377).

France is also renowned for its fondness for the architectural avant-garde, perhaps epitomised by Paris' Centre Pompidou (p376) and the glass pyramid outside the Louvre (p376).

### READING UP

For a sharp and funny look at the quirks and characteristics of the modern French – and how the rest of the world perceive them – pick up a copy of *Sixty Million Frenchmen Can't Be Wrong: Why We Love France but Not the French* by the Canadian journalists Jean-Benoit Nadeau and Julie Barlow. A recent addition to the massive French cooking canon is *French Women Don't Get Fat: The Secret Of Eating For Pleasure* by Mireille Guiliano, which explains how to have your cake and eat it too.

For a timeless Gallic read, Ernest Hemingway's *A Moveable Feast* is a classic account of life in pre-war Paris – so good you can almost smell the *Gitanes* smoke.

## Painting

An extraordinary flowering of artistic talent occurred in 19th- and 20th-century France. The impressionists, who endeavoured to capture the ever-changing aspects of reflected light, included Edouard Manet, Claude Monet, Edgar Degas, Camille Pissarro and Pierre-Auguste Renoir.

They were followed by the likes of Paul Cézanne, Paul Gauguin and Georges Seurat. A little later the Fauves, the most famous of whom was Henri Matisse, became known for their radical use of vibrant colour. France was also where Cubism was pioneered, principally by Pablo Picasso and Georges Braque.

## ENVIRONMENT

Hexagon-shaped France, the largest country in Western Europe, is hugged by water or mountains along every side except its northeastern boundary – a relatively flat frontier abutting Germany, Luxembourg and Belgium.

Its 3200km-long coastline encompasses everything from white chalk cliffs (Normandy) and treacherous promontories (Brittany) to beaches along the northern, western and southern coasts. Inland, five major river systems crisscross the country.

Europe's highest peak, Mt Blanc (4807m), spectacularly tops the French Alps which stagger along France's eastern border from Lake Geneva to the Côte d'Azur. To the north of Lake Geneva the Jura Range runs along the Swiss frontier, while the Pyrenees lace France's entire 450km-long border with Spain.

France has more mammals (around 110 species) than other country in Europe. Couple this with its 363 bird species, 30 amphibian types, 36 varieties of reptiles and 72 kinds of fish and wildlife-watchers are in paradise.

# TRANSPORT

## GETTING THERE & AWAY

### Air

**Air France** (code AF; ☎ 0 820 820 820; www.airfrance.com) and many other airlines travel regularly to Paris and other French cities, including Bordeaux, Lyon, Marseille, Nice, Strasbourg and Toulouse.

Cheap flights can be found online, or try agencies such as the French student travel company **OTU** (☎ 0820 81 78 17; www.otu.fr) and

**Nouvelles Frontières** (☎ 0825 00 08 25; www.nouvelles-frontieres.fr).

Budget airlines serving France:  
**bmiBaby** (code WW; www.bmibaby.com) Budget subsidiary of BMI.

**easyJet** (code U2; www.easyjet.com) Main UK budget carrier.

**Flybe** (code BE; www.flybe.com) Regional UK budget carrier.

**Ryanair** (code FR; www.ryanair.com) Mainly UK destinations.

**Transavia** (code HV; www.transavia.com) Budget subsidiary of KLM.

## Boat

Regular ferries travel to France from the UK, Channel Islands and Ireland. There are also links to Corsica, Sardinia and Tunisia from Marseille (p425) and to Corsica from Nice (p433).

### FROM THE UK

**Ferry Savers** (☎ 0870 990 8492; www.ferrysavers.com) guarantees the lowest prices on Channel crossings. Ferry companies might try to make it hard for people who use super cheap, one-day return tickets for one-way passage – a huge backpack is a dead giveaway.

### Brittany

From mid-March to mid-November, **Brittany Ferries** (☎ in UK 0870 366 5333, in France 0 825 828 828; www.brittany-ferries.com) links Plymouth to Roscoff (six hours, one to three per day). The one-way fare for foot passengers ranges from UK£23 to UK£73. There's also a daily crossing to St-Malo (8¼ hours); pedestrians pay from UK£48 one way.

From April to September, **Condor Ferries** (☎ in UK 0845 345 2000, in France 02 99 20 03 00; www.condorferries.com) has at least one daily ferry linking Weymouth with St-Malo (UK£41, seven to 10 hours). They also run services from both Poole and Weymouth to St-Malo via Jersey or Guernsey.

### Far Northern France

The Dover–Calais crossing (70 minutes to 1½ hours, 15 daily) is handled by **SeaFrance** (☎ in UK 0870 571 1711, in France ☎ 08 04 04 40 45; www.seafrance.com). Foot passenger fares start at UK£6 to UK£12 return. **P&O Ferries** (in UK ☎ 0870 598 0555, in France 0 825 013 013; www.poferies.com) also operates a Dover–Calais service (one to 1½ hours, 29 daily) from UK£18 one way for

foot passengers and €55 one way including a small car.

Ferries run by **Norfolk Line** (☎ in France 03 28 59 01 01; www.norfolkline.com) link Dunkirk with Dover, while **Speed Ferries** (☎ in UK 01304-20 3000, in France 03 21 10 50 00; www.speedferries.com) offers an ultra-fast catamaran service between Boulogne and Dover.

## Normandy

**Transmanche Ferries** (☎ 0800 917 1201; www.transmancheferries.com) operate the Newhaven–Dieppe route. The crossing (up to three daily) takes four hours. A one-way foot-passenger fare starts as low as UK£12; the one-way fare for a car and two adults starts from UK£33.

There's a 4¼-hour crossing from Poole to Cherbourg with **Brittany Ferries** (☎ in UK 0870 366 5333, in France 08 25 82 88 28; www.brittany-ferries.com). Foot passengers pay from UK£48 one way.

Brittany Ferries and Condor Ferries operate two or three car ferries a day (five hours by day, eight hours overnight) between Portsmouth and Cherbourg, and two daily catamarans from April to September. Foot passengers pay from UK£38 one way.

Brittany Ferries also has car-ferry services from Portsmouth to Caen (Ouistreham; six hours, three per day). Tickets cost the same as for Poole–Cherbourg.

## FROM IRELAND

Eurail pass holders pay 50% of the pedestrian fare for crossings between Ireland and France on Irish Ferries (make sure you book ahead).

**Irish Ferries** (☎ in Ireland 01 638 3333, in France 01 43 94 46 94; www.irishferries.ie) has overnight services from Rosslare to Cherbourg (18½ hours) or Roscoff (16 hours) every other day (three a week from mid-September to October). A foot passenger/car and driver costs from €56/99.

## Bus

Buses are slower and less comfortable than trains, but are cheaper, especially if you qualify for discounts (people under 26, over 60, teachers and students).

**Eurolines** (☎ 08 92 69 52 52, 01 43 54 11 99; www.eurolines.com) groups together 32 European coach operators and links points across Europe. Eurolines' website has information on fares, routes and bookings.

French coach company **Intercars** (☎ 08 92 89 80 80; www.intercars.fr in French) links France with

other European cities, notably Eastern Europe and Russia.

**Eurotunnel trains** (☎ in UK 0870 535 3535, in France 03 21 00 61 00; www.eurotunnel.com) whisk cars, motorcycles and coaches from Folkestone through the Channel Tunnel to Coquelles, 5km south-west of Calais. Shuttles run 24 hours a day, with up to five an hour during peak periods.

## Train

Rail services link France with practically every country in Europe. You can book tickets and get information from **Rail Europe** (www.rail-europe.com) up to two months ahead. In France, ticketing is handled by the **SNCF** (☎ 08 92 35 35 35; www.sncf.com).

The **Eurostar** (☎ in UK 0870 518 6186, in France 08 92 35 35 39; in France www.voyages-sncf.com, in UK www.eurostar.com) links London and Paris in two hours and 35 minutes. A 2nd-class single from London to Paris costs UK£149, or €223.50 in the opposite direction. Discounts are available for advance bookings, under 25s and students.

## GETTING AROUND

### Air

**Air France** (☎ 0820 820 820; www.airfrance.com) operates the greatest number of flights within France, although British budget carrier easyJet has flights linking Paris with Marseille, Nice and Toulouse.

Cheaper deals are available on weekdays and for bookings made at least three weeks in advance. Last-minute offers are posted on the Air France website every Wednesday.

## Bicycle

France is eminently easy to cycle around. A bicycle symbol on train timetables indicates that bicycles are allowed on particular trains. To transport your bike as baggage from door-to-door or station-to-station costs €49; for more info consult www.velo.sncf.com.

## Bus

Buses are used extensively for short-distance travel within *départements*, especially in rural areas, but services are often slow and few and far between.

## Car & Motorcycle

Having your own wheels brings a lot of freedom but it's expensive, and city parking and traffic are frequent headaches. The websites

www.viamichelin.com and www.autoroutes.fr calculate how much you will pay in petrol and tolls for specified journeys; www.mappy.fr provides detailed point-to-point routes.

To hire a car you'll generally need to be over 21 years old and hold a valid driver's licence and a credit card. Your credit card may cover collision damage waiver (CDW) if you use it to pay for the car rental. Some reliable rental agencies:

**ADA** (☎ 0 825 169 169; www.ada.fr, in French)

**Avis** (☎ 0 820 050 505; www.avis.com)

**EasyCar** (☎ 0906 333 333 3; www.easycar.com)

**OTU Voyages** (☎ 01 40 29 12 12; www.otu.fr, in French) For students.

If you don't live in the EU and need a car in France for 17 days to six months, it's *much* cheaper to 'purchase' one from the manufacturer and then 'sell' it back than it is to rent one. The *achat-rachat* (purchase–repurchase) paperwork is not your responsibility. Both Renault's **Eurodrive** (☎ in US 800-221-1052; www.eurodrive.renault.com) and Peugeot's **Vacation Plan/Sodexa** (☎ in US 212-581-3040; www.peugeot-openeurope.com) offer great deals that include insurance with no deductible (excess).

Deals can be found on the internet, and through companies like **Auto Europe** (☎ in US 1-888 223 5555; www.autoeurope.com) and **Holiday Autos** (☎ in UK 0870 5300 400; www.holidayautos.co.uk).

## Hitching

Lonely Planet does not recommend hitching, and getting out of big cities like Paris, Lyon and Marseille by thumb is nigh impossible. If you want to try your luck, remote rural areas are your best bet. Women should not hitch alone.

## Train

Eurail and Inter-Rail passes are valid in France. France's superb rail network is operated by the state-owned **SNCF** (www.sncf.com). Many towns and villages that are not on the SNCF train network are served by buses.

The flagship trains on French railways are the super-fast TGVs (*trains à grande vitesse*), which operate on the following routes:

**TGV Atlantique Sud-Ouest & TGV Atlantique**

**Ouest** Link Paris' Gare Montparnasse with western and southwestern France, including Brittany (Rennes, Quimper, Brest), Nantes, Tours, Poitiers, La Rochelle, Bordeaux, Biarritz and Toulouse.

**TGV Nord, Thalys & Eurostar** Link Paris' Gare du Nord

with Lille, Calais, Brussels, Amsterdam, Cologne and, via the Channel Tunnel, Ashford and London Waterloo.

**TGV Sud-Est & TGV Midi-Méditerranée** Link Paris' Gare de Lyon with the southeast, including Dijon, Lyon, Geneva, the Alps, Avignon, Marseille, Nice and Montpellier. **TGV Est** This line will connect Paris with Strasbourg and Germany, Austria and eastern European destinations. It's due to open in mid-2007.

A non-TGV train is referred to as a *corail* or TER (*train express régional*).

Special deals are available at www.sncf.com, and last-minute deals are published online every Tuesday.

Before boarding the train you must time-stamp your ticket in a *composteur*, one of those orange posts at the start of the platform. If you forget, find a conductor so they can punch it for you to avoid being fined. Tickets can be purchased on the train, but you'll pay a surcharge.

## EUROPEAN TRAIN PASSES

In France, Eurail and some other international train passes must be validated at a train station ticket window before you begin your first journey, to begin the period of validity. It's best to check if you're not sure. For details of the international passes available see p1213.

The **France Railpass** allows unlimited travel on SNCF trains for four days over a one-month period. In 2nd class it costs US\$229; each additional day costs US\$30. The **France Youthpass** allows four days of travel in a month. In 2nd class it costs US\$169, plus US\$23 for each extra day. These passes can be purchased from travel agents or travel websites such as www.raileurope.com.

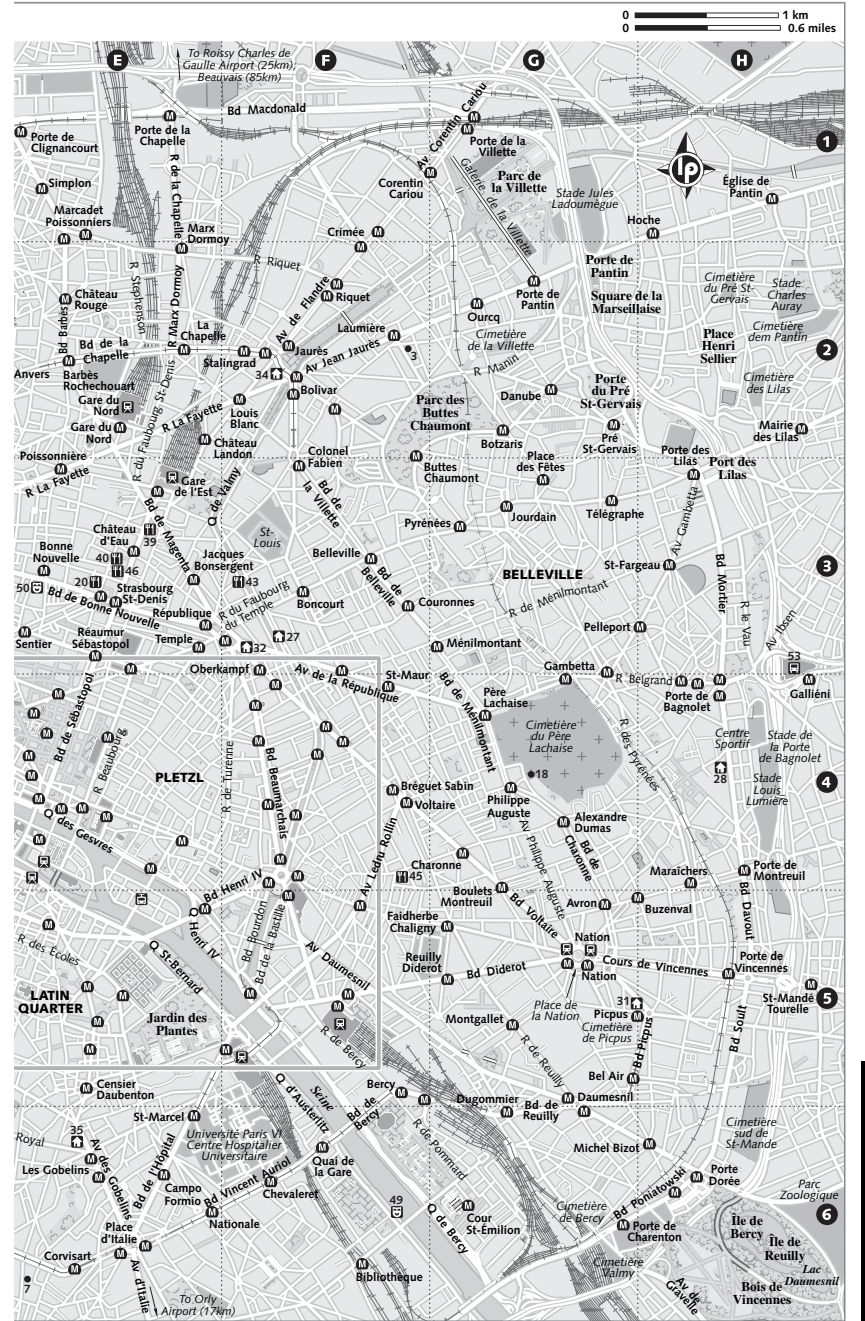
Reduced train fares within France are available with a **Carte 12-25** (€49) for travellers aged 12 to 25. A **Carte Escapades** (€99) for 26- to 59-year-olds guarantees savings of 25% on a return journey of at least 200km including a Saturday night away.

# PARIS

pop 2.2 million, metropolitan area 10.6 million

What can be said about the sexy, sophisticated City of Lights that hasn't been said before? Quite simply, this is one of the world's great metropolises, a trend-setter, market-leader and cultural capital for over a thousand years and still going strong. This





<b>INFORMATION</b>	Hôtel des Invalides.....	21	C4	Fromagerie.....	40	E3
Australian Embassy.....	Jardin des Tuileries.....	22	D4	L'Arbre à Cannelle.....	41	D3
Canadian Embassy.....	Jardins du Trocadéro.....	23	B4	La Maison Rose.....	42	D2
Club Alpin Française.....	Musée d'Orsay.....	24	C4	La Marine.....	43	F3
Cyber Cube.....	Musée Rodin.....	25	C4	La Mascotte.....	44	D2
German Embassy.....	Place de la Concorde.....	26	C3	Paris Hanoi.....	45	F4
Italian Embassy.....				Passage de Pondichery.....	46	E3
Ligue Française pour les Auberges de la Jeunesse.....				Pooja.....	(see 46)	
Netherlands Embassy.....	<b>SLEEPING</b>					
New Zealand Embassy.....	Auberge de Jeunesse Jules Ferry.....	27	F3	<b>DRINKING</b>		
Spanish Embassy.....	Auberge de Jeunesse Le D'Artagnan.....	28	H4	L'Élysée-Montmartre.....	47	D2
UK Consulate (Visa Section).....	Hôtel Bonséjour Montmartre.....	29	D2	La Cigale.....	(see 48)	
UK Embassy.....	Hôtel Eldorado.....	30	C2	La Fourmi.....	48	D2
US Embassy.....	Hôtel Le Cosy.....	31	H5			
	Hôtel Nevers.....	32	F3	<b>ENTERTAINMENT</b>		
<b>SIGHTS &amp; ACTIVITIES</b>	Le Village Hostel.....	33	D2	Le Batofar.....	49	F6
Arc de Triomphe.....	Peace & Love Hostel.....	34	F2	Rex Club.....	50	E3
Basilique du Sacré Cœur.....	Port Royal Hôtel.....	35	E6	Tryptique.....	51	D3
Bateau Lavoir.....	Style Hôtel.....	36	D2			
Catacombes.....	Woodstock Hostel.....	37	D2	<b>TRANSPORT</b>		
Cimetière du Père Lachaise - Conservation Office.....				Aérogare des Invalides.....	52	C4
Eiffel Tower.....	<b>EATING</b>			Gare Routière Internationale de Paris Gallieni.....	53	H3
Franprix Faubourg St Denis.....	Dix Vins.....	38	C5	Parking Pershing (Buses to Beauvais Airport).....	54	A2
	Franprix Magenta.....	39	E3			

is the place that gave the world the cancan and the cinematograph, a city that reinvented itself during the Renaissance, bopped to the beat of the Jazz Age and positively glittered during the *belle époque*. As you might expect, Paris is strewn with historic architecture, glorious galleries and cultural treasures, but the modern-day city is much more than just a museum piece. It's a heady hotchpotch of cultures and ideas – a place to stroll the boulevards, shop till you drop or do as the Parisians do and watch the world buzz by from a streetside café. Savour every moment.

## ORIENTATION

Central Paris is quite small: around 9.5km (north to south) by 11km (east to west). Excluding the Bois de Boulogne and the Bois de Vincennes, its total area is 105 sq km. The River Seine flows east–west through the city; the Rive Droite (Right Bank) is north of the river, while the Rive Gauche (Left Bank) is to the south. Paris is divided into 20 *arrondissements* (districts), which spiral clockwise from the centre. City addresses always include the *arrondissement*.

## INFORMATION

### Emergency

**SOS Helpline** (☎ in English 01 47 23 80 80)

**SOS Médecins** (☎ 24hr house calls 01 47 07 77 77, 08 20 33 24 24)

**Urgences Médicales de Paris** (Paris Medical Emergencies; ☎ 24hr house calls 01 53 94 94 94, 01 48 28 40 40)

## Internet Access

There are cybercafés dotted all over Paris.

**Cyber Cube** (Map pp372-3; www.cybercube.fr; 9 rue d'Odessa, 14e; per min €0.15, per 5/10hr €30/40; ☎ 10am-10pm; Montparnasse Bienvenue)

**Web 46** (Map pp378-9; 46 rue du Roi de Sicile, 4e; per 15/30/60min €2.50/4/7, 5hr €29; ☎ 10am-midnight Mon-Fri, 10am-9pm Sat, noon-midnight Sun; St-Paul)

**XS Arena Luxembourg** (Map pp378-9; 17 rue Soufflot, 5e; per 1/2/3/4/5hr €3/6/8/10/11; ☎ 24hr; Luxembourg) Central branch of this internet café chain.

**XS Arena Les Halles** (Map pp378-9; 31 rue Sébastopol, 1er; Châtelet des Halles; ☎ 24hr) Near the Forum des Halles.

## Left Luggage

All the train stations have left-luggage offices or lockers. Most are closed from about 11.15pm to about 6.30am.

## Money

Post offices with a Banque Postale offer the best exchange rates, and accept banknotes in various currencies as well as travellers cheques issued by Amex or Visa. *Bureaux de change* in Paris are usually faster, open longer and give better rates than commercial banks.

## Post

The **main post office** (Map pp378-9; ☎ 01 40 28 76 00; 52 rue du Louvre, 1er; ☎ 24hr; Sentier/Les Halles) opens round the clock for mail. Other services, including currency exchange, are available during regular opening hours.

## Tourist Information

**Office de Tourisme et de Congrès de Paris** (Paris Convention & Visitors Bureau; Map pp378-9; ☎ 08 92 68 30 00; www.parisinfo.com; 25-27 rue des Pyramides, 1er; ☎ 9am-7.30pm Jun-Oct, 10am-7pm Mon-Sat & 11am-7pm Sun Nov-May; Pyramides) is 500m northwest of the Louvre.

## SIGHTS

### Île de la Cité

The site of the first settlement in Paris around the 3rd century BC and later the Roman town of Lutèce (Lutetia), the **Île de la Cité** remained the centre of royal and ecclesiastical power throughout the Middle Ages. The seven arches of Paris' oldest bridge, **Pont Neuf** (Map pp378-9; Pont Neuf) have linked the Île de la Cité with both banks of the Seine since 1607.

### CATHÉDRALE DE NOTRE DAME DE PARIS

The **Cathédrale de Notre Dame de Paris** (Map pp378-9; ☎ 01 42 34 56 10; place du Parvis Notre Dame, 4e; audio guide €5; ☎ 8am-6.45pm Mon-Fri, 8am-7.45pm Sat & Sun; Cité) is the true heart of Paris, a French Gothic masterpiece and the focus of Catholic Paris for seven centuries.

Built on a site occupied by earlier churches (and, a millennium before that, a Gallo-Roman temple), it was begun in 1163 and largely completed by the middle of the 14th century. Striking features include the three main portals, whose statues were once brightly coloured to make them more effective as a *Biblia pauperum*: a 'Bible of the poor' to help the illiterate understand the Old Testament stories. Inside look out for the three

stunning stained-glass rose windows and the monumental 7800-pipe organ.

You can also climb the 387 steps of the **North Tower** (☎ 01 53 10 07 00; www.monum.fr; rue du Cloître Notre Dame; adult/student & 18-25 yr €7.50/4.80, under 18 yr & 1st Sun Oct-Mar free; ☎ 9.30am-7.30pm daily Apr-Jun & Sep; 9am-7.30pm Mon-Fri, 9am-11pm Sat & Sun Jul & Aug; 10am-5.30pm daily Oct-Mar) for breathtaking views across the city. You'll also see the 13-tonne *clocher Emmanuel* (Emmanuel bell) – no hunchbacks, though, despite what you may have heard from Victor Hugo.

Distances from Paris to every part of metropolitan France are measured from **place du Parvis Notre Dame**, the square in front of Notre Dame.

### STE-CHAPELLE

The most exquisite of Paris' Gothic monuments, **Ste-Chapelle** (Map pp378-9; ☎ 01 53 40 60 97; www.monum.fr; 4 blvd du Palais, 1er; adult/18-25yr €6.50/4.50, under 18yr & 1st Sun Oct-Mar free, joint ticket with Conciergerie €9.50; ☎ 9.30am-6pm Mar-Oct, 9am-5pm Nov-Feb; Cité) is tucked away within the Palais de Justice (Law Courts). Built in under three years, Ste-Chapelle was consecrated in 1248. The chapel was conceived by Louis IX to house his collection of sacred relics, now kept in the treasury of Notre Dame.

### CONCIERGERIE

The **Conciergerie** (Map pp378-9; ☎ 01 53 40 60 93; www.monum.fr; 2 blvd du Palais, 1er; adult/aged 18-25 €6.50/4.50, free for under 18yr & 1st Sun of month Oct-Mar only, joint ticket with Ste-Chapelle €9.50; ☎ 9.30am-6pm Mar-Oct, 9am-5pm Nov-Feb; Cité), was the main prison during the Reign of Terror. Among the 2700

## GETTING INTO TOWN

From Roissy Charles de Gaulle airport in the northeast and Orly airport in the south, RER trains travel to main train stations such as Gare du Nord, Gare de Lyon and Gare Montparnasse. There are also public buses to various parts of Paris.

The Eurostar from London arrives centrally at Gare du Nord, as do TGV trains from the north. TGV trains from the south reach Gare de Lyon or Gare Montparnasse. All three stations are linked to the metro.

A taxi will cost about €40/55 from Orly/Charles de Gaulle.

Private shuttle buses provide door-to-door service from either Orly or Charles de Gaulle for about €26 per person (from €17 per person for two or more).

**Allô Shuttle** (☎ 01 34 29 00 80; www.alloshuttle.com)

**Paris Airports Service** (☎ 01 46 80 14 67; www.parisairportservice.com)

**Shuttle Van ParisShuttle** (☎ 0 800 699 699; www.parishuttle.com)

**World Shuttle** (☎ 01 46 80 14 67; www.world-shuttles.com)

For more detail on airport transport and facilities, see p386.



prisoners held in the *cachots* (dungeons) before being sent to the guillotine were Marie Antoinette and, as the Revolution began to implode, the Revolutionary radicals Danton and Robespierre.

### Right Bank MUSÉE DU LOUVRE

The Palais du Louvre was constructed as a fortress by Philippe-Auguste in the early 13th century and rebuilt in the mid-16th century. In 1793 it became the **Musée du Louvre** (Louvre Museum; Map pp378-9; ☎ 01 40 20 53 17; www.louvre.fr; permanent collection €8.50, incl temporary exhibits €13, after 6pm Wed & Fri €6/11, admission free 1st Sun of month; ☎ 9am-6pm Mon, Thu, Sat & Sun, 9am-9.45pm Wed & Fri; 🚶 Palais Royal-Musée du Louvre), one of France's (if not the world's) finest museums.

The Louvre's top attractions are da Vinci's mischievous *Mona Lisa* and the beautiful Venus de Milo, but there's much, much more to see. Other highlights include works by Raphael, Botticelli, Delacroix and Titian, the lavish apartments of Napoleon III's Minister of State, and a glorious collection of Greek and Roman sculpture. Tickets remain valid for the whole day, so take your time – you'll enjoy it more if you don't try and pack too much into one day.

The main entrance in the Cour Napoléon is covered by the 21m-high glass **Grande Pyramide**. Avoid the queues by buying tickets in advance from the ticket machines in the Carroussel du Louvre, by ringing ☎ 0 892 683 622 or ☎ 0 825 346 346, or by booking online at www.louvre.fr. Note that entry to the permanent collection is free for those under 18 years, while those under 26 can enter free after 6pm on Fridays.

### JARDIN DES TUILERIES

The 28-hectare **Jardin des Tuileries** (Tuileries Garden; Map pp372-3; ☎ 01 40 20 90 43; ☎ 7am-9pm Apr-Sep, 7am-7.30pm Oct-Mar; 🚶 Tuileries/Concorde) was laid out in the mid-17th century. The Tuileries soon became the most fashionable spot in Paris for parading about in one's finery, and now forms part of the Banks of the Seine World Heritage Site, listed by Unesco in 1991.

### CENTRE POMPIDOU

Since its inauguration in 1977, the **Centre National d'Art et de Culture Georges Pompidou** (Georges Pompidou National Centre of Art & Culture; Map pp378-9; ☎ 01 44 78 12 33; www.centrepompidou.fr; place Georges

### AH, LA CARTE!

The **Carte Musées-Monuments** (Museums-Monuments Card; ☎ 01 44 61 96 60; one/three/five days €18/36/54) includes entry to some three dozen sights in Paris – including the Louvre, the Centre Pompidou and the Musée d'Orsay – and parts of the châteaux at Versailles (see p388). It's available from tourist offices, Fnac outlets, RATP information desks and major metro stations.

Pompidou, 4e; 🚶 Rambuteau) has long amazed and delighted visitors, not just for its outstanding collection of modern art but also for its radical architectural statement. It was among the first buildings to have its 'insides' turned out.

Nearby the centre on place Igor Stravinsky is the Fontaine Stravinsky (sometimes referred to as the fontaine des automates), a bizarre fountain that contains several outlandish and strikingly colourful sculptures by artists Jean Tinguely and Niki de Saint-Phalle, all inspired by the music of the great composer.

### ARC DE TRIOMPHE & CHAMPS-ÉLYSÉES

Commissioned in 1806 by Napoleon to commemorate his victories, the **Arc de Triomphe** (Triumphal Arch; Map pp372-3; ☎ 01 55 37 73 77; www.monum.fr; viewing platform adult/18-25yr €8/6, under 18yr & 1st Sun of month Oct-Mar free; ☎ 10am-11pm Apr-Sep, 10am-10.30pm Oct-Mar; 🚶 Charles de Gaulle-Étoile) remained unfinished when he started losing battles and then entire wars, and wasn't completed until 1836. Since 1920, the body of an **Unknown Soldier** from WWI has lain beneath the arch; his fate and that of countless others is commemorated by a memorial flame rekindled each evening around 6.30pm. The **viewing platform** (up 284 steps) affords fine views of the dozen surrounding avenues, many named after Napoleonic generals (including the ultra-exclusive av Foch, Paris' widest boulevard).

Today, the arch stands at the centre of the world's largest traffic roundabout, **place de l'Étoile** – officially known as place Charles de Gaulle. Over a dozen boulevards radiate outwards from the square, including av des Champs-Élysées, one of the city's swankiest shopping districts.

### PLACE DE LA CONCORDE

**Place de la Concorde** (Map pp372-3; 🚶 Concorde) was laid out between 1755 and 1775. The pink

granite **obelisk** (some 3300 years old) in the middle of the square once stood in the Temple of Ramses at Thebes (today's Luxor) and was given to France in 1831 by Mohammed Ali, Viceroy of Egypt.

### MUSÉE PICASSO

The **Musée Picasso** (Map pp378-9; ☎ 01 42 71 25 21; www.musee-picasso.fr; 5 rue de Thorigny, 3e; adult/18-25yr €6.70/5.20 Wed-Sat & Mon, admission for all €5.20 Sun, under 18 & 1st Sun of month free; ☎ 9.30am-6pm Wed-Mon Apr-Sep, 9.30am-5.30pm Wed-Mon Oct-Mar; 🚶 St-Paul/Chemin Vert), housed in the mid-17th-century Hôtel Salé, contains more than 3500 of the *grand maître's* works.

### PLACE DE LA BASTILLE

The Bastille, built during the 14th century as a fortified royal residence, is the most famous monument in Paris that no longer exists; the notorious prison was demolished by a Revolutionary mob on 14 July 1789. The **place de la Bastille** (Map pp378-9; 🚶 Bastille), where the prison once stood, is now a busy traffic roundabout.

### Left Bank

#### EIFFEL TOWER & CHAMP DE MARS

The **Tour Eiffel** (Eiffel Tower; Map pp372-3; ☎ 01 44 11 23 23; www.tour-eiffel.fr; av Gustave Eiffel; lifts to 1st/2nd/3rd platforms €4.20/7.70/11, children 3-11yrs €2.30/4.20/6, stairs to 1st & 2nd platforms €3.80; ☎ lifts 9.30am-11pm Sep-mid-Jun, 9am-midnight mid-Jun-Aug; stairs 9.30am-6pm Sep-mid-Jun, 9am-midnight mid-Jun-Aug; 🚶 Champ de Mars-Tour Eiffel/Bir Hakeim), faced massive opposition from Paris' artistic and literary elite when it was built for the 1889 Exposition Universelle (World Fair). It was almost torn down in 1909 but was spared because it proved an ideal platform for radio antennas. Today some 5.8 million make their way to the top each year.

The **Jardins du Trocadéro** (Trocadero Gardens; Map pp372-3; 🚶 Trocadéro), whose fountains and statue garden are grandly illuminated at night, are accessible across Pont d'Iéna from the Eiffel Tower.

### MUSÉE D'ORSAY

Famously housed in a former train station (1900), the stunning **Musée d'Orsay** (Orsay Museum; Map pp372-3; ☎ 01 40 49 48 14; www.musee-orsay.fr; 62 rue de Lille, 7e; adult/senior & 18-25yr €7.50/5.50, under 18yr & 1st Sun of month free; ☎ 9.30am-6pm Tue, Wed & Fri-Sun, 9.30am-9.45pm Thu; 🚶 Musée d'Orsay/Solférino) displays France's national collection of paint-

ings, sculptures and *objets d'art* produced between the 1840s and 1914, including the fruits of the impressionist, postimpressionist and Art Nouveau movements. Among its prized exhibits are works by Monet, Renoir, Pissarro, Sisley, Degas, Manet, Gauguin, Cézanne, Van Gogh, Seurat and Matisse.

### CATACOMBES

In 1785, the hygiene problems posed by Paris' overflowing cemeteries was solved by exhuming the bones and storing them in three disused quarries. One, created in 1810, is now known as the **Catacombes** (Map pp372-3; ☎ 01 43 22 47 63; www.catacombes.paris.fr, in French; 1 av Colonel Henri Roi-Tanguy, 14e; adult/senior & student/14-25yr €5/3.30/2.50, under 14 free; ☎ 10am-5pm Tue-Sun; 🚶 Denfert-Rochereau). After descending 20m (130 steps) from street level, visitors follow 1.6km of corridors stacked with the bones of millions of Parisians. Spooky, but super.

### PANTHÉON

The domed landmark now known as the **Panthéon** (Map pp378-9; ☎ 01 44 32 18 00; www.monum.fr; place du Panthéon, 5e; adult/18-25yr €7.50/4.80, under 18yr & 1st Sun Oct-Mar free; ☎ 10am-6.30pm Apr-Sep, 10am-6.15pm Oct-Mar; 🚶 Luxembourg) was commissioned as an abbey church in 1750, and completed in 1789. The crypt houses the tombs of French luminaries including Voltaire, Jean-Jacques Rousseau, Victor Hugo, Émile Zola, Jean Moulin and Nobel Prize-winner Marie Curie. Inside the Panthéon is a working model of Foucault's Pendulum that demonstrates the rotation of the earth.

### MUSÉE NATIONAL DU MOYEN AGE

The **Musée National du Moyen Age** (National Museum of the Middle Ages; Map pp378-9; ☎ 01 53 73 78 16, 01 53 73 78 00; www.musee-moyenage.fr; Thermes & Hôtel de Cluny, 6 place Paul Painlevé, 5e; adult/senior, student & 18-25yr €6.50/4.50, under 18yr & 1st Sun of month free; ☎ 9.15am-5.45pm Wed-Mon; 🚶 Cluny-La Sorbonne/St-Michel) is housed in two structures: the **frigidarium** (cooling room) and Gallo-Roman baths dating from AD 200, and the late-15th-century **Hôtel de Cluny**, considered the finest example of medieval civil architecture in Paris. Displays include statuary, illuminated manuscripts, arms, furnishings and objects made of gold, ivory and enamel.

### JARDIN DU LUXEMBOURG

In fine weather, Parisians flock to the formal terraces of the 23-hectare **Jardin du Luxembourg**

### CENTRAL PARIS





INFORMATION		SLEEPING			
Fédération Unie des Auberges de Jeunesse.....1 D2	Main Post Office.....2 C1	Office de Tourisme et Congrès de Paris.....3 A1	Web 46.....4 E3	XS Arena Les Halles.....5 D2	XS Arena Luxembourg.....6 B5
SIGHTS & ACTIVITIES		EATING			
Cathédrale de Notre Dame de Paris.....7 D4	Centre Pompidou.....8 D2	Conciergerie.....9 C3	Jardin du Luxembourg.....10 A5	Musée du Louvre.....11 B2	Musée National du Moyen Age.....12 C4
Musée Picasso.....13 F2	Notre Dame North Tower	Entrance.....14 D4	Panthéon.....15 C5	Place de la Bastille.....16 G4	Stap-Chapelle.....17 C3
Blue Planet Hostel.....18 H6	Centre International BVJ Paris-Louvre.....19 B1	Centre International BVJ Paris-Quartier Latin.....20 D5	Hôtel Baudin.....21 H4	Hôtel du Septième Art.....22 F4	Hôtel Rivoli.....23 E3
Hôtel Tiquetonne.....24 D1	MIJE Fauconnier.....25 E4	MIJE Fourcy.....26 E3	MIJE Maubuisson.....27 E3	OTU Voyages.....28 D2	Young & Happy Hostel.....29 D6
404.....30 E1	Bofinger.....31 G4	Breakfast in America.....32 D5	Campion.....33 D5	Ed l'Épicier.....34 D6	Ed l'Épicier.....35 D3
Food Market.....36 D4	Franprix.....37 D6	Franprix Hôtel de Ville.....38 D2	Franprix Les Halles.....39 C2	Franprix Marais.....40 E3	Joe Allen.....41 D1
L'Encrier.....42 H5	Le Foyer du Vietnam.....43 D6	Le Petit Pontoise.....44 D4	Le Trumilou.....45 D3	Les Cinq Saveurs d'Ananda.....46 D6	Monoprix.....47 F3
Piccolo Teatro.....48 E3	Robert et Louise.....49 E2	Tana.....50 C1	Andy Wahloo.....51 E1	Café de Flore.....52 A3	Café des Phares.....53 G4
Le 10.....54 B4	Le Bataclan.....55 G1	Le Piano Vache.....56 C5	Le Pick Clops.....57 E3	Le Vieux Chêne.....58 D6	Les Deux Magots.....59 A4
DRINKING		TRANSPORT			
Eurolines Office.....60 C4	Noctilien (Night Bus) Stops.....61 D3				

(Luxembourg Garden; Map pp378-9; ☎ 7am-9.30pm Apr-Oct, 8am-sunset Mar-Nov; M Luxembourg) to read, relax and sunbathe.

### MUSÉE RODIN

The **Musée Rodin** (Rodin Museum; Map pp372-3; ☎ 01 44 18 61 10; www.musee-rodin.fr; 77 rue de Varenne, 7e; adult/senior & 18-25yr €7/5, under 18 free & 1st Sun of month free, garden only €1; ☎ 9.30am-5.45pm Tue-Sun Apr-Sep, 9.30am-4.45pm Tue-Sun Oct-Mar; M Varenne), is both a sublime museum (containing casts of some of Rodin's most celebrated works, including *The Thinker* and *The Kiss*) and a lovely garden full of sculptures and shady trees.

### HÔTEL DES INVALIDES

The **Hôtel des Invalides** (Map pp372-3; blvd des Invalides; M Varenne/La Tour Maubourg) was built in the 1670s by Louis XIV to provide housing for 4000 *invalides* (disabled war veterans). On 14 July 1789, a mob forced its way into the building and, after fierce fighting, seized 28,000 rifles before heading on to the prison at Bastille and revolution.

### Other Districts

#### CIMETIÈRE DU PÈRE LACHAISE

The world's most visited graveyard, **Cimetière du Père Lachaise** (Père Lachaise Cemetery; Map pp372-3; ☎ 01 55 25 82 10; admission free; ☎ 8am-6pm Mon-Fri, 8.30am-6pm Sat, 9am-6pm Sun mid-Mar-early Nov; 8am-5.30pm Mon-Fri, 8.30am-5.30pm Sat, 9am-5.30pm Sun

early Nov-mid-Mar; M Philippe Auguste/Gambetta/Père Lachaise) opened its one-way doors in 1804. Among the 800,000 people buried here are Chopin, Molière, Balzac, Proust, Gertrude Stein, Colette, Pissarro, Modigliani, Sarah Bernhardt, Delacroix, Edith Piaf and even the 12th-century lovers, Abélard and Héloïse. The graves of **Oscar Wilde** (Division 89) and **Jim Morrison** (Division 6) are perennially popular. Free maps are available from the **conservation office** (16 rue du Repos, 20e).

### MONTMARTRE & PIGALLE

During the late 19th and early 20th centuries bohemian **Montmartre** attracted numerous writers and artists, including Picasso, who lived at the studio called **Bateau Lavoir** (Map pp372-3; 11bis Émile Goudeau) from 1908 to 1912. Montmartre retains an upbeat ambience that all the tourists in the world couldn't spoil.

A few blocks southwest of Montmartre is neon-drenched **Pigalle** 9e and 18e, a red-light district that boasts plenty of trendy night-spots, clubs and cabarets (which include the original Moulin Rouge).

### BASILIQUE DU SACRÉ CŒUR

The **Basilique du Sacré Cœur** (Basilica of the Sacred Heart; Map pp372-3; ☎ 01 53 41 89 00; www.sacre-coeur-montmartre.com; place du Parvis du Sacré Cœur, 18e; ☎ 6am-11pm; M Anvers), perched at the top of the Butte de Montmartre (Montmartre Hill), was

built in 1870-71. Some 234 spiralling steps lead to the spectacular panorama from the basilica's **dome** (admission €5; ☎ 9am-7pm Apr-Sep, 9am-6pm Oct-Mar).

### SLEEPING

Paris has a deserved reputation for having some of the priciest hotels in France, but it's still very possible to find a place to sleep, even if you're travelling on a shoestring. The city has several good hostels, although many impose a three-night maximum stay, especially in summer. Only official *auberges de jeunesse* (youth hostels) require Hostelling International (HI) cards. Curfews tend to be 1am or 2am. Few hostels accept reservations by telephone, so you'll have to turn up early in the am to bag a bed.

The student travel agency **OTU Voyages** (Map pp378-9; ☎ 01 40 29 12 22; www.otu.fr, in French; 119 rue St-Martin, 4e; ☎ 9.30am-6.30pm Mon-Fri, 10am-6pm Sat; M Rambuteau), opposite Centre Pompidou, can always find you accommodation, even in summer. The finder's fee is €15. **Alcôve & Agapes** (☎ 01 44 85 06 05; www.bed-8-breakfast-in-paris.com) arranges B&B accommodation in Paris for between €60 and €195 for a double.

### Louvre & Les Halles

**Centre International BVJ Paris-Louvre** (Map pp378-9; ☎ 01 53 00 90 90; www.bvjhotel.com; 20 rue Jean-Jacques Rousseau, 1er; dm €25, d per person €28; ☎ ; M Louvre-Rivoli) This modern 200-bed hostel has bunks in single-sex rooms for two to eight people. There's usually space (even in summer) if you stop by early, but you'll need to be under 35 and there are no kitchens.

**Hôtel Tiquetonne** (Map pp378-9; ☎ 01 42 36 94 58; fax 01 42 36 02 94; 6 rue Tiquetonne, 2e; s €30-40, d €50; M Étienne-Marcel) If you're looking for good-value digs smack in the middle of party town, this vintage 47-room cheapie is clean and comfortable and some rooms are quite large.

### Marais & Bastille

**Our pick** **Hôtel du Septième Art** (Map pp378-9; ☎ 01 44 54 85 00; hotel7art@wanadoo.fr; 20 rue St-Paul, 4e; s & d €85-135, tw €90-135; ☎ ; M St-Paul) This cinematically themed hotel will delight every self-respecting movie buff, with a quirky and highly imaginative black-and-white-movie motif running throughout, right down to the tiled floors and bathrooms. The 23 guestrooms spread over five floors are sizeable and quite different from one another,

and even the most expensive ones aren't going to break the bank.

**Maison Internationale de la Jeunesse et des Étudiants** (☎ 01 42 74 23 45; www.mije.com; dm/s/tw/tr per person €27/42/32/28; ☎ ; M ) runs three hostels in renovated *hôtels particuliers* (private mansions) in the heart of the Marais, and you won't find a better budget deal in Paris. Costs are the same for all three and reservations can be made via the central switchboard or emailing; they'll hold you a bed till noon. There's no age restriction, apparently you just need to be young at heart! The membership fee is €2.50.

The three hostels:

**MIJE Fourcy** (Map pp378-9; 6 rue de Fourcy, 4e; M St-Paul) The largest MIJE hostel with 185 beds. A three-course *menu* at the inhouse restaurant costs €10.50; two-courses cost €8.50. Both menus include a drink.

**MIJE Fauconnier** (Map pp378-9; 11 rue du Fauconnier, 4e; M St-Paul/Pont Marie) This 122-bed hostel is two blocks south of MIJE Fourcy.

**MIJE Maubuisson** (Map pp378-9; 12 rue des Barres, 4e; M Hôtel de Ville/Pont Marie) The pick of the three hostels, half a block south of the *mairie* (town hall).

**Hôtel Baudin** (Map pp378-9; ☎ 01 47 00 18 91; hotelbaudin@wanadoo.fr; 113 av Ledru Rollin, 11e; s €29-52, d €35-62, tr €40-76; M Ledru Rollin) This once-grand hostelry has 17 brightly coloured rooms and some well-weathered public areas. The rooms at the lower end of the price scale have wash-basins only (hall showers are free) while more expensive ones have shower or bath and toilet.

**Hôtel Rivoli** (Map pp378-9; ☎ 01 42 72 08 41; 44 rue de Rivoli or 2 rue des Mauvais Garçons, 4e; s €30-50, d €40-50, tr €66; M Hôtel de Ville) Long a budget favourite, the Rivoli is forever cheery but not as dirt cheap as it once was, with 20 basic, somewhat noisy rooms. The cheaper rooms have washbasins only but showers are free.

### Latin Quarter & Jardin des Plantes

**Young & Happy Hostel** (Map pp378-9; ☎ 01 47 07 47 07; www.youngandhappy.fr; 80 rue Mouffetard, 5e; dm €21-23, d per person €24-26; ☎ ; M Place Monge) Although slightly tatty, this is a friendly spot in the centre of the Latin Quarter that's popular with an older backpacking crowd. The rooms are closed from 11am to 4pm, but the reception remains open; curfew is 2am. Beds are in very small rooms for two to eight people with washbasins. In summer you'll need to be here by 8am.

**Centre International de Séjour BVJ Paris-Quartier Latin** (Map pp378-9; ☎ 01 43 29 34 80; www.bvjhotel.com; 44 rue des Bernardins, 5e; dm €26, s/d per person €35/28; ☒ ☑ ☒; M Maubert Mutualité) This 100-bed hostel on the Left Bank is a branch of the Centre International BVJ Paris-Louvre (p381) and has the same rules. All of the rooms here have showers and telephones.

**Port Royal Hôtel** (Map pp372-3; ☎ 01 43 31 70 06; www.portroyal.fr; 8 blvd de Port Royal, 5e; s €41-89, d €52.50-89; M Les Gobelins) It's hard to imagine this 46 room hotel still only bears one star. The spotless and very quiet rooms overlook either a small glassed-in courtyard or the street.

## Gare du Nord, Gare de l'Est & République

**Auberge de Jeunesse Jules Ferry** (Map pp372-3; ☎ 01 43 57 55 60; www.fuaj.fr; 8 blvd Jules Ferry, 11e; r per person €20; ☒ ☑ ☒; M République/Goncourt) This official hostel, three blocks east of place de la République, could use a makeover but the atmosphere is relaxed. Beds are in two- to six-person rooms, which are locked between 10.30am and 2pm; there's no curfew. Add €2.90 per night if you don't have an HI card.

**Auberge de Jeunesse Le D'Artagnan** (Map pp372-3; ☎ 01 40 32 34 57; www.fuaj.fr; 80 rue Vitruve, 20e; dm €21.50; M Porte de Bagnolet) The only other official hostel in central Paris is a long way from the action near the Gare Routière Internationale de Paris-Gallieni (International Bus Terminal). It has rooms with two to eight beds, big lockers, laundry, a bar and a cinema. With 435 beds on seven floors, it's the largest hostel in France.

**Peace & Love Hostel** (Map pp372-3; ☎ 01 46 07 65 11; www.paris-hostels.com; 245 rue La Fayette, 10e; dm €17-21, d per person €21-26; ☒; M Jaurès/Louis Blanc) This hippy hangout is a groovy – if chronically crowded – hostel with beds in 20 smallish, shower-equipped rooms for two to four people. There's a great kitchen and eating area,

but most of the action revolves around the ground floor bar (open till 2am).

**Hôtel Nevers** (Map pp372-3; ☎ 01 47 00 56 18; www.hoteldenevers.com; 53 rue de Malte, 11e; s & d €35-53, tr €66-78; ☒; M Oberkampf) This excellent budget hotel is around the corner from place de la République, near the nightlife of Mémilmontant. Cat-lovers will appreciate the furry feline welcome; the 32 guestrooms are sparsely furnished but clean.

## Gare de Lyon, Nation & Bercy

**Blue Planet Hostel** (Map pp378-9; ☎ 01 43 42 06 18; www.hostelblueplanet.com; 5 rue Hector Malot, 12e; dm €21; ☒ ☑ ☒; M Gare de Lyon) This 43-room hostel is close to Gare de Lyon – convenient if you're heading south or west at the crack of dawn. Dorm beds are in rooms designed for two to four people and the hostel closes between 11am and 3pm. There's no curfew.

**Hôtel Le Cosy** (Map pp372-3; ☎ 01 43 43 10 02; www.hotel-cosy.com; 50 av de St-Mandé, 12e; s €35-85, d €48-85; ☒ ☑ ☒; M Picpus) This family-run hotel southeast of place de la Nation positively oozes charm. The 28 rooms are decorated with original artwork and hardwood floors. If feeling flush, choose one of four 'VIP' rooms in the courtyard annexe.

## Clichy & Gare St-Lazare

**Style Hôtel** (Map pp372-3; ☎ 01 45 22 37 59; fax 01 45 22 81 03; 8 rue Ganneron, 18e; s & d €35-50, tr/q €57/67; M La Fourche) This 36-room hotel just west of Cimetière de Montmartre is a touch rough around the edges, but it's loaded with character and the welcome is always charming.

**Hôtel Eldorado** (Map pp372-3; ☎ 01 45 22 35 21; www.eldoradohotel.fr; 18 rue des Dames, 17e; s €25-50, d & tw €45-70, tr €50-80; M Place de Clichy) This bohemian place is one of Paris' grooviest finds: a welcoming hotel with 40 colourful rooms in a main building and a garden annexe. The cheaper rooms have washbasin only.

## CAMPING IN PARIS

**Camping du Bois de Boulogne** (☎ 01 45 24 30 00; www.campingparis.fr; 2 allée du Bord de l'Eau, 16e; camp sites off/mid/peak season €11/19.00/16.50, with vehicle, tent & 2 people €20/24.50/27.50, with electricity €23/27.50/30.50, first-time booking fee €13; ☒ ☑ ☒ 6am-2am) The Bois de Boulogne camping ground, the only one within the Paris city limits, lies along the Seine at the western edge of the Bois de Boulogne. Even with 435 camp sites and two dozen bungalows, it still gets very crowded in summer.

Porte Maillot metro station (Map pp372-3), 4.5km to the northeast, is linked to the site by RATP bus 244, which runs from 6am to 8.30pm daily, and from April to October by a privately operated **shuttle bus** (€1.60; ☒ 8.30am-1pm & 6pm-midnight daily).

## Montmartre & Pigalle

**Woodstock Hostel** (Map pp372-3; ☎ 01 48 78 87 76; www.woodstock.fr; 48 rue Rodier, 9e; dm €18-21, d per person €21-24; ☒ ☑ ☒; M Anvers) Woodstock is just downhill from raucous Pigalle in a quiet, residential quarter. Dorm beds are in rooms for four to six people; showers and toilets are off the corridor. Rooms are shut from 11am to 3pm, and the curfew is at 2am. Recent additions include a spanking new eat-in kitchen.

**Le Village Hostel** (Map pp372-3; ☎ 01 42 64 22 02; www.villagehostel.fr; 20 rue d'Orsel, 18e; dm €20-23, per person d €23-27 & tr €21.50-25; ☒ ☑ ☒; M Anvers) 'The Village' is a fine 25-room hostel with beamed ceilings and views of Sacré Cœur. Dorm beds are in rooms for four to six people and all have showers and toilets. Kitchen facilities are available, and there's a popular bar too. Rooms are closed between 11am and 4pm and curfew is 2am.

**Hôtel Bonsejour Montmartre** (Map pp372-3; ☎ 01 42 54 22 53; www.hotel-bonsejour-montmartre.fr; 11 rue Burq, 18e; s €25, d €32-48, tr €59; M Abbesses) The 'Good Stay' is a perennial budget favourite. It's a simple place – no lift, linoleum or parquet floors – but welcoming, comfortable and currently receiving a much needed face-lift. Some rooms have little balconies and at least one offers a fleeting glimpse of Sacré Cœur. Hall showers cost €2.

## EATING

Paris likes to think of itself as the culinary capital of France, and the city has a plethora of classically French cafés, bistros and brasseries. But modern-day Paris is a gastronomic melting-pot, and you'll find some of the city's best food at tiny restaurants serving traditional Vietnamese, Caribbean and North African cuisine.

## Louvre & Les Halles

**Joe Allen** (Map pp378-9; ☎ 01 42 36 70 13; 30 rue Pierre Lescot, 1er; starters €7-9.80, mains €12.90-16.50, lunch menu €12.90, dinner menus €18 & €22.50; ☒ noon-1am; M Étienne Marcel) A US-style favourite for some 35 years, Joe Allen is little bit of New York in Paris. Ribs (€16.50) are a speciality.

**Tana** (Map pp378-9; ☎ 01 42 33 53 64; 36 rue Tiquetonne, 2e; starters €7-12.50, mains €9-20; ☒ dinner to 11.30pm; M Étienne Marcel) In a street where each restaurant is more original than the next, Tana takes the tart. The mixed hors d'oeuvre for two and the *homok pla* (fish steamed in banana leaf) are both excellent.

**L'Arbre à Cannelle** (Map pp372-3; ☎ 01 45 08 55 87; 57 passage des Panoramas, 2e; dishes €6.50-12; ☒ 11.30am-6.30pm Mon-Sat; M Grands Boulevards) The 'Cinnamon Tree' is a lovely tearoom with original 19th-century décor, *tartes salées* (savoury pies; €6.50 to €7), salads (€6.50 to €9.50) and great *plats du jour* (€10).

## SELF-CATERING

Useful supermarkets include **Franprix Les Halles** (Map pp378-9; 35 rue Berger, 1er; ☒ 8.30am-7.50pm Mon-Sat; M Châtelet les Halles/Louvre-Rivoli) and **Ed l'Épicier** (Map pp378-9; 80 rue de Rivoli, 4e; M Hôtel de Ville).

## Marais & Bastille

The Marais is one of Paris' premier neighbourhoods for eating out. For quick eats, check out the noodle shops along rue Au Maire, 3e (Map pp378-9; take the metro to Arts et Métiers) or the falafel and *shwarma* (kebabs) restaurants dotted along rue des Rosiers, 4e (Map pp378-9; metro St-Paul).

**L'Encrier** (Map pp378-9; ☎ 01 44 68 08 16; 55 rue Traversière, 12e; starters €5-10, mains €9-16.50, menus €13 lunch & dinner €17-21; ☒ lunch Mon-Fri, dinner Mon-Sat; M Ledru Rollin/Gare de Lyon) There's always a relaxed atmosphere at the 'Inkwell'. Good-value set menus, an open kitchen and a large picture window make this a winner.

**Le Trumilou** (Map pp378-9; ☎ 01 42 77 63 98; 84 quai de l'Hôtel de Ville, 4e; starters €4-12, mains €13-21; menus €17.50 & €19; M Hôtel de Ville) This no-frills bistro is a Parisian institution; if you're looking for authentic French food at reasonable prices, you won't do better.

**Robert et Louise** (Map pp378-9; ☎ 01 42 78 55 89; 64 rue Vieille du Temple, 3e; starters €5-12, mains €13-18, lunch menu €12; ☒ lunch & dinner to 10pm Tue-Sat; M St-Sébastien Froissart) This 'country inn' offers delightful, simple and inexpensive French cuisine, including *côte de bœuf* (side of beef) for €39.

**Piccolo Teatro** (Map pp378-9; ☎ 01 42 72 17 79; 6 rue des Écouffes, 4e; €3.80-7.50, mains €8.90-11.70, lunch menus €8.90-14.70, dinner menus €15.10 & €21.50; ☒ lunch & dinner till 11.30pm; M St-Paul) This intimate restaurant serves excellent vegetarian food in a stone-walled dining room packed with cosy little tables.

**Paris Hanoi** (Map pp372-3; ☎ 01 47 00 47 59; 74 rue de Charonne, 11e; starters €3.10-7.50, mains €6.60-10; ☒ lunch Mon-Sat, dinner to 10.30pm daily; M Charonne) This upbeat restaurant is an excellent place to come for *pho* (soup noodles) and shrimp noodles.

**SELF-CATERING**

There are food shops and delicatessens along rue St-Antoine. Useful supermarkets:

**Franprix Marais** (Map pp378-9; ☎ 13 rue St-Antoine, 4e; ☎ 9am-8.30pm Mon-Sat; 📍 St-Paul)

**Franprix Hôtel de Ville** (Map pp378-9; 87 rue de la Verrerie, 4e; ☎ 9am-9pm Mon-Sat; 📍 Hôtel de Ville)

**Monoprix** (Map pp378-9; 71 rue St-Antoine, 4e; ☎ 9am-9pm Mon-Sat; 📍 St-Paul)

**Latin Quarter & Jardin Des Plantes**

Rue Mouffetard, 5e (Map pp378-9; take the metro to Place Monge or Censier Daubenton) and the surrounding streets are filled with cheap restaurants, sandwich shops and crêpe stalls, but whatever you so, avoid the area around rue de la Huchette (locally known as 'Bacteria Alley').

**Les Cinq Saveurs d'Ananda** (Map pp378-9; ☎ 01 43 29 58 54; 72 rue du Cardinal Lemoine, 5e; soups & starters €5.20-9, mains €9.20-14.90; ☎ lunch & dinner to 10.30pm Tue-Sun; 📍 Cardinal Lemoine) Set back from place de la Contrescarpe, this semi-vegetarian restaurant is popular among health foodies. All ingredients are farm-fresh and 100% organic.

**Le Foyer du Vietnam** (Map pp378-9; ☎ 01 45 35 32 54; 80 rue Monge, 5e; starters €3.10-6, mains €6-8.50, menus €8.20 & €12.20; ☎ lunch & dinner to 10pm Mon-Sat; 📍 Place Monge) A favourite meeting spot for the capital's Vietnamese community, serving simple meals such as 'Saigon' or 'Hanoi' soup (noodles, soya beans and pork flavoured with lemon grass, coriander and chives).

**Le Petit Pontoise** (Map pp378-9; ☎ 01 43 29 25 20; 9 rue de Pontoise, 5e; starters €8-13.50, mains €15-25; ☎ lunch & dinner to 10.30pm; 📍 Maubert Mutualité) This busy brasserie offers a blackboard menu of seasonal delights, from *foie gras* with figs (€12) to *poulet fermier avec pommes purée* (roasted farm chicken with mashed potato; €13).

**Breakfast in America** (Map pp378-9; ☎ 01 43 54 50 28; 17 rue des Écoles, 5e; meals €6.95-9.50; ☎ 8.30am-11pm; 📍 Cardinal Lemoine) This American-style diner, complete with red banquettes and Formica surfaces, serves all-day breakfast (from €6.95) with free coffee refills, plus burgers, chicken wings and fish and chips (€7.50 to €8.95).

**SELF-CATERING**

Place Maubert, 5e, becomes a lively **food market** (Map pp378-9) on Tuesday, Thursday and Saturday mornings. Useful supermarkets:

**Ed l'Épicier** (Map pp378-9; 37 rue Lacépède, 5e; ☎ 9am-1pm & 3-7.30pm Mon-Fri, 9am-7.30pm Sat; 📍 Place Monge)

**Franprix** (Map pp378-9; 82 rue Mouffetard, 5e; ☎ 8.30am-8.50pm Mon-Sat; 📍 Censier Daubenton/Place Monge)

**Gare du Nord, Gare de l'Est & République**

These areas offer all types of food, including Indian and Pakistani, which can be elusive elsewhere in Paris. There's a cluster of traditional bistros around the Gare du Nord.

**La Marine** (Map pp372-3; ☎ 01 42 39 69 81; 55bis quai de Valmy, 10e; starters €7.50-12, mains €14.10-18.80, lunch menu €12; ☎ lunch & dinner to 11.30pm Mon-Sat; 📍 République) This airy bistro overlooking the Canal St-Martin is a favourite, especially in the warmer months, for cheap traditional French cuisine.

Passage Brady, off Blvd de Strasbourg, is a derelict covered arcade with dozens of cheap Indian, Pakistani and Bangladeshi cafés offering excellent-value lunches (meat curry, rice and salad €5 to €7; chicken or lamb biryani €8 to €12; *thalis* €12). Among the best:

**Passage de Pondicherry** (Map pp372-3; ☎ 01 53 32 63 10; 84 passage Brady; 📍 Château d'Eau)

**Pooja** (Map pp372-3; ☎ 01 48 24 00 83; 91 passage Brady; 📍 Château d'Eau)

**SELF-CATERING**

Rue du Faubourg St-Denis, 10e (Map pp372-3; take the metro to Strasbourg St-Denis or Château d'Eau) is one of the cheapest places in Paris to buy food, especially fruit and vegetables. Many of the food shops, including the fromagerie at No 54, are open Tuesday to Saturday and until noon on Sunday.

Convenient supermarkets:

**Franprix Faubourg St-Denis** (Map pp372-3; 7-9 rue des Petites Écuries, 10e; 📍 Strasbourg St-Denis/Château d'Eau)

**Franprix Magenta** (Map pp372-3; 57 blvd de Magenta, 10e; 📍 Gare de l'Est)

**Montparnasse**

Montparnasse offers all types of cuisine but especially traditional *crêperies*.

**Dix Vins** (Map pp372-3; ☎ 01 43 20 91 77; 57 rue Falguière, 15e; lunch menu €20, dinner menu €24; ☎ lunch & dinner to 11pm Mon-Fri; 📍 Pasteur) This tiny little restaurant is so popular you will probably have to wait at the bar even if you've booked. Excellent value, good service and stylish décor.

**La Mascotte** (Map pp372-3; ☎ 01 46 06 28 15; 52 rue des Abbesses, 18e; starters €6.50-12, mains €17-23, lunch menu €17.50, dinner menu €29; ☎ lunch & dinner to 11.30pm Tue-Sat; 📍 Abbesses) The 'Mascot' is much frequented by regulars who can't get enough of

**SPLURGE**

**Bofinger** (Map pp378-9; ☎ 01 42 72 87 82; 5-7 rue de la Bastille, 4e; starters €6-18.50, mains €16.50-37.50, 2-/3-course menus €22.90/29.90; ☎ lunch & dinner to 1am Mon-Fri, noon-1am Sat & Sun; 📍 Bastille) Founded in 1864, Bofinger is reputedly the oldest brasserie in Paris; specialities include Alsatian-inspired dishes such as *choucroute* (sauerkraut; €17.50 to €19), and seafood. It's very posh and far from cheap, but makes the perfect place to spoil yourself on that last night in the City of Lights.

its seafood and regional cuisine. *Plats du jour* are between €14 and €16.

**SELF-CATERING**

Towards place Pigalle there are lots of grocery stores, many open till late; try the side streets off blvd de Clichy. Rue des Martyr, 9e (Map pp372-3) is lined with food shops.

**Montmartre & Pigalle**

Montmartre's restaurants vary widely in quality, so choose carefully.

**La Maison Rose** (Map pp372-3; ☎ 01 42 57 66 75; 2 rue de l'Abreuvoir, 18e; starters €7.80-13, mains €14.50-16.50, menu €16.50; ☎ lunch & dinner to 11pm daily Mar-Oct; lunch Thu-Mon, dinner to 9pm Mon & Thu-Sat Nov-Feb; 📍 Lamarck Caulaincourt) The tiny 'Pink House', just north of place du Tertre, is the quintessential intimate Montmartre bistro.

**DRINKING****Bars****MARAIS & BASTILLE**

**Andy Wahloo** (Map pp378-9; ☎ 01 42 71 20 38; 69 rue des Gravilliers, 3e; ☎ noon-2am; 📍 Arts et Métiers) Casablanca meets candy-store in this trendy, multi-coloured cocktail lounge. During happy hour (5pm to 8pm) a cocktail/beer is €5/3 – after that it doubles.

**Café des Phares** (Map pp378-9; ☎ 01 42 72 04 70; 7 place Bastille, 4e; ☎ 7am-3am Sun-Thu, 7am-4am Fri & Sat; 📍 Bastille) If you like some Camus with your coffee, head for the city's original philocafé. Debates take place at 11am on Sundays.

**Le Pick Clops** (Map pp378-9; ☎ 01 40 29 02 18; 16 rue Vieille du Temple, 4e; ☎ 7.30am-2am; 📍 Hôtel de Ville/St-Paul) This retro café-bar attracts a friendly flow of locals and passers-by, and makes a great spot for morning coffee or that last nightcap.

**LATIN QUARTER & JARDIN DES PLANTES**

**Le Piano Vache** (Map pp378-9; ☎ 01 46 33 75 03; 8 rue Laplace, 5e; ☎ noon-2am Mon-Fri, 9pm-2am Sat & Sun; 📍 Maubert Mutualité) 'The Mean Piano' is a grungy underground venue with regular bands and DJs playing mainly rock, reggae and pop.

**Le Vieux Chêne** (Map pp378-9; ☎ 01 43 37 71 51; 69 rue Mouffetard, 5e; ☎ 4pm-2am Sun-Thu, 4pm-5am Fri & Sat; 📍 Place Monge) 'The Old Oak' is supposedly the oldest bar in Paris, and it's still popular with students and jazz fans. Happy hour lasts till 9pm, with half pints for €2.50 (usually €3.50).

**ST-GERMAIN, ODÉON & LUXEMBOURG**

**Café de Flore** (Map pp378-9; ☎ 01 45 48 55 26; 172 blvd St-Germain, 6e; ☎ 7.30am-1.30am; 📍 St-Germain des Prés) The Flore is an Art Deco café where the red upholstered benches, mirrors and marble walls haven't changed since Sartre, de Beauvoir and Camus used to hang out here.

**Les Deux Magots** (Map pp378-9; ☎ 01 45 48 55 25; 170 blvd St-Germain, 6e; ☎ 7am-1am; 📍 St-Germain des Prés) This erstwhile literary haunt was a favourite of Sartre, Hemingway, Picasso and André Breton. Everyone has to sit on the terrace at least once for a coffee (€4), beer (€5.50) or the famous hot chocolate served in porcelain jugs (€6).

**Le 10** (Map pp378-9; ☎ 01 43 26 66 83; 10 rue de l'Odéon, 6e; ☎ 5.30pm-2am; 📍 Odéon) A popular cellar pub with tobacco-tinged posters, an eclectic jukebox and sangria served by the jug (€3.30 per person). Happy hour is from 6pm to 9pm.

**MONTMARTRE & PIGALLE**

**La Fourmi** (Map pp372-3; ☎ 01 42 64 70 35; 74 rue des Martyr, 18e; ☎ 8am-2am Mon-Thu, 10am-4am Fri-Sun; 📍 Pigalle) A perennial Pigalle favourite, the 'Ant' buzzes all day and night; it's hip without being overly pretentious.

**Live Music**

**Le Batadon** (Map pp378-9; ☎ 01 43 14 00 30; 50 blvd Voltaire, 11e; admission €15-50; ☎ box office 3-7pm Mon-Sat; 📍 Oberkampf/St-Ambroise) Built in 1864, this small concert hall is one of Paris' most eclectic venues, hosting rock, dance, comedy and techno acts from France and further afield.

**La Cigale** (Map pp372-3; ☎ 01 49 25 89 99; 120 blvd de Rochechouart, 18e; admission €22-45; ☎ box office noon-7pm Mon-Fri; 📍 Anvers/Pigalle) An enormous old music hall seating up to 2000 people, with a regular programme of gigs and international artists.



**L'Élysée Montmartre** (Map pp372-3; ☎ 01 55 07 16 00; www.elyseemontmartre.com; 72 Blvd de Rochechouart, 18e; cover €10-35; **M** Anvers) A huge old music hall with an impressive domed roof, this is one of the better venues in Paris for one-off rock and indie concerts. There are club nights and weekend DJs.

## CLUBBING

Paris has a thriving club scene, and there are some mighty fine DJs based here, but the scene moves fast so check local listings for the latest tips.

**Le Batofar** (Map pp372-3; ☎ 01 56 29 10 33; www.batofar.net, in French; opposite 11 quai François Mauriac, 13e; admission free-€15; ☎ 9pm-midnight Mon & Tue, 9pm or 10pm-4 or 6am Wed-Sun; **M** Quai de la Gare/Bibliothèque) A long-standing club housed inside an old tugboat. Expect electronica and techno for the most part, as well as some big-name DJs.

**Rex Club** (Map pp372-3; ☎ 01 42 36 10 96; 5 Blvd Poissonnière, 2e; admission €8-13; ☎ 11.30pm-6am Wed-Sat; **M** Bonne Nouvelle) The Rex reigns supreme in the house and techno scene and regularly hosts local and international DJs.

**Triptyque** (Map pp372-3; ☎ 01 40 28 05 55; www.tetryptique.com; 142 rue Montmartre, 2e; admission €3-10; ☎ 9pm-2am Sun-Wed, 9pm-5am Thu-Sat; **M** Grand Boulevards) A vast club split over three underground rooms, with a play list spanning electro, hip-hop, jazz and funk.

## ENTERTAINMENT

For the lowdown on Paris after dark, pick up *Pariscope* (€0.40) or *Officiel des Spectacles* (€0.35), both published on Wednesday. **Zurban** (www.zurban.com, in French; €1) also published on Wednesday, offers a fresher look at entertainment in the capital.

You can buy tickets for cultural events at ticket outlets, including **Fnac** (☎ 08 92 68 36 22; www.fnac.com) and **Virgin Megastore** (www.virginmega.fr) branches.

## GETTING THERE & AWAY

**BUS**  
Eurolines links Paris with destinations in Western and central Europe, Scandinavia and Morocco. The main **Eurolines office** (Map pp378-9; ☎ 01 43 54 11 99; www.eurolines.fr; 55 rue St-Jacques, 5e; ☎ 9.30am-6.30pm Mon-Fri, 10am-1pm & 2-6pm Sat; **M** Cluny-La Sorbonne) is in the city centre.

The **Gare Routière Internationale de Paris-Gallieni** (Map pp372-3; ☎ 0 892 899 091; 28 av du Général

de Gaulle, 93541 Bagnolet; ☎ 8am-10pm; **M** Gallieni), the city's international bus terminal, is in the suburb of Bagnolet.

## Train

Paris has six major train stations, each handling traffic to different parts of France and Europe.

**Gare d'Austerlitz** (Map pp372-3; Blvd de l'Hôpital, 13e; **M** Gare d'Austerlitz) Spain and Portugal; Loire Valley and non-TGV trains to southwestern France (eg Bordeaux and Basque Country).

**Gare de l'Est** (Map pp372-3; Blvd de Strasbourg, 10e; **M** Gare de l'Est) Luxembourg, Switzerland (Basel, Lucerne, Zurich), southern Germany (Frankfurt, Munich) and points further east; areas east of Paris (Champagne, Alsace and Lorraine).

**Gare de Lyon** (Map pp378-9; Blvd Diderot, 12e; **M** Gare de Lyon) Parts of Switzerland (eg Bern, Geneva, Lausanne), Italy and points beyond; TGV Sud-Est trains to areas southeast of Paris, including Dijon, Lyon, Provence, the Côte d'Azur and the Alps.

**Gare Montparnasse** (Map pp372-3; av du Maine & Blvd de Vaugirard, 15e; **M** Montparnasse Bienvenüe) Brittany and places en route from Paris (eg Chartres, Angers, Nantes), TGVs to Tours, Nantes, Bordeaux and southwestern France.

**Gare du Nord** (Map pp372-3; rue de Dunkerque, 10e; **M** Gare du Nord) UK, Belgium, northern Germany, Scandinavia, Moscow; terminus of the high-speed Thalys trains to/from Amsterdam, Brussels, Cologne and Geneva and Eurostar to London; trains to northern France, including TGVs to Lille and Calais.

**Gare St-Lazare** (Map pp372-3; rue St-Lazare & rue d'Amsterdam, 8e; **M** St-Lazare) Normandy (eg Dieppe, Le Havre, Cherbourg).

## GETTING AROUND

### To/from the Airports

**AÉROPORT ROISSY CHARLES DE GAULLE**  
**Roissy Charles de Gaulle** (code CDG; ☎ 01 48 62 22 80, 0 892 681 515; www.adp.fr) lies 37km northeast of central Paris. It has two train stations: **Aéroport Charles de Gaulle 1** (CDG1) and **Aéroport Charles de Gaulle 2** (CDG2). A free shuttle bus links the terminals with the train stations. Tickets for bus services are sold on board.

**RER B** (☎ 0 890 361 010; €8; 30min; every 4-15min 4.56am-12.15am) RER line B3 links CDG1 and CDG2 with the city. Take any RER line B train whose four-letter destination code begins with E (eg EIRE); a shuttle bus will ferry you to the appropriate terminal.

**Air France bus 2** (☎ 0 892 350 820; www.cars-airfrance.com in French; single/return €12/18; 35-50min;

every 15min 5.45am-11pm) Links the airport with the Arc de Triomphe outside 2 av Carnot, 17e (Map pp372-3; **M** Charles de Gaulle-Étoile) and the Palais des Congrès de Paris (Map pp372-3; Blvd Gouvion St-Cyr, 17e; **M** Porte Maillot).

**Air France bus 4** (☎ 0 892 350 820; www.cars-airfrance.com, in French; single/return €12/18; 45-55 min; every 30min 7am-9pm) Links the airport with Gare de Lyon (Map pp378-9; 20bis Blvd Diderot, 12e; **M** Gare de Lyon) and Gare Montparnasse (Map pp372-3; rue du Commandant René Mouchotte, 15e; **M** Montparnasse Bienvenüe).

**RATP Bus 350** (☎ 0 892 687 714; €4.20 or 3 metro/bus tickets; ☎ every 30min 5.45am-7pm) Links CDG with Gare de l'Est, 10e (Map pp372-3) and Gare du Nord, 10e (Map pp372-3).

**RATP Bus 351** (☎ 0 892 687 714; €4.20 or 3 metro/bus tickets; 55 min; every 30min 7am-9.30pm) Links CDG with place de la Nation, 11e (Map pp372-3).

### AÉROPORT D'ORLY

**Orly airport** (code ORY; ☎ 01 49 75 15 15, flight info 0 892 681 515; www.adp.fr) is 24km south of central Paris, with two terminals – Orly-Nord and Orly-Sud. Getting to/from the airport is easy; there are lots of buses shuttling between the airport and the city. Apart from RATP bus 183, all services call at both terminals. Tickets are sold on board.

**Air France Bus 1** (☎ 0 892 350 820; www.cars-airfrance.com; single/return €8/12; 30-45min; every 15min 6am-11pm each direction) This *navette* (shuttle bus) runs to/from Gare Montparnasse (Map pp372-3; rue du Commandant René Mouchotte, 15e; **M** Montparnasse Bienvenüe) and Aéroport des Invalides (Map pp372-3; **M** Invalides) in the 7e. The bus stops at Porte d'Orléans and Duroc metro stations on request.

**Orlyval** (☎ 0 892 687 714; €9.05; 35-40min; every 4-12min 6am-11pm each direction) This RATP service links Orly with the city centre. A shuttle train runs between the airport and Antony RER station (eight minutes) on RER line B; to get to Antony from the city (26 minutes), take line B4 towards St-Rémy-lès-Chevreuse. Orlyval tickets are valid on the RER and for metro travel within the city.

**Orlybus** (☎ 0 892 687 714; €5.80; 30min; every 15-20min 6am-11.30pm from Orly, 5.35am-11pm to Orly) RATP bus running to/from Denfert Rochereau metro station in the 14e.

**RATP Bus 183** (☎ 0 892 687 714; €1.40 or 1 metro/bus ticket; 1hr; every 35min 5.35am-8.35pm each direction) Links Orly-Sud (only) with Porte de Choisy metro station.

**Noctilien Bus 31** (☎ 0 892 687 714, 0 892 684 114 in English; 1hr; €5.60, every 60min 12.30am-5.30pm) Night bus linking Gare de Lyon, Place d'Italie and Gare d'Austerlitz with Orly-Sud.

### AÉROPORT PARIS-BEAUVAIS

**Beauvais** (code BVA; ☎ 03 44 11 46 86; www.aeroport-beauvais.com), 80km north of Paris, is used by Ryanair for its European flights.

**Express Bus** (☎ 0 892 682 064; €16.90; 1-1¼hr; 8.05am to 10.40pm from Beauvais, 5.45am-8.05pm to Beauvais) leaves **Parking Pershing** (Map pp372-3; 1 Blvd Pershing, 17e; **M** Porte Maillot) three hours before Ryanair departures and the airport 20 to 30 minutes after each arrival, dropping off on Place de la Porte Maillot. Tickets can be bought from the **Ryanair** (☎ 03 44 11 41 41) counter at the airport or from a kiosk in the parking lot.

### Public Transport

Paris' public transport is operated by **RATP** (Régie Autonome des Transports Parisiens; ☎ in French 0 892 687 714, in English 0 892 684 114; www.ratp.fr). The same tickets are valid on the metro, the RER, buses, the Montmartre funicular and Paris' three tram lines. They cost €1.40/10.70 for a single/*carnet* of 10. Tickets are available on buses and at all metro stations.

The **Carte Orange** is a combined metro, RER and bus pass and offers great value. A weekly *Carte Orange (coupon hebdomadaire)* costs €15.70 for zones 1 and 2 and is valid from Monday to Sunday. To buy your first *Carte Orange*, take a passport-size photograph to any metro or RER ticket window.

The **Mobilis** card allows unlimited travel for one day in two to eight zones (€5.40 to €18.40). **Paris Visite** passes offer discounts to certain museums and activities and on transport fares. The three-zone pass costs €8.35/13.70/18.25/26.65 for one/two/three/five days.

### BUS

Paris' bus system runs between 5.45am and 12.30am Monday to Saturday. Services are reduced on Sunday and public holidays (when buses run from 7am to 8.30pm).

After the metro lines have closed, **35 Noctilien** (www.noctilien.fr) night buses kick in, departing every hour from 12.30am to 5.30am. The buses serve the main train stations and cross the major arteries of the city. Look for blue 'N' or 'Noctilien' signs at bus stops. A single ride on a Noctilien bus costs €2.80.

Remember to cancel (*oblitérer*) your ticket in the *composteur* next to the driver.

### METRO & RER

Paris' underground network consists of two interlinked systems: the **Métropolitain**, (*métro*)

with 14 lines and 372 stations; and the **RER** (*Réseau Express Régional*), a network of suburban train lines.

Each **metro** train is known by the name of its terminus. On lines that split into several branches, the terminus is indicated on the cars with back-lit panels, and on electronic signs on the station platforms. The last trains begin their runs between 12.35am and 1.04am. The metro starts up again around 5.30am.

The **RER** is faster than the metro, but the stops are further apart. RER lines are known by an alphanumeric combination – the letter (A to E) refers to the line, the number to the spur it will follow to the suburbs.

Always keep your ticket until you exit from your station, otherwise you may be stopped by a *contrôleur* (ticket inspector) and fined (€25 to €45) for not having a valid ticket.

## Taxi

The *prise en charge* (flag-fall) in a Parisian taxi is €2. Within the city limits, it costs €0.77 per kilometre between 7am and 7pm Monday to Saturday, and €1.09 per kilometre at other times. Taxi companies:

**Abeille Radio Taxi** (☎ 01 42 70 00 42)

**Alpha Taxis** (☎ 01 45 85 85 85)

**Taxis Bleus** (☎ 01 49 36 10 10)

**Taxis-Radio Étoile** (☎ 01 42 70 41 41)

## AROUND PARIS

### VERSAILLES

pop 85,900

The prosperous, leafy and ever-so bourgeois suburb of Versailles, 21km southwest of Paris, is home to France's grandest and most famous chateau. It was the kingdom's political capital and royal court for more than a century, from 1682 to 1789 – the year Revolutionary mobs massacred the palace guard and dragged Louis XVI and Marie-Antoinette to Paris where they eventually had their heads lopped off.

The **Office de Tourisme de Versailles** (☎ 01 39 24 88 88; www.versailles-tourisme.com; 2bis av de Paris; ☎ 10am-6pm Mon, 9am-7pm Tue-Sun Apr-Sep; 9am-7pm Tue-Sat, 9am-6pm Sun Oct-Mar) offers tours (€8) of the chateau year-round.

### Sights

#### CHÂTEAU DE VERSAILLES

The splendid **Château de Versailles** (Versailles Palace; ☎ 01 30 83 77 88; www.chateauversailles.fr; admis-

sion to the palace adult/under 18yr €8/free, after 3.30pm €6; admission to Grand & Petit Trianon adult/under 18yr €5/free, after 3.30pm €3; ☎ 9am-6.30pm Tue-Sun Apr-Oct, 9am-5.30pm Tue-Sun Nov-Mar) was built in the mid-17th century during the reign of Louis XIV – the Roi Soleil (Sun King) – to project the absolute power of the French monarchy. The palace, a 580m-long structure with innumerable wings, grand halls and sumptuous bed-chambers, is perhaps even more renowned for its glorious landscaped **gardens** (admission free; ☎ 9am-sunset Apr-Oct, 8am-sunset Nov-Mar).

### Getting There & Away

RER line C5 (€2.55) takes you from Paris' Left Bank RER stations to Versailles-Rive Gauche station, which is only 700m southeast of the chateau. The last train to Paris leaves shortly before midnight.

SNCF operates up to 70 trains a day from Paris' Gare St-Lazare (€3.40) to Versailles-Rive Droite, which is 1.2km from the chateau. The last train to Paris leaves just after midnight.

### CHARTRES

pop 40,300

The magnificent 13th-century cathedral of Chartres, crowned by twin spires – one Gothic, the other Romanesque – is arguably the most famous and most beautiful in France, rivalled only by Notre Dame and Rouen in terms of scale and spectacle. Surrounded by farmland 88km southwest of Paris, the cathedral completely dominates the medieval town and the surrounding countryside, and makes a great day-trip from Paris.

The **Office de Tourisme de Chartres** (☎ 02 37 18 26 26; www.chartres-tourisme.com; place de la Cathédrale; ☎ 9am-7pm Mon-Sat, 9.30am-5.30pm Sun Apr-Sep, 10am-6pm Mon-Sat, 10am-1pm & 2.30-4.30pm Sun Oct-Mar) rents **audioguide tours** (for 1/2 people €5.50/8.50; 1½hr) of the medieval city.

### Sights

The 130m-long cathedral **Cathédrale Notre Dame de Chartres** (Cathedral of Our Lady of Chartres; ☎ 02 37 21 22 07; www.cathedrale-chartres.com, in French; place de la Cathédrale; ☎ 8.30am-6.45pm), one of France's finest Gothic cathedrals, was mostly built in the 13th century, although remnants of the original Romanesque cathedral can still be seen in the **Portail Royal** (Royal Portal) and the 103m-high **Clocher Vieux** (Old Bell Tower). The cathedral is particularly famous for its 172 breathtaking **stained-glass windows**, which

form one of the most important ensembles of medieval stained glass in the world.

Fabulous views are on offer from the 112m-high **Clocher Neuf** (New Bell Tower; adult/18-25 yr €6.50/4.50, under 18 & 1st Sun of certain months free; ☎ 9.30am-noon & 2-5.30pm Mon-Sat, 2-5.30pm Sun May-Aug; 9.30am-noon & 2-4.30pm Mon-Sat, 2-4.30pm Sun Sep-Apr).

### Getting There & Away

Some 30 SNCF trains a day (20 on Sunday) link Paris' Gare Montparnasse (€12.40, 55 to 70 minutes) with Chartres, all of which pass through Versailles-Chantiers (€10.10, 45 to 60 minutes).

## ALSACE & LORRAINE

Perched on the border between France and Germany, the neighbouring regions of Alsace and Lorraine are where the worlds of Gallic and Germanic culture meet head-on, but despite its Teutonic overtones, this is still very much part of France.

### STRASBOURG

pop 272,800

To most people, Strasbourg is best known as one of Europe's great seats of power. The European Parliament, the Council of Europe and the European Court of Human Rights are all based here, but despite its bureaucratic image you'll find Strasbourg to be a cosmopolitan city: bicycles buzz along the canals and the city swings by night when students and politicians alike head for the many pubs and *winstubs* (Alsatian restaurants) that line the streets of the old town. Strasbourg's excellent museums and rosy-pink cathedral are worth exploring, and when you need to quench your thirst you can take a tour of one of two huge lager breweries outside the city centre.

### Orientation

The train station is 400m west of the Grande Île (Big Island), the core of ancient and modern Strasbourg, whose main squares are place Kléber, place Broglie (*broag-lee*), place Gutenberg and place du Château. The Petite France area, in the Grande Île's southwestern corner, is subdivided by canals. The European Parliament building is 2km northeast of the cathedral.

### Information

**NeT SuR Cour** (18 quai des Pêcheurs; per hr €2; ☎ 9.30am-9.30pm Mon-Fri, 2-8pm Sat & Sun; ☎ Gallia) Well-equipped cybercafé.

**Main post office** (5 av de la Marseillaise; ☎ République)

**Tourist office** (☎ 03 88 52 28 28; www.ot-strasbourg.fr; 17 pl de la Cathédrale; ☎ 9am-7pm) The Strasbourg Pass (€10.60), a coupon book valid for three days, offers discounts on local sights.

### Grande Île

The enchanting **Grande Île**, with its public squares, pedestrianised areas and upmarket shopping, is a paradise for an aimless amble. The area known as **Petite France** is particularly charming – a chocolate-box confection of half-timbered buildings, peaceful canals and geranium-filled window boxes. The best views are from the **Barrage Vauban** (Vauban Dam; admission free; ☎ 9am-7.30pm).

Strasbourg's candy-coloured Gothic **Cathédrale Notre Dame** (☎ 7am-7pm) was completed in 1284, but the 142m spire wasn't finished till 1439. Inside the southern entrance is the 16th-century *horloge astronomique* (astronomical clock). The 66m-high **platform** (☎ 03 88 43 60 40; adult/student & under 18 yrs €3/1.50; ☎ 9am-5pm Mon-Fri, 10am-5pm Sat & Sun Apr-Oct, to 4.30pm Nov-Mar) affords a spectacular stork's-eye view.

The **Musée de l'Œuvre Notre-Dame** (☎ 03 88 32 88 17; 3 place du Château; adult/concession/under 18yr incl audioguide €4/2/free; ☎ 10am-6pm Tue-Sun) has one of Europe's premier collections of Romanesque, Gothic and Renaissance sculptures, 15th-century paintings and stained glass.

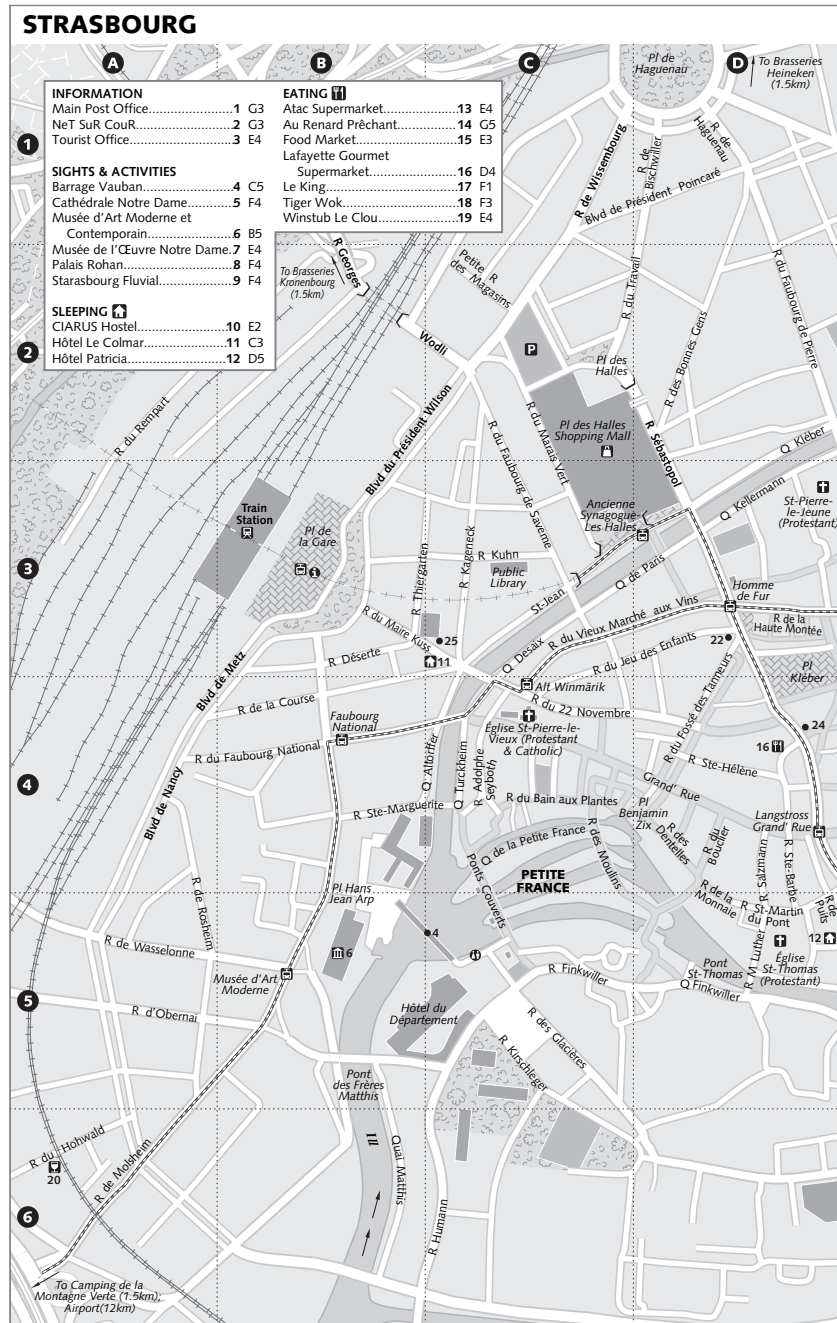
The **Musée d'Art Moderne et Contemporain** (Museum of Modern & Contemporary Art; ☎ 03 88 23 31 31; place Hans Jean Arp; adult/concession/under 18yr €5/2.50/free; ☎ 11am-7pm Tue, Wed, Fri & Sat, noon-10pm Thu, 10am-6pm Sun; ☎ Musée d'Art Moderne) has an exceptional collection of works representing every major art movement of the past century.

The **Palais Rohan** (☎ 03 88 52 50 00; 2 place du Château; combined ticket adult/concession/under 18yr & disabled €6/3/free, per museum €4/2/free; ☎ 10am-6pm Wed-Mon) was built between 1732 and 1742 for the city's bishops. It houses several museums including the **Musée Archéologique**, which travels from the Palaeolithic period to AD 800.

### Tours

#### BOAT TRIPS

River tours (70 minutes) are run by **Strasbourg Fluvial** (☎ 03 88 84 13 13, 03 88 32 75 25; adult/student under 25yr €7/3.50, at night May-Sep €7.40/3.70; ☎ 10.30am,





1pm, 2.30pm & 4pm in winter, more frequent when warmer). They depart from behind Palais Rohan.

### BREWERY TOURS

**Brasseries Kronenbourg** (☎ 03 88 27 41 59; siege.visites@kronenbourg-fr.com; 68 route d'Oberhausbergen; adult/student/12 to 18yr/family €5/4/3/14; ☑️ Ducs d'Alsace), 2.5km northwest of the Grande Île, offers brewery tours several times daily.

**Brasseries Heineken** (☎ 03 88 19 57 55; 4 rue St-Charles), about 1.5km north of town, has free, two-hour brewery tours during the week.

### Sleeping

**Camping de la Montagne Verte** (☎ 03 88 30 25 46; 2 rue Robert Forrer; per adult/site €3.40/4.65; ☑️ mid-Mar-Oct & late Nov-early Jan) A grassy municipal camping ground southwest of Grande Île, a short walk from the Nid de Cigognes stop on bus line 2.

**CIARUS Hostel** (☎ 03 88 15 27 88; www.ciarus.com; 7 rue Finkmatt; dm in 8-/4-/2-bed room incl breakfast €20/24/26.50; ☑️) This welcoming, 101-room hostel is so stylish it even counts a number of European Parliament members among its regular clients. Take bus 2, 4 or 10 to the Place de Pierre stop.

**Hôtel Le Colmar** (☎ 03 88 32 16 89; hotel.le.colmar@wanadoo.fr; 1 rue du Maire Kuss; d €42.50, with washbasin €29, hall shower €1.50; ☑️ Alt Winmärik) This one-star cheapie offers a unique mix of light and linoleum – stylish it ain't, but it's convenient and good value. Cash only.

**Hôtel Patricia** (☎ 03 88 32 14 60; www.hotelpatricia.fr; 1a rue du Puits; d from €43, with washbasin €32, hall shower €2; ☑️ reception 8am-8pm Mon-Sat, 8am-2pm Sun; ☑️) The best budget bet on the island. The dark, rustic interior and Vosges sandstone floors of this former convent make for an atmospheric night's sleep. The 22 rooms are simply furnished but immaculate and spacious; some (eg Nos 3 and 6) have great views.

### Eating & Drinking

Just south of place Gutenberg, pedestrianised rue des Tonneliers is lined with mid-range restaurants. Inexpensive places can be found northeast of the cathedral along rue des Frères.

**Au Renard Préchant** (☎ 03 88 35 62 87; 33 place de Zurich; mains €9.50-16.50; ☑️ closed Sun & lunch Sat) A stuffed, bespectacled *renard* (fox) presides over this Alsatian restaurant, housed in a 16th-century chapel. *Gibier* (game) bagged by Molsheim-area hunters is a winter speciality.

**Winstub Le Clou** (☎ 03 88 32 11 67; 3 rue du Chaudron; ☑️ meals served 11.45am-2.15pm & 5.30pm-midnight except Sun, holidays & lunch Wed) A typical *winstub* (literally 'wine room'), where diners sit together at long tables with paisley tablecloths. Specialities include *baeckeffe* (meat stew; €16.90) and *wädle braisé au pinot noir* (ham knuckles in wine; €14.90).

**Tiger Wok** (☎ 03 88 36 44 87; 8 rue du Faisan; lunch incl drink €13.50, dinner €14, all-you-can-eat €22.90; ☑️ noon-2.15pm & 7-10.30pm, to 11pm Wed & Thu, to 11.30pm Fri & Sat) Choose your ingredients (veggies, fish, meat), pick a sauce and then watch them being stir-fried by your own personal *wokeur*.

**Le King** (☎ 03 88 52 17 71; 28 rue Sellénick; 2-course menu €10; ☑️ closed Sat & dinner Fri; ☑️ Parc du Contades) In the heart of Strasbourg's Jewish neighbourhood, this kosher place specialises in Moroccan-style grilled meats and fish.

### SELF-CATERING

For picnic supplies:

**Atac supermarket** (47 rue des Grandes Arcades; ☑️ 8.30am-8pm Mon-Sat)

**Food market** (place Broglie; ☑️ 7am-4pm, often until 6pm Wed & Fri)

**Lafayette Gourmet supermarket** (34 rue du 22 Novembre; ☑️ 9am-8pm Mon-Sat).

### Drinking

**La Laiterie** (☎ 03 88 23 72 37; www.artefact.org, in French; 11-13 rue du Hohwald; ☑️ closed Jul, Aug & Christmas-early Jan; ☑️ Laiterie) One kilometre southwest of the station, Strasbourg's most vibrant venue hosts live gigs (free to €23) and regular Friday club nights (€5).

**La Salamandre** (☎ 03 88 25 79 42; www.lasalamandre-strasbourg.fr, in French; 3 rue Paul Janet; admission Fri & Sat €5, other nights €3-4; ☑️ 9pm-4am Wed-Sun Oct-Apr, 10pm-4am Wed-Sat May-Sep) Billed as a *bar-club-spectacles*, this disco has theme nights each Friday.

**La Java** (☎ 03 88 36 34 88; www.lajava.net, in French; 6 rue du Faisan; coat-check €2; ☑️ 7pm-4am) A lively *bar-dansant* with a stylish saloon on the ground-floor and a grungy cellar where you can boogie.

### Entertainment

Details on cultural events appear in the free monthly **Spectacles** (www.spectacles-publications.com), available at the tourist office.

### Getting There & Away

Eurolines buses stop 2.5km south of the **Eurolines office** (☎ 03 90 22 14 60; 6D place d'Austerlitz;

☑️ 10am-12.30pm & 2-6.30pm Mon-Fri & Sat morning; ☑️ Lycée Couffignal) near Stade de la Meinau (the city's main football stadium), on rue du Maréchal Lefebvre.

Train tickets are available at the **SNCF Boutique** (5 rue des France-Bourgeois; ☑️ 10am-7pm Mon-Fri, to 5pm Sat). The train station (currently undergoing a major refit) is linked to Metz (€20.40, 1¼ to 1¾ hours, four to eight daily), Nancy (€19.70, 1¼ hours, 10 to 17 daily) and Paris' Gare de l'Est (€50.30, four to 4¾ hours, nine to 13 daily).

### Getting Around

Four tram-lines (with a fifth under construction) form the centrepiece of Strasbourg's public transport network, run by **CTS** (☎ 03 88 77 70 70; 56 rue du Jeu des Enfants). Single bus/tram tickets cost €1.20. The 24-hour Tourpass (€3.20) is sold at tourist offices and tram stops.

The city's Vélocation system supplies bikes (per half/whole day €4/7, Monday to Friday €10, plus €100 deposit) from various outlets:

**City Centre** (☎ 03 88 24 05 61; 10 rue des Bouchers; ☑️ 9.30am-noon & 2-6.30pm or 7pm in summer, 10am-5pm Mon-Fri in winter; ☑️ Porte de l'Hôpital)

**Train Station** (☎ 03 88 23 56 75; 4 rue du Maire Kuss; ☑️ 9.30am-7pm Mon-Fri, 9.30am-noon & 2-7pm Sat, also open 9.30am-noon & 2-7pm Sun & holidays; ☑️ Alt Winmärik)

## NORTHERN FRANCE

Tucked into the northeast corner of France, this is one of the most densely-populated and industrial areas in the country, and the site of the most notorious battlefields of WWI. The region is made up of three separate areas – Flanders (Flandre or Flandres), Artois and Picardy (Picardie).

### LILLE

pop 226,800

In recent decades the once-grimy industrial city of Lille has transformed itself – with generous government help and the arrival of the Eurostar – into a glittering and self-confident cultural and commercial hub. Highlights for the visitor include the attractive old town with its strong Flemish feel, three renowned art museums, stylish shopping, some fine dining experiences and a cutting-edge nightlife scene.

### Information

**4 Players** (9 rue Maertens; per 10 min/hr €0.50/3;

☑️ 11am-10.30pm Mon-Fri, 10am-11.30pm Sat, 2-10pm Sun) Cybercafé.

**Tourist Office** (☎ 08 91 56 20 04; www.lilletourism.com; place Rihour; ☑️ 9.30am-6.30pm Mon-Sat, 10am-noon & 2-5pm Sun & holidays)

### Sights

**Vieux Lille** (Old Lille), which begins north of place du Général de Gaulle, is justly proud of its restored 17th- and 18th-century houses, but the town's main attraction is the **Palais des Beaux-Arts** (☎ 03 20 06 78 00; place de la République; adult/12-25yr/under 12yr €4.60/3/free; ☑️ 2-6pm Mon, 10am-6pm Wed-Sun; ☑️ République Beaux Arts), which possesses works by Rubens, Van Dyck and Manet.

### Sleeping & Eating

**Auberge de Jeunesse** (☎ 03 20 57 08 94; lille@fujaj.org; 12 rue Malpart; dm incl breakfast €15.90; ☑️ closed 24 Dec-late Jan; ☑️ Mairie de Lille) This spartan former maternity hospital now houses 165 beds in three- to seven-bed dorms. Toilets and showers are down the hall.

**Hôtel Le Globe** (☎ 03 20 57 29 58; 1 Blvd Vauban; d €38, with shower €34) The best rooms have old-fashioned fireplaces and French windows overlooking the Citadelle, which just about makes up for the lumpy pillows and slightly tired décor.

**Hôtel de France** (☎ 03 20 57 14 78; hotel.de.france.lille@wanadoo.fr; 10 rue de Béthune; s/d from €45/50) You can't get more central than this two-star place, with 33 rooms that are somewhat awkwardly laid out but functional. Some of the top-floor rooms have great views but there's no lift.

**Le Palais** (☎ 03 20 74 53 47; 4 rue du Palais de Justice; mains €11-15; ☑️ closed Sun & dinner Mon) Serves solid French-Flemish cuisine at fair prices, including *potjevlesch* (a gelled pâté made with pork, rabbit, fowl and veal).

Lille's **covered food market** (place Nouvelle Aventure; ☑️ 8am-2pm Tue-Thu, 8am-8pm Fri & Sat, 8am-3pm Sun & holidays; ☑️ Gambetta) is 1.2km southwest of the centre in the Wazemmes district. The largest supermarket is **Carrefour** (Euralille shopping centre; ☑️ 9am-10pm Mon-Sat).

### Drinking

**Chocolaterie Vandyck** (☎ 03 28 82 07 72; 4 rue des Bouchers; ☑️ 2-7pm Tue & Wed, 10am-7pm Thu-Sat, 3-7.30pm Sun) Hot chocolate (€4.50 to €7.50) and chocolate

pralines are the highlights at this delightful *salon dechocolat*.

**Café Citoyen** (Citizen Café; ☎ 03 20 13 15 73; http://cafecitoyen.org, in French; 7 place du Vieux Marché aux Chevaux; lunchtime plat du jour €8.30; ☎ noon-midnight Mon-Fri, 2-7pm Sat) This ethical café is relaxed and very friendly – internet access is free if you order an organic beer or a cup of fair-trade coffee.

### Getting There & Away

**Eurolines** (☎ 03 20 78 18 88; 23 parvis St-Maurice; ☎ 9.30am-6pm Mon-Fri, 1-6pm Sat, longer hr Jul-Aug) serves Brussels (€14, 1½ to two hours), Amsterdam (€41, six hours) and London (€34, six hours).

Lille's two train stations are one stop apart on metro line No 2. **Gare Lille-Flandres** operates TGVs to Paris' Gare du Nord (€35.40, at peak hours €48.40, 64 minutes, 23 daily Monday to Friday, 15 daily Saturday and Sunday). **Gare Lille-Europe** handles everything else, including Eurostars to London (1¼ hours), TGVs/Eurostars to Brussels (weekday/week-end €240/15.50, 40 minutes, 11 to 13 daily) and TGVs to Nice (€110.30 or €130.40, 7¼ hours, two direct daily).

## CALAIS

pop 75,000

Apart from some pleasant restaurants and Rodin's *The Burghers of Calais*, there's not much to keep even the most enthusiastic visitor entertained in Calais for more than a few hours.

The train station is 650m south of the main square, place d'Armes, and 700m north of Calais' commercial district, centred on blvd Léon Gambetta and place du Théâtre. The ferry terminal is 1.5km northeast of place d'Armes. The Channel Tunnel's vehicle loading area is about 6km southwest of the town centre.

The **tourist office** (☎ 03 21 96 62 40; www.calais-cotedopale.com; 12 blvd Georges Clemenceau; ☎ 10am-1pm & 2-6.30pm Mon-Sat, also 10am-1pm Sun Jul & Aug) provides all the usual information.

Calais' Flemish Renaissance-style **town hall** (1911-25) contains Rodin's *Les Bourgeois de Calais* (1895).

Original WWII artefacts fill the display cases of the **Musée de la Guerre** (☎ 03 21 34 21 57; adult/student/family of 5 incl audioguide €6/5/14; ☎ 10am-6pm May-Sep, 11am-5pm Wed-Mon Feb-Apr, noon-5pm Wed-Mon Oct & Nov).

At rustic **Tonnerre de Brest** (☎ 03 21 96 95 35; 16 place d'Armes; weekday lunch menus €10-17.80; ☎ closed Mon except Jul & Aug) you can try 19 different kinds of savoury *galettes* and 30 sorts of sweet crêpes, all washed down with a mug or three of cider.

### Getting There & Away

For details on getting across the Channel, see p369.

### BOAT

Car ferries from Dover dock daily at Calais' busy car ferry terminal, about 1.5km north-east of place d'Armes. Buses (€1.50; hourly from about 10am to 7 or 7.30pm) link Gare Calais-Ville and place d'Armes with the car ferry terminal.

**P&O Ferries** car ferry terminal (☎ 03 21 46 10 10; ☎ 6am-10pm); Calais town centre (41 place d'Armes)

**SeaFrance** car ferry terminal (☎ 03 21 46 80 05; ☎ 5.45am-10.45pm); Calais town centre (☎ 03 21 19 42 42; 2 place d'Armes)

### BUS

**Cariane Littoral** (☎ 03 21 34 74 40; 10 rue d'Amsterdam) operates services from Calais to Boulogne (€6.90, 40 minutes, four daily Monday to Friday, two on Saturday) and Dunkirk (€7.40, 45 minutes, 12 daily Monday to Friday, three on Saturday).

### CAR & MOTORCYCLE

To reach the Channel Tunnel's vehicle loading area at Coquelles, just follow the road signs on the A16 to the Tunnel Sous La Manche (Tunnel under the Channel) at exit No 13.

### TRAIN

Calais has two train stations: Gare Calais-Ville in the city centre; and Gare Calais-Fréthun, a TGV station located 10km southwest of town near the Channel Tunnel entrance. The stations are linked by the free Navette TER, a bus service operated by Cariane Littoral.

Gare Calais-Ville operates services to Boulogne (€6.90, 28 to 48 minutes, 17 daily Monday to Saturday, nine on Sunday), Dunkirk (€7.40, 50 minutes, six daily Monday to Friday, three or four daily Saturday and Sunday) and Lille-Flandres (€14.70, 1¼ hours, 19 daily Monday to Friday, 10 on Saturday and Sunday).

Calais-Fréthun is served by TGVs to Paris' Gare du Nord (€37.20 or €50.60, 1½ hours, six daily Monday to Saturday, three on Sunday) as well as the Eurostar to London.

## NORMANDY (NORMANDIE)

The land of Camembert and Calvados (an apple-flavoured aperitif), Normandy is a largely rural region where cows far outnumber their two-legged neighbours. Dotted with lush fields and winding hedgerows, Normandy is where you'll find the historic beaches of D-Day, the soaring spires of Mont St-Michel and the stunning Bayeux Tapestry – the world's largest comic strip.

## ROUEN

pop 109,000

With its elegant spires and soaring Gothic cathedral, Rouen is one of Normandy's highlights. Badly damaged during WWII, the city has since been lavishly restored, and the medieval quarter is filled with half-timbered houses and punch-drunk, polished-up buildings. The young French heroine Joan of Arc (Jeanne d'Arc) was tried for heresy and burned at the stake in the central square in 1431. Rouen makes an ideal base for exploring northern Normandy.

### Orientation & Information

The main train station (Gare Rouen-Rive Droite) is at the northern end of rue Jeanne d'Arc, the main thoroughfare running south to the Seine. The old city is centred on rue du Gros Horloge between the place du Vieux Marché and the cathedral.

**Cybernet** (47 pl du Vieux-Marché; pr hr €4; ☎ 10am-10pm) Internet access.

**Post office** (45 rue Jeanne d'Arc) Has a Cyberposte terminal.

**Tourist office** (☎ 02 32 08 32 40; www.mairie-rouen.fr; 25 pl de la Cathédrale; ☎ 9am-7pm Mon-Sat, 9.30am-12.30pm & 2-6pm Sun May-Sep; 9am-6pm Mon-Sat, 10am-1pm Sun Oct-Apr)

### Sights

The old city's main street is rue du Gros Horloge, which runs from the cathedral to **place du Vieux Marché**, where 19-year-old Joan of Arc was executed. The striking **Église Jeanne**

**d'Arc** (☎ 10am-12.15pm & 2-6pm, closed Fri & Sun morning) marks the site and contains marvellous 16th-century stained-glass windows.

Rouen's **Cathédrale Notre Dame** (☎ 8am-6pm Tue-Sun, 2-6pm Mon) is a masterpiece of French Gothic architecture, and is famous as the subject of a series of impressionist paintings by Monet.

The **Tour Jeanne d'Arc** (☎ 02 35 98 16 21; rue du Donjon; adult €1.50; ☎ 10am-12.30pm & 2-6pm Wed-Sat & Mon, 2-6.30pm Sun Apr-Sep; 10am-12.30pm & 2-5pm Wed-Sat & Mon, 2-5.30pm Sun Oct-Mar) is where Joan of Arc was imprisoned before her execution.

### Sleeping & Eating

**Hôtel Andersen** (☎ 02 35 71 88 51; www.hotelandersen.com; 4 rue Pouchet; s/d€50/60-65) Handy for the station, this quietly elegant family-run hotel is housed in a 19th-century mansion and offers an unmistakably old-world atmosphere – classical music greets you as you walk through the door, and the bedrooms ooze Laura Ashley style.

**Hôtel Le Palais** (☎ 02 35 71 41 40; 12 rue du Tambour; r from €30) Top hotel for value in town, bang in the middle of things near the Palais de Justice and the Gros Horloge. Don't expect too many spoils – the rooms are basic and not all are en suite, but central Rouen is on your doorstep.

**Pascaline** (☎ 02 35 89 67 44; 5 rue de la Poterne; menus €12.95/15.90) One of the top spots in town for a great-value *formule midi*, this bustling bistro serves up traditional cuisine in typically French surroundings – net curtains, wooden tables and chuffing coffee machines abound.

**Le P'tit Bec** (☎ 02 35 07 63 33; 182 rue Eau de Robec; lunch menus €11.50-14; ☎ lunch Mon-Sat, dinner Fri & Sat) Always busy with a local crowd, this down-to-earth restaurant is all about good, reliable food, including pasta, salads, *oeufs cocottes* and plenty of vegetarian options.

The **covered food market** (place du Vieux Marché; ☎ 6am-1.30pm Tue-Sun) sells a variety of produce including dairy products, fish and fresh produce. There's also an **Alimentation Générale** (78 rue de la République) and a **Monoprix supermarket** (65 rue du Gros Horloge).

### Drinking

**La Boîte à Bières** (☎ 02 35 07 76 47; 35 rue Cauchoise; ☎ 4pm-2am Tue-Sat) This lively half-timbered corner-bar is a good place to down a few local ales.

## Getting There & Away

**CNA** (☎ 0 825 076 027; 9 rue Jeanne d'Arc) runs regional buses to various destinations around Normandy. Buses leave from quai du Havre and quai de la Bourse.

From Gare Rouen-Rive Droite there are trains to Paris' Gare St-Lazare (€18.50, 70 minutes, six to eight daily), Caen (€20.70, two hours, twelve daily), Dieppe (€9, 45 minutes, twelve to fifteen daily) and Le Havre (€12.40, one hour, twelve to fifteen daily). Gare Rouen-Rive Gauche has regional services.

## BAYEUX

pop 20,775

There's one reason why several million visitors descend on Bayeux every year – a 70m-long piece of embroidered cloth known to the French as *La Tapisserie de la Reine Mathilde*, and to the rest of the world as the Bayeux Tapestry. Bayeux's winding streets are crammed with higgledy-piggledy period buildings, including a fine Gothic cathedral and lots of wooden-framed Norman houses, and the city makes a perfect launch pad for exploring the invasion beaches just to the north.

## Orientation & Information

The Cathédrale Notre Dame, the major landmark in the centre of Bayeux, is 1km north-west of the train station.

Just off the northern end of rue Larcher is the **tourist office** (☎ 02 31 51 28 28; www.bayeux-tourism.com; pont St-Jean; ☎ 9am-7pm Mon-Sat, 9am-1pm & 2-6pm Sun Jun-Aug; 9.30am-12.30pm & 2-6pm daily Apr-May & Sep-Oct; 9.30am-12.30pm & 2-5.30pm Mon-Sat Jan-Mar & Nov-Dec).

## Sights

The Bayeux Tapestry narrates the story of the Norman invasion of England in 1066 over 58 remarkable (and surprisingly graphic) scenes. It is housed in the **Musée de la Tapisserie de Bayeux** (☎ 02 31 51 25 50; rue de Nesmond; adult/student incl admission to Musée Baron Gérard €7.60/3; ☎ 9am-6.30pm mid-Mar–Apr & Sep–Nov; 9.30am-12.30pm & 2-6pm Nov–mid-Mar; 9am-7pm May-Aug).

The Gothic **Cathédrale Notre Dame** (place de la Liberté; ☎ 8.30am-6pm Oct-Jun, 8.30am-7pm Jul-Sep) dates from the 13th century.

The **Musée Mémorial 1944 Bataille de Normandie** (☎ 02 31 92 93 41; blvd Fabien Ware; adult/student €6/3; ☎ 9.30am-6.30pm May–mid-Sep, 10am-12.30pm & 2-6pm mid-Sep–Apr) houses Normandy's main collection of D-Day memorabilia, which includes

weapons, documents, photos and lots of military hardware.

The peaceful **war cemetery** (☎ 02 21 21 77 00; blvd Fabien Ware), a few hundred metres west of the war museum, is the largest of the 18 Commonwealth military cemeteries in Normandy. It contains 4868 graves of soldiers from the UK and 10 other countries.

## Sleeping

**Camping Municipal de Bayeux** (☎ 02 31 92 08 43; blvd d'Eindhoven; adult/site €3.10/3.83; ☎ mid-Mar–mid-Nov) This camping ground is about 2km north of the town centre. Bus 3 stops three times daily at nearby Les Cerisiers.

**Auberge de Jeunesse Bayeux Les Sablons** (☎ 02 31 92 15 22, fax 02 31 92 55 72; rond-point de Cherbourg; adult €12.90) Bayeux's official hostel is 1km from the train station. The accommodation is pretty sparse, but there's bike hire, laundry and a small restaurant on site.

**Hôtel Mogador** (☎ 02 31 92 24 58; hotel.mogador@wanadoo.fr; 20 rue Alain Chartier; d €46-51) A reliable if slightly rundown hotel on the market square. Floral curtains and the odd exposed beam conjure up some character, and there's a small garden courtyard that makes a lovely spot for morning croissant.

**Hôtel de la Gare** (☎ 02 31 92 10 70; www.normandy-tours-hotel.com; 26 place de la Gare; s/d €19/38) A few bargain-basement rooms are available above this small brasserie opposite the station. Normandy Tours is based here (opposite).

## Eating

**Le Petit Bistrot** (☎ 02 31 51 85 40; 2 rue du Bienvenu; mains €14-22; ☎ closed Sun & Mon Sep-Jun) An excellent spot for down-to-earth regional cooking, served in a sunny room decked out with wooden tables and terracotta floor tiles.

**La Rapière** (☎ 02 31 21 05 45; 53 rue St-Jean; lunch menu €15, dinner menus €25 & €31; ☎ closed Wed & Thu low season) Hearty home cooking, Norman-style – try specialities such as *timbale de pecheur* (fisherman's stew) and calvados sorbet.

There are lots of takeaway shops along or near rue St-Martin and rue St-Jean, including **Le Petit Glouton** (42 rue St-Martin).

## Getting There & Away

**Bus Verts** (☎ 0 810 214 214; opposite the train station) runs daily buses to Caen and the D-Day beaches (see opposite).

There are regular trains to Caen (€5.30, 20 minutes), Cherbourg (€14, one hour)

and Paris' Gare St-Lazare (€30.40, five direct daily).

## D-DAY BEACHES

The D-Day landings, codenamed 'Operation Overlord', were the largest military operation in history. Early on 6 June 1944, Allied troops stormed ashore along 80km of beaches north of Bayeux, codenamed (from west to east) Utah, Omaha, Gold, Juno and Sword. The landings on D-Day – called Jour J in French – were followed by the Battle of Normandy, which ultimately led to the liberation of Europe from Nazi occupation.

Caen's **Mémorial museum** (Memorial – A Museum for Peace; ☎ 02 31 06 06 44; www.memorial-caen.fr, in French; adult/student & 10-18yr €17.50/16, WWII veterans free; ☎ 9am-7pm Feb-Sep, 9am-6pm Oct-Dec, closed Jan) provides the best overview of the Battle of Normandy, and there are many small D-Day museums dotted around the area. Once on the coast, several well-signposted routes link the main battle sites.

The most brutal fighting on D-Day took place 15km northwest of Bayeux along the stretch of coastline now known as **Omaha Beach**. Dune-lined **Juno Beach**, 12km east of Arromanches, was stormed by Canadian troops on D-Day. Little remnants of the fighting remains on the beaches apart from the occasional concrete bunker – these days they're as popular with summer holidaymakers as history buffs.

To make it possible to unload cargo without having to capture one of the heavily-defended Channel ports, the Allies established two prefabricated breakwaters code-named Mulberry Harbours. One of them, Port Winston, can still be viewed from the shore at low tide at **Arromanches**, a seaside town 10km northeast of Bayeux.

Perched above Omaha Beach, the **American Military Cemetery** (☎ 02 31 51 62 00; ☎ 9am-6pm mid-Apr–Sep, 9am-5pm Oct–mid-Apr) at Colleville-sur-Mer, 17km northwest of Bayeux, is the largest American cemetery in Europe, containing the graves of 9387 American soldiers and a memorial to 1557 others whose remains were never found.

## Tours

**D-Day Tours** (☎ 02 31 51 70 52; www.d-daybeaches.com; BP 48525, 14400 Bayeux) offers day tours (adult/student/under 10 years €75/65/40) of the main D-Day sites.

The **Caen Mémorial** (☎ 02 31 06 06 45; www.memorial-caen.fr; afternoon tour adults/under 18yr & veterans €67.50/54, morning tour €54 per person; ☎ 9am & 1pm Apr-Sep; 1pm Jan-Mar & Oct-Dec) conducts minibus tours around the landing beaches. The price includes entry to the museum.

## MONT ST-MICHEL

pop 42

The slender towers and sky-scraping turrets of the abbey of Mont St-Michel are one of the classic postcard images of Northern France. Rising from flat white sands, the abbey sits atop a small island encircled by stout ramparts, connected to the mainland by an old causeway. Legend has it that the abbey was founded in the 8th century, when Aubert, the bishop of Avranches, was visited by the Archangel Michael in a dream.

The **Abbaye du Mont St-Michel** (☎ 02 33 89 80 00; adult/18-25yr/under 18 incl 1hr guided tour €8/5/free; ☎ 9am-7pm May-Sep, 9.30am-6pm Oct-Apr) is at the top of the Grande Rue. From Monday to Saturday between mid-May and September, there are self-paced illuminated night-time visits of Mont St-Michel complete with music from 9pm to midnight.

**Pontorson** (population 4100), the nearest town to Mont St-Michel, is 9km south and the base for most travellers. Route D976 from Mont St-Michel runs right into Pontorson's main thoroughfare, rue du Couësnon.

## Information

**Mont St-Michel Tourist Office** (☎ 02 33 60 14 30; www.ot-montsaintmichel.com; ☎ 9am-7pm Jul & Aug, 9am-noon & 2-5.30pm Sep-Jun) is up the stairs to the left inside Porte de l'Avancée at the entrance to the abbey.

## Sleeping & Eating

**Camping Haliotis** (☎ 02 33 68 11 59; www.camping-haliotis-mont-saint-michel.com; Pontorson; adult/site €4.50/4; ☎ Apr-Nov; ☎) Just off blvd Général Patton, this complex has a heated pool, bike hire, tennis courts and an onsite bar.

**Hôtel de Bretagne** (☎ 02 33 60 10 55; www.lebrtagnepontorson.com; 59 rue du Couësnon; s €35-48, d €39-64; lunch menu €11, dinner menus €15-38) This timber-fronted hotel in Pontorson is a little shabby, but the flowery bedspreads and frilly curtains add a touch of colour. The downstairs restaurant offers local specialities such as oysters with Camembert and scallops cooked in cider.



**Centre Duguesclin** (☎/fax 02 33 60 18 65; aj@ville-pontorson.fr; blvd du Général Patton; r per person €11-14; ☹️ year-round) One kilometre west of the train station, this newly renovated hostel offers four- to six-bed rooms and kitchen facilities. The hostel closes from 10am to 6pm, but there's no curfew.

**Crêperie La Sirène** (☎ 02 33 60 08 60; galettes €6-10, menu €14) Most of the restaurants on the Mont itself are massively overpriced, but this bog-standard *crêperie* isn't a bad budget option.

## Getting There & Away

**Courriers Bretons** (☎ 02 33 60 11 43) runs between Pontorson and Mont St-Michel (€1.80, 15 minutes, seven to 10 daily) and also to/from St-Malo (€8, one hour).

Local trains from Pontorson include Caen (€21.70, 2¼ hours, two daily) and Cherbourg (via Lisieux; €23.30, 2½ to 3 hours, two daily).

You can rent bicycles from Camping Haliotis (p397) and **VMPS** (☎ 02 33 60 28 76, 06 86 90 95 01). VMPS delivers to your hotel or camp-site.

# BRITTANY (BRETAGNE, BREIZH)

Flung out on the far west of France, Brittany is in many ways a nation apart, thanks to its status as the last outpost of traditional Celtic culture in the country. With its own unique language – closely related to other Celtic languages such as Cornish and Welsh – and a calendar packed with colourful festivals and events, Brittany is one of France's most fascinating regions. It's also blessed with lots of beautiful beaches and the oldest standing stones this side of Stonehenge.

## QUIMPER

pop 59,400

Small enough to feel like a village with its timbered houses and cobblestone streets, and large enough to serve as a centre for Breton culture and arts, Quimper (pronounced *kam-pair*) is Finistère's thriving capital. Derived from the Breton word *kemper*, meaning 'confluence', Quimper sits at the juncture of the small Rivers Odet and Steir.

## Information

**Tourist office** (☎ 02 98 53 04 05; www.quimper-tourisme.com, in French; place de la Résistance; ☹️ 9am-

7pm Mon-Sat, 10am-12.45pm & 3-5.45pm Sun Jul & Aug, 9.30am-12.30pm & 1.30-6pm or 6.30pm Mon-Sat Sep-Jun, 10am-12.45pm Sun Jun & 1-15 Sep)

## Sights & Activities

Quimper's **cathedral** (☹️ 9.30am-noon & 1.30-6.30pm Mon-Sat, 1.30-6.30pm Sun May-Oct, 9am-noon & 1.30-6.30pm Mon-Sat, 1.30-6.30pm Sun Nov-Apr) was begun in 1239 but only completed in the 1850s, with the addition of its dramatic twin spires.

The **Musée Départemental Breton** (☎ 02 98 95 21 60; 1 rue du Roi Gradlon; adult/child €3.80/2.50; ☹️ 9am-6pm Jun-Sep, 9am-noon & 2-5pm Tue-Sat & 2-5pm Sun Oct-May) is housed in the former bishop's palace. Superb exhibits showcase the area's history, furniture, costumes, crafts and archaeology. Adjoining the museum is the **Jardin de l'Évêché** (Bishop's Palace Garden; admission free; ☹️ 9am-5pm/6pm).

Quimper's local crafts include exquisite faïence pottery, best seen at the **Musée de la Faïence** (☎ 02 98 90 12 72; 14 rue Jean-Baptiste Bousquet; adult/child €4/2.30; ☹️ 10am-6pm Mon-Sat mid-Apr–mid-Oct).

Some of the largest alignments of standing stones in Brittany can be seen 110km south-east of Quimper near **Carnac**.

## Sleeping & Eating

**Camping Municipal** (☎/fax 02 98 55 61 09; av des Oiseaux; camp sites from €8.50; ☹️ Apr-Sep) An attractive wooded campsite 1km west of the old city. Take bus 1 from the train station to the Chaptal stop.

**Auberge de Jeunesse** (☎ 02 98 64 97 97; quimper@fujaj.org; 6 av des Oiseaux; dm incl breakfast €14.40, sheets €2.80; ☹️ Apr-Sep) Beside Camping Municipal, Quimper's seasonal youth hostel has self-catering facilities.

**Hôtel TGV** (☎ 02 98 90 54 00; www.hotelsgv.com; 4 rue de Concarneau; d €36-46) The best bet of several hotels around the train station, the TGV has 22 small but bright ensuite rooms. Light sleepers beware: the adjacent bar can be noisy at night.

**Crêperie la Krapouzerie** (☎ 02 98 95 13 08; 9 rue du Sallé; galettes €3.50-7, mains from €7; ☹️ closed Sun & Mon) This rustic restaurant creates crêpes and *galettes* using local ingredients such as *algues d'Ouessant* (seaweed from the Île de Ouessant) and home-made ginger caramel.

**Crêperie du Sallé** (☎ 02 98 95 95 80; 6 rue du Sallé; galettes €3-8.60; ☹️ lunch & dinner Tue-Sat) Locals crowd into this traditional restaurant for Breton crêpes including *saucisse fumée* (smoked sausage) and *Forestière* (made with mushrooms, bacon and cheese).

## Getting There & Away

**Caoudal** (☎ 02 98 56 96 72) runs buses to Concarneau (€2, 45 minutes, seven to 10 daily).

There are frequent trains going to Brest (€14, 1¼ hours, up to 10 daily), Rennes (€30.10, 2½ hours, five daily) and Paris (Gare Montparnasse; €68.20, 4¼ hours, eight daily).

## ST-MALO

pop 50,700

The port of St-Malo, battered by swelling seas and encircled by sturdy ramparts, became a key port during the 17th and 18th centuries, and an important base for merchant ships and government-sanctioned privateers (otherwise known as pirates). These days St-Malo is a summertime haven, especially for British tourists, for whom the city is just a short cross-Channel ferry hop away.

## Orientation & Information

St-Malo consists of the harbour towns of St-Malo and St-Servan plus the suburbs of Paramé and Rothéneuf to the east. The old walled city of St-Malo is known as *Intra-Muros* ('within the walls') or *Ville Close*. From the train station, it's a 15-minute walk westwards along ave Louis Martin.

**Cyberm@lo** (68 chaussée de Sillon; per 15 min/hr €1.50/4; ☹️ 10am-1am Mon-Sat, 11am-11pm Sun mid-Jun–mid-Sep; 11am-9pm Tue-Thu, 11am-11pm Fri & Sat, 3-8pm Sun mid-Sep–mid-Jun) Internet access.

**Tourist Office** (☎ 08 25 13 52 00, 02 99 56 64 43; www.saint-malo-tourisme.com; esplanade St-Vincent; ☹️ 9am-7.30pm Mon-Sat, 10am-6pm Sun Jul & Aug; 9am-12.30pm & 1.30-6pm or 6.30pm Mon-Sat Sep-Jun; 10am-12.30pm & 2.30-6pm Sun Easter-Jun & Sep)

## Sights

Originally an island, the old walled city became linked to the mainland by the isthmus of Le Sillon in the 13th century. During 1944, the battle to drive German forces out of St-Malo destroyed around 80% of it. The main historical monuments were faithfully reconstructed, while the rest of the area was rebuilt in the style of the 17th and 18th centuries.

Constructed between the 12th and 18th centuries, the town's centrepiece, **Cathédrale St-Vincent** (place J de Châtillon; ☹️ 9.30am-6pm), was severely damaged by the 1944 bombing.

For the best views of the walled city, take a stroll along the 17th-century **ramparts**. You can make a complete circuit (around 2km), and there's access at several places, including

all the city gates. From their northern stretch, you can look across to the remains of **Fort National** (admission free; ☹️ Jun-Sep). You can also walk to the rocky islet of Île du Grand Bé, where the great 18th-century writer Chateaubriand is buried. Check tide times with the tourist office, as the island becomes inaccessible for around six hours around high tide.

A nice day trip from St-Malo is to **Dinard**, where you can stroll along the famous beach-front promenade du Clair de Lune.

## Sleeping

**Camping Aleth** (☎ 02 99 81 60 91; camping@ville-saint-malo.fr; allée Gaston Buy, St-Servan; camp site €11.50; ☹️ May-Sep) Next to Fort de la Cité, Camping Aleth has panoramic 360-degree views and is close to the beaches. Take bus 1 in July and August or bus 3 year-round.

**Hôtel les Chiens du Guet** (☎ 02 99 40 87 29; www.leschiensduguet.com, in French; 4 place du Guet; d €37-48, tr €47-53) This welcoming no-star place is near Porte St-Pierre, which opens directly onto the beach. The 12 simple, sunlit rooms are homy if somewhat snug.

**Auberge de Jeunesse Ethic Etapes** (☎ 02 99 40 29 80; www.centrevarangot.com; 37 av du Père Umbricht; dm incl breakfast €12.40-16.20; ☹️ ☹️) This efficient place has a self-catering kitchen and sports facilities. Take bus 5 from the train station or bus 1 (July and August only) from the bus station.

## Eating

**Crêperie Margaux** (☎ 02 99 20 26 02; 3 place du Marché aux Légumes; crêpes €7.50-12, menu €12; ☹️ closed Tue & Wed) You can watch the owner of this wonderful little crêperie hand-making traditional crêpes.

**Pain de Campagne** (☎ 02 99 20 11 26; 7 rue Ste-Barbe; sandwiches €3.80-5.60, meals €5-9; ☹️ lunch Thu-Tue, dinner Mon, Tue & Thu-Sat Sep-Jun; noon-2am daily Jul & Aug) The locals' choice for sandwiches and light lunches.

**Bordier** (9 rue de l'Orme; ☹️ Tue-Sat) is the best cheese and dairy shop in town. Just down the street is the covered market, **Halle au Blé** (☹️ 8am-noon Tue & Fri).

## Getting There & Away

**Brittany Ferries** (☎ in France 08 25 82 88 28, in UK 0870 556 1600; www.brittany-ferries.com) sail between St-Malo and Portsmouth, and **Condor Ferries** (☎ in France 08 25 13 51 35, in UK 0870 243 5140; www.condorferries.co.uk) run to both Poole and Weymouth via Jersey or Guernsey. Ferries

leave from the Gare Maritime du Naye. For more see p369.

From April to September, **Compagnie Corsaire** (☎ 08 25 13 80 35) and **Etoile Marine Excursions** (☎ 02 23 18 02 04, www.etoile-marine-excursions.com) run a Bus de Mer (Sea Bus; adult/child €6/4 return, 10 minutes, hourly) shuttle service between St-Malo and Dinard.

**Courriers Bretons** (☎ 02 99 19 70 80) serves Pontorson (€2.50, one hour) and Mont St-Michel (€4.30, 1½ hours, three to four daily).

**TIV** (☎ 02 99 82 26 26) has buses to Dinard (€1.50, 30 minutes, hourly) and Rennes (€3, one to 1½ hours, three to six daily).

TGV trains run between St-Malo and Rennes (€11.60, one hour, frequent), and there's a direct service to Paris' Gare Montparnasse (€58, three hours).

## THE LOIRE

For a taste of the lavish lifestyles of the French aristocracy, look no further than the beautiful Loire region. This is famous as chateaux country, and with some of the grandest manors and fortified castles anywhere in France, it's hardly surprising that the Loire Valley has been listed by Unesco as a World Heritage Site. It's a rural and relaxing place to explore on foot or on two wheels, although it can get a little overrun in high summer.

### BLOIS

pop 48,600

Blois (pronounced blwah) has a long history of aristocratic intrigue and bloody royal politics. In the Middle Ages it was the seat of the powerful counts of Blois and in the 16th century it served as a second capital of France. It's also home to the renowned Poulain chocolate firm – but whereas even Willy Wonka let five lucky winners visit his factory, secretive Poulain has a strict no-tours policy.

### Orientation & Information

Blois, on the northern bank of the Loire, is a compact town – almost everything is within 10 minutes' walk of the train station. The old city is southeast and east of the chateau, which towers over place Victor Hugo.

The **tourist office** (☎ 02 54 90 41 41; www.loire-deschateaux.com; ☎ 9am–7pm Mon–Sat, 10am–7pm Sun Apr–Sep, 9am–12.30pm & 2–6pm Mon–Sat, 9.30am–12.30pm Sun Oct–Mar) is in place du Château.

### Sights

The **Château de Blois** (☎ 02 54 90 33 32; adult/student/6–17yr €6.50/5/3; ☎ 9am–7pm Jul & Aug; 9am–6pm Apr–Jun, Sep & Oct; 9am–12.30pm & 2–5.30pm Nov–Mar) has four wings constructed around a central courtyard, each reflecting the favoured style of the period in which it was built. The distinctive **Louis XII section** is ornamented with porcupines, the kings' heraldic symbol.

Opposite is the **Maison de la Magie** (House of Magic; ☎ 02 54 55 26 26; 1 pl du Château; adult/12–17 yrs/6–11 yrs €7.50/6.50/5; ☎ 10am–12.30pm & 2–6.30pm Jul & Aug, to 12.30pm & 2–6pm Tue–Sun Apr–Jun, to noon & 2–6pm Wed, Thu, Sat & Sun Sep–Mar) featuring a magic show, interactive exhibits and intriguing clocks invented by the Blois-born magician Jean-Eugène Robert-Houdin (1805–71), after whom the great Houdini named himself.

### Sleeping & Eating

**Hôtel du Bellay** (☎ 02 54 78 23 62; http://hoteldubellay.free.fr; 12 rue des Minimes; d €30–35, with washbasin €25) The tiny entrance to this ancient stone house is matched by the twelve tiny rooms; though simply furnished, they're quite cosy.

**Hôtel St-Jacques** (☎ 02 54 78 04 15; www.hotel-saintjacquesblois.com; 7 rue Ducoux; s/d €33/43; ☎) A cheerful, well-managed hotel near the station, recently renovated and upgraded to two stars. The 25 rooms have metal and glass furniture and offer good value.

**Le Bistrot** (☎ 02 54 78 47 74; 12 rue Henri Drussy; ☎ 8am–midnight Mon–Thu, 8am–2am Fri & Sat, also open Sun approx Apr–Sep, to 2am daily in summer) An informal bar-brasserie-wine bar serving family-style French dishes, including steaks (€11.50 to €13.50), salads (€8.50) and hot open-face sandwiches (€8.50).

**Le Rond de Serviette** (☎ 02 54 74 48 04; 18 rue Beauvoir; menus €7.90–9.50, salads €8; ☎ closed Sun & lunch Mon, also closed dinner Mon Nov–Apr) This little pizzeria markets itself as Blois' cheapest and most cheerful restaurant, declaring optimistically 'yes, we try to speak English'.

To stock up for a picnic, try the **food market** (rue Anne de Bretagne; ☎ to 1pm Tue, Thu & Sat) or the **Intermarché supermarket** (16 av Gambetta).

### Getting There & Away

**TLC** (☎ 02 54 58 55 44) has buses to Chambord (40 minutes, two to four daily Monday to Saturday) and Cheverny (€2.40, 30 minutes, two to four daily).

The train station has frequent services to Amboise (€5.60, 20 minutes, 10 to 20 daily),

Orléans (€9, 45 minutes, 14 to 28 daily), Tours (€8.70, 35 minutes, 11 to 22 daily) and Paris' Gare d'Austerlitz (€22.10, two hours, seven to 13 daily).

Bikes can be hired at **Bike en Blois** (☎ 02 54 56 07 73; 8 rue Henri Drussy; ☎ 9am–12.30pm & 2–6.30pm Mon–Sat, 10am–1pm & 6–7pm Sun Easter–Sep; 9.30am–12.30pm & 2–6pm Mon–Sat Oct–Christmas).

### AROUND BLOIS

#### Château de Chambord

Châteaux don't get any grander than **Chambord** (☎ 02 54 50 50 20; www.chambord.org; adult/18–25yr/under 18yr €8.50/6/free; ☎ 9am–6.30pm May–Sep, 9am–5.30pm Oct–Apr, to 8.30pm 14 Jul–15 Aug, ticket sales end 45 min before closing), constructed from 1519 by François I as a country lodge, but eventually used for just 42 days during the king's thirty-two year reign (1515–47).

The chateau's most famous feature is the **double-helix staircase**, attributed to Leonardo da Vinci who lived in Amboise from 1516 until 1519. The Italianate **rooftop terrace**, surrounded by a maze of cupolas, chimneys and slate roofs, was where the royal court assembled to watch military exercises, tournaments and hunting parties returning at the end of the day.

A 1½-hour **audioguide** (€4) is available, and from June to August, 1½-hour **guided tours** (€4) in English are held once or twice a day. Free *son et lumière* shows, known as Les Clairs de Lune, are held nightly from July to mid-September.

### GETTING THERE & AWAY

Chambord is 16km east of Blois, 45km southwest of Orléans and 17km northeast of Cheverny. For details on buses see opposite.

#### Château de Cheverny

**Cheverny** (☎ 02 54 79 96 29; www.chateau-cheverny.fr; adult/7–14yr/student under 25yr €6.50/3.20/4.10; ☎ 9.15am–6.45pm Jul & Aug, 9.15am–6.15pm Apr–Jun & Sep, 9.45am–5pm or 5.30pm Oct–Mar), built between 1625 and 1634, is the region's most magnificently furnished chateau, renowned for its opulently appointed rooms and salons – especially the **Chambre du Roi** (King's Bedroom), the **Grand Salon** and the 1st-floor **dining room**, which contains 34 painted wood panels illustrating the story of *Don Quixote*. Across the lawn is the 18th-century **Orangerie**, where Leonardo da Vinci's *Mona Lisa* was hidden during WWII.

Cheverny is 16km southeast of Blois and 17km southwest of Chambord. For information on the bus from Blois see opposite.

#### Château de Chaumont

It's a brisk climb up to **Château de Chaumont-sur-Loire** (☎ 02 54 51 26 26; adult/18–25yr/under 18yr €6.50/4.50/free; ☎ 9.30am–6.30pm 8 May–mid-Sep, 10am–5pm mid-Sep–7 May, no ticket sales 12.30–1.30pm Oct–Mar, ticket sales end 30min before closing), set on a bluff overlooking the Loire. The entrance, across a wooden drawbridge between two wide towers, opens onto an inner courtyard from where there are stunning views. Opposite the main entrance are the luxurious **stables**, built in 1877. At time of research the chateau was to close for several months in early 2007.

### GETTING THERE & AWAY

Chaumont-sur-Loire is on the Loire's south bank 17km southwest of Blois and 20km northeast of Amboise.

Onzain, 2km across the Loire from Chaumont, is on the Orléans–Tours rail line. Frequent trains go to Blois (€2.90, 10 minutes, 10 to 20 daily) and Tours (€6.90, 35 minutes, 11 to 22 daily).

The Chaumont-sur-Loire **tourist office** (☎ 02 54 20 91 73; 24 rue du Maréchal Leclerc; ☎ 9.30am–12.30pm & 2–7pm Mon–Sat May–Sep, also open Sun & holidays Jun–Aug, shorter hours Oct–Apr) rents bikes for €5/10 per half/whole day.

### TOURS

pop 136,500

Lively Tours has the cosmopolitan, bourgeois air of a miniature Paris, with wide 18th-century avenues, formal public gardens, café-lined boulevards and a thriving university with 25,000 students. The French spoken in Tours is said to be the purest in France.

### Orientation & Information

The focal point is place Jean Jaurès, where the city's major thoroughfares – rue Nationale, blvd Heurteloup, av de Grammont and blvd Béranger – meet. The train station is 300m east of place Jean Jaurès. The old city is centred on place Plumereau, 400m west of rue Nationale.

**Bureau de Change** (☎ 8.45am–6pm Mon–Sat, to 6.30pm Jun–Sep, closed Jan) Inside the train station. There are banks around place Jean Jaurès. **Emega Cyber-station** (43 rue du Grand Marché; per hr €2; ☎ noon–midnight Mon–Sat, 2–11pm Sun) Internet access.

**Laundrettes** 22 rue Bernard Palissy (☎ 7am-8pm); 149 rue Colbert (☎ till 7.45pm); cnr rue Bretonneau & rue Mûrier (☎ 7am-8.30pm)

**Post Office** (1 blvd Béranger) Has a Cyberposte and currency exchange.

**Tourist office** (☎ 02 47 70 37 37; www.ligeris.com; 78-82 rue Bernard Palissy; ☎ 8.30am-7pm Mon-Sat, 10am-12.30pm & 2.30-5pm Sun & holidays mid-Apr-mid-Oct; 9am-12.30pm & 1.30-6pm Mon-Sat, 10am-1pm Sun & holidays mid-Oct-mid-Apr).

## Sights

Occupying three floors of an impressive 17th- to 18th-century archbishop's palace, the **Musée des Beaux-Arts** (☎ 02 47 05 68 73; 18 place François Sicard; adult/student/under 13yr €4/2/free; ☎ 9am-12.45pm & 2-6pm Wed-Mon) has an excellent collection of paintings, furniture and *objets d'art* from the 14th to the 20th century.

Tours' Gothic-style **Cathédrale St-Gatien** (☎ 9am-7pm, closed during services) dates from the 13th to the 16th centuries, and is renowned for its marvellous 13th- to 15th-century stained-glass windows.

The city's **archaeological museum** (☎ 02 47 66 22 32; 25 rue du Commerce; adult/student €4.50/3; ☎ 10am-1pm & 2-6pm Tue-Sun) is housed in the Hôtel Gouin, a Renaissance residence built for a wealthy merchant around 1510. The Italianate façade is arguably more exciting than the collection of prehistoric, Gallo-Roman, medieval and Renaissance artefacts on display inside.

## Sleeping

**Auberge de Jeunesse du Vieux Tours** (☎ 02 47 37 81 58; www.ajtours.org, in French; 5 rue Bretonneau; s, d & tr per person incl breakfast €16.90; ☎ reception 8am-noon & 5-10pm Oct-Mar, 8am-noon & 6-11pm Apr-Sep; 📺) A well-equipped, 146-room hostel near the old town. There are eight kitchens for cooking and three lounges for hanging out – you can also rent bikes (€10 per day) or for that extra touch of luxury, your own mini-fridge (€0.50 a day).

**Hôtel Régina** (☎ 02 47 05 25 36; fax 02 47 66 08 72; 2 rue Pimbert; s/d €30/34, with washbasin €22/26) This popular one-star place has 20 clean, functional rooms with superb mattresses. The matronly manageress, who has the air of a mother superior, doesn't stand for any mischief. Curfew is 1am.

**Hôtel Val de Loire** (☎ 02 47 05 37 86; hotel.val.de.loire@club-internet.fr; 33 blvd Heurteloup; s/d €33/42, with washbasin €22/31) This two-star hotel, in a bourgeois home built in 1870, has heaps of

charm. The ceilings get lower the higher up you go but all the rooms boast real parquet floors and antique furniture.

## Eating

In the old city, place Plumereau, rue du Grand Marché and rue de la Rôtisserie are loaded with restaurants and cafés. Further east, cheap eats are available along rue Colbert.

**Comme Autre Fouée** (☎ 02 47 05 94 78; 11 rue de la Monnaie; lunch menu €10, other menus from €16-19.50; ☎ lunch Fri & Sat, dinner Tue-Sat, also open lunch Tue-Thu mid-May-mid-Sep) This place specialises in *fouée* (or *fouaces*): small, flat discs of dough baked in a wood-fired oven, and filled with pork *rillettes*, *haricots blancs* or goat's cheese.

**Le Boeuf Salad** (☎ 02 47 66 70 58; 19 rue du Grand Marché; menus €14-22; ☎ sometimes closed Tue & Wed) An informal French eatery, decked out in white and blue, serving Tours' cheapest steak-and-fries platter (€6.90; available October to May).

The best place for fresh produce is **Les Halles** (covered market; place Gaston Pailhou; ☎ 7am-7pm). General supplies are sold at two **Atac supermarkets** place du Général Leclerc (☎ 7.30am-8pm Mon-Sat); place Jean Jaurès (inside the shopping arcade; ☎ 9am-7.30pm Mon-Sat).

## Drinking & Entertainment

The old town is full of bars – a good starting point is place Plumereau, which fills to bursting in the summer, and nearby rue du Grand Marché.

**Le Palais** (☎ 02 47 61 48 54; 15 place Jean Jaurès; ☎ 7am-2am, closed Sun Nov-Mar) Each Monday starting at 8.30pm, this trendy bar-brasserie hosts a *café des langues*, where you can meet linguistically motivated locals by conversing with them in English (and lots of other languages). Thursday is karaoke night (from 10.30pm).

**Le Baromètre** (☎ 02 47 38 49 80; 33 rue du Grand Marché; ☎ 10am-2am) A smoky corner bar whose animated habitués often take advantage of an old guitar that's kept in the cellar. Annie, the *patronne*, has a personality that's much larger than her establishment, which is kept warm in winter by a roaring fire. The background music is jazz, blues and chansons.

**Le Paradis Vert** (☎ 02 47 66 00 94; 9 rue Michelet; adult/student billiard table per hr €10/8; ☎ 10am-2am) France's largest pool hall with 36 tables. The Monday night tournament (7.30pm to 1am) is open to all comers.

## Getting There & Away

**Aéroport Tours-Val de Loire** (☎ 02 47 49 37 00; www.tours-aeroport.com) is linked to London-Stansted by Ryanair. A **shuttle bus** (€5) links Tours' bus station with all Ryanair flights.

**Touraine Fil Vert** (☎ 02 47 47 17 18; www.touraine-filvert.com in French) runs buses to Amboise (€2.10, 45 minutes, seven daily Monday to Saturday). There's an **information desk** (☎ 02 47 05 30 49; ☎ 7am-7pm Mon-Sat) at the bus station on place du Général Leclerc.

The regional **train station** is linked to St-Pierre-des-Corps, Tours' TGV train station, by frequent shuttle trains. Trains run 13 to 20 times a day between Tours and Orléans (€15.90, one to 1½ hours); stopping at Blois (€8.70, 35 minutes). SNCF Lines run to Chenonceaux (€5.50, 30 minutes, four to six daily) as well as various other local destinations.

TGVs travel to Paris' Gare Montparnasse (€37.60 or €50.30, 1¼ hours, 13 to 15 daily), Bordeaux (€40.40, 2½ hours) and La Rochelle (€31.30, two to three hours). Slower corail services travel to Gare d'Austerlitz (€28.50, two to 2¾ hours, nine to 14 daily), Poitiers (€16.70/13.80, 40 to 60 minutes) and Nantes (€26.70/23.80, about two hours).

## Getting Around

**Détours de Loire** (☎ 02 47 61 22 22; www.locationdevelos.com; 31 blvd Heurteloup; hybrid per day/5 days/week/ additional day €13/43/56/4; ☎ 9am-1pm & 2-7pm Mon-Sat, 9.30am-12.30pm & 6-7pm Sun & holidays Easter-early Oct; 9am-1pm & 2-6pm Mon-Sat early Oct-Easter) is part of a network of 16 Loire Valley bike rental sites.

## AROUND TOURS

Some of the Loire's finest **châteaux** can be visited on a day trip from Tours. The tourist office in Tours has details of *son et lumière* and other spectacles performed at the châteaux during summer.

With its moat, drawbridge, towers and turrets, the 16th-century **Château de Chenonceau** (☎ 08 20 20 90 90; www.chenonceau.com; adult/student & child €8/6.50; ☎ 9am-7pm mid-Mar-mid-Sep, to 4.30pm rest of year) is everything a fairytale castle should be, although the château's antique-stuffed interior is overshadowed by the glorious landscaped gardens that surround the castle. There's even a fabulous yew tree labyrinth in which to get thoroughly lost.

The grand fortifications and turrets of the **Château Azay-le-Rideau** (☎ 02 47 45 42 04; adult/

18-25yr/under 18yr €7.50/4.80/free; ☎ 9.30am-7pm Jul & Aug, 9.30am-6pm Apr-Jun & Sep, 10am-12.15pm & 2-5.15pm Oct-Mar) were designed to indicate the rank and prestige of the castle's owners. The château's most impressive feature is an extraordinary staircase with ornated loggias on each floor.

The crenellated **Château de Langeais** (☎ 02 47 96 72 60; adult/10-17yr/under 10yr €7.20/4/free; ☎ 9.30am-7pm Jul & Aug; 9.30am-6.30pm Feb-Jun & Sep-mid-Nov; 10am-5pm mid-Nov-Jan) is the most authentic of the valley's châteaux, with an atmospheric interior packed with period furnishings, tapestries and original 15th-century floor tiles. There's even a working drawbridge and a ruined 10th-century *donjon* (keep), thought to be the oldest in France.

Perched above the River Vienne, the mostly ruined medieval **Château de Chinon** (☎ 02 47 93 13 45; adult/student €6/4.50; ☎ 9am-7pm Apr-Sep, 9.30am-5pm Oct-Mar), consists of three sections separated by waterless moats: the 12th-century Fort St-Georges, the Château du Milieu (the Middle Castle) and, at the western tip, the 13th-century Fort du Coudray. Superb views are on offer from the 14th-century clock tower.

## Getting There & Away

Many châteaux are accessible by train or SNCF bus from Tours, including Chenonceau, Villandry, Azay-le-Rideau, Langeais, Amboise, Chaumont, Chinon and Saumur, but touring the châteaux by public transport can be slow and expensive.

An organised bus tour is a better option of seeing the châteaux. There are several operators offering English-language tours of the main châteaux; typical prices are €18 to €31 for a half-day trip in a minibus for up to eight people. Stops at each château last between 45 minutes and one hour, and you'll usually be entitled to discounted entry fees if you're part of an organised group. Reservations for tours can be made at the Tours tourist office.

**Acco-Dispo** (☎ 06 82 00 64 51; www.accodispo-tours.com)

**Quart de Tours** (☎ 06 85 72 16 22; www.quartdetours.com)

**Services Touristiques de Touraine** (STT; ☎ 02 47 05 46 09; www.stt-millet.fr) Runs full-sized coaches for individuals rather than groups from April to mid-October.

**St-Eloi Excursions** (☎ 02 47 37 08 04; www.saint-eloi.com).

## AMBOISE

pop 11,000

The picturesque town of Amboise, nestling under its fortified chateau on the southern bank of the Loire, reached its peak during the decades around 1500, when luxury-loving Charles VIII enlarged the chateau and François I held raucous parties there. These days the town makes the most of its association with Leonardo da Vinci, who lived out his last years here under the patronage of François I. Amboise makes a convenient base for visiting the chateaux between Tours and Blois.

The **tourist office** (☎ 02 47 57 09 28; www.amboise-valde Loire.com; ☎ 9.30am-1pm & 2-6pm Mon-Sat, 10am-1pm & 2-6pm Sun Apr-Jun & Sep; 9am-8pm Mon-Sat & 10am-6pm Sun Jul & Aug; 10am-1pm & 2-6pm Mon-Sat & 10am-1pm sometimes Sun Oct-Mar) stocks maps for walking (*Balades Royales*; €4) and cycling (*5 Circuits Vélos*; €2), and supplies copies of a free English-language brochure for a walking tour of Amboise.

The rocky outcrop topped by **Château d'Amboise** (☎ 02 47 57 00 98; place Michel Debré; adult/15-25yr/7-14yr €8/6.80/4.80; ☎ 9am-7pm Jul & Aug; 9am-6pm or 6.30pm mid-Mar-Jun, Sep & Oct; 9am-noon & 2-4.45pm Nov-mid-Mar) has been fortified since Roman times. Charles VIII (r 1483-98), who was born and brought up here, enlarged the chateau in 1492 after a visit to Italy, where he was impressed by that country's artistic creativity and luxurious lifestyle.

Today just a few of the 15th- and 16th-century structures survive. These include the Flamboyant Gothic **Chapelle St-Hubert** and the **Salle des États** (Estates Hall). The chateau entrance is located at the end of rampe du Château.

Leonardo da Vinci came to Amboise in 1516 at the invitation of François I. Until his death three years later at the age of 67, he lived and worked at **Le Clos Lucé** (☎ 02 47 57 00 73; www.vinci-closlucé.com; 2 rue du Clos Lucé; adult/student/6-15yr Apr-mid-Nov €12/9.50/7, mid-Nov-Mar €9/7/6; ☎ 9am-8pm Jul & Aug; 9am-7pm Apr, Jun, Sep & Oct, 9am-6pm Nov, Dec, Feb & Mar; 9am-5pm Jan), a manor house that now houses scale models of his inventions, including a proto-automobile, armoured tank, parachute and hydraulic turbine.

## Getting There & Away

Touraine Fil Vert's line C1 links Amboise's post office with Tours' bus terminal (€2.10, 45 minutes, seven daily Monday to Saturday).

The **train station** blvd Gambetta), across the river from the town centre, is served by trains from Paris' Gare d'Austerlitz (€24.20, 2¼ to three hours, 11 daily), Blois (€5.60, 20 minutes, 10 to 20 daily) and Tours (€4.50, 15 minutes, 10 to 20 daily).

Hire mountain bikes at **Cycles Richard** (☎ 02 47 57 01 79; 2 rue de Nazelles; per day €15; ☎ 9am-noon & 2.30-7pm Tue-Sat).

## SOUTHWESTERN FRANCE

Though the Côte d'Azur is still the most popular beach spot in France, the many seaside resorts along the Atlantic Coast are fast catching up. If you're a surf-nut or a beach bum, then the sandy bays around Biarritz and Bayonne will be right up your street, while wine-lovers can sample the fruits of the vine in the high temple of French winemaking, Bordeaux. Towards the mountains of the Pyrenees you'll find the Basque Country, which in many ways is closer to the culture of northern Spain as the rest of France.

## LA ROCHELLE

pop 76,711

Known as *La Ville Blanche* (the white city), La Rochelle's luminous limestone façades are topped by 14th- and 15th-century towers glowing white in the bright coastal sunlight. One of France's foremost seaports from the 14th to 17th centuries, La Rochelle is now a pleasure port and sailing centre, and boasts one of the largest marinas in the country.

## Orientation & Information

La Rochelle is centred on the Vieux Port (old port). The old city unfolds to its north. To the southeast, the train station is linked to the Vieux Port by the av du Général de Gaulle, with the tourist office tucked in the Le Gabut quarter half-way between.

**Akromicro** (rue de l'Aimable Nanette; per hr €2;

☎ 10am-midnight daily) Cybercafé behind the tourist office.

**Post office** (6 rue de l'Hôtel de Ville) Exchange services and a Cyberposte.

**Tourist office** (☎ 05 46 41 14 68; larochelle-tourisme.com; Le Gabut; ☎ 9am-8pm Mon-Sat, 11am-5.30pm Sun Jul & Aug; 9am-7pm Mon-Sat, 11am-5pm Sun Jun & Sep; 10am-12.30pm & 1.30-6pm Mon-Sat, 10am-1pm Sun

Oct-May) Sells the *Pass Rochelais*, offering discounts on public transport, sights and activities.

## Sights & Activities

An enormous defensive chain used to be stretched between the two 14th-century stone towers at the harbour entrance. **Tour de la Chaîne** and **Tour St-Nicolas** both have fine views across the harbour. West of Tour de la Chaîne, the medieval wall leads to the steeple-topped, 15th-century **Tour de la Lanterne**.

The three **towers** (☎ 05 46 34 11 81; admission per tower adult/18-25 yrs/child €4.60/3.10/free; ☎ 10am-7pm Jul & Aug; 10am-12.30pm & 2-6.30pm 15 May-Jun & 1-15 Sep; 10am-12.30pm & 2-5.30pm Tue-Sun Oct-May) can be visited individually or on a combined ticket (€10/6.50/free).

La Rochelle's state-of-the-art **Aquarium** (☎ 05 46 34 00 00; adult/student & child €12.50/9.50, with audio guide €16/13; ☎ 9am-11pm Jul & Aug, to 8pm Apr-Jun & Sep, 10am-8pm Oct-Mar) is home to fish, sea flora and some mean-looking bull sharks.

## Sleeping

**Camping du Soleil** (☎ 05 46 44 42 53; av Marillac; camp sites per adult/tent €8.50/8.50; ☎ late Jun-late Sep) is the closest camping ground to the city; take bus 10.

**Centre International de Séjour-Auberge de Jeunesse** (☎ 05 46 44 43 11; www.fuaj-aj-larochelle.fr.st; av des Minimes; dm incl breakfast €14-16, tw incl breakfast €34; ☎ closed Christmas period) This popular hostel is 2km southwest of the train station in Les Minimes.

**Bar de l'Hôtel de Ville** (☎ 05 46 41 30 25; 5 rue St-Yon; d from €47, with shared bathroom €35) This bustling place attached to the Bar de l'Hôtel de Ville has just nine rooms. Don't expect much luxury – rooms are super-simple, but offer great value for money given the hotel's position near the Vieux Port and old town.

## Eating

**Teatro Bettini** (☎ 05 46 41 07 03; 3 rue Thiers; mains from €9.50; ☎ lunch & dinner Tue-Sat) Part Italian diner, part Rochelais restaurant, this decades-old restaurant is an old favourite for hearty lasagne and seafood.

**Café de la Paix** (☎ 05 46 41 39 79; 54 rue Chaudrier; mains €11-20; ☎ 7am-10pm Mon-Sat) A *belle époque* brasserie/bar serving traditional cuisine including beef, fish and foie gras, as well as bountiful breakfasts and afternoon teas.

The lively, 19th-century **covered market** (place du Marché; ☎ 7am-1pm) seethes with stalls selling fresh fish, meat, fruit and vegetables.

In the old city there's a **Monoprix supermarket** (30-36 rue du Palais; ☎ 8.30am-8pm Mon-Sat), and freshly baked breads and pastries are available at **Boulangerie Fillon** (18 quai Louis Durand; ☎ 6am-9pm Mon & Thu-Sat, 6am-8pm Tue, 6am-1pm Sun).

## Getting There & Away

From the **bus station** at place de Verdun, **Océcars** (☎ 05 46 00 95 15) runs services to regional destinations, including the Île de Ré.

Eurolines ticketing is handled by **Citram Littoral** (☎ 05 46 50 53 57; 30 cours des Dames; ☎ closed Sat afternoon, Mon morning & Sun).

The **train station** (☎ 0836 353 535) is linked by TGV to Paris' Gare Montparnasse (€57.60, three hours, five or six direct daily). Other destinations served by regular trains include Nantes (€22.30, two hours), Poitiers (€19.30, 1½ hours), and Bordeaux (€23.80, two hours).

**Aéroport de La Rochelle-Ile de Ré** (☎ 05 46 42 86 70; www.larochelle.aeroport.fr) has regular flights to various European cities, as well as connections to London Stansted and Dublin with budget carrier Ryanair (www.ryanair.com).

## Getting Around

The local transport system, **RTRC** (☎ 05 46 34 02 22), has a main bus hub and **information office** (place de Verdun; ☎ 7.30am-6.30pm Mon-Fri, 8am-6.30pm Sat). Most lines run until sometime between 7.15pm and 8pm. Tickets cost €1.20.

Bikes can be rented at **Les Vélos Autoplus** (☎ 05 46 34 02 22; ☎ 9am-7pm Jul & Aug; 9am-12.30pm & 1.30-7pm May, Jun & Sep; 9.15am-12.15pm & 1.50-6pm Mon-Sat Oct-Apr). The first two hours are free; after that bikes cost €1 per hour.

## BORDEAUX

pop 229,900

The city long known as *La Belle Au Bois Dormant* (Sleeping Beauty) is well and truly awake after years of slumber. The millennium was a major turning point for Bordeaux, when former mayor and controversial ex-Prime Minister Alain Juppé roused this graceful city, pedestrianising its boulevards, restoring its neoclassical architecture and implementing a high-tech new public transport system. These days, *La Belle* Bordeaux never seems to sleep at all.

## Orientation

The city centre lies between the flower-filled place Gambetta and the Garonne River. From



place Gambetta, place de Tourny is 500m northeast, from where the tourist office is 400m to the east. Bordeaux's train station, Gare St-Jean, is about 3km southeast of the city centre.

### Information

Banks offering currency exchange can be found on cours de l'Intendance, rue de l'Esprit des Lois and cours du Chapeau Rouge.

**Cyberstation** (23 cours Pasteur; per hr €3; ☎ 9.30am-2am Mon-Sat, 2pm-2am Sun) Internet access.

**Post office** (37 rue du Château d'Eau) Currency exchange and Cyberposte.

**Tourist office** (☎ 05 56 00 66 00; www.bordeaux-tourisme.com; 12 cours du 30 Juillet; ☎ 9am-7.30pm Mon-Sat, 9.30am-6.30pm Sun Jul & Aug; 9am-7pm Mon-Sat, 9.30am-6.30pm Sun May, Jun, Sep & Oct; 9am-6.30pm Mon-Sat, 9.45am-4.30pm Sun Nov-Apr)

**Train station tourist office** (☎ 9am-noon & 1-6pm Mon-Sat, 10am-noon & 1-3pm Sun May-Oct; 9.30am-12.30pm & 2-6pm Mon-Fri Nov-Apr).

### Sights

Looming above the city is **Cathédrale St-André** (☎ 05 56 81 26 25; admission free; ☎ 2-6pm Mon, 7.30am-6pm Tue-Fri, 9am-7pm Sat, 9am-6pm Sun). A Unesco World Heritage Site, the cathedral's oldest section dates from 1096, but it mostly dates from the 13th and 14th centuries. It's particularly renowned for its elaborate masonry carvings, best seen in the north portal. Behind the choir, the 50m-high belfry, **Tour Pey-Berland**, has a panoramic view at the top of 232 narrow steps.

Bordeaux's museums have free entry for permanent collections; temporary exhibits cost €5 for adults, €2.50 for children. Occidental art buffs can trace its evolution from the Renaissance to the mid-20th century at Bordeaux's exceptional **Musée des Beaux-Arts** (Museum of Fine Arts; ☎ 05 56 10 20 56; 20 cours d'Albret; ☎ Wed-Mon 11am-6pm). More recent works are on display at the **CAPC** (Museum of Contemporary Art;

☎ 05 56 00 81 50; Entrepôt 7, rue Ferrère; ☎ 11am-6pm Tue, Thu-Sun, to 8pm Wed, closed Mon) in a former colonial warehouse.

Gallo-Roman statues and prehistoric relics dating back some 25,000 years are the highlights of the impressive **Musée d'Aquitaine** (Museum of Aquitaine; ☎ 05 56 01 51 00; 20 cours Pasteur; ☎ 11am-6pm Tue-Sun).

Exquisite faïence pottery, porcelain, gold, iron and glasswork, and furniture are displayed at the **Musée des Arts Décoratifs** (Museum of Decorative Arts; ☎ 05 56 00 72 50; 39 rue Bouffard; museum ☎ 2-6pm Wed-Mon, temporary exhibits from 11am Mon-Fri).

The landscaped **Jardin Public** (cours de Verdun), established in 1755 and laid out in the English style a century later, includes the **Jardin Botanique** (☎ 05 56 52 18 77; admission free; ☎ 8.30am-6pm), founded in 1629 and at its present site since 1855; and the nearby **Musée d'Histoire Naturelle** (Natural History Museum; ☎ 05 56 48 29 86; ☎ 11am-6pm Mon & Wed-Fri, 2-6pm Sat & Sun).

Pretty **place Gambetta**, a central open area ringed by shady benches, wasn't always so peaceful – during the Reign of Terror that followed the Revolution, a guillotine placed here severed the heads of 300 alleged counter-revolutionaries.

### Sleeping

**Hôtel Touring** (☎ 05 56 81 56 73; le-touring@wanadoo.fr; 16 rue Huguerie; s €25-42, d €30-50, tr €57) A great budget hotel run by a friendly local family, its 12 impeccable rooms are furnished with original 1940s and '50s furniture like flip-up school-style desks and club chairs. The cheapest have showers but share toilet facilities.

**Hôtel Boulan** (☎ 05 56 52 23 62; fax 05 56 44 91 65; 28 rue Boulan; s €20-28, d €25-32) Situated on a secluded little side street, but still handy for a slew of Bordeaux's sights.

**Auberge de Jeunesse** (☎ 05 56 33 00 70; www.centres-animation.asso.fr; 22 cours Barbey; dm incl sheets & breakfast €19.90; ☎ ☎) Bordeaux's only hostel is housed in a lino-and-glass building with a self-catering kitchen and four-bed en suite dorms.

### Eating

**Cassolette Café** (☎ 05 56 92 94 96; www.cassolettecafe.com, in French; 20 place de la Victoire; lunch menu €9.90, dinner menu €11.90; ☎ ☎) Bordeaux's only hostel is housed in a lino-and-glass building with a self-catering kitchen and four-bed en suite dorms. **Cassolette Café** (☎ 05 56 92 94 96; www.cassolettecafe.com, in French; 20 place de la Victoire; lunch menu €9.90, dinner menu €11.90; ☎ ☎) Bordeaux's only hostel is housed in a lino-and-glass building with a self-catering kitchen and four-bed en suite dorms. **Cassolette Café** (☎ 05 56 92 94 96; www.cassolettecafe.com, in French; 20 place de la Victoire; lunch menu €9.90, dinner menu €11.90; ☎ ☎) Bordeaux's only hostel is housed in a lino-and-glass building with a self-catering kitchen and four-bed en suite dorms.

**Moshi Moshi** (☎ 05 56 79 22 91; 8 place Fernand Lafargue; mains from €15; ☎ ☎) 8pm-2am Tue-Sat) Japan meets France head-on at this super-chic minimalist place. The open kitchen lets you watch its celebrated chefs roll out sushi with unusual twists like foie gras and *magret de canard* (duck).

Near the covered market, **Marché des Capucins** (☎ 6am-1pm Tue-Sun) has lots super-cheap **fruit and vegetable stalls** (rue Élie Gintrec; ☎ 8.30am-12.45pm Mon-Sat). There's also a **Champion supermarket** (place des Grands Hommes; ☎ 8.30am-7.30pm Mon-Sat) and an excellent **fromagerie** (4 rue Montesquieu; ☎ closed Mon morning & Sun).

**Le Fournil des Capucins** (62-64 cours de la Marne), near place de la Victoire, is a bakery that never closes.

### Drinking

**Bodega Bodega** (☎ 05 56 01 24 24; 4 rue des Piliers de Tutelle; ☎ noon-3.15pm & 7pm-2am Mon-Sat, 7pm-2am Sun) The biggest and best Spanish bar in town has two floors of tapas, tunes and trendy types.

Student hangouts ring place de la Victoire, including **Chez Auguste** (☎ 05 56 91 77 32; 3 place de la Victoire; ☎ 7am-2am) and nearby **Café Pop** (Café Populaire; ☎ 05 56 94 39 06; 1 rue Kleber; ☎ 8pm-2am Tue-Sat), with a postmodern vibe and cool French tunes.

### Getting There & Away

**Citram Aquitaine** runs most buses to destinations in the Gironde and has an **information kiosk** (☎ 05 56 43 68 43; ☎ 1-8pm Mon-Fri, 9am-1.30pm & 5-8pm Sat) at esplanade des Quinconces.

**Eurolines** (☎ 05 56 92 50 42; 32 rue Charles Domercq; ☎ 7am-7.30pm Mon-Fri, 9am-7pm Sat) faces the train station.

Bordeaux is one of France's major rail hubs. The station, Gare St-Jean, is 3km from the city centre. Destinations include Paris' Gare Montparnasse (€63.70, three hours, at least 16 daily), Bayonne (€25.70, 1½ hours), Nantes (€39.60, four hours), Poitiers (€30.30, 1¾ hours), La Rochelle (€23.80, two hours) and Toulouse (€31.60, 2¼ hours).

### BORDEAUX VINEYARDS

Bordeaux is one of France's premier wine-growing areas. The region is divided into 57 *appellations* (production areas), and there are over 5000 *chateaux* around Bordeaux producing the region's trademark reds, rosés, sweet and dry whites, and sparkling wines.

The tourist office organises tours of local vineyards between May and October, starting at €50 and rising to €75 for *domaines* such as **Médoc** or **St-Émilion**. Tours include wine tastings and lunch. The smaller chateaux often accept walk-in visitors, but it's best to make advance reservations. Many chateaux close during the *vendange* (grape harvest) in October.

For DIY wine trailing, the **Maison du Vin de Bordeaux** (☎ 05 56 00 22 88; 3 cours du 30 Juillet; ☎ 8.30am-4.30pm Mon-Fri) supplies a free map of vineyards and chateaux.

You can stock up at Bordeaux's wine shops, including **Bordeaux Magnum** (☎ 05 56 48 00 06; 3 rue Gobineau; ☎ 10am-7.30pm Mon-Sat) and **l'Intendant** (☎ 05 56 48 01 29; 2 Allée de Tourny; ☎ 10am-7.30pm Mon-Sat), but don't worry if you're running low on funds – exceptional wines are on sale at Bordeaux's supermarkets for just a few euros. These same wines command a small fortune at some of the world's flashiest restaurants.

### BAYONNE

pop 43,400

Baiona' to the Basque, Bayonne is bordered by its twin rivers, the Adour and the Nive, which provide a picturesque backdrop for the town's narrow streets, shuttered buildings and waterside restaurants. The cultural and economic capital of the French Basque country, Bayonne is famous for its marzipan and prime smoked ham; it's also rumoured to be the place where the *baïonnette* (bayonet) was developed in the early 17th century.

### Orientation & Information

The Rivers Adour and Nive split Bayonne into three: St-Esprit, the area north of the Adour; Grand Bayonne, the oldest part of the city, on the western bank of the Nive; and the very Basque Petit Bayonne quarter to its east.

**Hallwash** (6 rue d'Espagne; ☎ 8am-8pm) Laundrette. **Taxiphone** (1 place Ste-Ursule; per hr €2; ☎ 11am-10pm) Internet café that also does cheap international phonecalls.

**Post office** (21 blvd Alsace-Lorraine)

**Tourist office** (☎ 05 59 46 01 46; www.bayonne-tourisme.com; place des Basques; ☎ 9am-7pm Mon-Sat, 10am-1pm Sun Jul & Aug, 9am-6.30pm Mon-Fri, 10am-6pm Sat Sep-Jun)

### Sights

The twin towers of Bayonne's Gothic **cathedral** (☎ 8am-noon & 3-7pm Mon-Sat) soar above the city. Above the north aisle are three Renaissance-era stained glass windows.

### GETTING INTO TOWN

**Bordeaux airport** (code BOR; ☎ 05 56 34 50 50; www.bordeaux.aeroport.fr) is in Mérignac, 10km west of the city centre, with domestic and international services. The train station and place Gambetta are connected to the airport (single/return €6.50/11) by **Jet'Bus** (☎ 05 56 34 50 50), which runs till around 9.30pm. A taxi from the airport costs about €20.

The **Musée Basque et de l'Histoire de Bayonne** (☎ 05 59 46 61 90; www.musee-basque.com, in French; 37 quai des Corsaires; adult/student/under 18 €5.50/3/free; 🕒 10am-6.30pm Tue-Sun May-Oct, 10am-12.30pm & 2-6pm Tue-Sun Nov-Apr) is an excellent introduction to the Basque people and their culture.

**Musée Bonnat** (☎ 05 59 59 08 52; 5 rue Jacques Lafitte; adult/student/child €5.50/3/free; 🕒 10am-6.30pm Wed-Mon May-Oct, 10am-12.30pm & 2-6pm Wed-Mon Nov-Apr) contains canvases by El Greco, Goya, Ingres and Degas, and a roomful of works by Rubens. You can buy a **combined ticket** (adult/student €9/4.50) for both museums.

## Festivals & Events

The town's premier fiesta is the five-day **Fêtes de Bayonne** in early August – like Pamplona's 'running with the bulls', only with cows. There's also a **chocolate festival** in May.

## Sleeping

**Auberge de Jeunesse** (☎ 05 59 58 70 00; www.hibiarritz.org; 19 route des Vignes, Anglet; B&B €16.50; 🕒 Apr-Oct) In Anglet, this hostel is lively and popular, and comes complete with a Scottish pub. Reservations are essential in summer. The hostel also has a small camping area (per person including breakfast €10.40).

**Hôtel Paris-Madrid** (☎ 05 59 55 13 98; sorbois@wanadoo.fr; place de la Gare; s/d €18/24, r with shower €27, d/tr with bathroom €32/47) You can tumble off the train straight into this hyper-friendly hotel. The rooms surround a peaceful inner patio and are excellent value. The owners speak English.

**Hôtel Côte Basque** (☎ 05 59 55 10 21; fax 05 59 55 39 85; 2 rue Maubec; s/d/tr from €35/47/57) Near the station, this reliable hotel has had a recent facelift – the recently renovated rooms are pleasant and comfortable, if a little on the uninspired side.

## Eating & Drinking

A good selection of medium-priced restaurants surrounds the covered market and all along quai Amiral Jauréguiberry.

**Le Chistera** (☎ 05 59 59 25 93; 42 rue Port Neuf; menu €15, mains €10-14; 🕒 Thu-Sun, lunch Tue & lunch Wed) This authentic Basque restaurant features in many a French gastronomic guide. The *chistera* is the basket that pelota players strap to their wrists, and the restaurant is decorated with motifs from the sport.

**Bar-Restaurant du Marché** (☎ 05 59 59 22 66; 39 rue des Basques; 🕒 lunch only Mon-Sat) You can fill

yourself to bursting point for under €15 at this unpretentious place with its ample, homely cooking, run for 30 years by the same welcoming, Basque-speaking family.

**Bodega Ibaia** (☎ 05 59 59 86 66; 45 quai Amiral Jauréguiberry; mains €8-12; 🕒 Tue-Sat & dinner Mon) This atmospheric Basque restaurant-tapas bar boasts wooden benches, sawdust on the floor and traditional Spanish tiling.

The **covered market** (quai Commandant Roquebert; 🕒 7am-1pm & 3.30-7pm Fri, 8am-1pm Mon-Thu & Sat) occupies an imposing riverside building. There are several food shops and delicatessens along rue Port Neuf and rue d'Espagne.

The greatest concentration of pubs and bars is in Petit Bayonne, especially along rue Panneau, rue des Cordeliers and quai Galuperie. Two lively spots are **Café-Bar Le Patio** (38 rue Panneau) and **Massai Café** (14 rue des Cordeliers).

## Entertainment

Every Thursday in July and August, there's traditional Basque music at 9.30pm in place Charles de Gaulle.

In summer, bullfights are held from time to time at **Les Arènes** (☎ 05 59 25 65 30; 19 av Maréchal Foch), 1km west of the city centre.

## Getting There & Away

**Biarritz-Anglet-Bayonne airport** (code BIQ; ☎ 05 59 43 83 83; www.biarritz.aeroport.fr, in French) is 5km southwest of central Bayonne. Ryanair flies daily to/from London Stansted and three times weekly to/from Dublin. Air France has several daily flights to/from Paris (Orly and Roissy) and Lyon. Bus 6 links both Bayonne and Biarritz with the airport.

From place des Basques, **ATCRB buses** (☎ 05 59 26 06 99) follow the coast to the Spanish border. **Transportes Pesa** buses leave twice a day for Bilbao in Spain, calling by Irún and San Sebastián. From the train station, **RDTL** (☎ 05 59 55 17 59; www.rdtl.fr, in French) runs services northwards into Les Landes. For beaches north of Bayonne, such as Mimizan Plage and Moliets Plage, get off at Vieux Boucau (1¼ hours, six or seven daily).

Eurolines is represented by **Voyages Domejean** (☎ 05 59 59 19 33; 3 place Charles de Gaulle). Buses stop in the square, opposite this travel agent's office.

TGVs run between Bayonne and Paris' Gare Montparnasse (€75.60, five hours, eight daily). There are frequent services to Biarritz (€2.20, 10 minutes) and the Franco-Spanish

border towns of Hendaye (€6.20, 40 minutes) and Irún (€6.50, 45 minutes).

There are also trains to Bordeaux (€24.90, 2¼ hours, at least 10 daily) and Toulouse (€35.50, 3¾ hours, five daily).

## BIARRITZ

### pop 30,046

The stylish coastal town of Biarritz, 8km west of Bayonne, took off as a popular seaside resort in the mid-19th century when Napoleon III and his Spanish-born wife, Eugénie, visited regularly. Nowadays everyone from Parisian weekenders to beach bums in campervans flock to this lovely seaside town, renowned for its beaches and some of Europe's best surfing.

## Orientation & Information

Place Clemenceau, the heart of town, is south of the main beach (Grande Plage). Pointe St-Martin, topped with a lighthouse, rounds off Plage Miramar, the northern continuation of the Grande Plage. The train station and airport are about 3km southeast of the centre.

**Form@tic** (15 av de la Marne; per hr €4; 🕒 10am-8pm daily Jul-Sep, 10am-7pm Mon-Sat Oct-Jun, closed Sat pm Nov-May) Internet access.

**Laundrette** (11 av de la Marne; 🕒 7am-9pm)

**Post office** (rue de la Poste)

**Tourist office** (☎ 05 59 22 37 00; www.biarritz.fr; square d'Ixelles; 🕒 8am-8pm Jul & Aug, 9am-6pm Mon-Sat, 10am-5pm Sun Sep-Jun) Publishes a free monthly what's-on guide.

**Tourist Office Annexe** (🕒 Jul & Aug) At the train station.

## Sights

**Musée de la Mer** (Sea Museum; ☎ 05 59 22 33 34; www.museedelamer.com; Esplanade du Rocher de la Vierge; adult/child €7.50/4.60; 🕒 9.30am-12.30pm & 2-6pm, closed Mon Nov-Mar) has an aquarium filled with underwater life from the Bay of Biscay (Golfe de Gascogne) plus exhibits on commercial fishing and Biarritz' whaling past.

Biarritz' fashionable beaches are end-to-end bodies on hot summer days. In high season, the **Grande Plage** and also **Plage Miramar** to its north are lined with striped bathing tents. North of Pointe St-Martin, the superb surfing beaches of **Anglet** stretch northwards for more than 4km. Take eastbound bus 9 from place Clemenceau.

If you fancy yourself as the next Kelly Slater, surfing lessons and board hire are

available at the Bayonne and Biarritz Auberges de Jeunesse. Alternatively, try **Rip Curl Surf Shop** (☎ 05 59 24 38 40; 2 av de la Reine Victoria) or the **Quiksilver Surf School** (☎ 05 59 22 03 12; www.biarritz-boardriders.com, in French) under the Casino Municipal.

For surf conditions ring the French-language **Swell Line** (☎ 08 92 68 40 64; www.swell-line.com).

Beyond long, exposed **Plage de la Côte des Basques**, some 500m south of Port Vieux, are **Plage de Marbella** and **Plage de la Milady**. Take westbound bus 9.

## Sleeping

**Biarritz Camping** (☎ 05 59 23 00 12; www.biarritz-camping.fr; 28 rue d'Harcet; site €15-21.50; 🕒 mid-May-mid-Oct; 🚰) This camp site, 2km southwest of the centre, has spacious, shady sites. Take the westbound bus 9 to the Biarritz Camping stop.

**Auberge de Jeunesse** (☎ 05 59 41 76 00; www.hibiarritz.org; 8 rue Chiquito de Cambó; B&B €17.20; 🕒 year-round) This popular hostel, with rooms for two to four, offers outdoor activities such as surfing, sailing and guided walks. From the train station, follow the railway westwards for 800m.

**Hôtel Palym** (☎ 05 59 24 16 56; www.le-palmarium.com; 7 rue du Port Vieux; d/tr €42/52, d with bathroom €50-55; 🕒 mid-Jan-mid-Nov) This welcoming 20-room family-run place occupies a brightly painted town house on a street packed full with hotels. Bedrooms, on the floors above the family's bustling restaurant, are colourful though the bathrooms are a squeeze.

## Eating

**Le Corsaire** (☎ 05 59 24 63 72; Port des Pêcheurs; mains €11-15; 🕒 lunch & dinner Tue-Sat) It's all about seafood here at the water's edge, with dishes including *dorade à l'espagnole* and grilled cod with chorizo.

**Bistrot des Halles** (☎ 05 59 24 21 22; 1 rue du Centre; mains €14-17; 🕒 daily) One of a cluster of decent restaurants along Rue du Centre that take their produce fresh from the nearby covered market, this bustling place serves three-course meals from the blackboard menu for about €25, including wine.

Just downhill from Biarritz's covered market, **La Table de Don Quichotte** (12 av Victor Hugo) sells all sorts of Spanish hams, sausages, pickles and wines, while you'll find a tempting array of cheeses, wines and pâtés at nearby **Mille et Un Fromages** (8 av Victor Hugo).

## Drinking & Entertainment

There are several good bars along rue du Port Vieux and the surrounding streets.

**Le Surfing** (☎ 05 59 24 78 72; 9 blvd Prince des Galles) Surf-themed bar which makes the perfect place to discuss waves and wipe-outs.

**Ventilo Caffè** (rue du Port Vieux; ☎ Wed-Sun, daily in summer) This café attracts a young crowd and gets packed to the gills on summer nights.

Two popular clubs near the town centre are **Le Caveau** (☎ 05 59 24 16 17; 4 rue Gambetta; ☎ 11pm-5am) and **Biarritz Latino** (☎ 05 59 22 77 59; ☎ 11pm-5am Tue-Sat).

## Getting There & Away

Stopping on Ave Jean Petit, nine daily **ATCRB buses** (☎ 05 59 26 06 99) follow the coast south-westwards to St-Jean de Luz (€3, 30 minutes) and Hendaye (€3, one hour). For other destinations, it's better to go from Bayonne.

Biarritz-La Nègresse train station is 3km from the town centre. Destinations and fares are similar to Bayonne (see p408). Buses 2 and 9 connect the two. **SNCF** (13 av du Maréchal Foch; ☎ Mon-Fri) has a town-centre office.

## LOURDES

pop 15,242

Lourdes was a sleepy market town until 1858, when Bernadette Soubirous, a 14-year-old peasant girl, claimed she saw the Virgin Mary in a series of 18 visions that came to her in a grotto. Nowadays Lourdes is one of the world's most important pilgrimage sites, descended upon annually by some five million visitors. Although the town has plenty of tacky souvenirs, it's still an intriguing place to visit.

## Orientation & Information

Lourdes' main streets are rue de la Grotte and blvd de la Grotte, both leading to the Sanctuaires Notre Dame de Lourdes. The principal north-south thoroughfare, av Général Baron Maransin, connects the train station with place Peyramale.

The **tourist office** (☎ 05 62 42 77 40; www.lourdes-infotourisme.com; ☎ 9am-7pm Mon-Sat, 10am-6pm Sun Jul & Aug, 9am-6.30pm Mon-Sat, 10am-12.30pm Sun Apr-Jun & Sep, 9am-noon & 2-6pm Mon-Sat Jan-Mar & Oct-Dec) is in place Peyramale.

## Sights

### SANCTUAIRES NOTRE DAME DE LOURDES

The Sanctuaries of Our Lady of Lourdes were developed within a decade of the events of

1858. The most revered site is the **Grotte de Massabielle** (Massabielle Cave or Grotto) or the Grotte des Apparitions (Cave of the Apparitions), its walls worn smooth by the touch of millions of hands. Nearby are 19 **pools** in which 400,000 pilgrims seeking cures immerse themselves each year.

The main 19th-century section of the sanctuaries includes the neo-Byzantine **Basilique du Rosaire** (Basilica of the Rosary), the **crypt** and above it the spire-topped, neo-Gothic **Basilique Supérieure** (Upper Basilica).

Visitors to the sanctuaries should dress modestly. All four places of worship open 6am to 10pm in summer and 7am to 7pm in winter.

## Sleeping & Eating

**Camping de la Poste** (☎ 05 62 94 40 35; 26 rue de Langelle; per person/site €2.80/4; ☎ Easter-mid-Oct) Right in the heart of town, it's tiny, friendly – and often full. It also rents eight excellent-value rooms with bathroom (double/triple/quad €26/35/44).

**Hôtel Saint-Pierre** (☎ 05 62 42 30 31; fax 05 62 94 80 32; 4-6 passage de la Fontaine; s/d/tr/q €25/30/35/40; ☎ Easter-Oct) Rooms at this spruce hotel are smallish but quite satisfactory. There's a bar for guests, a pleasant street-side patio and a restaurant, Reflet des Îles, serving spicy exotic fare (from €15).

**Hôtel Cazaux** (☎ 05 62 94 22 65; hotelcazaux@yahoo.fr; 2 chemin des Rochers; s/d €30/35; ☎ Easter-mid-Oct) This small 20-room hotel is a converted private house. Its friendly, a true bargain and really cosy.

**Le Cardinal** (☎ 05 62 42 05 87; 11 place Peyramale; salads €5-5.50; ☎ Mon-Sat) Le Cardinal is an unpretentious bar-brasserie where you can tuck into steak, pork or chicken, garnished with chips and salad for only €6.

**L'Ardiden** (☎ 05 62 94 30 55; 48 av Peyramale; lunch menu €11, dinner menus €12.50-16, mains €8-14; ☎ Wed-Sun) A pleasantly-sited neighbourhood restaurant, especially strong on pizza and pasta.

Lourdes' covered market occupies most of place du Champ Commun.

## Getting There & Away

The **bus station** (place Capdevielle) has services northwards to Pau (€7.40, 1½ hours, four to six daily).

Lourdes is well connected by train to cities all over France, including Bayonne (€18.90, 1¾ hours, up to four daily) and Toulouse

(€22.20, 1¾ hours, six daily). There are four daily TGVs to Paris' Gare Montparnasse (€91.80, six hours).

## THE DORDOGNE

The Dordogne – better known to the French as Périgord – is one of the most popular areas of France, and it's easy to see what attracts visitors here in their thousands every year. Littered with ancient châteaux, sparkling rivers and quintessentially French countryside villages, the Dordogne region is for many people the picture of rural France. It's also renowned as one of the world's most important prehistoric sites – the Vézère Valley is littered with some of the most spectacular cave art ever found.

## SARLAT-LA-CANÉDA

pop 15,563

Nestled at the bottom of a sheltered valley, Sarlat-la-Canéda is one of the most attractive medieval towns in France: a maze of cobble alleyways, cul-de-sacs and snaking lanes, hemmed in by the town's distinctive honey-bricked buildings and elegant mansions. Unsurprisingly, it's also hugely popular, and the summer crowds can take the shine off things. Sarlat makes an excellent base for exploring the prehistoric sites of the Vézère Valley.

## Information

**Cyber Espace** (av Gambetta; ☎ 4.30-8pm Tue & Thu, 9am-noon & 1.30-8pm Wed, 1-8pm Fri, 9am-1pm & 2-8pm Sat)

**Post office** (place du 14 Juillet) Money exchange and Cyberpost.

**Tourist office** (☎ 05 53 31 45 45; www.ot-sarlat-perigord.fr; rue Tourny; ☎ 9am-7pm Mon-Sat, 10am-noon Sun Apr-Oct, 9am-noon & 2-7pm Mon-Sat Nov-Mar)

## Sights

The atmospheric Cité Médiévale (Medieval Town) is bisected by the ruler-straight rue de la République (La Traverse). In the heart of the old town, the **Cathédrale St-Sacerdos** dates from the 17th century. Across the square is the lavish **Maison de la Boétie**, the birthplace of the writer Étienne de la Boétie (1530-63).

Behind the cathedral is the **Jardin des Enfeus**, Sarlat's first cemetery, and the 12th-century **Lanterne des Morts** (Lantern of the Dead), a short tower that looks like the top of a missile.

## KAYAKING & CANOEING

Kayaking is an excellent way to explore the Dordogne region, and there are plenty of places where you can hire gear or organise trips. Operators are obliged to provide you with lifejackets (*gilets*) and an introduction to basic safety procedures. You'll generally be dropped at your starting point by minibus and then paddle your own way back to base. Prices vary from around €12 to €25. Contact:

**Canoe Dordogne** (☎ 05 53 29 58 50; contact@canoe-dordogne.fr; La Roque-Gageac)  
**Canoës-Loisirs** (☎ 05 53 28 23 43; www.perigord-insolite.net; Vitrac)  
**Randonnée Dordogne** (☎ 05 53 28 22 01; randodordogne@wanadoo.fr; Domme)

## Sleeping & Eating

**Hôtel Les Récollets** (☎ 05 53 31 36 00; www.hotel-recollets-sarlat.com; 4 rue Jean-Jacques Rousseau; d from €43-63) Lost in the narrow alleys of the Medieval Town, this great-value hotel has bags of period appeal (think quirky layouts and plenty of exposed brickwork) and colourful bedrooms.

**Hôtel St-Albert** (☎ 05 53 31 55 55; www.sarlathotel.com, in French; pl Pasteur; r €45-58) This cosy little hotel lies slightly outside the busy streets of the old town, and offers 25 snug rooms decked out in sunny tones, plus a calm, convivial atmosphere.

**Restaurant Le Bistrot** (☎ 05 53 28 28 40; pl du Peyrout; menus €17.50/22; ☎ Mon-Sat) This reliable little French diner makes a perfect spot to try some Périgord specialities, especially duck and goose dishes. On warm summer evenings the outside terrace overlooking the cathedral is the only place to be.

**Chez Le Gaulois** (☎ 05 53 59 50 64; 3 rue Tourny; mains €9-13; ☎ Tue-Sat) Massive selections of smoked meats, sausage and cheese are served up on wooden platters at this Savoyard restaurant.

The Saturday **market** (☎ 8.30am-1pm) bustles into action on place de la Liberté and along rue de la République. A **fruit and vegetable market** (☎ 8.30am-1pm) is held on Wednesday morning on place de la Liberté.

Town supermarkets include **E.Leclerc** (☎ 05 53 31 35 35; route de Souillac; ☎ Mon-Sat 9am-8pm) and **Lidl** (av Aristide Briand; ☎ 9am-12.30pm & 2.30-7.30pm Mon-Fri, 9am-7pm Sat).

## Getting There & Away

Bus services from Sarlat are practically nonexistent – about the only destination is Périgueux (€7.10, 1½ hours) via Montignac. There's no bus station: departures are from the train station, place Pasteur or place de la Petite Rigaudie.

Sarlat's **train station** (☎ 05 53 59 00 21) is 1.3km south of the city. Destinations include Périgueux (via Le Buisson; €12.60, 1¾ hours, two daily), Les Eyzies (change at Le Buisson; €7.90, 50 minutes to 2½ hours, two daily) and Bordeaux (€21.20, 2½ hours, five to seven direct daily).

## Montignac

pop 8290

The previously-peaceful town of Montignac, 25km northeast of Les Eyzies, achieved sudden fame after the discovery of the nearby Grotte de Lascaux (see opposite).

The **tourist office** (☎ 05 53 51 82 60; www.bienvue-montignac.com, in French; place Bertrand de Born; ☎ 9am-7pm Jul-Sep; 9am-noon & 2-6pm Mon-Sat Apr-Jun & Sep-Oct; 10am-noon & 2-5pm Mon-Sat Nov-Mar) is next to the 14th-century Église St-Georges le Prieuré.

The splendid **La Roseraie** (☎ 05 53 50 53 92; www.laroseraie-hotel.com; 11 pl des Armes; s €81-96, d €92-152, s with half board €105-130, d with half board €150-194) is housed in one of the town's grandest mansions overlooking place des Armes. It's the top hotel in town, with plenty of plumped-up cushions, floral wallpaper and polished furniture.

**Hôtel de la Grotte** (☎ 05 53 51 80 48; hoteldela.grotte@wanadoo.fr; place Tourny; d with €49-57) You won't find better value in Montignac than this sweet little hotel, which with its red-and-white striped awnings and chichi furnishings seems to have dropped out of a time hole to the 1930s.

# BURGUNDY & THE RHÔNE

Burgundy is the spiritual heartland of two of France's *raisons d'être* – food and wine. The vineyards along the Côte d'Or and the Côte des Nuits are littered with some of the most prestigious names in French winemaking (including Napoleon's favourite tippie, Gevrey-Chambertin). It's also renowned for

its rich, meaty cooking: this is the place to try quintessentially Burgundian dishes such as *boeuf Bourguignon* and *escargots* (snails).

## DIJON

pop 151,200

Dijon, the mustard capital of the universe, is one of France's most appealing provincial cities. Filled with some of France's most elegant medieval and Renaissance buildings, the lively centre is wonderful for strolling, especially if you like to leaven your cultural enrichment with good food and shopping, while the city's 25,000 students help keep the nightlife scene snappy.

## Orientation & Information

Dijon's main thoroughfare, known for much of its length as rue de la Liberté, stretches from the train station eastwards past the tourist office and the Palais des Ducs to Église St-Michel. The main shopping precinct is around rue de la Liberté and perpendicular rue du Bourg. The focal point of the old town is place François Rude.

**Laundrettes** 41 rue Auguste Comte (☎ 6am-9pm); 28 rue Berbisey (☎ 6am-8.30pm); 8 place de la Banque (☎ 7am-8.30pm).

**Main post office** (pl Grangier) Cyberposte and currency exchange.

**Netwave** (10 rue de la Liberté; per hr €4; ☎ 10am-9pm Mon-Sat, to 10pm in summer) Internet access.

**Tourist office** (☎ 08 92 70 05 58, cost per min €0.34; www.dijon-tourism.com; place Darcy; ☎ 9am-7pm May–mid-Oct, 10am-6pm mid-Oct–Apr)

## Sights & Activities

**Palais des Ducs et des États de Bourgogne**, an elaborate palace complex at the heart of old Dijon, was once home to the region's rulers. The eastern wing houses the Musée des Beaux-Arts. The 46m-high, 15th-century **Tour Philippe-le-Bon** (Tower of Philip the Good; ☎ 03 80 74 52 71; adult/student/under 12yr €2.30/1.20/free; ☎ guided visits every 45 to 60 min 9am-noon & 1.45-5.30pm Easter-late Nov; less frequent Wed afternoon, Sat & Sun late Nov-Easter) affords fantastic views over the city.

Housed in the east wing of the Palais des Ducs, the **Musée des Beaux-Arts** (Museum of Fine Arts; ☎ 03 80 74 52 70; admission free, audioguide €3.90; ☎ 9.30am-6pm Wed-Mon May-Oct, 10am-5pm Wed-Mon Nov-Apr) is one of the most outstanding museums in France. Highlights for visitors include the wood-panelled **Salle des Gardes** (Guards' Room) and an outstanding collection of

## ANCIENT HISTORY

The Vézère Valley is renowned for its fantastic prehistoric caves, many of which contain the finest examples of cave art ever found.

The most famous are the **Lascaux Caves** (☎ 05 53 51 95 03; www.semitour.com; adult/6-12yr €8/5; ☎ 9am-8pm Jul & Aug; 10am-noon & 2-5.30pm Apr-Jun & Sep-Oct; 10am-12.30pm & 2-5.30pm Tue-Sat Feb-Apr & Nov-Dec; closed Jan), 2km southeast of Montignac. The cave's walls are covered with an astonishing menagerie of animals and figures, including oxen, deer, horses, reindeer and mammoth, as well as an amazing 5.5m bull, the largest cave drawing ever found. The original cave was closed in 1963 to prevent damage to the paintings, but the most famous sections have been re-created in a second cave nearby.

The **Grotte de Font de Gaume** (☎ 05 53 06 86 00; www.leseyzies.com/grottes-ornees; adult/18-25yr/under 18 €6.10/4.10/free; ☎ 9.30am-5.30pm May-Sep, 9.30am-12.30pm & 2-5.30pm Sep-May, closed Sat), 1km northeast of Les Eyzies, is where you can see around two dozen prehistoric paintings of mammoths, bison, horses, fish, reindeer and bears, created some 14,000 years ago.

About 8km east of Les Eyzies is the **Abri du Cap Blanc** (☎ 05 53 59 21 74; adult/7-15yr €5.90/3.50; ☎ 9.30am-7pm Jul & Aug, 10am-noon & 2-6pm Apr-Jun & Sep-Nov), which is unusual in that it only contains carved sculptures, rather than the combinations of engravings and cave paintings you'll see elsewhere.

The 1200m-long **Grotte de Pech Merle** (☎ 05 65 31 27 05; www.pechmerle.com; adult/5-18yr mid-Jun–mid-Sep; €7.50/4.50, mid-Sep–mid-Jun €6/3.80; ☎ 9.30-noon & 1.30-5pm Apr-Nov), 30km northeast of Cahors, has dozens of stunning cave paintings created some 16,000 to 20,000 years ago, as well as a haunting human footprint.

Most of the caves are closed in winter, and get very busy in summer. Visitor numbers are also limited, so you'll need to reserve ahead during busy periods. Public transport is scarce, although you can get to Les Eyzies by train and navigate the Vézère valley by bike.

French, Flemish and Italian art. The museum also has a modern art section (closed from 11.30am to 1.45pm).

A little way north of the Palais des Ducs, the **Église Notre Dame** was built between 1220 and 1240. The façade's three tiers are decorated with leering gargoyles and an elaborate clock, the **Horloge à Jacquemart**.

Visits to the **Musée de la Moutarde** (Musée Amora; 48 quai Nicolas Rolin; adult/under 12yr €3/free; ☎ bilingual tours 3pm Mon-Sat May-Oct, Wed & Sat Nov, Dec & Feb-Apr) at the Amora mustard factory can be arranged by the tourist office.

## Sleeping

**Hôtel du Palais** (☎ 03 80 67 16 26; hoteldupalais-dijon@wanadoo.fr; 23 rue du Palais; d €40-68) A great two-star place in a 17th-century *hôtel particulier*, the 13 bedrooms are spacious and exude old-fashioned charm – rooms on the 3rd floor have great rooftop views.

**Hôtel Chateaubriand** (☎ 03 80 41 42 18; www.hotelchateaubriand.fr, in French; 3 av Maréchal Foch; d €38, with washbasin €34) A 23-room, no-star place near the train station that has the air of a well-worn dive but has more character than the chain hotels down the block.

**Hostellerie du Sauvage** (☎ 03 80 41 31 21; hoteldusauvage@free.fr; 64 rue Monge; d €44-54) In a 15th-century *relais de poste* (posthouse) set around a cobbled courtyard, this great-value hotel is just off lively rue Monge. The 22 rooms are spare and practical.

**Centre de Rencontres Internationales et de Séjour de Dijon** (CRISD; ☎ 03 80 72 95 20; www.auberge-cri-dijon.com; 1 blvd Champollion; dm/s/d with breakfast €16.80/32.30/42.60) This institutional hostel, 2.5km northeast of the centre, was completely renovated in 2006. Most beds are in modern, airy rooms of four or six. By bus, take Liane 4 to the Epière CRI stop.

## Eating

**Café Chez Nous** (☎ 03 80 50 12 98; impasse Quentin; ☎ 10am-2am, closed Mon morning & Sun) This is a quintessentially French *bar du coin* (neighbourhood bar), down a tiny alleyway from the covered market. The *plat du jour* chalked up daily on the blackboard costs €6.50 to €9.

**La Mère Folle** (☎ 03 80 50 19 76; 102 rue Berbisey; lunch menu €9.50, other menus €14.50-23; ☎ closed lunch Sat, Tue & lunch Wed) Crammed with character, from the baroque wall mirrors to the pineapple-shaped table lamps, this camp French restaurant bills



itself as a *resto extravagant* and serves unusual variations on traditional dishes.

**La Petite Marche** (☎ 03 80 30 15 10; 27-29 rue Mussette; menus €10.50-14; 🍴 lunch Mon-Sat) An organic restaurant with seven types of salad and lots of vegetarian options (as well as meat and fish).

Self-caterers should check out the **covered market** (Halles du Marché; rue Quentin; 🕒 6am-1pm Tue-Sat), the **Monoprix supermarket** (11-13 rue Piron; 🕒 9am-8.45pm Mon-Sat) and the excellent **fromagerie** (28 rue Mussette; 🕒 closed Mon morning & Sun).

## Drinking & Entertainment

For the latest on Dijon's nightlife, pick up *Spectacles*, available free from the tourist office. Dijon's club scene is centred on place de la République, and there are lots of bars along rue Berbisey.

**Le Cercle Jamaïque** (☎ 03 80 73 52 19; 14 place de la République; admission free; 🕒 2pm-5am Tue-Sat) Decked out in lovably tacky baroque décor, this nightclub has live music (Cuban, flamenco, jazz, rock-n-roll) nightly from 11pm to 3.30am. Rum-based cocktails are the speciality. The downstairs **disco** (🕒 11pm-5am Thu-Sat) plays everything but techno.

**Le Cappuccino** (☎ 03 80 41 06 35; 132 rue Berbisey; 🕒 5pm-2am Mon-Sat) Despite the name, beer rather than coffee is the mainstay at this popular bar – there are over 100 brews to choose from, including Mandubienne, the only beer brewed in Dijon.

**Café des Univers** (☎ 03 80 30 98 29; 47 rue Berbisey; 🕒 5pm-2am) One of many café-bars along rue Berbisey, with live music at weekends and a small dance floor (open roughly 8pm to 2am Thursday to Sunday).

## Getting There & Away

The bus station is in the train station complex. Details on bus options are available at the **Tranco information counter** (☎ 03 80 42 11 00; 🕒 6am-8pm Mon-Fri, 7am-2pm & 3-6pm Sat, 10am-1pm & 4-8pm Sun). Bus 60 (12 to 17 daily Monday to Saturday, two Sunday) travels to the Côte de Nuits wine villages of Marsannay-la-Côte, Couchey, Fixin and Gevrey-Chambertin (30 minutes).

The **train station** (rue du Docteur Remy) has services to Nice (€72.40, six hours, two daily), Paris' Gare de Lyon (€49 by TGV, 1½ hours, 15 daily weekdays, eight to 10 weekends) and Strasbourg (€40, four hours, three or four non-direct daily).

## Getting Around

Details on Dijon's bus network, operated by Divia, are available from **L'Espace Bus** (☎ 08 00 10 20 04; www.divia.fr in French; pl Grangier; 🕒 7.30am-6.45pm Mon-Fri, 8.30am-6.30pm Sat). Single tickets cost €0.90 and are valid for an hour; a Forfait Journée (day ticket) costs €3.

## BEAUNE

pop 22,000

Beaune (pronounced similarly to 'bone') is the unofficial capital of the Côte d'Or. This thriving town's *raison d'être* is wine: making it, tasting it and selling it – but most of all, drinking it.

Burgundy's finest vintages come from the vine-covered Côte d'Or (Golden Hillside), the narrow, eastern slopes of a limestone, flint and clay ridge that runs south from Dijon for about 60km.

## Orientation & Information

The old city, enclosed by ramparts and a stream, is encircled by a one-way boulevard with seven names. The tourist office and the commercial centre are about 1km west of the train station.

**Laundrette** (19 rue du Faubourg St-Jean; 🕒 6am-9pm)

**Post office** (7 blvd St Jacques)

**Tourist office** (☎ 03 80 26 21 30; www.beaune-burgundy.com) 1 rue de l'Hôtel-Dieu (🕒 9 or 10am-1pm & 2-7pm Jun-3rd weekend Nov, to 6pm late Mar-May, to 5pm 4th week in Nov-late Mar); 6 blvd Perpreuil (🕒 same hours but midday closure is noon-1pm)

## Sights & Activities

**Hôtel-Dieu des Hospices de Beaune** (☎ 03 80 24 45 00; rue de l'Hôtel-Dieu; adult/student/under 18yr €5.60/4.80/2.80; 🕒 ticket counter open 9am-6.30pm Easter-mid-Nov; 9-11.30am & 2pm-5.30pm mid-Nov-Easter, interior closes 1hr later), Beaune's celebrated charity hospital, was founded in 1443 by Nicolas Rolin (chancellor to Philip the Good). One highlight is the graphic **Polyptych of the Last Judgement** (1443), an ornate altarpiece by the Flemish painter Roger van der Weyden.

Underneath Beaune, millions of dusty bottles of wine are being aged to perfection in cool, dark, cobweb-lined *caves* (cellars). Several cellars offer wine-tasting tours, including **Marché aux Vins** (☎ 03 80 25 08 20; www.marcheauxvins.com, in French; 2 rue Nicolas Rolin; admission €10; 🕒 visits begin 9.30-11.30am & 2-5.30pm, no midday closure mid-Jun-Aug). You get to sample a whopping 16 wines in the candle-lit former Église des Cordeliers.

## Sleeping & Eating

Budget deals are almost nonexistent in Beaune.

**Camping ground** (☎ 03 80 22 03 91; 10 rue Auguste Dubois; camp sites per adult/tent €3.50/4.30; 🕒 mid-Mar-Oct) A four-star camping ground 700m north of the centre.

**Hôtel Rousseau** (☎ 03 80 22 13 59; 11 place Madeleine; d 52, s/d/tr/q with washbasin from €25/32/48/56, hall shower €3) An endearingly shabby, 12-room hotel run since 1959 by a woman *d'un certain âge*. Some of the old-fashioned rooms have showers or toilets.

The covered market at place de la Halle hosts a **food market** (🕒 until 12.30pm Sat) and a smaller **marché gourmand** (gourmet market; 🕒 Wed morning).

**Casino supermarket** (28 rue du Faubourg Madeleine; 🕒 8.30am-7.30pm Mon-Sat) is through an archway on rue Faubourg Madeleine.

## Getting There & Away

Bus 44, run by **Tranco** (☎ 03 80 42 11 00), links Beaune with Dijon (€5.95, one hour, seven Monday to Friday, four Saturday, two Sunday and holidays), stopping at Côte d'Or wine villages such as Vougeot, Nuits-St-Georges and Aloxe-Corton. Except in July and August, bus 44 (three daily weekdays, one or two daily weekends) serves villages south of Beaune, including Pommard, Volnay, Meursault and La Rochepot.

Beaune has frequent **trains** to Dijon (€6.20, 20 minutes, 16 to 22 daily) via the Côte d'Or village of Nuits-St-Georges (€2.90, 10 minutes). Other destinations include Paris' Gare de Lyon (€42.70, two direct TGVs daily), and Lyon (€20.50, two hours; 11 to 17 daily).

## LYON

pop 465,300

Commercial, industrial and banking powerhouse for the past 500 years, grand old Lyon is the focal point of a prosperous urban area of almost two million people, France's second-largest conurbation. Outstanding art museums, a dynamic cultural life and a busy nightlife scene lend the city a distinctly sophisticated air.

## Orientation

The city centre is on the Presqu'île, a small peninsula bounded by the Rivers Rhône and Saône. Public squares running down the peninsula from north to south include place

de la Croix Rousse; pedestrianised rue de la République; place Bellecour; and place Carnot, just north of Gare de Perrache. On the western bank of the Saône, Vieux Lyon (Old Lyon) is sandwiched between the river and the hilltop area of Fourvière.

## Information

**AOC Exchange** (20 rue Gasparin, 2e; 🕒 9.30am-6.30pm Mon-Sat; 📞 Bellecour) Currency exchange off place Bellecour.

**Space Internet** (cnr rue Romarin & rue Terraille, 1er; per hr €2; 🕒 10am-8.30pm Mon-Sat; 📞 Hôtel de Ville)

**Laverie de la Fresque** (1 rue de la Martinière, 1er; 🕒 6am-10pm; 📞 Hôtel de Ville)

**Post office** (10 place Antonin Poncet, 2e; 📞 Bellecour)

**Tourist office** (☎ 04 72 77 69 69; www.lyon-france.com; place Bellecour, 2e; 🕒 10am-5.30pm Mon-Sat) The Lyon City Card (for 1/2/3 days adult €18/28/38, children €9/14/19) covers admission to Lyon's museums, a guided tour, a river excursion (April to October only) and unlimited travel on public transport.

## Sights

### VIEUX LYON

Old Lyon, with its cobbled streets and **medieval and Renaissance houses** below Fourvière hill, is split into three quarters: St-Paul at the northern end, St-Jean in the middle and St-Georges in the south. Facing the river is the **Palais de Justice** (Law Courts; quai Romain Rolland).

The partly Romanesque **Cathédrale St-Jean** (place St-Jean, 5e; 📞 Vieux Lyon), seat of Lyon's 133rd bishop, was built from the late 11th to the early 16th centuries. The **astronomical clock** in the north transept arm chimes at noon, 2pm, 3pm and 4pm.

### FOURVIÈRE

Over two millennia ago, the Romans built the city of Lugdunum on the slopes of Fourvière. Today, Lyon's 'hill of prayer' is topped by the **Basilique Notre Dame de Fourvière** (www.lyon-fourviere.com, in French), a typically over-the-top example of 19th-century ecclesiastical architecture, and the **Tour Métallique**, erected in 1893 and now used as a TV transmitter. The hill affords spectacular views of Lyon and its two rivers. The funicular departing from place Édouard Commette is the easiest way up; use a metro ticket or buy a return ticket (€2.20).

### PRESQU'ÎLE

The centrepiece of beautiful **place des Terreaux** (📞 Hôtel de Ville) is the 19th-century fountain

**LYON**

0 400 m  
0 0.2 miles

**INFORMATION**

AOC Exchange.....	1	C4
Espace Internet.....	2	C1
Laverie de la Fresque.....	3	B1
Post Office.....	4	C4
Tourist Office.....	5	C4

**SIGHTS & ACTIVITIES**

Basilique Notre Dame de Fourvière.....	6	A3
Cathédrale St-Jean.....	7	B3
Musée des Beaux-Arts.....	8	C1
Palais de Justice.....	9	B3
Tour Métallique.....	10	A2

**SLEEPING**

Auberge de Jeunesse du Vieux Lyon.....	11	A4
Collège Hôtel.....	12	B2
Hôtel Iris.....	13	D2

**EATING**

Food Market.....	14	C3
Gaston Restaurant Agricole.....	15	C3
Jim-Deli.....	16	C3
Le Petit Léon.....	17	C2
Lolo Quoi.....	18	C3

**DRINKING**

Albion.....	19	C1
Fish.....	20	D4
Ké Pêcherie.....	21	C2
La Marquise.....	22	D3
Smoking Dog.....	23	B2

**TRANSPORT**

Bus Station.....	24	B6
Centre d'Échange.....	(see 24)	
Eurolines.....	(see 24)	
Intercars.....	(see 24)	
Linebus.....	(see 24)	
SNCF Boutique.....	25	C4

sculpted by Frédéric-Auguste Bartholdi, creator of New York's Statue of Liberty.

Next door, the **Musée des Beaux-Arts** (Museum of Fine Arts; ☎ 04 72 10 17 40; 20 place des Terreaux, 1er; adult/under 18yr €6/free; ☎ 10am-6pm Wed-Mon, to 10.30pm Fri; **M** Hôtel de Ville) showcases one of France's finest collection of sculptures and paintings outside Paris.

### OTHER ATTRACTIONS

Lyon's 117-hectare **Parc de la Tête d'Or** (☎ 04 72 69 47 60; blvd des Belges, 6e; ☎ 6am-11pm mid-Apr-mid-Oct, to 9pm mid-Oct-mid-Apr; **M** Masséna), landscaped in the 1860s, is graced by a lake, botanical garden and zoo.

At the northern edge of the park is the **Cité Internationale**, which houses the **Musée d'Art Contemporain** (Museum of Contemporary Art; ☎ 04 72 69 17 17; www.moca-lyon.org; 81 quai Charles de Gaulle, 6e; admission varies depending on exhibition; ☎ noon-7pm Wed-Sun).

Cinema's glorious beginnings are explored at the **Institut Lumière** (☎ 04 78 18 95; www.institut-lumiere.org; 25 rue du Premier Film, 8e; adult/student €6/5; ☎ 11am-6.30pm Tue-Sun; **M** Monplaisir-Lumière), 3km southeast of place Bellecour. It's housed inside the Art Nouveau home (1899-1902) of Antoine Lumière who, with his sons Auguste and Louis, shot the world's first motion picture, *La Sortie des Usines Lumières* (Exit of the Lumières Factories) in 1895. Today classic films are screened in the **Hangar du Premier Film**.

### Sleeping

**Auberge de Jeunesse du Vieux Lyon** (☎ 04 78 15 05 50; lyon@fuj.org; 41-45 montée du Chemin Neuf, 5e; dm €12.70; ☎ reception 7am-1pm & 9m or 10pm-1am; **M** Vieux Lyon) Rates include breakfast at this superbly located hostel above Vieux Lyon. Its 180 beds are split between rooms for two to seven people.

**Hôtel de la Poste** (☎ 04 78 28 62 67; 1 rue Victor Fort, 4e; s/d/tr/q €37/35/45/66, with shower & toilet €39/44/58/70; ☎ reception 7am-9pm Mon-Fri, 8am-9pm Sat & Sun; **M** Croix Rousse) Price – not prettiness – pulls in the punters at this bright but basic hotel overlooking the lovely central square in Croix Rousse.

**Hôtel Iris** (☎ 04 78 39 93 80; hoteliris@freesurf.fr; 36 rue de l'Arbre Sec, 1er; s/d €37/39, with shower & toilet €45/47; **M** Hôtel de Ville). The location of this two-star number inside a four-centuries-old corner couldn't be better, so get in quick to snag one of its simple rooms overlooking a quiet courtyard.

### Eating

**Le Petit Léon** (☎ 04 72 10 11 11; www.leondelyon.com; 3 rue Pléney, 1er; menu €18.50, plat du jour €11.20; ☎ lunch Tue-Sat; **M** Hôtel de Ville) Tables are highly sought after at this soulful old-world bistro, the affordable arm of Michelin-starred big brother Léon de Lyon around the corner.

**Gaston Restaurant Agricole** (☎ 04 72 41 87 86; 41 rue Mercière, 2e; 2-/3-course menu €11.50/14.50; ☎ lunch & dinner Mon-Sat; **M** Cordeliers) Pack a giant-sized appetite before venturing into this feisty agricultural restaurant, complete with rusty old tractor, farm tools and veggie-filled wheelbarrows.

**Lolo Quoi** (☎ 04 72 77 60 90; 40-42 rue Mercière, 2e; pasta €12-13.50, menus €2.50-20.50; ☎ lunch & dinner; **M** Cordeliers) Sleekly kicked out in wood and slate, this Italian place is trendy, chic and serves innovative pasta – book ahead.

**Jim-Deli** (☎ 04 78 38 31 67; 14 rue des Quatre Chapeaux, 2e; starters/pasta €7/13; ☎ lunch; **M** Hôtel de Ville) Authentic Italian *panini*, *carpaccio*, pasta and salads.

**Ninkasi Opéra** (☎ 04 78 28 37 74; www.ninkasi.fr; French; 27 rue de l'Arbre Sec, 1er; salads €6-9, burgers €5.20; ☎ 11-1am Mon-Thu, 11-3am Fri & Sat, 6pm-1am Sun; **M** Hôtel de Ville) This microbrewery-run grub stop is great for fast food – fish and chips or meaty burgers – and there are film screenings, live bands and the odd magic show on Sunday night.

### SELF-CATERING

Central Lyon has two **outdoor food markets** Presqu'île (quai St-Antoine, 2e; ☎ Tue-Sun morning; **M** Cordeliers); Croix Rousse (blvd de la Croix Rousse, 4e; ☎ Tue-Sun morning; **M** Croix Rousse).

### Drinking & Clubbing

#### BARS

The bounty of café-terraces on place des Terreaux buzz with drinkers day and night; take the metro to Hôtel de Ville.

**modernartcafé** (☎ 04 72 87 06 82; www.modernartcafe.net; 65 blvd de la Croix Rousse, 4e; ☎ 11.30-2am

### GETTING INTO TOWN

The **Aéroport Lyon-St-Exupéry** (Lyon St-Exupéry airport; ☎ 08 26 80 08 26; www.lyon.aeroport.fr) is 25km east of the city. **Satobus** (☎ 04 72 68 72 17; www.satobus.com; single/return €8.40/14.90) links the airport with the city between 5am and midnight.



**Gîte Le Vagabond** (☎ 04 50 53 15 43; www.gite.vagabond.com; 365 av Ravanel-le-Rouge; dm €14.40, with breakfast/half-board €19.40/31.40, d with breakfast €62; ☎ reception 8-10am & 4.30-10pm; ♿) This legendary hangout is where cool dudes free-ride by day and eat, drink and party by night. Beds are in four- or six-person dorms and doubles have their own bathroom.

**Hôtel El Paso** (☎ 04 50 53 64 20; www.cantina.fr; 37 impasse des Rhododendrons; dm €15, s/d/tr/q €35/45/55/70, with shower & toilet €45/55/65/80) The accommodation leg of nightclub La Cantina, El Paso looks like a cheap hotel in a Mexican border-town. But young boarders revel in the rowdy atmosphere and Tex-Mex menu – all at a price that's hard to beat.

**Les Deux Glaciers** (☎ 04 50 53 15 84; glaciers@clubinternet.fr; 80 rte des Tissières; camp sites 2 adults, tent & car €12.70; ☎ mid-Dec–mid-Nov) Chamonix has some 13 camping grounds in summer, but this is the only one open year-round. Ride the train to Les Bossons or the Chamonix bus to the Tremplin-le-Mont stop.

## Eating

**Le Panier des Quatre Saisons** (☎ 04 50 53 98 77; 24 Galerie Blanc Neige; mains €15; ☎ dinner Thu, lunch & dinner Fri-Tue Dec-May & mid-Jun–Oct) A firm favourite, the Basket of Four Seasons cooks up a feast of season-driven, quintessentially French dishes.

**Annapurna** (☎ 04 50 55 81 39; planetguddoy@aol.com; 62 av Ravanel-Le Rouge; mains €15) Authentic Indian dishes – biryani, tandoori etc – as well as more unusual dishes like curried lobster tail (€38).

**Le Jekyll** (☎ 04 50 55 99 70; www.thejekyll.com; 78 rte des Pélerins; ☎ 4pm-2am Mon-Fri, 11-2am Sat & Sun) Fill up on BBQ ribs, Irish lamb and Guinness stew washed down with a pint of Murphy's at Chamonix's Irish pub.

**Elevation 1904** (☎ 04 50 53 00 52; 259 av Michael Croz) By the train station, this is a small smoky joint serving breakfast, burgers and well-stuffed paninis.

**Poco Loco** (☎ 04 50 53 43 03; pocolococham@aol.com; 47 rue du Docteur Paccard; ☎ 11am-2am) Chip-eating punters love this grungy café-bar, especially for toasted sandwiches and paninis.

## Drinking and Entertainment

Chamonix nightlife rocks. Rue des Moulins tous a line-up of drinking holes, including a trio of firm favourites damaged by fire in February 2006: **Cybar**, **Bar du Moulins** and **Dick's Tea Bar**, all at No 80, have pledged to be open again for the 2006–07 winter season.

**Bar'd Up** (☎ 04 50 53 91 33; 123 rue des Moulins; ☎ 4.30pm-2am) and lounge bar **L'Expedition** (☎ 04 50 53 57 68; 26 rue des Moulins; ☎ 4pm-2am) are still going strong.

**Cantina Club** (☎ 04 50 53 83 80; www.cantina.fr; 37 impasse des Rhododendrons; ☎ 7pm-2am) Deep house, drum'n'bass and hip hop are pumped out at this happening bar-cum-club. Live bands make it Chamonix's prime concert venue.

## Getting There & Away

From **Chamonix bus station** (☎ 04 50 53 07 02; www.altibus.com; ☎ 6.45am-10.30am & 1.25-4.45pm Mon-Fri, 6.45am-11am Sat & Sun), at the train station, there are buses to Geneva airport and bus station (single/return €34/55, 1½ to 2¼ hours, three daily) and Courmayeur (single/return €10/18, three daily).

Chamonix-Mont Blanc **train station** (☎ 04 50 53 12 98; place de la Gare) is on the line between St-Gervais-le Fayet, 23km west of Chamonix, and Martigny, 42km north of Chamonix in Switzerland. There are nine to 12 daily trains and a return Chamonix-St-Gervais fare is €9 (40 minutes).

From St-Gervais-le Fayet, there are trains to most major French cities.

## Getting Around

Local buses are run by **Chamonix Bus** (☎ 04 50 05 55; chamonixbus@transdev.fr; 591 promenade Marie-Paradis; ☎ 7am-7pm winter, 8am-noon & 2-7pm Jun-Aug).

# LANGUEDOC-ROUSSILLON

pop 2,295,000

Languedoc Roussillon is really three separate regions rolled into one. **Bas Languedoc** (Lower Languedoc) is known for bullfighting, rugby, the Roman amphitheatre at Nîmes and the turret-topped town of Carcassonne. Inland is the mountainous region of **Haut Languedoc** (Upper Languedoc), while **Roussillon** sits beside the rugged Pyrenees and shares more than just a border with nearby Catalonia.

## NÎMES

pop 144,600

Nîmes is graced by some of France's best-preserved Roman buildings. Founded by Emperor Augustus, the Roman Colonia Nemausensis reached its zenith during the

2nd century AD, receiving its water from a Roman aqueduct system that included the Pont du Gard, a magnificent arched bridge 23km northeast of town. Ransacked by the Vandals in the early 5th century the city began a downward spiral from which it has never quite recovered.

For information drop in to the **tourist office** (☎ 04 66 58 38 00; www.ot-nimes.fr; 6 rue Auguste; ☎ 8am-8pm Mon-Sat, 10am-6pm Sun Jul & Aug; 8.30am-7pm Mon-Sat, 10am-5pm or 6pm Sun Sep-Jun).

## Sights

The city's superb Roman amphitheatre, **Les Arènes** (adult/11-16yr/under 11yr incl audioguide €7.70/5.60/free; ☎ 9am-7pm Jun-Aug, 9am-5.30pm Mar-May, Oct & Sep, 9.30am-4.30pm Nov-Feb), built around AD 100 to seat 24,000 spectators, is wonderfully preserved, even retaining its upper storey, unlike its counterpart in Arles.

The rectangular Roman temple known as the **Maison Carrée** (Square House; adult/11-16yr/under 11yr €4.50/3.60/free; ☎ same as Les Arènes) was built around AD 5 to honour Emperor Augustus' two adopted sons. The striking glass and steel building across the square, designed by the British architect Norman Foster, is the **Carré d'Art** (Square of Art), housing the municipal library and Musée d'Art Contemporain.

A 15-minute uphill walk brings you to the crumbling 30m high **Tour Magne** (adult/11-16yr/under 11yr €2.70/2.30/free; ☎ same as Les Arènes), connects with the train station. Regional destinations include Pont du Gard (€6.20, 30 minutes, up to six daily).

There's an **SNCF office** (11 rue de l'Aspic). At least eight TGVs daily run to/from Paris' Gare de Lyon (€72.70 to €88.80, three hours). There are frequent services to Arles (€6.90, 30 minutes), Avignon (€7.70, 30 minutes) and Marseille (€17.20, 1¼ hours).

## Festivals & Events

Nîmes becomes more Spanish than French during the five-day **Féria de Pentecôte** (Whitsuntide Festival) in June, and the three-day **Féria des Vendanges**, both marked by daily *corridas* (bullfights). The **Bureau de Locations des Arènes** (☎ 04 66 02 80 90; 2 rue de la Violette) sells tickets.

## Sleeping & Eating

**Hôtel Amphithéâtre** (☎ 04 66 67 28 51; hotel-amphitheatre@wanadoo.fr; 4 rue des Arènes; s €34-39, d €44-61; ☎ Feb-Dec; ☎ ♿) The Amphithéâtre, once a pair of 18th-century mansions, has 15 rooms decorated in warm, woody colours. Each is

named after a writer or painter – the nicest are Montesquieu or Arrabal (€61), both with a balcony overlooking place du Marché.

**Hôtel de La Mairie** (☎ 04 66 67 65 91; hotelnimes@aol.com; 11 rue des Greffes; r €26, with shower €34, with bathroom €43-52) Several rooms in this friendly family-run hotel have separate bathroom and toilet. Ceilings are high and rooms cool, even in high summer.

**Auberge de Jeunesse** (☎ 04 66 68 03 20; www.hinimes.com; 257 chemin de l'Auberge de Jeunesse, la Cigale; dm/d/q €11.65/27.30/46.60) This hostel has everything from dorms to cute houses in its extensive grounds, 3.5km northwest of the train station. There's also bike hire (per day €14) and camp sites (per person €5.85). Take bus I, and get off at the Stade stop.

**La Truye qui Filhe** (☎ 04 66 21 76 33; 9 rue Fresque; menu €9.20; ☎ noon-2pm Mon-Sat, closed Aug) Within the vaults of a restored 14th-century inn, the best bargain in Nîmes blends self-service format with a superb-value regional menu.

There are colourful Thursday **markets** in the old city in July and August. The covered **food market** is in rue Général Perrier.

## Getting There & Away

Nîmes' **airport** (FNI; ☎ 04 66 70 49 49), 10km southeast of the city, is served by Ryanair, which flies to/from London (Stansted and Luton), Liverpool and Nottingham East Midlands.

The **bus station** (☎ 04 66 29 52 00; rue Ste-Félicité) connects with the train station. Regional destinations include Pont du Gard (€6.20, 30 minutes, up to six daily).

There's an **SNCF office** (11 rue de l'Aspic). At least eight TGVs daily run to/from Paris' Gare de Lyon (€72.70 to €88.80, three hours). There are frequent services to Arles (€6.90, 30 minutes), Avignon (€7.70, 30 minutes) and Marseille (€17.20, 1¼ hours).

## AROUND NÎMES Pont du Gard

The Pont du Gard, a Unesco World Heritage site, is a three-tiered Roman aqueduct that was once part of a 50km-long system of canals built to bring water from near Uzès to Nîmes. The scale is huge: the 35 arches of the 275m-long upper tier, running 50m above the River Gard, could carry 20,000 cubic metres of water per day and the largest construction blocks weigh over five tonnes.

The Pont du Gard is 21km northeast of Nîmes, 26km west of Avignon and 12km



southeast of Uzès. Buses to/from each town normally stop 1km north of the bridge beside the Auberge Blanche. In summer, some make a diversion to the Pont du Gard car park. There are five buses daily from Nîmes and three from Avignon.

## CARCASSONNE

pop 43,937

From afar, Carcassonne looks like some fairytale medieval city. Bathed in late-afternoon sunshine and highlighted by dark clouds, the old walled city (La Cité) is truly breathtaking, but with an estimated 3.5 million annual visitors, it can be a tourist hell in high summer.

### Orientation & Information

The River Aude separates the Ville Basse from La Cité, up on a hill 500m southeast. Pedestrianised rue Georges Clemenceau leads from the train station and Canal du Midi southwards through the heart of the lower town. **Main tourist office** (☎ 04 68 10 24 30; www.carcassonne-tourisme.com; 28 rue de Verdun; ☹ 9am-7pm daily Jul & Aug, 9am-6pm Mon-Sat, 9am-noon Sun Sep-Jun)

**Tourist office annexe** (Porte Narbonnaise; ☹ year-round) In La Cité.

### Sights

**La Cité**, enclosed by two rampart walls dotted with 52 stone towers, is one of Europe's largest city fortifications. But only the lower sections of the walls are original; the rest, including the anachronistic witches'-hat roofs, were stuck on by Viollet-le-Duc in the 19th century. It's lit up in spectacular fashion after dark.

Entry to the 12th-century **Château Comtal** (adult/student/under 18 €6.50/4.50/free; ☹ 9.30am-6.30pm Apr-Sep, 9.30am-5pm Oct-Mar) includes a 30-minute guided tour of both castle and ramparts.

### Sleeping & Eating

**Camping de la Cité** (☎ 04 68 25 11 77; www.campeole.fr; site €16-21.40, for walkers €9-11; ☹ mid-Mar-mid-Oct) A walking and cycling trail leads from the site to both La Cité and the Ville Basse. From mid-June to mid-September, bus 8 connects the camping ground with La Cité and the train station.

**Auberge de Jeunesse** (☎ 04 68 25 23 16; carcassonne@fuaj.org; rue Vicome Trencheval; B&B €16; ☹ Feb-mid-Dec; ☹) Carcassonne's cheery HI-affiliated hostel, in the heart of La Cité, has rooms sleeping four to six. It has a kitchen, snack bar and outside terrace, and rents bikes (€8).

**Hôtel Astoria** (☎ 04 68 25 31 38; www.astoria-carcassonne.com, in French; 18 rue Tourtel; r €28, d/tr/q with bathroom €45/52/66; ☹ Mar-Jan) Rooms are fresh and pleasant inside this midrange hotel and its agreeable annexe. Bathrooms are a bit poky but not bad for the price.

**Au Bon Pasteur** (☎ 04 68 25 49 63; 29 rue Arnagac; menus €15-28; ☹ closed Sun & Mon Jul & Aug, Sun & Wed Sep-Jun) At this intimate restaurant, the simple wooden tables and chairs belie the sophistication of the cooking. Year-round, their *menu classique* (€15) and *formules de midi* (lunch specials; €10 to €11.50) both represent excellent value.

There's a **covered market** (rue du Verdun; ☹ Mon-Sat) and an **open-air market** (place Carnot; ☹ Tue, Thu & Sat). **L'Art Gourmand** (13 rue St-Louis) sells scrummy chocolate and 33 types of ice cream.

### Getting There & Away

Ryanair flies from London (Stansted) and Brussels (Charleroi) to Carcassonne's **airport** (☎ 04 68 71 96 46), 5km from town. There are also flights to Dublin, Liverpool and UK East Midlands.

Carcassonne is on the main line to Toulouse (€12.70, one hour, frequent).

## TOULOUSE

pop 431,500

France's fourth-largest and one of its fastest-growing cities, Toulouse has a vibrant centre with a large student population. It's also known as *la ville rose* (the pink city) because of the profusion of rose-red brick buildings.

### Information & Orientation

Toulouse's heart is framed to the east by blvd de Strasbourg and, to the west, by the Garonne River. Its two principal squares are place du Capitole and place Wilson. The wide allées Jean Jaurès lead northeastwards to the bus station and Gare Matabiau, the train station, both across the Canal du Midi.

**Alerte Rouge** (21 place St-Sernin; per hr €3; ☹ 10am-11pm Mon-Sat) Free wi-fi connection if you buy a drink.

**Lavarie Atoraya** (29 rue Pargaminnières; ☹ 7.30am-9.30pm) Laundrette.

**Post Office** (9 rue la Fayette)

**Tourist Office** (☎ 05 61 11 02 22; www.toulouse-tourisme.com; square Charles de Gaulle; ☹ 9am-7pm Mon-Sat, 10am-1pm & 2-6.15pm Sun Jun-Sep; 9am-6pm Mon-Fri, 9am-12.30pm & 2-6pm Sat, 10am-12.30pm & 2-5pm Sun Oct-May) In the base of the Donjon du Capitole, a 16th-century tower.

### Sights

Bustling, pedestrianised **place du Capitole** is the city's main square and makes a great place to stop for a drink.

The small, 18th-century **Vieux Quartier** is a web of narrow lanes south of place du Capitole and place Wilson. Typical is place St-Georges with many cafés and restaurants.

The **Musée des Augustins** (☎ 05 61 22 21 82; 21 rue de Metz; €3/free; ☹ 10am-6pm) houses a superb collection ranging from Roman stone artefacts to paintings by Rubens, Delacroix and Toulouse-Lautrec. It's in a former Augustinian monastery, and the gardens of its two 14th-century **cloisters** are among the prettiest in southern France.

The vast **Basilique St-Sernin** (☎ 05 61 21 80 45; place St-Sernin; ☹ 8.30am-6.15pm Mon-Sat, 8.30am-7.30pm Sun Jul-Sep; 8.30-11.45am & 2-5.45pm Mon-Sat, 8.30am-12.30pm & 2-7.30pm Sun Oct-Jun) is France's largest and most complete Romanesque structure. The basilica is topped by a magnificent eight-sided 13th-century tower and spire.

The extraordinary **Église des Jacobins** (Parvis des Jacobins; ☹ 9am-7pm) is the mother church of the order of Dominican friars (or Jacobins, as they're often called in France). St Thomas Aquinas (1225-74) is buried below the altar.

### Sleeping

**Camping de Rupé** (☎ 05 61 70 07 35; 21 chemin du Pont de Rupé; camp site €13.50; ☹ for caravans year-round, tents Jul-Aug) Often packed, this camping ground is 6km northwest of the train station. From place Jeanne d'Arc take bus 59.

**Hôtel des Arts** (☎ 05 61 23 36 21; fax 05 61 12 22 37; 1bis rue Canteqri; s/d with washbasin €28/32, with shower €30.50/33.50) Price is the trump card for this modest place. Rooms are small but well maintained. Toilets are in the corridor.

**Hôtel Anatole France** (☎ 05 61 23 19 96; fax 05 61 21 47 66; 46 place Anatole France; r €25, with shower/bathroom €30/36) This is a quiet and intimate option, with just 18 rooms. Rooms are bright and the décor is minimalist.

**Au Gascon** (☎ 05 61 21 67 16; 9 rue des Jacobins; menus €11-18; ☹ Mon-Sat) Terrific value for hearty, filling and artery-thickening Gascon cuisine – duck, foie gras and delicious *cassoulet au confit* (haricot bean stew with confit of duck).

**La Faim des Haricots** (☎ 05 61 22 49 25; 3 rue du Puits Vert; menus €9-12; ☹ lunch Mon-Sat, dinner Thu-Sat) This simple place offers pick-'n'-mix all-vegetarian *menus* from its salad and dessert bars.

### SELF-CATERING

For fresh produce, visit **Les Halles Victor Hugo** (place Victor Hugo), the large covered food market, or the **market** (place des Carmes) to its south. Both open until 1pm, Tuesday to Sunday.

### Getting There & Away

Northwest of the city centre (8km) is **Toulouse-Blagnac international airport** (☎ 05 61 42 44 00; www.toulouse.aeroport.fr). Air France and easyJet have over 30 flights daily to/from Paris (mainly Orly). Other budget carriers to Toulouse include BMBaby and Flybe.

The **Navette Aéroport bus** (☎ 05 34 60 64 00; www.navettevia-toulouse.com; single/return €3.90/5.90) links town and airport. The last run to the airport is at 8.20pm. Pick it up at the bus station, outside Jean Jaurès metro station or place Jeanne d'Arc. From the airport, the last bus leaves at 12.15am.

**Intercars** (☎ 05 61 58 14 53) and **Eurolines** (☎ 05 61 26 40 04) use Toulouse's modern **bus station** (☎ 05 61 61 67 67; blvd Pierre Sémar; ☹ information office 8am-7pm) just north of the train station.

The **train station** (Gare Matabiau; ☎ 08 92 35 35 35; blvd Pierre Sémar) is about 1km northeast of the city centre. Destinations include Bordeaux (€31.10, 3¼ hours) and Carcassonne (€12.70, one hour). The fare from Toulouse to Gare d'Austerlitz in Paris is €71 by Corail (6½ hours) and €95 by TGV (5½ hours) to Gare Montparnasse via Bordeaux.

## PROVENCE

It's impossible not to be swept up by the sights – and smells – of picture-perfect Provence. Whether it's wandering through the region's lavender-filled fields or drinking in the aromas of Marseille's markets, you'll discover Provence is a real assault on the senses. With its tiny, traditional hamlets, hilltop villages and brightly-coloured fields, it made the ideal canvas for artists such as Paul Cézanne and Vincent Van Gogh, who both lived and worked here and made Provence the subject of some of their most famous paintings.

### MARSEILLE

pop 808,700

Gritty, grimy and gloriously real Marseille is France's oldest and largest city after Paris. It's far less genteel than its Provençal counterparts, but its rough-and-tumble edginess exerts an

**GETTING INTO TOWN**

The **Marseille-Provence airport** (code MRS; ☎ 04 42 14 14) is 28km northwest of the city in Marignane. **Navette** (☎ in Marseille 04 91 50 59 34, ☎ at airport 04 42 14 31 27) shuttle buses link Marseille-Provence airport (€8.50, one hour) with Marseille's train station.

irresistible pull. Pulsing to a sultry Mediterranean tempo, Marseille also beats to the drum of neighbouring northern Africa. Its fusion of cultures is best experienced at its thronging street markets, where spice stands and Moroccan craft-shops sit side by side with stalls selling fish straight off the boats. Not to be missed.

**Orientation**

The city's main thoroughfare, La Canebière, stretches eastwards from the Vieux Port (Old Port). The train station is north of La Canebière at the end of blvd d'Athènes. The ferry terminal is west of place de la Joliette. Addresses given below include *arrondissements* (1er being the most central).

**Information**

**Canebière Change** (39 La Canebière, 1er) There are other banks and exchange bureaus nearby.

**Info Cafe** (1 quai du Rive Neuve, 1e; per 30 min/hr €2/3.60; ☎ 9am-10pm Mon-Sat, 2.30-7.30pm Sun) Internet access.

**Laverie des Allées** (15 allées Léon Gambetta, 1er; ☎ 8am-8pm) Laundrette.

**Post office** (1 place de l'Hôtel des Postes, 1er) Offers currency exchange.

**Tourist office** (☎ 04 91 13 89 00; www.marseille-tourisme.com; 4 La Canebière, 1er; ☎ 9am-7pm Mon-Sat, 10am-5pm Sun, to 7.30pm mid-Jun-mid-Sep) Sells the Marseille City Pass (one/two days €18/25), which includes access to the city's museums, unlimited travel on public transport, a guided tour and a boat trip to either Ile d'If or Îles du Frioul.

**Dangers & Annoyances**

Forget everything you've heard about Marseille, it's no more dangerous than many other French cities. But as with any big city, keep your wits about you, and take extra care at night in the Belsunce area, southwest of the train station.

**Sights**

The courtyard of the **Centre de la Vieille Charité** (Old Charity Cultural Centre; ☎ 04 91 14 58 80; 2 rue de la Charité, 2e; admission €3; ☎ 10am-5pm Tue-Sun Oct-May, 11am-6pm daily May-Sep) incorporates the **Musée d'Archéologie**

(☎ 04 91 14 58 80; €2) and **Musée des Arts Africains, Océaniens & Amérindiens** (Museum of African, Oceanic & American Indian Art; ☎ 04 91 14 58 38; admission €2), which has a diverse collection of primitive art, including masks from the Americas, Africa and the Pacific. A combined ticket costs €4.

The resplendent **Basilique Notre Dame de la Garde** (☎ 04 91 13 40 80; admission free; ☎ basilica & crypt 7am-7pm, longer hours in summer), 1km south of the Vieux Port, dominates Marseille's skyline. The domed basilica was built between 1853 and 1864, and is ornamented with coloured marble, murals and mosaics restored in 2006.

Immortalised in Alexandre Dumas' 1840s novel *Le Comte de Monte Cristo* (The Count of Monte Cristo), the 16th-century **Château d'If** (☎ 04 91 59 02 30; adult/student €5/3.50; ☎ 9.30am-6pm Mon-Sat Sep-Mar, 9.30am-6.30pm Jun-Aug) sits on a 30-sq-km island 3.5km west of the Vieux Port. Political prisoners of all persuasions were incarcerated here, including the Revolutionary hero Mirabeau and the Communards of 1871.

**GACM** (☎ 04 91 55 50 09, www.answeb.net/gacm; 1 quai des Belges, 1er) runs boats to the Château d'If at 9am, 10.30am, noon, 2pm, and 3.30pm (€9 return, 20 minutes).

**Sleeping**

Generally, the better hotels cluster around the old port (where budget options are pretty much nonexistent) and as you head east out of the centre along the corniche.

**Auberge de Jeunesse de Bonnevoine** (☎ 04 91 17 63 30; fax 04 91 73 97 23; impasse du Docteur Bonfils, 8e; dm €14.60-15.60, d €33.70-35.70, incl sheets & breakfast; ☎ Feb-Dec; ☎ ) A fair hike from the centre, this HI makes up for it with its proximity to the beach, and outdoor terrace and bar. Take bus 44 from the Rond Point du Prado metro stop and get off at the Place Bonnefons stop.

**La Cigale et la Fourmi** (☎ 04 91 40 05 12; 19 rue Théophile Boudier, Mazargues, 9e; dm/d €15/30; ☎ ) Also heading toward the Calanques, this tiny, independent hostel has miniature staircases, loft-style rooms and freebies including wi-fi and bikes. From the Rond Point du Prado metro stop, take bus 21 to the Obelisque stop or bus 22 to the Robespierre stop.

**Le Richelieu** (☎ 04 91 31 01 92; www.richelieu-marseille.com; 52 corniche Président John F Kennedy, 7e; d €34-53) With a breezy, beach-house vibe and marine-themed rooms, this artists' haven is built onto the rocks next to the plage des Catalans.

**Eating**

African, Middle Eastern and Mediterranean cuisines, along with Provençal specialities are the mainstays of Marseille's restaurants. Marseille is also *the* place to try authentic bouillabaisse (fish stew).

**Le Bistro à Vin** (☎ 04 91 54 02 20; 17 rue Sainte, 6e; dishes €12; ☎ closed Sun & Sat lunch) As its name implies, the wine at this beamed-ceiling rustic bistro with wooden tables are outstanding. The accompanying fare – including *tapenade* and gourmet cheeses – is exceptional value.

**Le Femina** (☎ 04 91 54 03 56; 1 rue Musée, 1er; menus €8-18; ☎ closed Sun & Mon) Heading east from the Vieux Port towards cours Julien, Le Femina is a great – and affordable – traditional Algerian place for couscous cooked to perfection.

**Chez Madie Les Galinettes** (☎ 04 91 90 40 87; 138 quai du Port, 2e; mains €10-28, bouillabaisse €35; ☎ lunch & dinner Mon-Sat, closed Sat lunch in summer) Decked out with original pop art and mural panels, this portside place is top for bouillabaisse, but you'll need to order a day ahead if you're stopping by for lunch.

**O'Stop** (☎ 04 91 33 85 34; 15 rue St-Saëns, 1er; menu €10; ☎ 24hr) does fantastic sandwiches and simple regional specialities round-the-clock.

Stock up on fruit and vegetables at **Marché des Capucins** (place des Capucins, 1er; ☎ Mon-Sat), one block north of La Canebière, and at the **fruit-and-vegetable market** (cours Pierre Puget, 6e; ☎ Mon-Sat).

**Drinking & Entertainment**

Cultural events are covered in Wednesday's *L'Hebdo* (in French; €1) available around town. The website www.marseillebynight.com, in French, also has listings.

**L'OM Café** (☎ 04 91 33 80 33; 3 quai des Belges, 1er; menus €14-25; ☎ 7am-1am) Decked out in the blue-and-white of Olympique Marseille, this soccer-mad place becomes a giant party when it screens each and every game.

**Au Petit Nice** (☎ 04 91 48 43 04; 28 place Jean Jaurès; ☎ 6am-2am) This cosy Brit boozier-type place is a local favourite.

**Le Trolleybus** (☎ 04 91 54 30 45; 24 quai Rive Neuve; ☎ 11pm-dawn Wed-Sat) Shake your booty to techno, funk, indie and more inside this tunnel-like harbour-side club.

**L'Intermediaire** (☎ 04 91 47 01 25; 39 cours Julien; ☎ 7pm-2am Mon-Sat) Groovers gather at this artsy, intimate place for live music and new bands.

**Getting There & Away**

The **bus station** (gare des autocars; ☎ 04 91 08 16 40; 3 place Victor Hugo, 3e) is 150m to the right as you exit the train station. Buses travel to Aix-en-Provence (€4.40, 30 minutes to one hour, every 10 minutes), Avignon (€17.20, two hours, one daily), Cannes (€23.50, two hours, four daily) and Nice (€25, 2½ hours, up to three daily).

**Eurolines** (☎ 0892 289 9091, www.eurolines.com) and **Intercars** (☎ 04 91 50 08 66; fax 04 91 08 72 34), with adjacent offices in the bus station, run buses to Spain, Switzerland, Germany, Italy and the UK. There's a joint **office** (☎ 04 91 50 57 55; 3 allées Léon Gambetta) near the Vieux Port.

Marseille's passenger train station, served by both metro lines, is Gare St-Charles. There's a **ticket office** (☎ 9am-8pm Mon-Sat, ticket purchases 4am-1am) and a **left-luggage office** (rates from €3.50; ☎ 7.30am to 10pm) next to platform A. In town, tickets can be bought at the **SNCF Boutique** (9 rue Montgrand, 6e; ☎ 9.30am-6.30pm Mon-Fri, 10am-6pm Sat).

From Marseille there are trains to Paris' Gare de Lyon (€75.20, three hours, 17 daily), Nice (€26.40, 2½ hours, 21 daily), Avignon (€16.80, 30 minutes, 27 daily) and Lyon (€43.10, 3¼ hours, 16 daily).

**BOAT**

Marseille's **passenger ferry terminal** (gare maritime; ☎ 04 91 56 38 63; fax 04 91 56 38 70) is 250m south of place de la Joliette (2e).

The **Société Nationale Maritime Corse Méditerranée** (SNMCM; ☎ 0 836 679 500; www.snmcm.fr; 61 blvd des Dames, 2e; ☎ 8am-6pm Mon-Fri, 8.30am-noon & 2-5.30pm Sat) links Marseille with Corsica, Sardinia and Tunisia.

**Getting Around**

Marseille has two metro lines (Métro 1 and Métro 2) and an extensive bus network. The metro and most buses run from 5am until 9pm. Tickets (€1.60) can be used on metros and buses for one hour after they've been time-stamped. A pass for one/three days costs €4/9.50.

**AIX-EN-PROVENCE**

pop 140,100

A pocket of Parisian chic in Provence, it's hard to believe Aix-en-Provence is just 25km from chaotic Marseille. Aix (pronounced like the letter X) is all class: its plane tree-shaded boulevards and public squares are littered

with 17th- and 18th-century mansions and mossy fountains. Two of the town's most famous sons are painter Paul Cézanne and novelist Emile Zola, but for all its polish, it's still a laidback Provençal town at heart.

The **tourist office** (☎ 04 42 16 11 61; www.aixenprovencetourism.com; 2 place du Général de Gaulle; ☎ 8.30am-7pm Mon-Sat, 10am-1pm & 2-6pm Sun) is typically efficient but can get seriously busy in summer.

## Sights

Art, culture and architecture abound in Aix, and it's a perfect city to explore on foot. The graceful **cours Mirabeau** is the literal and spiritual heart of Aix, dotted with fashionable cafés and elegant Renaissance *hôtels particuliers* along its southern side.

On a hilltop 1.5km north of the tourist office, Cézanne's last **studio** (Atelier Paul Cézanne; ☎ 04 42 21 06 53; www.atelier-cezanne.com; 9 av Paul Cézanne; adult/student €5.50/2; ☎ 10am-noon & 2-5pm, to 6pm Apr-Jun & Sep, 10am-6pm Jul & Aug) is preserved almost as he left it, complete with tools and still-life models. Cézanne fans can follow the **Circuit de Cézanne** (Cézanne trail), marked on the pavement by bronze plaques inscribed with the letter C, which visits many of the great painter's favourite haunts.

## Sleeping

**Camping Arc-en-Ciel** (☎ 04 42 26 14 28; route de Nice; per site €17.10; ☎ Apr-Sep) A four-star camping ground bordered by wooded hills and (unfortunately) a busy motorway. It's 2km southeast of town – take bus 3 to Les Trois Sautets.

**Auberge de Jeunesse du Jas de Bouffan** (☎ 04 42 20 15 99; fax 04 42 59 36 12; 3 av Marcel Pagnol; dm incl breakfast & sheets €15.70; ☎ 7am-1pm & 5pm-midnight, closed 20 Dec-9 Feb) Flash and cyclist-friendly, with a bar and tennis courts, this HI hostel is 2km west of the centre. Take bus 4 from La Rotonde to the Vasarely stop.

**Hôtel Concorde** (☎ 04 42 26 03 95; fax 04 42 27 38 90; 68 blvd du Roi René; d €43-69; ☎) Ask for a room with views over the hills at this 50-room place on the southeastern edge of the city centre. Some have small balconies, and higher-priced rooms come with air-con and mini bars, but try to duck the dark ground-floor rooms out the back.

## Eating

Aix excels for Provençal cuisine, and is also renowned for its colourful markets.

**Charlotte** (☎ 04 42 26 77 56; 32 rue des Bernardines; 2-/3-course menu €13/16; ☎) lunch & dinner Tue-Sat) Townspeople congregate like a big extended family at this bustling place, which turns out delicious, simple home cooking from the open kitchen.

**Le Zinc d'Hugo** (☎ 04 42 27 69 69; 22 rue Lieuttaud; mains €14-18; ☎) lunch & dinner Tue-Sat) This rustic French bistro boasts stone walls, wooden tables and a daily blackboard menu.

Trestle tables set up each morning for the **produce market** on place Richelme, displaying olives, goat's cheese, honey and lots of other Provençal products. Another **food market** (place des Prêcheurs) takes place on Tuesday, Thursday and Saturday morning.

## Getting There & Away

Aix's **bus station** (☎ information office 08 91 02 40 25; av de l'Europe) is a 10-minute walk southwest from La Rotonde. Buses run to Marseille (€4.40, 35 minutes, every 10 minutes, every 20 minutes on Sunday), Arles (€10, 1¼ hours, five daily) and Avignon (€13.90, one hour, six daily).

Aix's bus station is linked to the TGV station (€3.90) and Aéroport Marseille-Provence (€7.90) by the half-hourly **Navette** (☎ 04 42 93 59 13).

The **train station** (☎ 5am-9.15pm Mon-Fri, 6am-9.15pm Sat & Sun, information office 9am-7pm) has frequent services to Marseille (€6.20, 35 minutes, at least 18 daily).

## AVIGNON

pop 89,300

Encircled by 4.3km of stone ramparts, this graceful city is famous for its annual performing arts festival and the graceful Pont St-Bénézet, aka the Pont d'Avignon (Bridge of Avignon). Its brief stint as the papal seat of power has bestowed Avignon with a treasury of magnificent art and architecture, none grander than the massive Palais des Papes.

## Orientation

The main avenue within the *intra-muros* (within the walls) runs northwards from the train station to place de l'Horloge; it's called cours Jean Jaurès south of the tourist office and rue de la République north of it.

Place de l'Horloge is 300m south of place du Palais, which abuts the Palais des Papes. The city gate nearest the train station is Porte de la République, while the city gate next to Pont Édouard Daladier, which leads to Villeneuve-lès-Avignon, is Porte de l'Oulle.



## Information

**Lavmatic** (27 rue du Portail Magnanen; ☎ 7am-7.30pm) Laundrette.

**Post office** (cours Président Kennedy) Currency exchange and Cyberposte.

**Tourist office** (☎ 04 32 74 32 74; www.avignon-tourisme.com; 41 cours Jean Jaurès; ☎ 9am-6pm Mon-Sat, 10am-5pm Sun Apr-Jun & Aug-Oct; 9am-6pm Mon-Fri, 9am-5pm Sat, 10am-noon Sun Nov-Mar; 9am-7pm Mon-Sat, 10am-5pm Sun Jul)

**Webzone** (3 rue St Jean le Vieux; per 30/60 min €2/3.50; ☎ 10am-10pm) Internet access.

## Sights

The subject of a famous French nursery rhyme, the fabled 900m wooden **Pont St-Bénézet** (St Bénézet's Bridge; ☎ 04 90 27 51 16; full price/pass €4/3.30; ☎ 9am-7pm Apr-Jun & Oct & Nov, 9am-8pm Jul-Sep, 9.30am-5.45pm Nov-Mar, to 9pm during theatre festival in Jul) was completed in 1185, although all but four of its 22 spans were washed away in the mid-1600s.

The **Palais des Papes** (Palace of the Popes; ☎ 04 90 27 50 00; place du Palais; admission €9.50; ☎ 9am or 9.30am-6.30pm or 7pm Oct-Jun, 9am-8pm Jul-Sep, to 9pm during theatre festival in Jul) was built during the 14th century as a fortified palace for the papal court. It's the largest Gothic palace in the world, but its undecorated rooms are all but empty, except during occasional art exhibitions.

The **Musée du Petit Palais** (☎ 04 90 86 44 58; place du Palais; admission €6; ☎ 10am-1pm & 2-6pm Wed-Mon Jun-Sep, 9.30am-1pm & 2-5.30pm Wed-Mon Oct-May) houses an outstanding collection of Italian religious paintings including works by Botticelli, Carpaccio and Giovanni di Paolo.

Just up the hill from the cathedral is **Rocher des Doms**, a delightful bluff-top park that has great views of the Rhône, Pont St-Bénézet, Villeneuve-lès-Avignon and the Alpilles.

Across the Rhône from Avignon (and in a different département) is the 13th century town of Villeneuve-lès-Avignon, which can be reached in about half an hour on foot or by bus 10 from the post office. The **Tour Philippe-le-Bel** (☎ 04 32 70 08 57; admission €1.60; ☎ 10am-12.30pm & 2-6.30pm, closed Mon mid-Sep-mid-Jun), a 14th-century defensive tower, offers great views of Avignon's walled city, the river and the surrounding countryside.

## Festivals & Events

More than 600 *spectacles* are on display during the **Festival d'Avignon** (Bureau du Festival; ☎ 04 90 27 66 50; www.festival-avignon.com; Espace St-Louis, 20 rue du Portail Boquier), founded in 1946 and held

annually from early July to early August. The fringe event, **Festival Off** (Avignon Public Off; ☎ 01 48 05 01 19; www.avignon-off.org), has an eclectic – and cheaper – programme of experimental performances.

## Sleeping

During the festival, it's practically impossible to find a hotel room at short notice.

**Camping Bagatelle** (☎ 04 90 86 30 39; camping .bagatelle@wanadoo.fr; Île de la Barthelasse; camp site €8.92-15.32; ☎ reception 8am-9pm) A shady camp ground north of Pont Édouard Daladier, 850m from the walled city.

**Auberge Bagatelle** (☎ 04 90 85 78 45; auberge .bagatelle@wanadoo.fr; Île de la Barthelasse; dm €14.56, s €28.90-32.90, d €34.80-36.80) Adjoining the campground, this hostel has 180 beds in a mix of two- to eight-bed rooms, plus snazzier private digs in its adjoining hotel.

**YMCA-UCJG** (☎ 04 90 25 46 20; ymca-avignon@wanadoo.fr; 7bis Chemin de la Justice; s €23-34, d €29-43, tr €34-52; ☎ reception 8.30am-6pm, closed Dec-early-Jan) If you're after your own space on a shoestring, head to this spotless hostel just across the river in Villeneuve-lès-Avignon. Take bus 10 to the Pont d'Avignon stop Monteau.

**Hôtel Mignon** (☎ 04 90 82 17 30; www.hotel-mignon.com; 12 rue Joseph Vernet; s €36, d €40-55; ☎ ) Cute and comfy, this 16-room place within the walled city is a favourite for its boutique rooms in pretty shades like lavender, friendly, helpful staff, wi-fi, and a decent breakfast of croissants and rolls (€5).

## Eating

**Restaurant Brunel** (☎ 04 90 27 16 00; 46 rue de la Balance; mains €10-18; ☎ lunch & dinner Tue-Sat) A local favourite for authentic Provençal food, especially at lunch, when the outside terrace is always packed.

**Le Caveau du Théâtre** (☎ 04 90 82 60 91; 16 rue des Trois Faucons; lunch/dinner menus €10.60/18; ☎ closed Sat lunch & Sun) Swing over to the south of the square for mellow, moody jazz and a monthly-changing *carte* of traditional southern French fare.

Over 40 outlets fill Les Halles' **food market** (place Pie; ☎ 7am-1pm Tue-Sun).

## Getting There & Away BUS

The **bus station** (halte routière; ☎ 04 90 82 07 35; blvd St-Roch; ☎ information window 10.15am-1pm & 2-6pm Mon-Fri) is to the right as you exit the train station.

Local services include Aix-en-Provence (€13.90, one hour), Arles (€7.10, 1½ hours), Marseille (€20, 35 minutes), Nice (€37) and Nîmes (€7.60, 1¼ hours). Most lines operate on Sunday at reduced frequency.

Long-haul bus companies **Linebus** (☎ 04 90 85 30 48) and **Eurolines** (☎ 04 90 85 27 60; www.eurolines.fr) have offices at the far end of the bus platforms.

## TRAIN

The **main train station** (☎ information counters 9am-6.15pm Mon-Sat) is located across blvd St-Roch from Porte de la République. The brand new TGV station is a few kilometres from town. A **shuttle bus** (€2; ☎ half-hourly 5.30am-10.50pm) links the TGV station to the bus stop outside the post office.

There are trains to Arles (€5.70, 20 minutes, 14 to 18 daily), Marseille (€16.80, 30 minutes), Nice (€38.80, three hours), Nîmes (€7.70, 30 minutes, 15 daily) and by TGV to Paris' Gare de Lyon (€67, 2½ hours) and Lyon (€29.60, one hour).

## CÔTE D'AZUR

The Côte d'Azur, otherwise known as the French Riviera, has been synonymous with chic elegance and lofty living for well over a century. It's still a playground of the rich and beautiful, especially at stylish resorts such as Nice, Cannes and, of course, that epitome of extravagance: Monte Carlo. However, less well-heeled visitors will find plenty to entertain them too.

## NICE

pop 347,100

Naughty Nice is one of the highlights of the French Riviera. Sun seekers sip cocktails on parasoled lounges lining its pebbled shores, kids splash in the azure seas and rollerbladers cruise the promenade des Anglais, but Nice

### GETTING INTO TOWN

**Ligne d'Azur** (☎ 08 10 06 10 07; www.ligne-dazur.com; €4) runs two shuttle services to the airport – Route 99 to Gare Nice Ville, and Route 98 to the Gare Routière. Both stop at the two airport terminals, and run till around 9pm.

is more than just a place for fun in the sun. There are some major art museums, a ruined Roman city and a glorious old town to discover, as well as some of the best restaurants, bars and markets in the Mediterranean. The city is a great base from which to explore the rest of the Côte d'Azur.

## Orientation

Av Jean Médecin runs south from near the train station to place Masséna. The modern city centre, ie the area north and west of place Masséna, includes the up-market pedestrianised streets of rue de France and rue Masséna. The intercity bus station is three blocks east of place Masséna. The famous promenade des Anglais follows the gently curved beachfront from the city centre to the airport, 6km west.

## Information

### INTERNET ACCESS

**Nemeos** (2 rue Halvèy; per 15/60min €3/6; ☎ 10am-midnight Apr-Oct, noon-10pm Nov-Mar) One of countless cybercafés in Nice.

### LAUNDRY

**Taxi Lav** (22 rue Pertinax; ☎ 7am-9pm) Vieux Nice (13 rue du Pont Vieux; ☎ 7am-9pm)

### MONEY

**Barclays Bank** (2 rue Alphonse Karr) There's a change counter here.

**Le Change** (☎ 04 93 88 56 80; 17 av Thiers; ☎ 7.30am-8pm) Opposite the Gare Nice Ville.

### POST

**Branch post office** (2 rue Louis Gassin) In Vieux Nice.  
**Main post office** (23 av Thiers)

### TOURIST INFORMATION

**Main tourist office** (☎ 0892 70 74 07; 5 promenade des Anglais; ☎ 8am-8pm Mon-Sat, 9am-7pm Sun Jun-Sep; 9am-6pm Mon-Sat Oct-May) Right by the beach.  
**Train station tourist office** (☎ 0 892 353 535; av Thiers; ☎ 8am-8pm Mon-Sat, 9am-7pm Sun Jun-Sep; 8am-7pm Mon-Sat, 9am-6pm Sun Oct-May)

## Sights & Activities

The most atmospheric area of Nice is the beautiful **old town** (Vieux Nice), with its tangle of 18th-century pedestrian passages and alleyways lined with cafés, shops and restaurants. At the eastern end of quai des États-Unis, steep steps and a cliffside **lift**





(€0.70; ☎ 10am-5.30pm Oct-Mar, 9am-7pm Apr, May & Sep, 9am-8pm Jun-Aug) climb to the **Parc du Château**, a beautiful hilltop park with great views over the old city and the beachfront.

The **Musée d'Art Moderne et d'Art Contemporain** (☎ 04 93 62 61 62; av St-Jean Baptiste; adult/student €4/2.50; ☎ 10am-6pm Wed-Mon) has a fantastic collection of avant-garde art from the 1960s to the present, including iconic pop art from Roy Lichtenstein, and Andy Warhol's 1965 *Campbell's Soup Can*.

The largest public collection of works by the Russian-born artist Marc Chagall is housed at the **Musée National Message Biblique Marc Chagall** (Marc Chagall Biblical Message Museum; ☎ 04 93 53 87 20; permanent collection adult/student €5.50/4, temporary exhibitions additional €1.20; ☎ 10am-6pm Wed-Mon Jul-Sep, 10am-5pm Oct-Jun). The museum contains the largest collection of works by Chagall anywhere in the world, including several large-scale biblical paintings and a couple of pieces created specially for the museum – look out for the mosaic above the pond and the stunning stained glass in the concert room.

About 2.5km north of the city centre is the **Musée Matisse** (Matisse Museum; ☎ 04 93 81 08 08; www.musee-matisse-nice.org; 164 av des Arènes de Cimiez; adult/student €4/2.50; ☎ 10am-6pm Wed-Mon), which contains a fantastic collection of exhibits and paintings spanning Matisse's entire career.

Free sections of beach alternate with 15 sun lounge-lined **plages concédées** (private beaches; ☎ late Apr/early May-15 Sep), for which you have to pay by renting a chair (around €11 a day) or mattress (around €9). There are outdoor showers on every beach, and indoor showers and toilets opposite 50 promenade des Anglais.

## Sleeping

Nice makes a great base on the Côte d'Azur, with lots of cheap sleeps. Hostels often don't take reservations, so you'll need to turn up by 9am to guarantee a bed in summer.

## HOSTELS

**Our pick Villa Saint-Exupéry** (☎ 04 93 84 42 83; www.vsaaint.com; 22 av Gravier; dm €18-22, s €30 d €52 incl breakfast; ☎ ☎) In a former monastery, this palatial hostel is fit for St-Exupéry's little prince, and worth the 3km trip north from the city centre. Treats include a slate-and-steel kitchen, barbecue terrace, 24-hour common room-bar, and terrazzo-tiled (mostly en

## SPURGE

**Hôtel Windsor** (☎ 04 93 88 59 35; www.hotelwindsornice.com; 11 rue Dalpozzo; d €80-165, ☎ ☎ ☎) Half of this hotel's rooms feature impressionist murals, and the other half are the wonderful, often whacky works of experimental contemporary artists, in a wild mix of styles. Art apart, there's also an exotic private garden with a birdcage, a Zen fitness room, *hammam* (Turkish bath) and meditation area.

suite) dorms and rooms, some with magical views across Nice to the Med. Take bus 1, direction Saint Sylvestre, along av Jean Médecin to the Gravier stop and follow the steps up to the hostel.

**Auberge de Jeunesse – Les Camélias** (☎ 04 93 62 15 54; www.fuaj.org; 3 rue Spitalieri; dm €20 incl breakfast, sheets €2.70; ☎ ☎) Flash backpacking. The four- to eight-bed dorms have space-age metallic bunks and in-room showers, and there's a self-catering kitchen. A funky citrus-coloured bar stays open to 11pm, and there's no curfew.

**Backpackers Chez Patrick** (☎ 04 93 80 30 72; www.chezpatrick.com; 32 rue Pertinax; dm/d €21/45; ☎ ☎) Ultra-handly for the station, you'll find this independent hostel inconspicuously situated above a restaurant (look for Chez Patrick's doorbell on the street below). Chill out in the air conditioned, French-washed tiled common room; or in the high-ceilinged rooms, which have stacks of space, hand basins, brand new beds and double-glazed windows.

**Hôtel Paradis** (☎ 04 93 87 71 23; www.paradishotel.com; 1 rue Paradis; dm €25-30, d €90; ☎ ☎) Boutique-style budget hotel and dorms 60m from the beach.

## HOTELS

**Hôtel Wilson** (☎ 04 93 85 47 79; www.hotel-wilson-nice.com; 39 rue de l'Hôtel des Postes; s/d/tr €45/50/60.50, s/tr with shared bathroom €27/43.50, d with shared bathroom €33-50) Owner and multilingual *bon viveur* Jean-Marie Martinez lives in this rambling old apartment building, and shares his dining table, books and classical music with his guests.

**Hôtel de la Buffa** (☎ 04 93 88 77 35; www.hotel-buffa.com; 56 rue de la Buffa; d €48-73; ☎ ☎) Up a spiral staircase in a character-filled building, old

fashioned corridors with ornate cornices and baskets of dried and silk flowers open to 13 bright, airy, sun-washed rooms.

## Eating

Niçoise nibbles include *socca* (a thin layer of chickpea flour and olive oil batter fried on a large griddle, served with pepper), *salade niçoise*, *ratatouille* and *farcis* (stuffed vegetables, each with a unique filling). Generally, you'll find the most authentic restaurants in Vieux Nice.

**La Table Alziari** (☎ 04 93 80 34 03; 4 rue François Zanin; mains €8-14; ☎ noon-2pm & 7.30-10pm Tue-Sat) In the heart of old Nice, this tiny, traditional Provençal place has no *carte*, just a blackboard with a daily selection of seasonal dishes.

**Nissa Socca** (☎ 04 93 80 18 35; 5 rue Ste-Réparate; dishes from €6, menu €13; ☎ closed Sun & lunch Mon) Locals love this inexpensive *socca* joint in Nice's ambient old town, and it's a prime location for taste-testing authentic Niçoise cuisine.

**Lou Pilha Leva** (place Centrale; dishes from €3; ☎ 11am-10pm) Seated at outdoor wooden tables under an awning, this down-to-earth place is a good bet for vegetarians. Try the *soupe au pistou* (soup of vegetables, noodles, beans, basil and garlic).

**Pasta Basta** (☎ 04 93 80 03 57; 18 rue de la Préfecture; mains €6.80-9.50; ☎ noon-2pm & 7-11pm) This inexpensive old place dishes up authentic pasta and primo pizzas on stylish square white plates, best savoured on the canopied front terrace.

Pack the ultimate picnic hamper from cours Saleya's **fruit & vegetable market**, and pick up freshly caught fish from the **fish market** (place St-François; ☎ 6am-1pm Tue-Sun).

## Drinking & Entertainment

Vieux Nice's little streets are jammed with bars and cafés in which to sip a perfect *pastis*.

**Cave de la Tour** (☎ 04 93 80 03 31; 3 rue de la Tour; mains around €7.50; ☎ 7am-7pm Tue-Sat, 7am-noon Sun) An utterly untouristy old-town treasure that combines a wonderful wine shop and a café/bar.

**Chez Wayne's** (☎ 04 93 13 46 99; 15 rue de la Préfecture) A magnet for carousing locals and visitors alike, this raucous watering hole has live bands every night.

**Les Trois Diables** (☎ 04 93 92 93 37; 2 cours Saleya; ☎ 5pm-2.15am) The 'three devils' tempts a mainly local crowd with trip-hop, house and electro.

## Getting There & Away

### AIR

**Aéroport International Nice-Côte d'Azur** (NCE; ☎ 08 20 42 33 33; www.nice.aeroport.fr) is 6km west of the city centre and served by numerous carriers, including **BMIBaby** (www.bmibaby.com) and **easyJet** (www.easyjet.com). Its two terminals are connected by a free **shuttle bus** (☎ at least every 10min 6am-11pm).

### BOAT

The fastest and least expensive ferries from mainland France to Corsica depart from Nice.

Ferries between France and Corsica are operated by **Société Nationale Maritime Corse-Méditerranée** (SNMCM; ☎ 0 891 701 801; www.snmcm.fr), which operates boats from Nice, Marseille and Toulon to Ajaccio, Bastia, Calvi, Ile Rousse, Porto Vecchio and Propriano.

**Corsica Ferries** (France ☎ 08 25 09 50 95; www.corsicaferries.com) runs year-round from Nice to Ajaccio, Bastia, Calvi and Ile Rousse, and from Toulon to Ajaccio and Bastia.

Daytime sailings from Nice take around four hours; ferries from Marseille and Toulon are usually overnight.

In summer there are up to eight ferries daily (reservations are essential); in winter there are as few as eight a week and fares are much cheaper. In bad weather, boats can be cancelled at very short notice (often on the day of departure).

Fares start at around €24 per adult one way for Nice to Bastia. Cabins start from an additional €25. Transporting a small car costs upwards of €53 one way. Count on adding from around €18 one way for taxes.

### BUS

Buses stop at the **intercity bus station** (☎ 04 93 85 61 81; 5 blvd Jean Jaurès).

There are services daily to Antibes (1¼ hours), Cannes (1½ hours), Menton (1¼ hours) and Monaco (45 minutes). Single tickets cost €1.30.

For long-haul travel, **Intercars** (☎ 04 93 80 08 70), at the bus station, serves various European destinations; it also sells Eurolines tickets for buses to London, Brussels and Amsterdam.

### TRAIN

Nice's main train station, **Gare Nice Ville** (av Thiers) is 1.2km north of the beach.



The **train station** (☎ 04 95 23 11 03; place de la Gare) is staffed until 6.30pm (to 8pm May to September). Services include Bastia (€20.70, four hours, three to four daily), Corte (€11, two hours, three to four daily) and Calvi (€24.10, five hours, two daily; change at Ponte-Leccia).

The ferry terminal is in the same building as the bus station. The **SNCM ticket office** (☎ 04 95 29 66 99; 3 quai l'Herminier; ☎ 8am-8pm Tue-Fri, to 6pm Mon, to 1pm Sat) is across the street.

## BASTIA

pop 37,800

With its colourful jumble of tenement buildings and atmospheric old port, Bastia is like a miniature version of mainland Marseille: a thriving, lively city that's not over-pretified for tourists. Basking beneath the Mediterranean sun, Bastia's narrow streets are crowned by a crumbling 15th-century citadel.

The focal point of the city is place St-Nicolas, where you'll find the **tourist office** (☎ 04 95 54 20 40; www.bastia-tourisme.com; place St-Nicolas; ☎ 8.30am-noon & 2-6pm Mon-Sat). Bastia's main thoroughfares are the busy shopping street of blvd Paoli and av Maréchal Sébastiani, which links the ferry port with the train station.

The **old port** is an atmospheric jumble of boats, restaurants and crumbling buildings, dominated by the twin towers of the **Eglise St-Jean-Baptiste**.

## Sleeping

**Camping San Damiano** (☎ 04 95 33 68 02; www.camping.sandamiano.com; tent & vehicle €5-7, per person €5-7; ☎ Apr-Oct) Served by the airport bus, this pine-forested camp ground is 5km south of Bastia, with furnished bungalows available.

**Hôtel Le Riviera** (☎ 04 95 31 07 16; www.corsehotel.riviera.com; 1bis rue Adolphe Landry; s €40-50, d €50-60; ☎) Le Riviera's rooms are far from luxurious, but they're pleasant and light-filled and a stone's throw from the port.

**Hôtel Univer** (☎ 04 95 31 03 38; www.hoteldeluniver.com; 3 av Maréchal Sébastiani; s €45-60, d €50-70; ☎) Handily situated for place St-Nicolas, this two-star hotel has 25 sparkling rooms with sky-blue and yellow décor and timber floors.

## Getting There & Away

### AIR

**Aéroport Bastia-Poretta** (☎ 04 95 54 54 54; www.bastia.aeroport.fr) is 24km south of the city. Buses (€8, seven to nine daily, fewer on Sunday) depart

from outside the Préfecture building. The tourist office has schedules, and timetables are posted at the bus stop.

### BOAT

The southern ferry terminal is at the eastern end of av François Pietri. The vehicle entrance is 600m north.

There's an **SNCM** (☎ 04 95 54 66 81; www.sncm.com; ☎ 8-11.45am & 2-5.45pm Mon-Fri, 8am-noon Sat) office in the southern terminal. Tickets are sold two hours before departure.

**Moby Lines** (☎ 04 95 34 84 94; www.mobylines.it; 4 rue du Commandant Luce de Casabianca) has a bureau in the ferry terminal, which opens two hours before each sailing.

The **Corsica Ferries** (☎ 04 95 32 95 95; corsicaferris.com; 15bis rue Chanoine Leschi; ☎ 8.30am-noon & 2-6pm Mon-Fri, 9am-noon Sat) office is across the road from the ferry terminal.

### BUS

Buses leave from several locations around town. **Eurocorse** (☎ 04 95 31 73 76) travels to Ajaccio (€20, three hours) via Corte (€11, two hours) twice daily except on Sundays.

**Les Beaux Voyages** (☎ 04 95 65 11 35) travels to Île Rousse and Calvi (€15, two hours) daily except Sunday. Buses leave from outside the train station.

### TRAIN

The **train station** (☎ 04 95 32 80 61; av Maréchal Sébastiani; ☎ 6am-8.40pm Mon-Sat, 8.40am-12.40pm & 4.15-8.40pm Sun) is beside the roundabout on square Mal-Leclerc. Destinations include Ajaccio (€20.70, four hours, four daily) via Corte, and Calvi (€15.70, three hours, three or four daily) via L'Île Rousse.

## BONIFACIO (BUNIFAZIU)

pop 2700

The cliff-top citadel of Bonifacio is separated from the Italian island of Sardinia by 12km of sapphire sea, known as the Bouches de Bonifacio (Strait of Bonifacio). The tall, sun-bleached buildings of the Haute Ville teeter precariously on the edge of limestone cliffs, and within the citadel itself you'll discover a charming maze of alleyways with a distinctly medieval feel.

The **tourist office** (☎ 04 95 73 11 88; www.bonifacio.fr; 2 rue Fred Scaroni; ☎ 9am-8pm daily Jul & Aug; 9am-7pm daily May, Jun & Sep; 9am-noon & 2-6pm Mon-Fri Oct-Apr) is in the Haute Ville.

## Sights

The steps linking rue St-Érasme with Porte de Gênes are known as Montée Rastello and Montée St-Roch further up. At the top of Montée St-Roch stands the Porte de Gênes. Inside the gateway, you can visit the **Grand Bastion** (admission €2; ☎ 9am-6pm Mon-Sat Apr, May, Sep & Oct; 9am-6pm daily Jul & Aug) above Porte de Gênes.

Nearby, along the citadel's ramparts, there are great views from **place du Marché** and **place Manichella**. From the citadel, the **Escalier du Roi d'Aragon** (Staircase of the King of Aragon; €2) leads down the cliff.

Outside the citadel, west along the limestone headland, stands **Église Ste-Dominique**, one of the only Gothic buildings in Corsica. Further to the west the elaborate tombs of the **Cimetière Marin** stand out against a backdrop of crashing waves and wheeling gulls.

## Sleeping

**Camping L'Araguina** (☎ 04 95 73 02 96; av Sylvère Bohn; camp site from €13.50; ☎ Mar-Oct) Near the Hôtel des Étrangers, it's shaded by olive trees and only a short walk into town.

**Hôtel des Étrangers** (☎ 04 95 73 01 09; hoteldes.etrangers.france.com; in French; av Sylvère Bohn; d €37-74; ☎ Apr-Oct; ☎) Bonifacio's best deal is 300m outside town, a rambling hotel with 30 light, airy, old-fashioned soundproofed rooms with cable TVs.

## Getting There & Away

### AIR

Bonifacio's airport, **Aéroport de Figari** (☎ 04 95 71 10 10), is 21km north of town. An airport bus runs from the town centre in July and August (€7 to €8).

### BOAT

In summer, ferries to Santa Teresa in Sardinia are operated by **Saremar** (☎ 04 95 73 00 96; www.saremar.it, in Italian) and **Moby Lines** (☎ 04 95 73 00 29; www.mobylines.it) from Bonifacio's ferry port (50 minutes, two to seven daily). Fares start from €8 one way, plus taxes (around €6.20 one way).

### BUS

**Eurocorse** (Porto Vecchio ☎ 04 95 70 13 83) runs two buses to Ajaccio (€19.50, four hours) via Sartène from Monday to Saturday. For Bastia, change at Porto Vecchio (€6.50, 45 minutes, two to four buses daily).

# FRANCE DIRECTORY

## ACCOMMODATION

During peak periods, popular destinations are packed out – particularly in July and August, when the French tend to take their summer holidays. Tourist offices will often reserve rooms (generally for a fee).

## Camping & Caravan Parks

Camping is immensely popular in France. Most camping grounds close from October or November to March or April. Hostels sometimes let travellers pitch tents in their grounds. Gîtes de France coordinates farm camping and publishes the annual guide *Camping à la Ferme*.

*Camping sauvage* (camping in non-designated spots) is illegal.

## Gîtes Ruraux & B&Bs

A *gîte rural* is a self-contained holiday cottage (or part of a house) in a village or on a farm. A *chambre d'hôte*, basically a B&B (bed and breakfast), is a room in a private house, rented by the night. The website www.bbfrance.com is useful for B&Bs and vacation rentals.

Ask about Gîtes de France offices and brochures at local tourist offices, or contact the **Fédération Nationale des Gîtes de France** (☎ 01 49 70 75 75; www.gites-de-france.fr).

## Hostels & Foyers

Official hostels are known as *auberges de jeunesse*. A dorm bed costs around €25 in Paris, and anything from €9.70 to €35 in the provinces. Breakfast/dinner is often available for €3/10; sheets are extra.

France's major hostel associations are **Fédération Unie des Auberges de Jeunesse** (FUJ; Map pp378-9; ☎ 01 48 04 70 30; www.fuaj.org; 9 rue de Brantome, 3e, Paris; ☎ Rambuteau) and **Ligue Française pour les Auberges de la Jeunesse** (LFAJ; Map pp372-3; ☎ 01 44 16 78 78; www.auberges-de-jeunesse.com; 7 rue Vergniaud, 13e, Paris; ☎ Glacière). If you want to stay at one of their hostels, you'll need to either buy a HI card or a nightly Welcome Stamp.

In university towns, *foyers d'étudiant* (student dormitories) are sometimes converted for use by travellers during summer. These places frequently have space when other hostels are full.



## Hotels

A double has one double bed, so specify if you prefer *deux lits séparés* (two twin beds). French hotels almost never include breakfast in their nightly rates.

## ACTIVITIES

From the peaks, rivers and canyons of the Alps to the mountains of the Massif Central, France lends itself to all kinds of exhilarating outdoor adventures.

## Adventure Sports

France is a top spot for adventurous activities. In big cities and picturesque places, especially the Côte d'Azur and the Alps, local companies offer high-adrenaline pursuits such as canyoning, paragliding, white-water rafting and bungy jumping.

## Cycling

Some of the best areas for cycling (with varying grades of difficulty) are in the French Alps, the Jura, the Pyrenees, the Dordogne, Quercy, Brittany, Normandy and the Atlantic coast. Lonely Planet's *Cycling France* includes essential maps, directions, technical tips and advice.

## Skiing

France has more than 400 ski resorts in the Alps, the Jura, the Pyrenees, the Vosges, the Massif Central and even Corsica. The ski season generally lasts from December to March or April. January and February tend to have the best overall conditions.

The Alps have some of Europe's finest (and priciest) ski facilities. Much cheaper and less glitzy are the smaller stations in the Pyrenees and Massif Central.

Pre-arranged package deals are by far the cheapest way to ski. Contact specialist tour operators such as [www.ski-europe.com](http://www.ski-europe.com), or contact **Ski France** (☎ 01 47 42 23 32; [www.skifrance.fr](http://www.skifrance.fr)).

## Walking

France is crisscrossed by 120,000km of *sentiers balisés* (walking paths), which pass through every imaginable kind of terrain. Probably the best-known trails are the *sentiers de grande randonnée*, long-distance footpaths marked by red-and-white striped track indicators.

The **Club Alpin Français** (CAF; Map pp372-3; ☎ 01 53 72 87 00; [www.ffcam.fr](http://www.ffcam.fr) in French; 24 av de Laumière, 19e,

Paris; ☎ Laumière) has an information centre in Paris.

Lonely Planet's *Walking in France* is packed with essential practical information.

## Water Sports

France has fine beaches along all its three coasts. The sandy beaches stretching along the Atlantic Coast (eg near La Rochelle, see p404 for more information) are less crowded than their pebbly counterparts on the Côte d'Azur. Corsica also has some magnificent spots. Brittany and the north coast are also popular, albeit slightly cooler, beach destinations.

The best surfing in France is on the Atlantic coast around Biarritz. White-water rafting, canoeing and kayaking are practised on many French rivers, especially in the Dordogne and the Alps. Contact the **Fédération Française de Canoë-Kayak** (FFCK; ☎ 01 45 11 08 50; [www.ffck.org](http://www.ffck.org), in French).

## BUSINESS HOURS

French business hours are usually 9am or 9.30am to 7pm or 8pm, often with a midday break from noon or 1pm to 2pm or 3pm (except in Paris). Most businesses close on Sunday; exceptions include grocery stores, *boulangeries* (bakeries), cake shops and florists.

**Cafés** ☎ early morning until around midnight.

**Banks** ☎ 8am or 9am to 11.30am or 1pm and then 1.30pm or 2pm to 4.30pm or 5pm, Monday to Friday or Tuesday to Saturday.

**Bars** ☎ early evening until 1am or 2am.

**Post offices** ☎ 8.30am or 9am to 5pm or 6pm Monday to Friday (often with a midday break), Saturday morning from 8am to noon.

**Restaurants** ☎ lunch between noon and 2pm and for dinner from 7.30pm.

**Supermarkets** ☎ 9am or 9.30am to 7pm or 8pm Monday to Saturday; some open on Sunday morning.

## EMBASSIES & CONSULATES

### Embassies & Consulates in France

All foreign embassies can be found in Paris. Many countries – including the USA, Canada and most European countries – also have consulates in other major cities.

**Australia** Paris (Map pp372-3; ☎ 01 40 59 33 00; [www.austgov.fr](http://www.austgov.fr); 4 rue Jean Rey, 15e; ☎ Bir Hakeim)

**Canada** Paris (Map pp372-3; ☎ 01 44 43 29 00; [www.amb-canada.fr](http://www.amb-canada.fr); 35 av Montaigne, 8e; ☎ Franklin D Roosevelt)

**Germany** Paris (Map pp372-3; ☎ 01 53 85 45 00; [www.amb-allemaigne.fr](http://www.amb-allemaigne.fr); 13-15 av Franklin D Roosevelt, 8e; ☎ Franklin D Roosevelt)

**Italy** Paris (Map pp372-3; ☎ 01 49 54 03 00; [www.amb-italie.fr](http://www.amb-italie.fr); 51 rue de Varenne, 7e; ☎ Rue du Bac)

**Netherlands** Paris (Map pp372-3; ☎ 01 40 62 33 00; [www.amb-pays-bas.fr](http://www.amb-pays-bas.fr); 7 rue Eblé, 7e; ☎ St-François Xavier)

**New Zealand** Paris (Map pp372-3; ☎ 01 45 01 43 43; [www.nzembassy.com](http://www.nzembassy.com); 7ter rue Léonard de Vinci, 16e; ☎ Victor Hugo)

**Spain** Paris (Map pp372-3; ☎ 01 44 43 18 00; [www.amb-espagne.fr](http://www.amb-espagne.fr); 22 av Marceau, 8e; ☎ Alma Marceau)

**UK** Paris Embassy (Map pp372-3; ☎ 01 44 51 31 00; [www.amb-grande-bretagne.fr](http://www.amb-grande-bretagne.fr); 35 rue du Faubourg St-Honoré, 8e; ☎ Concorde); Paris Consulate (Visa section) (Map pp372-3; ☎ 01 44 51 31 01; 16 rue d'Anjou, 8e; ☎ Madeleine)

**USA** Paris (Map pp372-3; ☎ 01 43 12 22 22; [www.amb-usa.fr](http://www.amb-usa.fr); 2 av Gabriel, 8e; ☎ Concorde)

## French Embassies & Consulates

France's diplomatic and consulates are listed on the website [www.france.diplomatie.fr](http://www.france.diplomatie.fr).

**Australia** Canberra (☎ 02-6216 0100; [www.ambafrance-au.org](http://www.ambafrance-au.org); 6 Perth Ave, Yarralumla, ACT 2600); Sydney Consulate (☎ 02-9261 5779; [www.consulfrance-sydney.org](http://www.consulfrance-sydney.org); Level 26, St Martin's Tower, 31 Market St, Sydney, NSW 2000)

**Canada** Ottawa (☎ 613-789 1795; [www.ambafrance-ca.org](http://www.ambafrance-ca.org); 42 Sussex Drive, Ottawa, Ont K1M 2C9); Toronto Consulate (☎ 416-925 8041; [www.consulfrance-toronto.org](http://www.consulfrance-toronto.org); 2 Bloor Est, Suite 2200, Toronto M4W 1A8)

**Germany** Berlin (☎ 030-590 039 000; [www.botschaft-frankreich.de](http://www.botschaft-frankreich.de); Pariser Platz 5, Berlin 10117); Munich Consulate (☎ 089-419 4110; [www.consulfrance-munich.de](http://www.consulfrance-munich.de); Heimeranstrasse 31, 3rd fl, Munich 80339)

**Italy** Rome (☎ 06-686 011; [www.ambafrance-it.org](http://www.ambafrance-it.org); Piazza Farnese 67, 00186 Rome)

**Netherlands** The Hague (☎ 070-312 5800; [www.ambafrance-nl.org](http://www.ambafrance-nl.org); Smidsplein 1, 2514 BT Den Haag); Amsterdam Consulate (☎ 020-530 6969; [www.consulfrance-amsterdam.org](http://www.consulfrance-amsterdam.org); Vijzelgracht 2, 1017 HR Amsterdam)

**New Zealand** Wellington (☎ 04-384 2555; [www.ambafrance-nz.org](http://www.ambafrance-nz.org); 13th fl, Rural Bank Building, 34-42 Manners St, PO Box 11-343, Wellington)

**Spain** Madrid (☎ 91-423 8900; [www.ambafrance-es.org](http://www.ambafrance-es.org); Calle de Salustiano Olozaga 9, 28001 Madrid); Barcelona Consulate (☎ 93-270 3000; [www.consulfrance-barcelone.org](http://www.consulfrance-barcelone.org); Ronda Universitat 22, 08007 Barcelona)

**UK** London Embassy (☎ 020-7073 1000; [www.ambafrance-uk.org](http://www.ambafrance-uk.org); 58 Knightsbridge, London SW1X 7JT); London Consulate (☎ 020-7073 1200; [www.consulfrance-londres.org](http://www.consulfrance-londres.org); 21 Cromwell Rd, London SW7 2EN); London Visa Section (☎ 020-7073 1250; 6A Cromwell Place, London SW7 2EW)

**USA** Washington (☎ 202-944 6000; [www.ambafrance-us.org](http://www.ambafrance-us.org); 4101 Reservoir Rd NW, Washington, DC 20007); New York Consulate (☎ 212-606 3600; [www.consulfrance-newyork.org](http://www.consulfrance-newyork.org); 934 Fifth Ave, New York, NY 10021)

## FESTIVALS & EVENTS

Most French cities, towns and villages have at least one major music, dance, theatre, cinema or art festival each year.

**May Day** (France; 1 May) Workers day is celebrated with trade union parades and diverse protests. People give each other *muguet* (lilies of the valley) for good luck. No-one works (except waiters and *muguet* sellers).

**Cannes Film Festival** (Cannes; mid-May; [www.festival-cannes.com](http://www.festival-cannes.com)) The stars walk the red carpet at Cannes, the epitome of see-and-be-seen cinema events in Europe.

**Fête de la Musique** (France; 21 June; [www.fetedelamuseique.culture.fr](http://www.fetedelamuseique.culture.fr)) Bands, orchestras, buskers and spectators take to the streets for this national celebration of music.

**National Day** (France; 14 July) Fireworks, parades and all-round hoo-ha to commemorate the storming of the Bastille in 1789, symbol of the French Revolution.

**Gay Pride** (Paris and other cities; [www.gaypride.fr](http://www.gaypride.fr)) Effervescent street parades, performances and parties through Paris and other major cities.

**Festival Interceltique de Lorient** ([www.festival-interceltique.com](http://www.festival-interceltique.com) in French) Huge Celtic festival attracting people from all over Brittany and the UK.

**Christmas Markets** (Alsace) Alsace is the place to be for a traditional-style festive season, with world-famous Christmas markets, decorations and celebrations.

## HOLIDAYS

The following *jours fériés* (public holidays) are observed in France.

**New Year's Day** (Jour de l'An) 1 January – parties in larger cities; fireworks are subdued by international standards.

**Easter Sunday & Monday** (Pâques & lundi de Pâques) Late March/April.

**May Day** (Fête du Travail) 1 May – traditional parades.

**Victoire 1945** 8 May – the Allied victory in Europe that ended WWII.

**Ascension Thursday** (Ascension) May – celebrated on the 40th day after Easter.

**Pentecost/Whit Sunday & Whit Monday** (Pentecôte & lundi de Pentecôte) Mid-May to mid-June – celebrated on the seventh Sunday after Easter.

**Bastille Day/National Day** (Fête Nationale) 14 July – the national holiday.

**Assumption Day** (Assomption) 15 August.

**All Saints' Day** (Toussaint) 1 November.

**Remembrance Day** (L'onze novembre) 11 November – celebrates the WWI armistice.

**Christmas** (Noël) 25 December.

## MONEY

France uses the euro. *Bureaux de change* are available in most major cities, and most large post offices offer currency exchange and cash traveller's cheques. Commercial banks charge a stiff fee for changing money – generally it's cheaper to use the *distributeurs automatiques de billets* (DAB, otherwise known as ATMs). Visa and MasterCard (Access or Eurocard) are widely accepted at most shops, restaurants and hotels, although you'll need to know your *code* (PIN number).

For lost cards, call:

**AmEx** (☎ 01 47 77 72 00)

**Diners Club** (☎ 0 810 314 159)

**MasterCard, Eurocard & Access** (Eurocard France;

☎ 0 800 901 387, 01 45 67 84 84)

**Visa** (Carte Bleue; ☎ 0 800 902 033)

## POST

France's 17,000 post offices are marked with a yellow or brown sign reading 'La Poste'. Since La Poste also has banking, finance and bill-paying functions, queues can be very long, but there are automatic machines for postage.

## Postal Rates

Domestic letters of up to 20g cost €0.53. For international post, there are three different zones: a letter/package under 20g/2kg costs €0.55/12.50 to Zone A (EU, Switzerland, Iceland, Norway); €0.75/14 to Zone B (the rest of Europe and Africa); and €0.90/20.50 to Zone C (North and South America, Asia & Middle East, Australasia).

## TELEPHONE

### International Dialling

To call someone outside France, dial the international access code (☎ 00), the country code, the area code (without the initial zero if there is one) and the local number.

To make a reverse-charges (collect) call (*en PCV*) or a person-to-person call (*avec préavis*), dial ☎ 3123 or ☎ 0 800 990 011 (for the USA and Canada) and ☎ 0 800 990 061 for Australia.

Phoncards offer much better international rates than Country Direct services (which allow you to be billed by the long-distance carrier you use at home).

### EMERGENCY NUMBERS

- Ambulance (SAMU) ☎ 15
- EU-wide emergency hotline ☎ 112
- Fire brigade ☎ 18
- Police ☎ 17
- Rape crisis hotline ☎ 0800 05 95 95

## Mobile Phones

France uses GSM 900/1800, compatible with the rest of Europe and Australia but not the North American or Japanese systems. The three major networks are **SFR** (☎ 0 800 106 000; www.sfr.com), **Bouygues** (☎ 0 810 630 100; www.bouygtel.com) and **Orange** (☎ 0 800 830 800; www.orange.fr). If you have a compatible phone, you can buy a 'prepaid' kit that includes a SIM-card and a set number of calls. When these run out you purchase a recharge card at most *tabacs*.

Mobile phone numbers in France always begin ☎ 06.

## Public Phones & Phonecards

Public phones in France are card-operated. Phonecards (*télécartes*) cost €8 or €15 at post offices, *tabacs* (tobacconists) and anywhere you see a sticker saying 'télécarte en vente ici'.

*Cartes à code* (with a free access number and a scratch-off code) offer better rates than *cartes à puce* (cards with a magnetic chip). They can also be used from private as well as public phones, and often have good international rates.

## VISAS

EU nationals and citizens of Switzerland, Iceland and Norway need only a passport or national identity card to enter France, which is part of the Schengen zone. Citizens of Australia, the USA, Canada, New Zealand, Japan and Israel do not need visas as tourists for up to three months; the same goes for citizens of EU candidate countries (except Turkey).

Those not exempt will need a Schengen visa allowing unlimited travel throughout the entire EU zone for 90 days (see p1200).

© Lonely Planet Publications. To make it easier for you to use, access to this chapter is not digitally restricted. In return, we think it's fair to ask you to use it for personal, non-commercial purposes only. In other words, please don't upload this chapter to a peer-to-peer site, mass email it to everyone you know, or resell it. See the terms and conditions on our site for a longer way of saying the above - 'Do the right thing with our content.'