

Marseille Area



Provence's seething, sultry metropolis of Marseille and its surrounds fly in the face of the region's typically tranquil images. The pulsating port city itself is an exhilarating hub, bubbling over with history, a host of cutting-edge creative spaces, and a hip, multicultural urban style. Since Greek settlers came ashore more than 2½ millennia ago, waves of immigrants have made Marseille home. Among today's Marseillais are descendants of Armenians, Spaniards, Italians, Greeks, Arabs, Russians, Jews and North Africans, as well as those of Provençal origin, making the city as much a melange as its fabled *bouillabaisse*.

From Marseille, the craggy coast jags southeast around the translucent aquamarine waters lapping Les Calanques – rocky, white-limestone inlets gashed during the Ice Age's rising seas – to the cliff-crowned fishing village of Cassis, and the former shipyards of La Ciotat, where cinematic history began.

Salt (and pollution) tangs the air west of Marseille. Europe's largest brine lake, the Étang de Berre, is home to one of the continent's biggest petrochemical plants, but also harbours highlights such as the canal-straddled town Martigues. Nearby, the clear coves and cluster of townships along the Côte Bleue (Blue Coast) are a seaside haven little touched by tourism.

Heading north, Marseille's barren, sea- and wind-scoured backdrops soften to the green and purple hues of Provence's picturesque landscapes. Pays d'Aix (Aix Country), with the elegant plane-shaded boulevards, filigreed fountains and mansions of Aix-en-Provence at its gateway, unfold west to Salon de Provence's olive groves.

HIGHLIGHTS

- Shop for artisanal specialities in the atmospheric jumble of streets winding through Marseille's **Le Panier quarter** (p113)
- Follow the footsteps of writer/film-maker Marcel Pagnol in and around **Aubagne** (p119)
- From Cassis, hike the precipitous cliffs of **Les Calanques** (p116)
- Climb up to La Ciotat's panoramic botanical park, **Parc du Mugel** (p118)
- Indulge in a heavenly hydrotherapy treatment at Aix-en-Provence's Roman thermal spa, **Thermes Sextius** (p127)



ITINERARIES

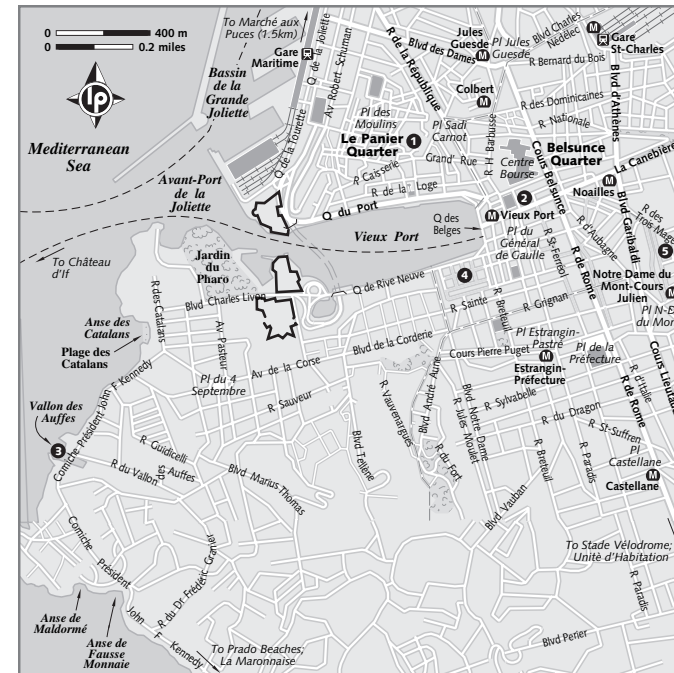
MAX OUT MARSEILLE

Two Days / Marseille

Despite its sprawling layout, greater Marseille has corners crammed with a frenzy of sights, sounds, smells and flavours. To experience the city's sensory overload, weave through the narrow streets of its oldest quarter, **Le Panier** (1; see the boxed text, p113), and get into the Marseille mode at the **Musée de la Mode** (p99). Follow the African drums, accordions and clinking metals to the yacht-filled **Vieux Port** (2; p97) and the clamour of the daily **fish market** (p110). Savour the city's signature **bouillabaisse** (p180) and a fiery **pastis** (p113).

Afterwards, stroll, cycle or skate along the **coast** (p100), stopping by the fairy-tale fishing village of **Vallon des Auffes** (3; p100). Hang out with local hipsters at **La Maronnaise** (p111) and dance until dawn. Or take the open-topped **Le Grand Tour** (p104) bus back to the city centre, jumping off at **Basilique Notre Dame de la Garde** (p99) for celestial views. Dine at the open-air cafés on **place Thiers** (4; p97) then head to the bohemian **cours Julien** (5; p110) quarter for **live music** (p111).

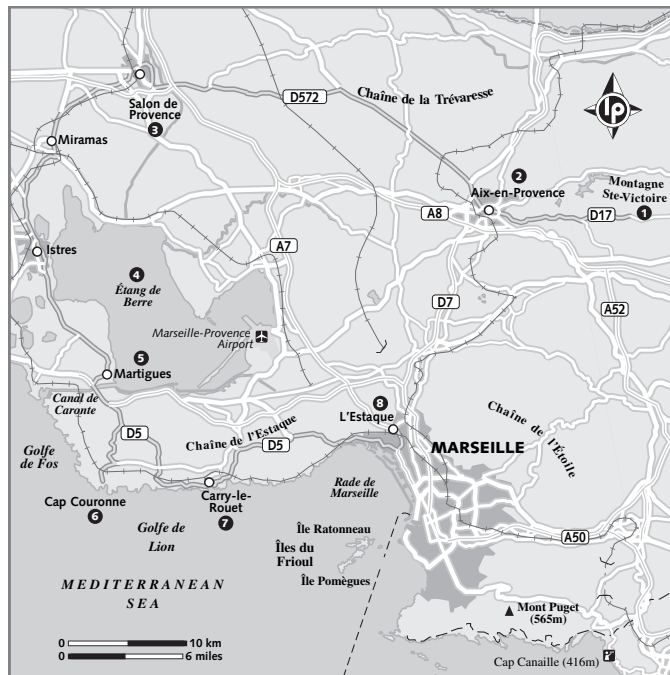
Put a slower spin on the city the next day with a blissful boat ride from the Vieux Port to **Château d'If** (p102). Then, depending on your passion, make an architectural pilgrimage to Le Corbusier's urban masterpiece, **Unité d'Habitation** (p102); a sporting pilgrimage to the **Stade Vélodrome** (p103); a cultural pilgrimage to Marseille's **museums** (p97); or worship the sun, wind and waves at the **Prado beaches** (p102). On a Sunday, don't miss mooching the Moroccan-style market **Marché aux Puces** (p113).



MOUNTAINS TO THE SEA Two Days / Montagne Ste-Victoire to L'Estaque
Marvel at the mountainscapes that inspired Cézanne at **Montagne Ste-Victoire** (1; p131), then retrace his steps around his home town, **Aix-en-Provence** (2; p126) and visit his last studio, the **Atelier Paul Cézanne** (p126). Linger over lunch on the pavement terrace of Aix's legendary café (and former Cézanne haunt) **Les Deux Garçons** (p130) on Aix's beautiful boulevard, cours Mirabeau. Afterwards, admire Cézanne's works at Aix's magnificent new museum, **Musée Granet** (p126).

Whiz west to medieval **Salon de Provence** (3; p121) to ponder Nostradamus' prophecies at his former-home-turned-museum, the **Maison de Nostradamus** (p121) and stop by the antiquated, aromatic soap factory, **Savonnerie Marius Fabre** (p122). Stroll through the olive groves massed around **Mas des Bories** (p122) on a free guided tour; and depending on the time of year, help with the harvest. Come nightfall, dine on Francis Robin's celebrated, sun-inspired cuisine at **Mas du Soleil** (p123) and spend the night in one of the garden-view rooms of the *mas* (farmhouse), or tuck yourself up in the **Grand Hôtel de la Poste** (p122) with a view over Salon's moss-covered, mushroom-shaped **Fontaine Moussue** (p121).

The next day, skirt the western edge of the industrialised brine lake **Étang de Berre** (4; p120) to the brightly coloured fishermen's houses clustered around the canals of **Martigues** (5; p120). Continue south to **Cap Couronne** (6; p119) for a summertime snorkel in its marine-life-rich waters, then carry on along the **Côte Bleue** (p119) east to **Carry-le-Rouet** (7; p119) to sample its sea urchins. Keep heading east to the picturesque port of **L'Estaque** (8; p119) to pick up Cézanne's trail once more.



MARSEILLE

pop 1.5 million

With buildings in hues of ripened apricot, cracked wheat and blanched almond scattered along the seashore, Marseille is infused with a perceptible and irrepressible energy. This gritty, grimy and gloriously real city – France's oldest, and largest after Paris – isn't gentrified like its Provençal counterparts. But its rough-and-tumble, litter-swirled streets and its coastal corniches chicaning around sun-scorched coves and beaches are filled with treasures. Pulsing to a sultry southern European tempo, Marseille also beats to the drum of neighbouring North Africa. Its maritime heritage thrives at its vibrant Vieux Port (Old Port), where fresh-off-the-boat catches are displayed along the docks at its centuries-old fish market.

Unlike Paris, London and other mondial cities, this heady, heated melting pot has no China Town, Little Italy, Mini Morocco or Tiny Tunisia. Instead, cuisines, shops, music and cultural celebrations are strewn throughout the city like confetti blown by the mistral wind. Locals are unified by their high-spirited accent – and by their cherished football team, Olympique de Marseille (OM), when matches see a myriad of nationalities sing as one: '*Nous sommes les Marseillais!*' (We are the Marseillais!)

The city's cutting-edge music scene, warehouses-turned-nightclubs, cultural centres and museums are among the hippest and most happening of any in the country. Its seaport

MARKET DAY

Marseille and Aix-en-Provence have daily food markets; see p110, p113 and p130 for details. Morning market days elsewhere:

Tuesday La Ciotat

Wednesday Cassis, Salon de Provence

Friday Cassis

Sunday La Ciotat

remains the most important in France, handling a quarter of all external trade, and is the third-largest in Europe, while high-speed rail now puts Paris just three hours from Marseille. (The English spelling, Marseilles – pronounced the same – is passing out of use.)

In part because of Marseille's unfounded (or at least outdated) reputation as a dangerous city, tourism, for now, is yet to temper this unique urban undercurrent of Provence.

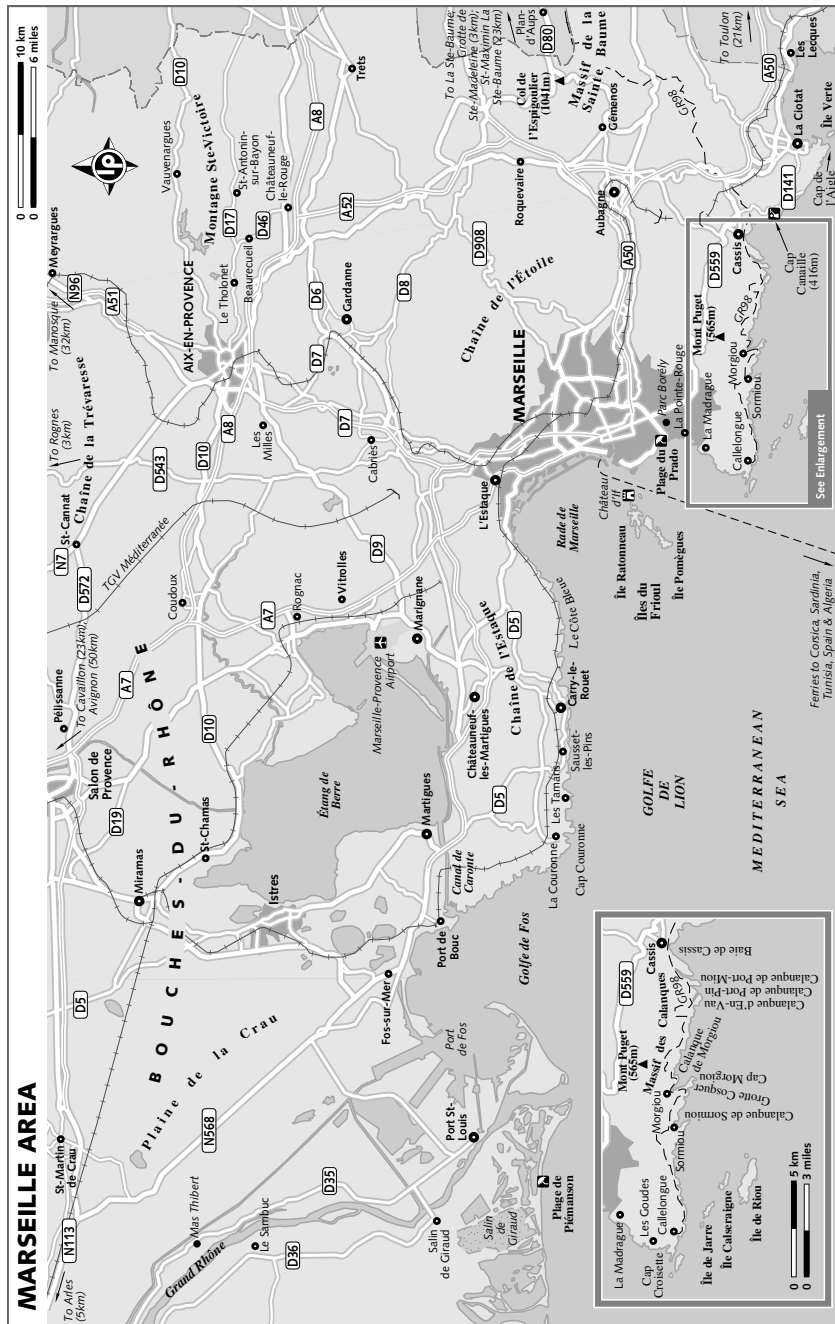
HISTORY

Around 600 BC, Greek mariners founded Massilia, a trading post at what is now Marseille's Vieux Port. In the 1st century BC, the city lost out by backing Pompey the Great rather than Julius Caesar, whose forces captured Massilia in 49 BC and exacted revenge by confiscating the city's fleet and directing Roman trade elsewhere. Massilia stayed a free port, remaining the last Western centre of Greek learning before falling into ruin. It was revived in the early 10th century by the counts of Provence, and became part of France in the 1480s. Calamity struck in 1720 when the plague, carried on a merchant ship

LITERARY MARSEILLE

Marseille has long inspired the literary to be literary.

- *Little Dorrit* (Charles Dickens) Classic novel, opens with Marseille 'burning in the sun'.
- *The Count of Monte Cristo* & *The Three Musketeers* (Alexandre Dumas) Nineteenth-century Marseille features in these classics by the French novelist (1802–70).
- *Two Towns in Provence* (MFK Fisher) Street-by-street, fountain-by-fountain celebration of Aix-en-Provence and Marseille, penned in 1964.
- *The Arrow of Gold* (Joseph Conrad) 'Certain streets have an atmosphere of their own, a sort of universal fame... One such street is the Canebière'. So begins Conrad's tale (1919) of swash-buckling love and adventure, opening in Marseille.
- *Marseille Taxi* (Peter Child) Contemporary tale of a married Marseillais taxi driver with too many mistresses and dodgy dealings with the underworld; great beach reading.
- *To Die in Provence* (Norman Bogner) Late 1990s thriller set in Aix-en-Provence.



RHYTHM OF THE CITY

Ask almost anyone in this sun-drenched city where they're from, and the answer's not France or other country of origin, but simply 'Marseille'. Even if you didn't know where they were from, though, chances are the city's distinctive accent would be a dead giveaway. The Marseille accent has a singsong cadence that originated in large part from early-19th-century Italian émigrés, and is now citywide and adopted by new arrivals.

The accent stands out even to foreigners, particularly the twang on the final syllable. The word *porte* (door; pronounced 'port' elsewhere in France), for example, sounds something like 'por-tay' in Marseille, and *matin* (morning; pronounced 'ma-tun' elsewhere) sounds more like 'ma-tang'; adding a theatrical flair to even the most run-of-the-mill storytelling (much less the entertainingly tall stories for which Marseille locals are renowned).

As an artistic technical director who divides his time between Marseille and Paris describes it: 'The way of speaking here is like a badge, which people wear with pride. Parisians will ask, in a low, serious voice, 'Comment allez-vous?' (How are you?). In Marseille, it's 'COMMENT VAS-TU?' with arms waving wildly. People are very open and passionate here; and very proud to be Marseillais.'

Music director of Marseille radio station Radio Grenouille, Stéphane Galland, agrees. Stéphane believes the accent is a way of asserting identity because it's all that's remaining from the original Provençal language. The government forced people to speak French, and a strong accent is a form of rebellion to retain individual identity; which musicians like Jo Corbeau and Massilia Sound System reinforce by singing in the Marseille accent.

from Syria, wiped out more than half of the city's 90,000 inhabitants.

Marseille's citizens embraced the Revolution, sending 500 volunteers to defend Paris in 1792. Heading north, they sang a rousing march recently composed in Strasbourg and ever after dubbed *La Marseillaise* – now France's national anthem. Trade with North Africa escalated after France occupied Algeria in 1830. In 1869 the Suez Canal was opened; growing work opportunities saw the number

of inhabitants escalate by more than a quarter of a million. The population rose again following Tunisia's independence in 1956 and Algeria's in 1962, with residents of these two former French colonies increasing Marseille's population by 50%.

The economic downturn of the 1990s bred poverty and widespread unemployment. The extreme-right politicians rode the wave of discontent, and morale remained low until a myriad of expansion projects (see the boxed text, p112) and a boom in employment (now nearly double the national average) saw the city's spirits soar. Today Marseille is arguably the city most on the rise in France.

DOWN-TEMPO

One of the creative forces behind Marseille's alternative radio station Radio Grenouille, Claire Tourette, says, 'There's a saying in Marseille that sums up the Mediterranean tempo:

Pas trop vite le matin,
Pas trop vite le soir
 (Not too fast in the morning,
 Not too fast in the evening)

So it's never fast. It can be frustrating working in the music industry in Marseille, because it takes so long to make something happen... You call someone and they ask you to call back the next day, and the next... But it's a good way of life here. You've got time to enjoy it.'

ORIENTATION

The city's main thoroughfare, the wide boulevard La Canebière, stretches eastwards from the Vieux Port. To the north of the Vieux Port is the labyrinth of narrow streets weaving through Le Panier, Marseille's most historic quarter. Heading southwest of the Vieux Port brings you to the start of the seaside corniches. The city's commercial heart is around rue Paradis.

From the central Gare St-Charles (St-Charles train station), north of La Canebière at the northern end of blvd d'Athènes, it's a 10-minute walk or two metro stops to the Vieux Port. Shuttle buses link Marseille airport, 28km northwest, with the station. The

ferry terminal is west of place de la Joliette, or a 10-minute walk or two-minute metro ride to the Vieux Port.

Greater Marseille is divided into 16 arrondissements (districts). In this chapter, arrondissements are noted in addresses: 1er for first arrondissement and so on.

Maps

The tourist office distributes a decent, free city map (note that its eastern point is at the top of the page where you'd normally find north).

INFORMATION

Bookshops

Librairie de la Bourse (Map p106; ☎ 04 91 33 63 06; 8 rue Paradis, 1er; metro Vieux Port) Extensive range of maps and guides, primarily in French.

Librairie Maritime et Outremer (Map p106; ☎ 04 91 54 79 26; 26 quai de Rive Neuve, 1er; metro Vieux Port) Seafaring books, maps and guides.

Maison de la Presse (Map p106; 29 quai des Belges, 1er; metro Vieux Port) Stocks English-language newspapers and magazines.

Emergency

Police headquarters (Préfecture de Police; Map p106; ☎ 04 91 39 80 00; place de la Préfecture, 1er; metro Estrangin-Préfecture; ☎ 24hr)

Internet Access

Get free wi-fi at Vieux Port on the *Marseille Sans Fils* (Marseille without wires) network. **Info Cafe** (Map p106; ☎ 04 91 33 74 98; 1 quai du Rive Neuve, 1e; per 30 min/hr €2/3.60; ☎ 9am-10pm Mon-Sat, 2.30-7.30pm Sun) Right on the Vieux Port up a short flight of steps; has English keyboards.

Internet Resources

Mairie-Marseille (www.mairie-marseille.fr in French) Official city website.

Marseille-Tourisme (www.marseille-tourisme.com) Tourist office website.

Webcity Marseille (marseille.webcity.fr in French) City guide with particularly strong nightlife section.

Laundry

La Savonnerie (Map p106; 5 rue Breteuil, 1er; metro Vieux Port; ☎ 6.30am-8pm) A 7/10kg load costs €3.50/5; drying is €.40 per five minutes. Bring change.

Left Luggage

Gare St-Charles (Consignes; Map p98; small/medium/large locker €3.50/6/8; ☎ 7.30am-10pm) Next to Platform A.

Media

Mars Magazine Hip *The Face*-style 'magazine of the Marseillais' with short, sharp dining and nightlife city guide (€5, in French, published quarterly).

Medical Services

A list of pharmacies open at night and/or on Sunday is pinned outside the tourist office.

Hôpital de la Timone (☎ 04 91 49 91 91, 04 91 38 60 00; 264 rue St-Pierre, 5e; metro La Timone) Just over 1km southeast of place Jean Jaurès.

Money

Several banks and exchange bureaus dot La Canebière, 1er.

Canebière Change (Map p106; ☎ 04 91 13 71 26; 39 La Canebière, 1er; metro Vieux Port) Amex agent.

Post

Central post office (Map p106; 1 place de l'Hôtel des Postes, 1er; metro Colbert)

Tourist Information

Comité Départemental du Tourisme (Map p98; ☎ 04 91 13 84 13; www.visitprovence.com; Le Montesquieu bldg, 13 rue Roux de Brignoles, 6e; metro Estrangin-Préfecture) Tourist information on the Bouches-du-Rhône *département* (administrative area).

Tourist office annexe (Map p98; ☎ 04 91 50 59 18; Gare St-Charles, 1er; metro Gare St-Charles; ☎ 10am-noon & 1-5pm Mon-Fri); main branch (Map p106; ☎ 04 91 13 89 00; accueil@marseille-tourisme.com; 4 La Canebière, 1er; metro Vieux Port; ☎ 9am-7.30pm Mon-Sat, 10am-6pm Sun Jul-Sep, 9am-7pm Mon-Sat, 10am-5pm Sun Oct-Jun)

Travel Agencies

Voyages Wasteels (Map p106; ☎ 04 95 09 30 60; marseille@wasteels.fr; 67 La Canebière, 1er; metro Noailles; ☎ 9.30am-12.30pm & 2-6pm Mon-Fri, 9.30am-12.30pm Sat)

DANGERS & ANNOYANCES

Forget everything you may have heard about Marseille being a hotbed of crime: it's no more dangerous than other French cities. As with any big city, keep your wits about you and your valuables out of view. At night take extra care in the Belsunce area, southwest of the train station bounded by La Canebière, cours Belsunce and rue d'Aix, rue Bernard du Bois and blvd d'Athènes. Day and night keep car doors locked and windows up, especially when stationary at traffic lights; and *never* leave anything of value in a parked vehicle, even in the boot.

Taxi drivers departing from the train station and the ferry terminal are notoriously dishonest – you're usually better off preordering one (and arranging a meeting point), or picking one up in the street.

SIGHTS

Around the Vieux Port VIEUX PORT & LE PANIER

Ships have docked for more than 26 centuries at the city's birthplace, the colourful Vieux Port. The main commercial docks were transferred to the Joliette area on the coast north of here in the 1840s, but the Vieux Port remains a thriving harbour for fishing boats and pleasure yachts.

Guarding the harbour are **Bas Fort St-Nicolas** (Map p98) on the southern side and, across the water, **Fort St-Jean** (Map p98), founded in the 13th century by the Knights Hospitaller of St John of Jerusalem. In 2008 a national Musée des Civilisations de l'Europe et de la Méditerranée (Museum of European & Mediterranean Civilisations) will open inside the latter as part of Marseille Euroméditerranée (see the boxed text, p112).

Marseille's 17th-century **town hall** (Map p106; quai du Port) dominates the port's northern quay. Behind it, the historic **Le Panier quarter** (Map p106), dubbed Marseille's Montmartre for its sloping streets as much as its artsy ambience, was the site of the Greek *agora* (marketplace), hence its name translates as 'the basket'. Dynamited during WWII and extensively rebuilt afterwards, today its mishmash of laneways is an atmospheric jumble of authentic artisan shops (see the boxed text, p113) and washing lines strung outside the terraced houses that evoke the area's past.

On the Vieux Port's southern side, late-night restaurants and cafés pack the **place Thiers** and **cours Honoré d'Estienne d'Orves** pedestrian zone (Map p106). Heading southwest of the Vieux Port brings you past the serene **Jardin du Pharo** (Map p98) overlooking the sea; continuing southwest leads you around to the coast.

EAST OF THE VIEUX PORT

From the Provençal word *canebe* (hemp) after the city's traditional rope industry, **La Canebière** (Map p106) stretches northeast from the old port to sq Léon Blum.

Bounded by La Canebière, cours Belsunce and rue d'Aix, rue Bernard du Bois and blvd

CITY SAVER

Save time, euros and wear-and-tear on your feet with a **Marseille City Pass** (1-/2-day pass €18/25). This handy pass gives you access to the city's museums, guided tours of the town, unlimited travel on all metro and bus services, as well as a trip on the little train up to the Basilique Notre Dame de la Garde, and a boat trip to either Château d'If or Îles du Frioul, plus various discounts such as the tourist bus Le Grand Tour. The pass quickly pays for itself for adults; it's not necessary for children under 12, as many attractions are greatly reduced or free.

d'Athènes, the ramshackle **Belsunce** (Map p106) quarter is slowly being rehabilitated. The **public library** (Map p106) on cours Belsunce was the legendary Alcazar music hall from 1857 until 1964.

North lies the central train station area and La Friche la Belle de Mai (see the boxed text, p112), the hub of Marseille's underground arts scene.

A few blocks south of La Canebière is the student hang-out, **cours Julien** (Map p98), a bohemian, graffitied concourse with a water garden and palm trees, hip cafés, music venues and bars, and a Berlin vibe. Nearby, students and artists also gather around place Jean Jaurès in the quarter of **La Pleine** (Map p98). Aubagne-born Marcel Pagnol (1895–1974) spent his childhood here at 52 rue Terrusse.

Museums

Marseille has 30 museums; the tourist office has a comprehensive list.

Permanent exhibitions at municipal museums are free on Sunday mornings, and cost €2/1 for adult/child during the rest of the week. Temporary exhibitions usually cost €3/1.50. Unless otherwise indicated, museums listed here are open Tuesday to Sunday, 10am to 5pm October to May, and 11am to 6pm from June to September.

CENTRE DE LA VIEILLE CHARITÉ

Designed by Marseillais architect Pierre Puget, the arcaded courtyard of the **Centre de la Vieille Charité** (Old Charity Centre; Map p106; ☎ 04 91 14 58 80; 2 rue de la Charité, 2e) wraps around Provence's most imposing baroque church. Used variously as a barracks, a soldiers' rest home and, later,

INFORMATION	Compte Départemental du Touriste	1	D3	1	D3	1	D3	1	D3
	Tourist Office Amsee	2	E1	2	E1	2	E1	2	E1
SIGHTS & ACTIVITIES	Abbaye St-Victor	3	C3	3	C3	3	C3	3	C3
	Bas For St-Nicolas	4	C3	4	C3	4	C3	4	C3
	Basilique Notre Dame de la Garde	5	D4	5	D4	5	D4	5	D4
	Cressi Sub	6	C4	6	C4	6	C4	6	C4
	Euroméditerranée Centre d'Information	(See 10)		(See 10)		(See 10)		(See 10)	
	Fort St-Jean	7	C3	7	C3	7	C3	7	C3
	Jardin du Pharo	8	C3	8	C3	8	C3	8	C3
	Jardin Pierre Puget	9	D3	9	D3	9	D3	9	D3
	Les Docks	10	C1	10	C1	10	C1	10	C1
SHOPPING	Monument aux Morts de l'Armée d'Orient	11	B4	11	B4	11	B4	11	B4
	Musée des Civilisations de l'Europe et de la Méditerranée (from 2008)	(See 7)		(See 7)		(See 7)		(See 7)	
	Musée d'Histoire Naturelle	12	F1	12	F1	12	F1	12	F1
	Nouvelle Cathédrale de la Major	13	C2	13	C2	13	C2	13	C2
	Palais du Pharo	14	B3	14	B3	14	B3	14	B3
	Palais Longchamp	15	B3	15	B3	15	B3	15	B3
	Vieille Major	16	C2	16	C2	16	C2	16	C2
	Zinedine Zidane Ad.	17	B4	17	B4	17	B4	17	B4
SLEEPING	Hôtel Le Beldou	18	B3	18	B3	18	B3	18	B3
	Hôtel Luthia	19	E2	19	E2	19	E2	19	E2
	Hôtel Maréchal Pétia	20	C4	20	C4	20	C4	20	C4
	Hôtel Péron	21	B4	21	B4	21	B4	21	B4
	Le Ryad	22	E2	22	E2	22	E2	22	E2

low-cost housing for people who lost their homes during WWII, the centre now houses the **Musée d'Archéologie Méditerranéenne** (☎ 04 91 14 58 80) and the **Musée des Arts Africains, Océaniques & Amérindiens** (Musée of African, Oceanic & American Indian Art; ☎ 04 91 14 58 38), which has a diverse and often striking collection, including masks from the Americas, Africa and the Pacific.

A combined ticket for adult/student costs €5/2.50.

MUSÉE CANTINI

Recessed behind grand gates inside a 17th-century *hôtel particulier* (private mansion), the **Musée Cantini** (Map p106; ☎ 04 91 54 77 75; 19 rue Grignan, 6e; metro Estrangin-Préfecture; adult/child 10-16yr €3/1.50; ☎ 10am-5pm Tue-Sun Oct-May, 11am-6pm Tue-Sun Jun-Sep) has collections including 17th- and 18th-century Provençal ceramics and landscapes of the surrounding region including André Derain's *Pinède, Cassis* (1907) and Raoul Dufy's *Paysage de l'Estaque* (1908).

MUSÉE D'HISTOIRE DE MARSEILLE

For a fascinating insight into Marseille's composited history, the **Musée d'Histoire de Marseille** (History Museum of Marseille; Map p106; ☎ 04 91 90 42 22; ground fl, Centre Bourse shopping centre, 1er; ☎ noon-7pm Mon-Sat) has some extraordinary exhibits such as the remains of a merchant vessel discovered by chance in the Vieux Port in 1974, which plied the surrounding waters back in the early 3rd century AD.

Fragments of Roman buildings unearthed during the construction of the Centre Bourse shopping centre can be seen outside the museum in the **Jardin des Vestiges** (Garden of Ruins), which fronts rue Henri Barbusse (1er).

MUSÉE DES DOCKS ROMAINS

At the **Musée des Docks Romains** (Roman Docks Museum; Map p106; ☎ 04 91 91 24 62; place Vivaux, 2e; metro Vieux Port), displays include 1st-century Roman structures; with vast jars that held up to 2000L of wine or oil.

MUSÉE DE LA MODE

Avant-garde fashions take centre stage at the stylish **Musée de la Mode** (Fashion Museum; Map p106; ☎ 04 91 56 59 57; 11 La Canebière, 1er; adult/child €3/1), which features thousands of garments and accessories from 1945 onwards, and some striking temporary retrospectives such as 1920s beachwear.

MUSÉE DE LA MARINE ET DE L'ÉCONOMIE

The colonnaded Chamber of Commerce (also known as the Palais de la Bourse), built between 1854 and 1860, houses a **Musée de la Marine et de l'Économie** (Naval & Economy Museum; Map p106; ☎ 04 91 39 33 33; 9 La Canebière, 1er; metro Vieux Port; adult/child under 12 €2/free; ☎ 10am-6pm Tue-Sun). The museum highlights Marseille's economic ties to the sea through a series of paintings, engravings, models and other exhibits.

PALAIS LONGCHAMP

Constructed in the 1860s, the colonnaded **Palais Longchamp** (Map p98; Blvd Philippe, 4e; metro Cinq Avenues Longchamp) was designed in part to disguise a water tower built at the terminus of an aqueduct from the River Durance. Ponder prehistoric Provence in its **Musée d'Histoire Naturelle** (Natural History Museum; Map p98; ☎ 04 91 14 59 50; adult/child 10-16yr €3/1.50; ☎ 10am-5pm Tue-Sun Jun-Sep).

MUSÉE D'ART CONTEMPORAIN

Wild, off-the-wall creations of Marseille-born sculptor César (César Baldaccini; 1921-98) are displayed at the **Musée d'Art Contemporain** (Museum of Contemporary Art; MAC; ☎ 04 91 25 01 07; 69 Blvd de Haïfa, 8e) as well as works by Christo, Nice new realists Ben and Klein, and pop artist Andy Warhol.

Take bus 44 from the Rond-Point du Prado (Prado roundabout) metro stop to the place Bonnefons stop, from where it is a short walk along av de Hambourg to rond-point Pierre Guerre, easily recognisable by a giant metal thumb – a classic César imprint – that sticks up from the middle of the roundabout.

Churches & Cathedrals

BASILIQUE NOTRE DAME DE LA GARDE

Everywhere you go in Marseille, you'll see the golden statue of the **Basilique Notre Dame de la Garde** (Map p98; ☎ 04 91 13 40 80; admission free; ☎ basilica & crypt 7am-7pm, longer hr in summer), the Romano-Byzantine basilica rising up from the city's highest hill, La Garde (162m). Built between 1853 and 1864, the domed basilica is ornamented with coloured marble, murals, and intricate mosaics, which were superbly restored in 2006; it gives you a 360-degree panorama of the city's sea of terracotta roofs below. Its bell tower is crowned by a 9.7m-tall gilded statue of the Virgin Mary on a 12m-high pedestal. Bullet marks and vivid shrapnel scars on the cathedral's northern façade mark

the fierce fighting that took place during Marseille's Battle of Liberation in August 1944.

Bus 60 links the Vieux Port (from cours Jean Ballard) with the basilica. Otherwise, there's a **little train** (p104), which departs from the Vieux Port for the 20-minute trip up the steep hill. This gives you around 20 minutes to look around before catching the next one back down. By foot it's 1km south of the Vieux Port.

NOUVELLE CATHÉDRALE DE LA MAJOR

Cupolas, towers and turrets top the Romano-Byzantine **Nouvelle Cathédrale de la Major** (New Cathedral of the Major; Map p98; place de la Major, 2e; metro Joliette). Built between 1852 and 1893, the enormous 140m-long, 60m-high structure dwarfs the remains of the neighbouring 11th-century cathedral, **Vieille Major** (Old Major; Map p98; closed to visitors).

ABBAYE ST-VICTOR

The twin tombs of 4th-century martyrs and a 3rd-century sarcophagus are among the sacred objects inside imposing Romanesque

12th-century **Abbaye St-Victor** (Map p98; 3 rue de l'Abbaye, 7e; metro Vieux Port), set on a hill above the Vieux Port. The annual Pèlerinage de la Chandeleur and Marseille's annual sacred-music festival, Festival des Chants Sacrés en Méditerranée, also take place here (see p104).

The Coast

Mesmerising views of the Med – and of a whole other face of Marseille – unveil along **corniche Président John F Kennedy** (7e). Beginning 200m southwest of the Jardin du Pharo, Marseille's main coast road continues south past the small **Plage des Catalans** (Map p98) – the nearest beach to the city centre – to **Valon des Auffes** (Map p98). Nestled around this picture-postcard fishing village are traditional *cabanons* (seaside cabins), built by fishermen to store tackle and cook traditional Sunday *bouillabaisse*. A narrow staircase (behind the bus stop) links corniche Président John F Kennedy with the harbour.

On the road above stands the 1922 **Monument aux Morts de l'Armée d'Orient** (Map p98), a WWI memorial statue.

LITTLE SAINTS

One of Provence's most enduring – and endearing – Christmas traditions is *santons*, tiny kiln-fired figures accompanying the nativity scene.

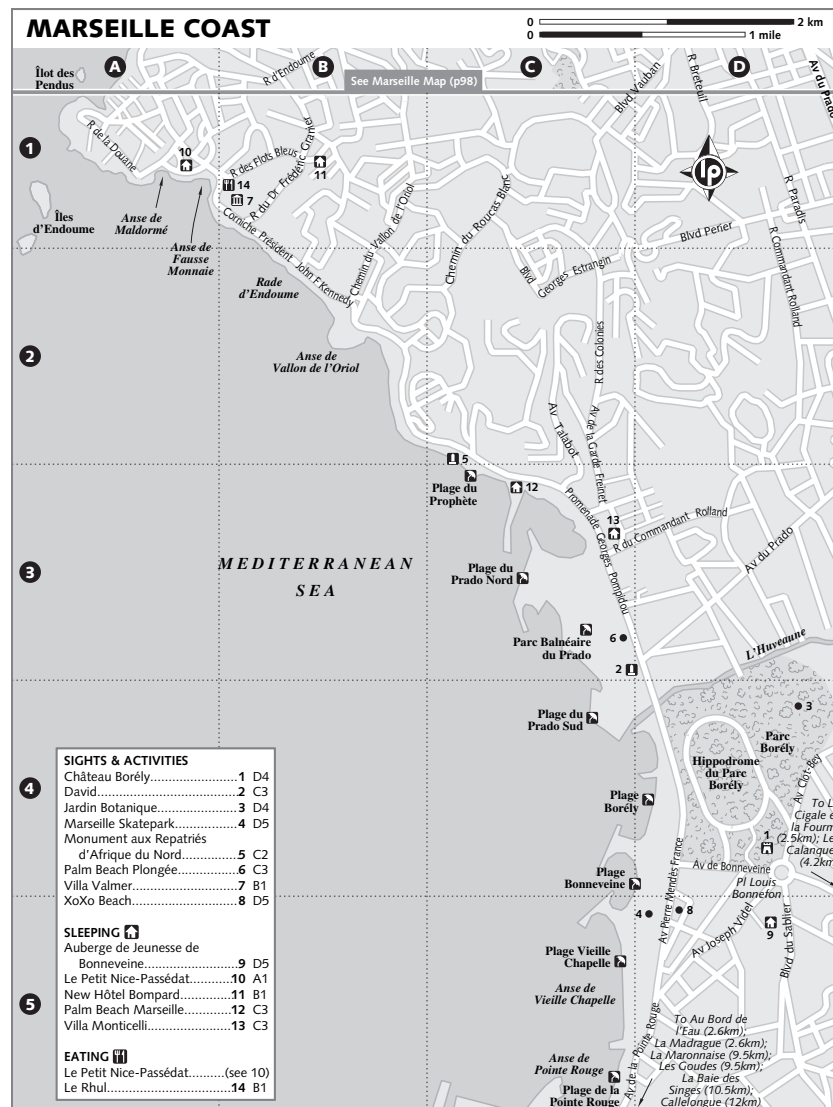
The custom of creating a crèche with figurines featuring Mary, Joseph, shepherds, kings, oxen and a donkey dates from the Avignon papacy of John XII (1319–34). But it was only after the 1789 Revolution and consequent Reign of Terror that these figures were cut down in size as the people of Provence handcrafted them in the secrecy of their homes: hence, the birth of the *santon* and the Provençal crèche.

Santons (from *santoïn* in Provençal, meaning 'little saint') stand between 2.5cm and 15cm high. The first colourfully painted terracotta figures were created by Marseillais artisan Jean-Louis Lagnel (1764–1822), who came up with the idea of crafting clay miniatures in a plaster mould and allowing them to dry before firing the figures at 950°C. *Santonniers* (*santon* makers) still stick to Lagnel's method today.

In a traditional Provençal crib – set up in churches and peoples' homes in early November and dismantled after the three kings have delivered their gifts during Epiphany – there are 55 *santons* ranging from the tambourine man, chestnut seller, fishwife and woman with aïoli, to the tinsmith, scissor grinder, a trumpet-blowing angel and the patron saint of *santonniers*, St Francis of Assisi.

Since 1803, *santonniers* have continued to visit Marseille each December to take part in the **Foire aux Santonniers**, which sees the length of La Canebière transformed into one great big *santon* fair. The same month, Aubagne (p119) holds its two-day **Biennale de l'Art Santonnier** incorporating *santon*-making workshops.

Marseille's magical **Musée du Santon** (Map p106; ☎ 04 91 54 26 58; 47 rue Neuve Ste-Catherine, 7e; admission free; 🕒 10am-noon & 2-6.30pm Tue-Sun) displays an enchanting private collection of 18th- and 19th-century *santons* belonging to *santonnier* Marcel Carbonnel. Entrance to the adjoining **ateliers** (workshops; 🕒 8am-1pm & 2-5.40pm Mon-Thu), where you can watch the figures being crafted, is also free.



The *jardins* (gardens) of **Villa Valmer** (Map p101; ☎ 04 91 31 32 49; 275 corniche Président John F Kennedy; admission free; 🕒 gardens 8am-7pm) are a potent cocktail of pistachio, palm and pine trees shading one of the few surviving bourgeois villas that were built along the coast during the Second Empire. The villa is otherwise closed to visitors.

Sculpted in bronze by César in 1971, the enormous propeller of the **Monument aux Repatriés d'Afrique du Nord** (Map p101) honours those who returned from North Africa. Further south, in front of the body-packed Prado beaches (p102) on the intersection of av du Prado and promenade Georges Pompidou, Marseille's Italian connection is demonstrated

by way of Jules Cantini's 1903 marble replica of Michelangelo's masterpiece, **David** (Map p101). Nearby, **Parc Borély** (Map p101; ☎ 04 91 76 59 38; av du Parc Borély) encompasses a **lake, jardin botanique** (botanical garden) and the 18th-century **Château Borély** (Map p101; ☎ 04 91 25 26 34; 134 av Clot Bey), hosting art exhibitions.

Promenade Georges Pompidou continues south to **La Pointe-Rouge, La Madrague, Callegongue** and **Les Goudes**, the latter two being harbour villages on Cap Croisette from where the breathtaking *calanques* (rocky inlets; p115) can be accessed on foot. Bus 19 from the Rond-Point du Prado metro stop runs along promenade Georges Pompidou to La Madrague; from La Madrague bus 20 continues to Callegongue.

Along almost its entire length, corniche Président John F Kennedy – and its continuation, promenade Georges Pompidou – is served by bus 83 from the Vieux Port (quai des Belges) and the Rond-Point du Prado metro stop on av du Prado. Bus 19 continues south from the corner of av du Prado and the corniche.

Château d'If & Îles du Frioul

Immortalised in Alexandre Dumas' classic 1840s novel *Le Comte de Monte Cristo* (The Count of Monte Cristo), the 16th-century fortress-turned-prison **Château d'If** (☎ 04 91 59 02 30; adult/student €5/3.50; ☎ 9.30am-5.30pm, to 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, along with hundreds of Protestants (many of whom perished in the dungeons), the Revolutionary hero Mirabeau, and the Communards of 1871.

A few hundred metres west of the Château d'If are the barren white-limestone islands of Ratonneau and Pomègues, collectively known as the **Îles du Frioul**. From the 17th to the 19th century, they were used as a place of quarantine for people suspected of carrying plague or cholera. Sea birds and rare plants thrive on these tiny islands (each about 2.5km long, totalling 200 hectares), which are sprinkled with the ruins of the old quarantine hospital, Hôpital Caroline, and Fort Ratonneau (used by German troops during WWII).

Boats run by **GACM** (Map p106; ☎ 04 91 55 50 09; www.answeb.net/gacm in French) leave from quai des Belges at 9am, 10.30am, noon, 2pm and 3.30pm (€10 return, 20 minutes) to both the Château d'If and the Îles du Frioul, and addi-

tional departures at 6.45am, 5pm and 6.30pm go to the Îles du Frioul alone.

It costs €10 to go to either the Château d'If or the Îles du Frioul, or €15 combined. A trip to either is included in the Marseille City Pass (see the boxed text, p97).

Le Corbusier's Unité d'Habitation

Elevated on tapering pylons like a titanic dry-docked ship, visionary International-style architect Le Corbusier redefined urban living in 1952 with the completion of his vertical 337-apartment 'garden city', **Unité d'Habitation** (☎ 04 91 16 78 00; www.hotellecorbusier.com; 280 blvd Michelet, 8e; admission free; ☎ by appointment), also known as Cité Radieuse (Radiant City). Along its darkened hallways, primary-coloured downlights create a glowing tunnel leading to a minisupermarket, architectural bookshop and panoramic rooftop 'desert garden' with an avocado-tiled ankle-deep pool producing rippling sunlit patterns, and a cylindrical concrete tower (camouflaging the building's utilities), which tops off the steamship effect. Even if you're not staying at the on-site Hôtel Le Corbusier (p105), you can arrange to visit this tour de force, including its private apartments, or dine at its restaurant, with sweeping views of the Mediterranean – and of the proliferation of high-rises that Le Corbusier inspired. Catch bus 83 or 21 to the Le Corbusier stop.

For more about Le Corbusier, see p65.

ACTIVITIES

Walking and mountain-bike trail information is available from the tourist office.

Beaches

Swarming with swimsuit-clad volleyball players, the small, sandy public beach **Plage des Catalans** (Map p98; 3 rue des Catalans; ☎ 8.30am-6.30pm Jun-Sep) is a short stroll from the city centre. Near the **Vallon des Auffes** (Map p98), sun-seekers bask lizardlike on wooden decks built over the rocks, sliding down short ladders to dip in the sea. **Plage du Prophète** (Map p101) is favoured by families for its shallow waters.

Marseille's main beach area is the 1km-long **Parc Balnéaire du Prado** (Map p101; ☎ 04 91 29 30 40); created from backfill from the excavations for Marseille's metro. Beginning 5km south of the centre, it's split into five beaches (north to south): **Plage du Prado Nord** (also called Plage du Petit Roucas Blanc), **Plage du Prado Sud** (also called Plage de David), **Plage Borély**, **Plage Bon-**

FEVER PITCH

Nothing unites Marseillais from all backgrounds like their beloved football team, **Olympique de Marseille** (OM; www.olympiquedemarseille.com), established in 1899. The team's hallowed home ground, the **Stade Vélodrome** (3 blvd Michelet, 8e; metro Rond-Point du Prado) was built in the 1930s and initially held cycling fixtures (hence the name). Overhauled to host the 1998 World Cup, the stadium now seats up to 60,000 screaming spectators. One-hour **guided stadium tours** (€5) kick off in July and August – reserve at the tourist office.

In town, match tickets as well as shirts, scarves and other paraphernalia in the club's 'sky (blue) and white' colours are sold at OM's **Boutique Officielle** (Map p106; ☎ 04 91 33 52 28; 44 La Canebière, 1er; metro Noailles; ☎ 10am-7pm Mon-Sat), and **L'OM Café** (Map p106; ☎ 04 91 33 80 33; 3 quai des Belges, 1er; metro Vieux Port; ☎ 7am-1am), with soccer balls suspended from the ceiling and press clippings and posters plastering the walls. The bar – and especially its outdoor terrace – hosts a giant party when it screens every OM game. If you can't make it here, OM has its own pay-TV channel, **OMTV** (www.omnet-web.com/tv.html in French), which broadcasts daily from 5pm to 9pm.

Marseille's most famous footballer never to have played for OM is Midas-booted midfielder, Zinedine 'Zizou' Zidane, who struck gold for France in 1998's World Cup and captained the country to the 2006 World Cup final (losing to Italy after *that* head-butt) then retired as the world's highest-paid player. He's immortalised in gigantic Adidas-ad form on the side of 82b corniche Président John F Kennedy (Map p98).

neveine and **Plage Vieille Chapelle**. These beaches have public toilets, showers, first-aid posts with coastguards and free lockers to safeguard valuables. Prado du Nord and Sud are wheelchair accessible; Prado du Nord and Borély have a children's playground; and café-clad Borély and Bonneveine have sun-loungers/parasols to rent (€10/4 per day). **Plage de la Pointe Rouge**, further south again, is hot with windsurfers and water-skiers. And, even though it's the Med, the swell's often big enough (not Biarritz-big, but big enough!) to surf; you'll find board-hire shops on av du Prado.

Take bus 83 (583 at night) from quai des Belges to the Plage David or La Plage stop; or buses 19 or 72 from the Rond-Point du Prado metro stop. On foot, follow corniche Président John F Kennedy.

Boating

In addition to Château d'If and the Îles du Frioul (opposite), several more islands (some protected by the Conservatoire du Littoral; p76) are scattered offshore. Though it's not possible to visit them, you can rent a boat to sail around them. **AVP Location** (☎ 04 91 91 86 77; 96 quai du Port, 2e; metro Vieux Port) rents boats and yachts of all shapes and sizes.

Diving & Snorkelling

Spectacular diving and snorkelling abounds in the waters around Marseille and its offshore islands. Hire equipment from **Cressi Sub** (Map

p98; ☎ 04 91 90 95 74; 11 av de St-Jean, 1er; metro Vieux Port) or **Palm Beach Plongée** (Map p101; ☎ 04 91 22 10 38; www.airdive-provence.com; Hôtel Concorde Palm Beach, 2 promenade de la Plage, 8e). Dives start from €37 including gear; snorkelling is priced from €23.

From mid-June to mid-September, half-day baptism dives (€48) run by **Aqua 13** (www.aqua13.com in French) can be booked through the tourist office.

Kayaking

All-day sea-kayaking (€55; June to September) adventures with **Raskas Kayak** (www.raskas-kayak.com in French) are arranged by the tourist office.

For a moonlit paddle around the *calanques*, contact **Jean Christophe Fabre** (☎ 06 75 74 25 81) for times and prices.

Inline Skating & Skateboarding

Even if you're not a skater, you'll get a rush watching the death-defying tricks at the beachside **Marseille Skatepark** (Map p101; www.marseilleskatepark.fr.st; av Pierre Mendès, 8e), a giant bowl that's legendary on the international circuit. Take bus 19 from the Rond-Point du Prado metro stop on av du Prado to the Vieille Chapelle stop in front of Plage Vieille Chapelle. If you are a skater, you can hire blades and boards opposite the skate park from **XoXo Beach** (Map p101; ☎ 04 91 25 15 39; 197 av Pierre Mendès France, 8e; per hr/half-day/full-day €3.80/7.60/12; ☎ 10am-7pm). If you pick them up at 6.30pm and return them by noon you'll

only pay for half a day. Some ID is required as a deposit.

At press time, Marseille's en-masse blade through the city streets, **Marseille en Roller** (MER; ☎ 06 26 50 34 76; www.marseillenroller.com), had been cancelled by the authorities, but hopes were high for its resurrection.

TOURS

Marseille's tourist office runs several thematic **guided tours** a week, with at least a couple in English, spotlighting aspects of the city's art, architecture and artists such as writer-filmmaker Marcel Pagnol. Walking tours start from €6.50, with coach tours from €14. Schedules are usually available one month ahead; advance bookings are essential.

The hop-on-hop-off, open-topped bus, **Le Grand Tour** (☎ 04 91 91 05 82; adult/student/child €17/14/8; ☎ 10am-at least 4pm) travels between key sights and museums, taking in the Vieux Port, the corniche and Notre Dame de la Garde, accompanied by a five-language audio guide. Tickets are available from the tourist office or on the bus.

For a DIY walking tour, the free city map handed out by the tourist office outlines three **walking circuits**. The one around Le Panier corresponds with a red-painted line on the pavement, though once in a while it dead-ends (and at one point runs straight into a concrete-bound tree).

Two **little trains** (Les Petits Trains; Map p106; ☎ 04 91 25 24 69; www.petit-train-marseille.com; adult/child €5/3), offer a great, calf-friendly way to see some of the steeper parts of the city. One circuit runs up to the Basilique Notre Dame de la Garde (p99) year-round; the other tootles around Le Panier (p97) from April to October. Recorded commentary is in several languages, but because of the open-air 'carriages' and chattering groups aboard, it's difficult to hear. Check at the ticket office for departure times. Note that trains only depart when they have enough passengers.

In July and August, **GACM** (p102) runs boat trips (commentary in French) from the Vieux Port to Cassis and back (€20), which pass by the *calanques'* clear turquoise coves.

FESTIVALS & EVENTS

Pèlerinage de la Chandeleur (Candlemas Pilgrimage) Each year on 2 February, the statue of the Black Virgin inside the Abbaye St-Victor (p100) is carried through the streets in this candlelit procession.

Carnaval de Marseille A street carnival with decorated floats, held in March.

Beach volleyball world championships Hosted by Plage du Prado; in July.

Festival de Marseille (www.festivaldemarseille.com in French) The city's frenetic energy peaks in July, with 21 days of contemporary international dance, theatre, music and art.

Five Continents Jazz Festival (www.festival-jazz-continents.com in French) Fired up with acid jazz, funk and folk; in July.

Ciné Plein Air festival In July and August, watch French-language films for free under open skies – look for posters or ask at the tourist office.

Fête de l'Assomption On 15 August; honours the city's traditional protector with a Mass in the Nouvelle Cathédrale de la Major (p100) and a procession through Le Panier.

Festival des Chants Sacrés en Méditerranée In Oct ober; brings sacred-music concerts to Marseillais churches.

Fiesta des Suds Celebrates world music; held at the Docks des Suds (p112) in October.

SLEEPING

Because Marseille's not geared to tourists (in the way that Nice is), rooms are in short supply – book ahead.

Chambres d'Hôtes

Le Ryad (Map p98; ☎ 04 91 47 74 54; www.leryad.fr; 16 rue Sénac de Meilhan, 1er; metro Vieux Port; s €65-90, d €75-100, mini-ste €110-120; ☎ ☎) Stepping inside the richly coloured, tapered arches of this *chambre d'hôte* (bed and breakfast accommodation) half a block off La Canebière feels like

setting foot in Casablanca, home town of its artist-owner. Rates include breakfast in the sculpture-strewn garden; book ahead for a festive table d'hôte meal (€35) featuring North African specialities such as plum-and-apricot-flavoured lamb *tajines* (Moroccan stew). Kids under 10 stay free; baby cots cost €10.

La Bastide des Escourches (☎ 04 91 27 08 47; www.bastidedesescourches.com; 6 chemin des Escourches, Village d'Eoures, 11e; d €67; ☎ ☎ ☎) Just inside Marseille's city limits – about 19km east of the centre via the zippy A50 but close to Les Calanques and Aubagne – this late-19th-century mansion has five flowing rooms (two with private external bathrooms) painted in soothing tones of green and blue to reflect the *calanques*, after which each room takes its name. The property also has two separate, spacious, self-contained houses (from €550 per week; breakfast, sheets and cleaning extra)

Villa Monticelli (Map p101; ☎ 04 91 22 15 20; www.villamonticelli.com; 96 rue du Commandant Rolland, 8e; d €80-95; ☎ ☎ ☎ ☎ ☎) Secluded within sprawling, shady gardens amid similarly grand early-20th-century mansions, this elegant Italianate villa run by Colette and Jean Paraque has five impeccable rooms inspired by Provençal luminaries like Mistral and Pagnol. You can cook up a meal in the guest kitchen or pack a picnic for the nearby beaches. Included in the rates (which drop for longer stays) are wi-fi and crispy, flaky breakfast pastries. Parking's free; for a seaside spin, bike hire costs €8 per day.

Hotels

BUDGET

Hôtel Le Richelieu (Map p98; ☎ 04 91 31 01 92; www.lerichelieu-marseille.com; 52 corniche Président John F Kennedy, 7e; d €40-88; ☎) With a breezy, beach-house vibe and marine-motif rooms, most opening to balconies, this artists' haven and adjoining atelier-gallery is built onto the rocks next to the plage des Catalans. Bathrooms are mostly tiny and tucked behind shower curtains. Jutting over the water, the sundrenched terrace is idyllic for breakfast (€7) with a backdrop of island views.

Hôtel St-Louis (Map p106; ☎ 04 91 54 02 74; www.hotel-st-louis.com; 2 rue des Récollettes, 1er; metro Noailles; s €38, d €47-49, tw €54, tr €59-65) This charmingly simple pied-à-terre is in the heart of Marseille's chic shopping district. Double sets of French doors open to Juliet balconies in many of the 22 rooms, which have towering ceilings,

French-washed walls and hexagonal-tiled terracotta floors.

MIDRANGE

Hôtel Relax (Map p106; ☎ 04 91 33 15 87; 4 rue Comeille, 1er; metro Vieux Port; s €35, d €50-55; ☎) In a dress-circle location overlooking Marseille's Art Deco Opera House, this *chambre d'hôte*-feel 20-room hotel is framed by sunflower yellow awnings above geranium-filled window boxes. Some rooms are itty-bitty but button-cute with Provençal fabrics, TVs, telephones and an in-room fridge to stash your pre-opera champagne.

Hôtel Hermes (Map p106; ☎ 04 96 11 63 63; www.hotelmarseille.com; 2 rue de la Bonneterie, 2e, metro Vieux Port; s €47, d €63-79, nuptial ste €90; ☎ ☎) Adjoining the Vieux Port, Hôtel Hermes' cosy rooms are a steal. The communal rooftop terrace with tables and chairs is perfect for a sunset picnic. Perched above it, up a metal stairway-to-heaven, you'll find the ship's-cabin-style nuptial suite: it feels like you're on top of the world. Rooms on the 1st or 2nd floors are your best bet for picking up the free wi-fi. Parking costs €6.

Hôtel Belle-vue (Map p106; ☎ 04 96 17 05 40; www.hotelbellevue.fr; 34 quai du Port, 2e; metro Vieux Port; s €68-115, d €68-122, tr €137; ☎) Inside this classical cream building cased in duck-egg blue shutters on the Vieux Port you'll find the very funky jazz bar La Caravelle (p111) and above it, the Hôtel Belle-vue's artistic rooms. Wrapping around a wrought-iron staircase (no lift, unfortunately), claret-coloured walls create a dramatic backdrop for up-and-coming painters who exhibit their work in the de facto gallery formed by the hotel's public spaces.

New Hôtel Bompard (Map p101; ☎ 04 91 99 22 22; www.new-hotel.com; 2 rue des Flots Bleues, 7e; s €75-125, d €75-140, Mas des Genêts €180/250; ☎ ☎ ☎ ☎ ☎) From the secreted garden of this oasis near the sea, the city's commotion is a world away. Through a grand Victorian arched hallway hung with oil paintings, classically appointed rooms have dark timber furniture; or for something a bit more this century, rooms in the slate-and-olive Mas des Genêts come with glass-brick bathrooms. A guest-only restaurant opens daily for lunch and dinner in summer (Monday to Friday only in winter), with mains from €13 to €18; breakfast (€11) is served daily. Parking is free.

Hôtel Le Corbusier (☎ 04 91 16 78 00; www.hotel-lecorbusier.com; 280 blvd Michelet, 8e; d €85-95; ☎ ☎) Staying at the restored 20-room hotel within

AUTHOR'S CHOICE

Hôtel Péron (Map p98; ☎ 04 91 31 01 41; www.hotel-peron.com; 119 corniche Président John F Kennedy, 7e; s €66-76, d €70-79, tw €90-106; ☎ ☎) Wow. In the same family for four generations, this utterly unassuming 1920s period piece has a faded exterior that conceals museumlike rooms preserving original Art Deco turquoise-and-black ceramic bathrooms (some only partly partitioned) and parquet floors inlaid with Provençal olive-picking scenes. Many rooms are set at an angle to accentuate the sea views, and all have balconies. Breakfast (€8) isn't a meal so much as an event, when the family plays traditional Marseille music. Bonus: free parking.



this iconic concrete monolith (see p102) gives architectural aficionados the opportunity to absorb Le Corbusier's legacy from the inside out. A few extra euros get you a sublime sea view, and some rooms have balconies framed by distinctive bold colour panels.

Also recommended:

Hôtel Mariette Pacha (Map p98; ☎ 04 91 52 30 77; www.mariettepacha.fr; 5 place du 4 Septembre, 7e; s €49-54, d €59-70, q €94-99; P) Close to the city and just 200m from the sea; creatively configured to adapt to a range of accommodation including family rooms. Free online computer and wi-fi; private parking costs €10.

Hôtel Lutetia (Map p98; ☎ 04 91 50 81 78; www.hotelmarseille.com; 38 allées Léon Gambetta, 1er; metro Réformés-Canabière; s/d/tr from €55/60/69) You'll awaken to church bells ringing out from Les Réformés, the twin-

steeped church up the street from this sweet, petite place with a thimble-size lift whisking you to neat-as-a-pin rooms. Wi-fi is free.

Hôtel Saint-Ferréol (Map p106; ☎ 04 91 33 12 21; www.hotel-stferreol.com; 19 rue Pisançon, 6e; metro Vieux Port; s €72-82, d €77-92; P) On the corner of the city's most beautiful lamp-lit pedestrian shopping street. Wi-fi's free; breakfast (€8.50) includes fresh-squeezed OJ.

Hôtel du Palais (☎ 04 91 37 78 86; www.hotel-marseille.com; 26 rue Breteuil, 6e; metro Estrangin-Préfecture; d €80-100; P) Chic place of 22 rooms done up in designer shades, with chrome-and-glass minibars, free wi-fi, a sleek red lobby and cachet to spare.

Hôtel Résidence du Vieux Port (Map p106; ☎ 04 91 91 91 22; www.hotelmarseille.com; 18 quai du Port, 2e; metro Vieux Port; s €91-105, d €91-135, apt €162; P) Most rooms in this shipping-crate-styled

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building give onto the port, with a small loggia to lap up the views. Parking costs €6.

TOP END

Le Petit Nice-Passédat (Map p101; ☎ 04 91 59 25 92; www.petitnicepasseadat.com; Anse de Maldormé, 7e; d €150-470, st €590-810; P) Nestled into the rocks above a petite cove and rock-ledge beach, this intimate little hideaway of just 16 individually and exquisitely appointed rooms overlooks an orchid-mosaic-tiled saltwater pool; and is also home to Gerald Passédat's virtuoso restaurant (p110); with half-board from €100. Guest parking's free.

Hôtel Mercure Beauvau Vieux Port (Map p106; ☎ 04 91 54 91 00; www.mercure.com; 4, rue Beauvau, 1er; metro Vieux Port; s €158-263, d €170-275, st €400; P) First opened in 1816, and receiving luminaries like Frédéric Chopin and George Sand, Marseille's most historic hotel houses antique Louis-Philippe and Napoleon III furniture. Above down-quilted beds, suspended embroideries give rooms a regal feel. Sleep under the stars in six mezzanine rooms beneath retractable shuttered skylights. The Beauvau's one

of Marseille's best bets for wheelchair access. Wi-fi starts from €10 for two hours.

Palm Beach Marseille (Map p101; ☎ 04 91 16 19 00; h3485@accor-hotels.com; 200 corniche Président John F Kennedy, 7e; s/d/st from €249/275/495; P) You can specify if you want your views of the sea from your bathtub or bed at this cool, streamlined hotel built into the rocks. Flanked by palms, the reception area is on the 3rd floor; below it, looking a bit like a modish furniture showroom, a flowing art-gallery space has an exposed rockface gushing water from the Roucas Blanc springs, which also fills the pool. Parking costs €15.

Hostels

Frustratingly, France's second-biggest city has no central hostel.

Auberge de Jeunesse de Bonneveine (Map p101; ☎ 04 91 16 30 30; fax 04 91 73 97 23; impasse du Docteur Bonfils, 8e; dm incl sheets & breakfast €14.60-15.60, d €37.0-35.70; meals €3-8; P) Handy for the *calanques*, this functional HI (Hostelling International) is an easy stroll to the expansive beaches opposite Parc Borély – or just kick

CULINARY CAST-OFFS

Fish, *huîtres* (oysters), *moules* (mussels) and mounds of other shellfish are predominant and plentiful in Marseille, but nothing stands out like the city's signature dish, *bouillabaisse*. Originally it was a means for fishermen to feed their families by salvaging scraps after they'd sold the best of their catch. Despite its humble origins, today it's Marseille's most sought-after meal, prepared by pedigreed chefs including signatories to the *Charte de la Bouillabaisse Marseille* – an international charter for quality control.

Though some restaurants trap unsuspecting diners by touting it for as little as €15 (invariably meaning the fish is frozen), expect to pay about €35 to €50 per person for a true *bouillabaisse*, dished up in two parts with the soup and fish served separately. Many of the better places require you to order up to 48 hours ahead, and may require a minimum of two diners. For more on *bouillabaisse*, see p44.

Marseille subscribers to the *charte*:

Le Rhul (Map p101; ☎ 04 91 52 54 54; 269 corniche Président John F Kennedy, 7e; menus €20-50; ☺ lunch & dinner) This stalwart has been brewing *bouillabaisse* for over half a century. The views of the sea, and cuisine from it, are indubitable. And the welcome? Well, two out of three ain't bad.

Le Miramar (Map p106; ☎ 04 91 90 10 40; 12 quai du Port, 2e; metro Vieux Port; mains €25-50; ☺ lunch & dinner Tue-Sat) The white-clothed tables and burgundy velvet-covered seats gracing Miramar's quayside terrace and glowing lamplit interior create a fine ambience for dining on Christian Buffa's celebrated creations in style.

Chez Fonfon (Map p98; ☎ 04 91 52 14 38; 140 rue du Vallon des Auffes; menus €40 & €55, mains €15-46; ☺ lunch & dinner Tue-Sat, dinner Mon) Overlooking the quaint fishing harbour of Vallon des Auffes from an apricot-hued dining room, this third-generation-run peach of a place also specialises in *poisson à l'argile* (fresh clay-cooked fish, flavoured with aniseed).

L'Épauette (Map p98; ☎ 04 91 52 17 82; rue du Vallon des Auffes, 7e; menus €45, €65 & €95; ☺ lunch & dinner Tue-Sat) Chef Guillaume Sourrieu's culinary wizardry conjures up desserts such as pan-fried mango doused with balsamic vinegar and sprinkled with sherbet as well as a breathtaking *bouillabaisse*.

back at the hostel bar's balmy terrace. Take bus 44 from the Rond-Point du Prado metro station to the place Bonnefons stop.

La Cigale et la Fourmi (☎ 04 91 40 05 12; 19 rue Théophile Boudier, Mazargues, 9e; dm €15, d €30) A quirky guesthouse of miniature twisting staircases and *Being John Malkovich*-like, loft-style rooms, the tiny, independent 'Cicada and the Ant' is run by Jean Chesnaud, who grew up in the house and expanded it room by room, spilling over to another little house up the road. Freebies include wi-fi and bikes; there are self-catering facilities, but no breakfast. From the Rond Point du Prado metro stop, take bus 21 to the Obélisque stop or bus 22 to the Robespierre stop.

EATING Vieux Port & Around

The quai de Rive Neuve (1er) teems with restaurants and cafés; those along quai du Port (2e) are generally better but pricier. Behind quai de Rive Neuve, the pedestrian streets around place Thiers, cours Honoré d'Estienne d'Orves and place aux Huiles brim with umbrella-filled dining terraces in the warmer months.

Chez Madie Les Galinettes (Map p106; ☎ 04 91 90 40 87; 138 quai du Port, 2e; metro Vieux Port; mains €10-28, *bouillabaisse* €35; ☺ lunch & dinner Mon-Sat, closed Sat lunch in summer) Decked out with colourful original pop art and mural panels, this *très* Marseille place produces an authentic *bouillabaisse* (you'll need to order before Mme Roux's expedition to the fish markets around 3pm, so order the day before if you're headed here for lunch). Other standouts include the house specialty fish, *Les Galinettes*; marinated capsicums with anchovy tapenade; and chestnut ice cream.

Le Bistro à Vin (Map p106; ☎ 04 91 54 02 20; 17 rue Sainte, 6e; metro Vieux Port; dishes €12; ☺ closed Sun & Sat lunch) Fronted by a scrubbed claret-coloured wooden façade and filled with timber tables, this rustic beamed-ceiling wine bistro has some top drops, accompanied by Provençal fare like tapenade, an *assiette garrigue* (a mix of warm goats cheese, dried ham, fresh figs and melon), and a mouthwatering selection of artisanal cheeses.

Lemongrass (Map p106; ☎ 04 91 33 97 65; 8 rue Fort-Notre-Dame, 1er; metro Vieux Port; menus €30; ☺ closed Sun) Spice up your Marseille dining experience at

this refreshing place serving succulent Asian-French fusion creations such as peeled local lobsters in curry with tart Granny Smith apples, and coconut rice pudding in banana leaf.

Le Souk (Map p106; ☎ 04 91 91 29 29; 98 quai du Port, 2e; metro Vieux Port; menus €20-30; ☺ lunch Tue-Sun & dinner Tue-Sat Sep-Jun, lunch Sat & Sun & dinner Sun Jul & Aug) Enhanced by exotic décor of orange-and-red mosaic walls, wrought-iron furniture, and tiny tea-light candles, Le Souk is an atmospheric place to savour a Moroccan *tajine* – a heaping slow-cooked meat and vegetable stew elegantly delivered in a conical covered earthenware dish that takes its name from the Greek *teganon* (frying pan).

Le Mas (Map p106; ☎ 04 91 33 25 90; 4 rue Lulli, 1er; metro Vieux Port; menu €25; ☺ 11am-4am, ☺ closed Sun Oct-Apr) Its name might mean Provençal farmhouse, but this little late-night place is snugly at home amid the urban tumult. Lining its walls are photographs of the stars, show-biz types and other insomniac artists who dine here on fab French-Provençal fare. Wine is included in *menu* prices.

Les Arcenaulx (Map p106; ☎ 04 91 54 85 38; 27 cours Honoré d'Estienne d'Orves, 1er; metro Vieux Port; menus €30-50; ☺ Mon-Sat) Wrapped around cours des Arcenaulx, this cavernous former Louis XIV warehouse contains an antiquarian and contemporary bookshop and publishing house with a specialist interest in gastronomy; as well as a grand, airy restaurant turning out taste sensations such as whole pigeon with caramelised quinces; and a *salon de thé* (tearoom) serving ice creams named after literary classics.

Une Table au Sud (Map p106; ☎ 04 91 90 63 53; 2 quai du Port, 2e; metro Vieux Port; lunch menu €34, dinner menus €48-88; ☺ closed Sun & Mon) Chef Lionel Lévy continues to break the Modern Mediterranean mould at his Michelin-starred restaurant with

picture windows framing the port. Utilising local ingredients in inventive ways, you (and he) will be surprised every time by his 'surprise menu'. It comprises four imaginative courses in addition to cheese and dessert – which could be anything from a chocolate-and-avocado creation to olive-oil-and-lemon sorbet. A glass lift provides wheelchair access.

Le Panier

The area of Le Panier contains some dining legends. For artisanal specialities, see p113.

Ardamone (Map p106; ☎ 04 91 90 18 09; 28 rue Caisserie, 2e; metro Vieux Port; menus €14-20, mains €9.50-18; ☺ 10am-7pm Tue-Sat) Avocado and salmon sushi, green chicken curry with fragrant rice, and tofu and carrots marinated in ginger are among the world-influenced dishes at Marseille's only *resto bio* (organic restaurant). A couple of vegan dishes are included on the strictly organic menu, which also features scrumptious desserts such as chocolate and split-almond brownies and blueberry crumble with raspberry coulis.

Pizzeria Étienne (Map p106; 43 rue de Lorette, 2e; metro Colbert; mains €7-13.50; ☺ lunch & dinner Mon-Sat) This old Marseillais haunt has the best pizza in town as well as succulent *pavé de boeuf* (beef steak) and scrumptious *supions frits* (pan-fried squid with garlic and parsley), but it's not just the food that packs the place out. Because Pizzeria Étienne is a convivial meeting point for the entire neighbourhood, you'll need to pop in beforehand to reserve in person (there's no phone), though you will get a free aperitif while you wait for a table. Credit cards aren't accepted. From rue de la République, cut down passage de Lorette and walk up the staircase.

Le Café Parisien (Map p106; ☎ 04 91 90 05 77; 1 place Sadi Carnot, 2e; metro Colbert; mains €14.90-24.60;

KICK STARTS & QUICK FIXES TO REV YOU UP

Le Pain Quotidien (Map p106; ☎ 04 91 33 55 00; 18 place Aux Huiles, 1er; metro Vieux Port; dishes €5-8; ☺ 8am-6pm Sun-Wed, to 10pm Thu-Sat) Locals tuck into eggs for breakfast along with their daily *bio* (organic) bread, smothered in finger-licking chocolate spread.

Lina's Sandwiches (Map p106; ☎ 04 96 11 54 16; 11 La Canebière, 1er; metro Vieux Port; lunch formule €7.50, sandwiches €3.50-6.85; ☺ 9.30am-5pm Mon-Sat) Adjoining the Musée de la Mode, this spiffy home of the 'beautiful sandwich' sports cranberry, orange and mustard décor and stylish desserts such as lemon-meringue pie.

La Caravelle (Map p106; ☎ 04 96 17 05 40; www.hotelbellevue.fr; 34 quai du Port, 2e; metro Vieux Port; breakfast €8, mains €11.50-12.50; ☺ breakfast & lunch) Top-notch breakfasts and lunches that hit the spot come with tip-top views of the port. Also a live-music venue (p111).

Restaurant O'Stop (Map p106; ☎ 04 91 33 85 34; 15 rue St-Saëns, 1er; metro Vieux Port; menu €10; ☺ 24hr) Simple regional specialities are dished up this little hole-in-the-wall round the clock.

☞ 7.30am-4pm Mon-Sat Jul-Aug, to 4pm Mon-Wed, to 2am Thu-Sat Sep-Jun) Le Café Parisien's sculpted plaster walls have been a theatrical backdrop for Marseillais diners for over a century. The brasserie's once-faded glamour has recently been restored to its former heyday splendour, serving elegant fare such as squid drizzled in olive oil and a richer-than-rich risotto. Post-*repas*, play *boules* on the café's indoor pitch downstairs, or have a pastis at the adjacent underground bar.

La Fabrique (Map p106; ☎ 04 91 91 40 48; 3 place Jules Verne, 2e; metro Vieux Port; mains around €15; ☞ 7.30pm-2am Wed-Fri, noon-2am Sat & Sun) The concrete bar and loungey retro vibe is a magnet for hipsters, as is the Mediterranean menu.

Le Panier's western fringe flows into the commercial port area (metro Joliette, 8e), where dining spots at the London-docks-like complex, Les Docks, include the voluminous **Le Dock de Suez** (Map p98; ☎ 04 91 56 07 56; 10 place de la Joliette, 2e; metro Joliette; mains around €25; ☞ lunch Mon-Fri; dinner & weekends by reservation). Business high flyers rub shoulders as chef Richard Tucita greases the wheeling and dealing with sophisticated dishes such as *supions à la Provençale* (squid with garlic and tomatoes) and braised ox cheek.

Cours Julien & Around

For fare as diverse as Marseille itself, head to cours Julien and its surrounding streets like rue des Trois Mages for a staggering array of cuisines, including Greek, Indian, Lebanese, Spanish and North African.

Le Femina (Map p106; ☎ 04 91 54 03 561 1 rue Musée, 1er, metro Noailles; menus €8-18; ☞ lunch & dinner Tue-Sat) East from the Vieux Port towards cours Julien, Le Femina is a great and eminently affordable traditional Algerian place for couscous. This dish has been cooked to perfection by five generations of the same welcoming family since 1921.

Le Sud du Haut (Map p98; ☎ 04 91 92 66 64; 80 cours Julien, 6e; metro Notre Dame du Mont-Cours Julien; mains around €10; ☞ lunch Tue-Sat, dinner Thu-Sat) Dine on the sky-topped terrace or amid the contemporary sculptures and artworks at this offbeat place. The chef prepares local faves such as stuffed Provençal vegetables.

By the Sea

Beach cafés, restaurants and bars overlooking Plage Borély and Plage Bonneveine all give you a chance to dine with sand between your toes; there are also a couple of eateries where

you can wear your bikini, around Plage des Catalans.

Several *bouillabaisse* specialists (see p108) also serve up sea views.

Pizzeria Chez Jeannot (Map p98; ☎ 04 91 52 11 28; 129 rue du Vallon des Auffes, 7e; dishes from €6; ☞ lunch & dinner Tue-Sun) With a magical setting overlooking the storybook Vallon des Auffes, this affable, affordable joint has fresh-as-it-gets salads, pasta and shellfish, plus piping-hot pizzas.

La Baie des Singes (The Bay of Monkeys; ☎ 04 91 73 68 87; Cap Croisette; mains €12-25; ☞ lunch & dinner Apr-Sep) Stunningly located on a cape 15km south of the centre. Select your seafood prior to its preparation, and afterwards collapse on a comfy deck chair overlooking Île Maire. From Les Goudes follow the signs to the Cap Croisette car park then walk 500m along the narrow path through rocks. Ask when booking about getting here by boat.

Au Bord de l'Eau (☎ 04 91 72 68 04; 15 rue des Arapèdes, port de la Madrague Montredon, 8e; menus €25-30; ☞ daily Jul & Aug, closed Tue & lunch Sun, Dec & Jan) Promise you won't tell *too* many people about this little harbourside haven literally 'at the water's edge'. Chances are, you can thank the fishing boats moored below the sun-drenched terrace for catching the fish on your plate just hours before. To get here, catch bus 83 to the statue of David at av du Prado, then continue south on bus 19.

Péron (Map p98; ☎ 04 91 52 15 22; 56 comiche Président John F Kennedy, 7e; menu €60; ☞ lunch & dinner) This designer, truffle-coloured place set out over the sea is one of the premier destinations in Marseille for a no-holds-barred gastronomic extravaganza. Stunning views unfold over the Med – and your plate, with highlights including lobster risotto.

Le Petit Nice-Passédât (Map p101; menus €90-150, mains €50-95; ☞ lunch Tue-Sat & dinner daily summer, lunch & dinner daily winter) Maestro Gerald Passédât creates twin-Michelin-starred seafood- and meat-based masterpieces inspired by the slow southern tempo – and by Nénette the turtle, who has roamed Le Petit Nice-Passédât's terrace for over 30 years. For more on accommodation here, see p107.

Self-Catering

Marseille's most aromatic markets are its **fresh fish market** (Map p106; quai des Belges, 1er; metro Vieux Port; ☞ 8am-noon), at the old port, circled by hungry seagulls; and its **garlic market** (Map p106; cours Belsunce, 1er; metro Vieux Port; ☞ late Jun-late Jul).

Fruit, vegetables, fish and dried products are sold at the **Marché des Capucins** (Map p106; place des Capucins, 1er; metro Noailles; ☞ 8am-7pm) and the morning market on **place de la Joliette** (Map p98; place de la Joliette, 2e; metro Joliette; ☞ Mon-Fri). For more markets, see p113.

Central supermarkets include **Monoprix** (Map p106; 36 La Canebière, 1er; metro Noailles; ☞ 8.30am-8.30pm Mon-Sat) and a couple inside the concrete bunker Centre Bourse (Map p106).

DRINKING

Drinking tends to be laid-back in Marseille, stretching languorously from the daytime into the night. Many bars double as *glaciers* (ice creameries). You can't go wrong heading for the café-ringed Vieux Port, which also has a couple of Guinness-serving Irish pubs along quai de Rive Neuve. Students and artists congregate at the alternative cafés and bars on and around cours Julien and place Jean Jaurès.

Bar de la Marine (Map p106; ☎ 04 91 54 95 42; 15 quai de Rive Neuve, 1er; ☞ 7am-1am) Marcel Pagnol filmed the card-party scenes in *Marius* – the first of his early-20th-century cult-classic trilogy – here. Today it draws in people from every walk of life, from grizzled sailors to high-powered business types. There's a terrace overlooking the port, but to really experience this institution, take a seat in the 1930s interior lined with photographs and caricatures. The bar made another big screen appearance in 2003's *Love Actually*.

L'Exit Café (Map p106; 12 quai de Rive Neuve, 7e; metro Vieux Port; ☞ 7am-1am) Close to Bar de la Marine, L'Exit Café buzzes during its nightly buy-one-get-one-free happy hour from 6pm to 9pm.

Cup of Tea (Map p106; ☎ 04 91 90 84 02; 1 rue Caisserie, 2e; metro Vieux Port; ☞ 8.30am-7pm Mon-Fri, 9.30am-7pm Sat) Just behind the northern side in Le Panier is a clutch of chic spots like this hip bookshop-café – a soothing stop if you're craving a cuppa after all that pastis. Writers' workshops and poetry slams are regular events.

Au Petit Nice (Map p98; ☎ 04 91 48 43 04; 28 place Jean Jaurès; ☞ 6am-2am) This local favourite sees shoppers stop in for a morning espresso and diners drop by for a sunset aperitif on the terrace; by nightfall its eclectic interior gets packed.

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. *Billetteries* (ticket counters) include **FNAC** (Map p106; ☎ 04 91 39 94 00; Centre Bourse, 1er; metro Vieux Port) and **Virgin Megastore** (Map p106; ☎ 04 91 55 84 11; 75 rue St-Ferréol, 6e; metro Estrangin-Préfecture), as well as the tourist office.

The cutting-edge cultural centre La Friche la Belle de Mai (see the boxed text, p112) embraces the entire cultural spectrum – from theatre, ballet and contemporary music to installation and video art. See p34 for more information.

Nightclubs
Marseille's club scene is burgeoning along with the rest of the city, with some of the hottest spots spread outside the city centre.

La Maronnaise (☎ 04 91 73 98 58, 04 91 72 42 65; rte de la Maronnaise, 8e; admission €10; ☞ 9am-4am Wed-Sat early May-early Sep) This hipsters' hangout at Les Goudes on Cap Croisette is a day-night event. You'll need to arrive early to snag a sun lounge or earlier still for a patch of sand on the tiny beach, before dancing under the stars till dawn. To keep you going, you can have lunch (€15) and dinner (€30) on the seaside terrace. Take bus 19 from the Rond Point du Prado metro stop on av du Prado.

Le Trolleybus (Map p106; ☎ 04 91 54 30 45; 24 quai Rive Neuve, 1er; metro Vieux Port; admission varies; ☞ 11pm-dawn Wed-Sat) Booty-shaking, tunnel-like harbour-side club in a 17th-century arsenal. Top DJs spin groove, soul, funk, acid jazz, hip-hop and salsa in the Terminus and pop and rock in the Trolleybar. There's also a whisky bar and a wicked sound system.

Other happenin' haunts:
Le Bazar (☎ 04 91 79 08 88; 90 blvd Rabatau, 8e; admission €15; ☞ midnight-6am Thu-Sun) This is a vast Moroccan-style space with bungalows and palms; DJs play techno and house.

Le Millenium (☎ 08 92 88 80 13; route de Cassis, 9e; admission free; ☞ 11pm-6am Thu-Sun) Five kinds of music across five gyrating floors, and a record-producer/rock-star-type crowd aged 20 to 50; about 6km from the centre.

Metal Café (Map p106; ☎ 04 91 54 03 03; 20 rue Fortia, 1er; metro Vieux Port; admission €5; ☞ until late Thu-Sun) Look for the steely grey door at the foot of the staircase linking cours Honoré d'Estienne d'Orves with rue Sainte.

Live Music

La Caravelle (Map p106; ☎ 04 96 17 05 40; www.bellevue.fr; 34 quai du Port, 2e; metro Vieux Port; ☞ 7am-2am; 🎷) Legendary jazz sessions take place on Friday and Saturday nights from September

to May at the Hôtel Bellevue's funky 1st-floor bar. It's lined by timber walls with black-and-red-vinyl upholstered chairs, theatrical murals, and a sky blue ceiling. Free tapas is served during happy hour (6pm to 9pm) every night. On balmy nights, the balcony is a prized portside perch.

Docks des Suds (☎ 04 91 99 00 00, 08 25 83 38 33; www.dock-des-suds.org in French; 12 rue Urban V, 2e) World music is among the genres performed at this sprawling venue near the commercial port. Hours are variable, as are admission prices.

Espace Julien (Map p98; ☎ 04 91 24 34 10; www.espace-julien.com in French; 39 cours Julien, 6e; metro Notre Dame du Mont-Cours Julien; ☎ variable) Rock, *opérock*, alternative theatre, reggae, hip-hop, Afro-groove and other cutting-edge entertainment are on the bill here; the website lists upcoming gigs and cover charges. Hours are variable.

L'Intermédiaire (Map p98; ☎ 04 91 47 01 25; 63 place Jean Jaurès, 6e; metro Notre Dame du Mont-Cours Julien; admission free; ☎ 6.30pm-2am Mon-Sat) Famed for its free live-music sessions ranging from blues to breaking new bands (from 10.30pm most nights), the intimate L'Intermédiaire is a gathering spot for Marseille's artists, musos and writers.

Pelle Mêle (Map p106; ☎ 04 91 54 85 26; 8 place aux Huiles, 1er; metro Vieux Port; admission €2; ☎ 5pm-2am Tue-Sat) Swing to live jazz from 10pm most nights.

MARSEILLE'S RENAISSANCE

The city was slammed as a flash point for crime and corruption a few years ago, but the 21st century has heralded the rebirth of Marseille, particularly its docklands (La Joliette quarter) and central train-station area (St-Charles quarter). Marseille Euroméditerranée (Euromed) is pouring €3.05 billion into these two high-unemployment districts. By the project's completion in 2010, it will have delivered 15,000 to 20,000 new jobs, 4000 brand-new and 6000 renovated homes, and 800,000 sq metres of commercial real estate, as well as doubling the precincts' green recreational areas in size.

State-of-the-art offices and trendy restaurants are up and running in the enormous former warehouse **Les Docks** (Map p98; 10 place de la Joliette), the project showcase. Quai d'Arenç's old grain silos now contain a 2000-seat cinema, a business centre and panoramic restaurant; and in 2008 Fort St-Jean will house a **Musée des Civilisations de l'Europe et de la Méditerranée** (Museum of European & Mediterranean Civilisations; Map p98), replacing the National Museum of Arts & Popular Traditions, in Paris since 1937.

The St-Charles quarter will be the site of a new **Grand Halle** (Grand Hall), designed by French architect Jean-Marie Duttilleul, at the central train station. In the adjoining Belle de Mai district, **La Friche la Belle de Mai** (☎ 04 95 04 95 04; www.lafriche.org in French; 23 rue Guibal), a former tobacco factory and sugar-refining plant, houses theatrical and artists' workshops, cinema studios (see p65), a couple of radio stations, multimedia displays and exhibition halls.

A scale model of the future face of Marseille is on display at **Euroméditerranée Centre d'Informations** (Map p98; ☎ 0 800 111 114; www.euromediterranee.fr; Atrium 103, Les Docks, 10 place de la Joliette, 2e; metro Joliette; ☎ 10am-1pm & 2-6pm Mon-Thu, 10am-1pm & 2-5pm Fri).

Gay & Lesbian Venues

The website www.petitfute-gay.com (in French) has comprehensive coverage of Marseille's gay and lesbian scene, which revolves around the perennial favourite, **MP Bar** (Map p106; ☎ 04 91 33 64 79; 10 rue Beauvau, 1e, metro Vieux Port; ☎ until sunrise).

Opera & Ballet

Opéra de Marseille (Map p106; ☎ 04 91 55 11 10; http://opera.mairie-marseille.fr in French; 2 rue Molière, 1er; metro Vieux Port; tickets €8-35) Housed in an Art Deco building built in 1921; enter on place Ernest Reyer.

Marseille-based dance companies include the **Ballet National de Marseille** (www.ballet-de-marseille.com), which performs at various venues.

Theatre

Théâtre National de Marseille (Map p106; ☎ 04 96 17 80 00; www.theatre-lacriee.com in French; 30 quai de Rive Neuve, 7e; metro Vieux Port) Mainstream dramas are staged in Marseille's old fish-auction house, built in 1909.

Alternative performance venues include **Chocolat Théâtre** (Map p98; ☎ 04 91 42 19 29; www.chocolattheatre.com in French; 59 cours Julien, 6e; metro Notre Dame du Mont-Cours Julien); and three pocket-sized places in the **Passage des Arts** (Map p106; 16 quai de Rive Neuve, 7e; metro Vieux Port):

Le Quai du Rire (Map p106; ☎ 04 91 54 95 00)

Théâtre Badaboum (Map p106; ☎ 04 91 54 40 71)

Théâtre Off (Map p106; ☎ 04 91 33 12 92)

MARSEILLE'S BASKET

In Le Panier's history-woven streets you can get your fill of its past, and fill your shopping basket with artisan products handmade in Marseille.

Sniff Marseille's scented handmade soaps at **La Cie de Provence** (Map p106; ☎ 04 91 56 20 94; 1 rue Caisserie), and pick up bathroom accoutrements such as colourful towels at the neighbouring **Le Comptoir du Panier** (Map p106; ☎ 04 91 56 20 94; 1 rue Caisserie). Olive-wood carvings, olive soaps and olive oils fill **72% Pétanque** (Map p106; ☎ 04 91 91 14 57; 10 rue du Petit Puits). Nearby is a clutch of ceramic ateliers with shops attached to their workshops, including **Le Transfo** (Map p106; ☎ 04 91 56 21 93; 3 rue du Petit Puits). Squeal over the cute **Au Cochon Dingue** (The Mad Pig; Map p106; ☎ 06 71 39 96 16; 6 place de Lorette), selling handmade pig ornaments.

To fill your picnic basket, try **La Chocolatière du Panier** (Map p106; ☎ 04 91 91 67 66; 4 place des 13 Cantons), with weird-and-wonderful flavours of handmade chocolates like onion and lavender; and **Les Navettes des Accoules** (Map p106; ☎ 04 91 90 99 42; 68 rue Caisserie) for traditional biscuits made from orange flour and shaped like torpedos. At **Le Goût de l'Enfance** (Map p106; ☎ 04 91 54 11 25; 6 place des Pistoles; ☎ Tue-Sat 9am-6pm) you can buy by Le Panier legend Mme Brigitte Garelli's homemade jam (it's also served by cafés in the quarter). Wash it down with the local firewater at **La Maison du Pastis** (Map p106; ☎ 04 91 90 86 77; 108 quai du Port) where you can sample more than 60 varieties of pastis or splash out on absinthe.

Then cross the port and climb up to the sculpted stone benches of the **Jardin du Pharo** (p97) to empty your picnic basket as the sunset sizzles over the water.

Cinema

Les Variétés (Map p106; ☎ 04 96 11 61 61; cesarvarietes@wanadoo.fr; 37 rue Vincent Scotto, 1er; metro Noailles) and **Cinéma César** (Map p98; ☎ 04 91 37 12 80; 4 place Castellane, 6e; metro Castellane) screen nondubbed films.

SHOPPING

Shops around town sell the *Tarot de Marseille*, today the most commonly used tarot deck, which was originally created in Marseille to play the local version of the *tarocchi* card game before its (oc)cult following.

Music shops are massed around cours Julien, including the specialist drum shop, **Le Magasin La Baguetterie des Batteurs** (Map p98; ☎ 04 91 36 55 55; 42 cours Julien, 6e; metro Notre Dame du Mont-Cours Julien; ☎ closed Sun & Mon), jam-packed with *djembes* (West African hand drums), kits, sticks and more.

Live chickens killed to order and African carved animals are among the many colourful sights at the Moroccan-style markets, **Marché aux Puces** (av du Cap Pinède, 15e; ☎ 9am-7pm Sun). To get there, take buses 35 or 70 from rue des Fabres, which is in front of Espace Infos RTM.

Cours Julien (Map p98; 6e; metro Notre Dame du Mont-Cours Julien) hosts various morning markets: fresh flowers on Wednesday and Saturday, antique books alternate Saturdays, and stamps or antique books on Sunday.

GETTING THERE & AWAY

Air

Aéroport Marseille-Provence (Marseille-Provence airport; ☎ 04 42 14 14 14; www.marseille.aerport.fr) is in Marignane, 28km northwest of Marseille.

Boat

From two terminals at Marseille's **Gare Maritime** (Passenger ferry terminal; Map p98; ☎ 04 91 39 45 66; 23 place de la Joliette & blvd des Dames, 2e; metro Joliette), **SNCM** (Map p98; ☎ 0 891 701 801; www.sncm.fr; 61 blvd des Dames, 2e; metro Joliette; ☎ 8am-6pm Mon-Fri, 8.30am-noon & 2-5.30pm Sat) operates ferries to and from Corsica, Sardinia, Tunisia and Algeria. **Algérie Ferries** (Map p98; ☎ 04 91 90 89 28; 29 blvd des Dames, 2e; metro Joliette; ☎ 9-11.45am & 1-4.45pm Mon-Fri) operates boats to and from Algeria.

For more information about boat travel to and from Marseille, see p421.

Bus

Most buses use the **bus station** (Map p106; ☎ 04 91 08 16 40; 3 place Victor Hugo, 3e; metro Gare St-Charles) next to the train station, but some services to and from Bandol, La Ciotat and Cassis use the stop on **place Castellane** (Map p98; ☎ 04 91 79 81 82; 6e; metro Castellane), south of the centre. Bus drivers sell tickets.

Buses travel to Aix-en-Provence (€4.40, 35 minutes via the autoroute or one hour via the N8, every five to 10 minutes), Avignon (€17.20, two hours, one daily), Cannes (€23.50,

two hours, four daily), Carpentras (€12, two hours), Cavaillon (€10.20, one hour), Orange and other destinations. **Phocéens Cars** (☎ 04 93 85 66 61) travels to Nice (€25, 2¾ hours, up to three daily).

Year-round services going to and from Digne-les-Bains (€15.10, 2¼ hours) and ski-season buses to and from Barcelonnette (€24.10, four hours) are operated by the Gap-based **Société des Cars Alpes Littoral** (SCAL; ☎ 08 20 83 38 33).

International routes are covered by **Eurolines** (☎ 04 91 50 57 55) and **Intercars** (☎ 04 91 50 08 66), both at Marseille bus station.

Car & Motorcycle

Car-hire agencies at the train station:

Avis (Map p98; ☎ 04 91 64 71 00; Gare St-Charles, 1er)

Europcar (Map p98; ☎ 04 91 99 09 32; 7 blvd Maurice Bourdet, 1er)

Hertz (Map p98; ☎ 04 91 14 04 24; 21 blvd Maurice Bourdet, 1er)

Train

From **Gare St-Charles** (Map p106; metro Gare St-Charles, 1er), which is Marseille's central passenger train

station, there are direct services to and from Aix-en-Provence centre (€6.40, 38 minutes, 16 to 24 daily), Avignon centre (€16.80, one hour, hourly), Nîmes (€17.60, 1¼ hours, 12 daily), Arles (€12.40, 50 minutes), Orange (€19.90, 1½ hours, 10 daily) and other destinations.

More than two dozen trains a day chug east along the coast on the Marseille–Vintimille (Ventimiglia in English and Italian) line, linking Marseille with Toulon (€10.20, 45 minutes to one hour), Cannes (€24.20, two hours), Antibes (€25.20, 2¼ hours), Nice (€27, 2½ hours), Monaco (€28.50, three hours via Nice) and Menton (€29.20, 3¼ hours via Nice). Most Marseille–Hyères trains (€12.60, 1¼ hours, four daily) stop at Cassis, La Ciotat, Bandol, Ollioules, Sanary-sur-Mer and Toulon.

For trains to other parts of France and Europe see p420.

GETTING AROUND To/From the Airport

Navette (airport ☎ 04 42 14 31 27; Marseille ☎ 04 91 50 59 34) shuttle buses link Marseille–Provence airport (adult/child €8.50/5, one hour) with Marseille's train station. Buses heading to the airport leave from outside the station's main entrance every 20 minutes between 5.30am and 9.50pm, and buses to the train station depart from the airport between 6.10am and 10.50pm.

Bicycle

Motorists parked with Vinci Park (below) can pick up a free bicycle to pedal around town. **Tandem** (Map p101; ☎ 04 91 22 64 80; 6 av du Parc Borély; ☎ 9am–6.30pm) hires out wheels near the beach.

Boat

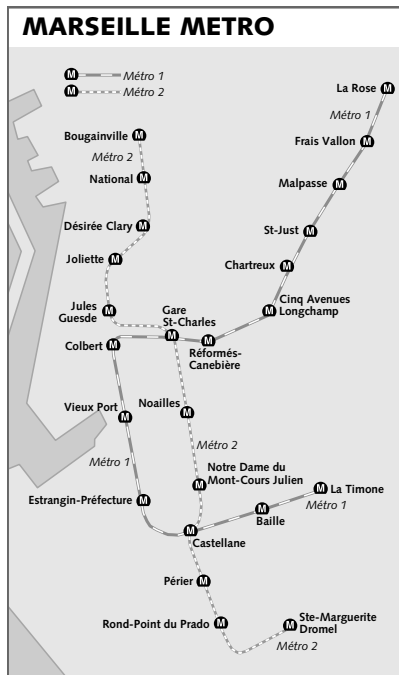
A ferry yo-yos between the town hall on quai du Port and place aux Huiles on quai de Rive Neuve 8am to 6.30pm daily. An adult single/return fare costs €0.50/0.80 (under seven years free). Sailing time is three minutes. Tickets are available on the ferry.

Car & Motorcycle

Dead-central underground car parks run by **Vinci Park** (www.vincipark.com in French):

Bourse (Map p106; rue Reine Elisabeth, 1er; metro Vieux Port; per hr/day €1.80/13) Underneath the shopping centre.

De Gaulle (Map p106; 22 place du Général de Gaulle, 1er; metro Vieux Port; per hr/day €2/14.50; ☎ 24hr) Just off La Canebière.



Public Transport

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. From 9.25pm to 12.30am, metro and tram routes are covered every 15 minutes by buses M1 and M2; stops are marked with the fluorescent green signs reading *métro en bus* (metro by bus). Most night buses begin their runs in front of the **Espace Infos RTM** (Map p106; ☎ 04 91 91 92 10; 6 rue des Fabres, 1er; ☎ 8.30am–6pm Mon–Fri, 9am–12.30pm & 2–5.30pm Sat).

Bus/metro tickets (€1.70) can be used on any combination of metros and buses for one hour after they've been time-stamped. A pass for one/three days costs €4.50/10.

By the time you're reading this, sections of Marseille's new **tramway** (www.metro-tramway-marseille.com in French) *should* be operational, though construction has been hampered by delays. Check the website for updates and route maps.

Taxi

Marseille Taxi (☎ 04 91 02 20 20) and **Taxis France** (☎ 04 91 49 91 00) run taxis 24 hours a day.

AROUND MARSEILLE

Butting up against Marseille's built-up environs are spectacular stretches of rocky coast hiding crystalline coves, charming towns and celebrated vineyards.

LES CALANQUES

Skirting 20km of pristine turquoise coves, Les Calanques (including the 500 sq km of the rugged inland Massif des Calanques) have been protected since 1975. The three main gateways are Marseille's southern hemline, and the coastal towns of Cassis and La Ciotat to the east.

Despite its barren, windswept landscape, the massif shelters an extraordinary wealth of flora and fauna – including 900 plant species, of which 15 are protected, such as the dwarf red behen, Marseille astragalus and tartonraire sparrow wort. The Bonelli eagle is a frequent visitor to Les Calanques, which are also home to Europe's largest lizard (the 60cm eyed lizard), and longest snake (the 2m Montpellier snake) in its darker cracks and crevices.

Although largely inaccessible by car, Les Calanques offer ample walking opportunities

NO ENTRY

The threat of forest fire to the semiarid flora skirting Marseille's limestone coastline prompts the Office National des Forêts (National Forests Office) to close Les Calanques each year from 1 July until the second Saturday in September – as well as any time when conditions are too dry. From April to June, they're also closed on Saturday and Sunday. At other times walkers can usually access footpaths between 6am and 11am only (reduced hours in high-risk conditions) – check with the Marseille, Cassis or La Ciotat tourist offices for updates. On-the-spot fines are issued for breaching the strictly enforced rules.

(of varying degrees of difficulty, including some rock clambering). The coastal GR98 leads south from the Marseille suburb of La Madrague to Callelongue on Cap Croisette, and then east along the coast to Cassis. Count on 11 to 12 hours at least to walk the full 28km stretch across the cliffs. A head for heights is a definite advantage. Lonely Planet's *Walking in France* includes step-by-step coverage along Les Calanques west from Cassis to Morgiou.

Marseille's tourist office runs guided walks (€13) from 2pm to 5pm on Friday between early January and late June, and again from mid-September to the end of December. Participants must be aged over eight years; sturdy shoes are a must.

Les Calanques are spectacular when viewed aboard a boat. You can hire your own boat in Marseille or Cassis for your own explorations (see p103 and p116 for details). Otherwise, a myriad of boat excursions to Les Calanques leave from Marseille (see p102), Cassis (see p116) and La Ciotat (p118) in the Marseille area, and from Bandol (p380) and Sanary-sur-Mer (p380) further east.

For information about Les Calanques, including maps and aerial photographs, check out www.gipcalanques.fr (in French).

Sormiou & Morgiou

The largest *calanque* (rocky inlet), **Sormiou**, hit the headlines in October 1991 when Henri Cosquer, a diver from Cassis, swam through a narrow, 150m-long passage 36m underwater into an underwater cave to find its interior

adorned with prehistoric wall paintings from around 20,000 BC. Now named the **Grotte Cosquer**, the cave is a historical monument and, to protect both it and divers' safety, is closed to the public. Many more are believed to exist.

To get here by car from place Louis Bonnefon (next to Château Borély) in Marseille, follow the southbound av de Hambourg past César's thumb on rond-point Pierre Guerre to chemin de Sormiou. From the end of this road, the rte du Feu forest track (a 45-minute walk) leads to Sormiou's small, isolated fishing port and beach. Or, take bus 23 from the Rond-Point du Prado metro stop to La Cayolle stop, from where it is a 3km walk to Sormiou.

Sormiou and Morgiou are separated by Cap Morgiou. **Calanque de Morgiou** nestles on the eastern side of the cape, which has a pretty little port bobbing with a handful of fishing boats, and a restaurant. From av de Hambourg, follow the Morgiou road signs past Marseille's prison in Les Beaumettes. Morgiou beach is one hour's walk from the car park. Alternatively, you could catch bus 23 and continue past La Cayolle to get off at the Morgiou-Beauvallon bus stop.

En-Vau, Port-Pin & Port-Miou

Continuing east along the stone-sculptured coast brings you to **Calanque d'En-Vau**, with emerald waters encased by cliffs where climbers sometimes dangle precariously, and a pebbly beach. Its entrance is guarded by the **Doigt de Dieu** (God's Finger), a giant rock pinnacle. The car park on the Col de la Gardiole (south off the D559), 5km west along a dirt road from Cassis, is closed from July to the second Saturday of September and when the fire risk is too great. When the car park is open, a steep three-hour marked trail leads from here to En-Vau. The slippery limestone surface and sheer descents into En-Vau are for the truly hardcore only; and definitely not for those prone to vertigo. Approaching from the east, it is a solid 1½-hour walk on the GR98 from **Calanque de Port-Miou**, immediately west of Cassis. En route you pass the neighbouring **Calanque de Port-Pin**, a 30-minute walk from Port-Miou. In summer, boats sail from Cassis to En-Vau (see right).

Cassis' tourist office distributes free maps of the walking trails leading to these three *calanques*.

CASSIS

pop 8070

Cascading down the rock face to its St-Tropez-like little fishing port, Cassis (pronounced 'ca-see') isn't related to the blackcurrant liqueur (pronounced 'ca-sees'), which is used to create a kir apéritif – but it is famed for kir's other ingredient, producing sweet whites from its terraced vines. The town's name comes from the Roman *Carsicis Portus*, meaning 'crowned port', so christened for the imperial rock now known as the Couronne de Charlemagne (Crown of Charlemagne) presiding above, which is visible from far out to sea.

Peering down on the port from a rocky outcrop is Cassis' 14th-century chateau, now a hotel (www.chateaudecassis.com) visitable only by guests of its five rarefied suites. In high season, holidaymakers pour into this petite port to frolic along its waterfront and sip its fabled wines.

Orientation

Cassis train station is 3.5km east of the centre on av de la Gare. Buses stop at rond-point du Pressoir, five minutes' walk along av du Professeur René Leriche and rue de l'Arène to the port. The old town surrounds the port. Quai St-Pierre, from where boat trips depart, runs alongside the port to the beach, the sandy Plage de la Grande Mer. Pebbly Plage de Bestouan is 700m northwest of the port.

Information

Tourist office (☎ 08 92 25 98 92; www.ot-cassis.fr; quai des Moulins; ☞ 9am-7pm Mon-Fri, 9.30am-12.30pm & 3-6pm Sat & Sun Jul & Aug, 9am-12.30pm & 2-6.30pm Mon-Fri, 9.30am-12.30pm & 2-5.30pm Sat, 10am-12.30pm Sun Mar-Jun & Sep-Oct, 9.30am-12.30pm & 2-5.30pm Mon-Fri, 10am-12.30pm & 2-5pm Sat, 10am-12.30pm Sun Nov-Feb) On the port.

Activities

BOATING

Year-round, more than a dozen boats sail around Les Calanques daily. Tickets are sold at the portside **kiosk** (☎ 04 42 01 90 83; www.cassis-calanques.com; sq Gilbert Savon) on quai St-Pierre. A 45-minute trip to three *calanques* (Port-Miou, Port-Pin and En-Vau) costs €12/6.50 per adult/child two to 10 years; a 65-minute trip covering these three *calanques* plus Oule and Devenson *calanques* is €14/9; and a 1½-hour trip covering eight *calanques* (including Morgiou) costs €17/12.50. Credit cards aren't accepted.

In addition to the circular boat trips, you can disembark at En-Vau (return adult/child two to 10 years €16/10.50), spend a couple of hours on the beach, and return to Cassis on a later boat. The walk from the boat to the beach is a 200m scramble across rocks, not recommended for young children.

Boats of all shapes and sizes can be hired with or without a permit from **Loca'Bato** (☎ 04 42 01 27 04; impasseduGrandCarnot.com) starting from €90 for a morning, up to €2000 for a week (plus a hefty deposit).

DIVING

Diving expeditions are organised by the **Cassis Services Plongée** (☎ 04 42 01 89 16; www.cassis-services-plongee.fr; 3 rue Michel Arnaud; ☞ daily mid-Mar–mid-Nov), also known as Centre Cassidain de Plongée. Baptism dives cost €60 including gear. Regular dives including gear with/without an instructor start at €50/44. The company also runs night dives and shipwreck expeditions.

WINE TASTING

Twelve estates producing the Cassis appellation (*appellation d'origine contrôlée*; AOC) wines ribbon the surrounding hillsides; the tourist office has a list of suggested itineraries.

In town, the bottle-lined wine bar **Le Chai Cassidain** (☎ 04 42 01 99 80; 7 rue Séverin Icard; ☞ 11am-1pm & 4-10pm Apr-Oct, 11am-1pm & 4-8pm Tue-Sun Nov-Mar) sells locals wines by the glass (€4 to €6) and often has free tastings.

On the first Sunday in September, the **Fête des Vendanges et du Vin Cassis** heralds the annual grape harvest.

Sleeping & Eating

Auberge de Jeunesse (☎ 04 42 01 02 72; dm €11; ☞ mid-Mar–Dec; ☐) BYO provisions for this 60-bed hostel isolated in the heart of the Massif des Calanques, 4km west of Cassis' centre; this place relies on the sun and wind for electricity and has no running water or public transport. By car, follow the signs off the D559 from Marseille then follow the trail from av des Calanques. Kids aged under seven aren't allowed to stay here. Parking's allowed, but hours of access may be restricted – check ahead.

Le Clos des Arômes (☎ 04 42 01 71 84; www.le-clos-des-aromes.com; 10 rue Abbé Paul Mouton; s €49, d €65-75; ☞ Mar-Dec; ☐ ☞) A short stroll from the port, this intimate hotel houses comfortable, cosy rooms (with phones but no TVs). It's fronted

by a flowering restaurant terrace (menus €24 to €36; closed Tuesday lunch and Wednesday), which is a favourite with Cassidains. Limited garaged parking (€11) is available.

La Bastidaïne (☎ 04 42 98 83 09; www.labastidaïne.com; 6b av des Albizis; B&B €75-95; ☐ ☞) This centuries-old wine grower's house, 1.5km from the centre, contains a delightful four-room *chambre d'hôte*, but if you're looking to ensconce yourself for a while, there's also a *cabanon* (apartment; €420 to €570 per week) with a self-catering kitchen and private terrace.

Le Jardin d'Émile (☎ 04 42 01 80 55; www.lejardindemile.fr; d low season €82-107, high season €102-132; ☐ ☞) Nestled beneath leafy trees opposite Plage de Bestouan, Émile's Garden has seven rooms in a bouquet of colours (some with sea views), and a restaurant serving Provençal classics. Menus €30 to €50.

La Table du Boucher (☎ 04 42 01 70 95; 6 rue Adolphe Thiers; menus from €15; ☞ lunch & dinner summer, closed Mon & lunch Tue winter) Run by a former butcher (as evident from the beef-butcher layouts on the placemats), La Table du Boucher has a candlelit terrace that's an appealing spot to enjoy specialist meat dishes, and, this being Cassis, seafood too, including a mouthwatering *marmite* (not the yeast spread, but a subtly spiced 'cooking pot' of fish, tropical fruit and vegetables).

La Poissonerie (☎ 04 42 01 71 56; 5 quai JJ Barthélemy; menu €20; ☞ closed Mon, lunch Thu & Jan) Fish is guaranteed to be at its freshest at this locals' favourite and its adjoining fish shop, owned by two brothers, one who catches the fish, the other who cooks it.

Getting There & Around

Cassis is on the Bandol-Marseille (five daily) and La Ciotat-Aix-en-Provence (three to 12 daily) bus routes; see www.lepilote.com (in French) for schedules. Two to four buses daily serve Marseille (1¼ hours, €2.70).

Cassis train station is on the Marseille-Hyères rail line and there are regular daily trains in both directions including to and from La Ciotat (€2.20, six minutes), Bandol (€4.40, 18 minutes), Marseille (€4.90, 22 minutes) and Toulon (€6.80, 34 minutes).

Bus 2, 3 and 4 link Cassis train station with the town centre (€1.30, 10 minutes, at least hourly).

Free minibuses shuttle motorists from free car parks on the edge of town to the centre from June to mid-September.

CLIFFTOP VISTAS

Europe's highest maritime cliff, the hollow limestone **Cap Canaille** (399m) towers above the south-western side of **Baie de Cassis** (Cassis Bay). From the top, captivating views unfold across Cassis and **Mt Puget** (565m), the highest peak in the Massif des Calanques.

An equally heart-stopping panorama unfurls along the **rte des Crêtes** (Road of Crests; closed during high winds), wiggling 16km along the clifftops from Cassis to La Ciotat.

LA CIOTAT

pop 35,000

La Ciotat, 16km east of Cassis, crackles with the promise of a town whose charms are yet to be 'discovered' by tourists. Not that La Ciotat is any stranger to influential visitors – it was a favourite of Georges Braque (1892–1963), who painted its quaint old port; and it was where the Lumière brothers (see p65) shot the world's first motion picture, *L'Arrivée d'un Train en Gare de La Ciotat* (The Arrival of a Train at La Ciotat Station). Shipyards dominated La Ciotat's economy until their closure in 1989. Today the rusty cranes cranked up over this seaside town add a filmic effect, with the waterfront now a marina specialising in yacht maintenance and repairs.

Information

Tourist office (☎ 04 42 08 61 32; www.laciotatourisme.com in French; blvd Anatole France; ☎ 9am–8pm Mon–Fri, 10am–1pm Sun mid-Jun–Sep, 9am–noon & 2–6pm Mon–Sat, 10am–1pm Sun May–mid-Jun, 9am–noon & 2–6pm Mon–Sat Oct–Apr) On the headland separating the old port and marina.

Sights & Activities

La Ciotat's **film festival** takes to the screens in June, showcasing up-and-coming talent. Year-round, cinema is celebrated at the **Espace Simon-Lumière** (☎ 04 42 71 61 70; 20 rue du Maréchal Foch; admission free; ☎ 3–6pm Tue–Sat), which has an exhibition hall dedicated to filmography and the Swiss-born film icon Michel Simon (1895–1975), who lived in La Ciotat. Restoration is underway of the world's oldest cinema, the grand Eden Théâtre (blvd Georges Clemenceau), where the Lumières screened many films from 1899; the modern **Cinéma Lumière**

(place Evariste Gras) screens a mix of Hollywood and art-house fare. The pioneering Lumière brothers also feature at La Ciotat's history museum, **Musée du Vieux Ciotat** (☎ 04 42 71 40 99; 1 quai Ganteaume; adult/child €3.20/1.60; ☎ 4–7pm Wed–Mon Jun–Sep, 3–6pm Wed–Mon Oct–May), as does local champion boules player, Jules Le Noir, who invented Provence's favourite game (see p39).

Soaring 155m above the town is the wind-and sea-sculpted Bec d'Aigle (Eagle's Beak) on Cap de l'Aigle. Climbing from the sea to the cape's peak, the rambling 12-hectare botanic gardens **Parc du Mugel** (av du Mugel; admission free; ☎ 8am–8pm Apr–Sep, 9am–6pm Oct–Mar) proliferate with exotic plants, a bamboo forest and palms, as well as a peaceful picnic area.

Affording a superb panorama of the town and cape is the tiny **Île Verte** (Green Island). **Boats** (☎ 04 42 83 11 44, 06 63 59 16 35; adult/child under 10yr return €8/4; ☎ departures hourly 10am–noon & –5pm May, Jun & Sep, every 30min 9am–7pm Jul & Aug) depart from quai Général de Gaulle at the old port. On weekends a boat departs at 7am for fishermen; book in advance. From the same departure point but with a different boat company, you can also cruise from La Ciotat's old port around the nearby *calanques* (☎ 06 09 35 25 68; cruises from €17; ☎ Mar–Oct).

Summer days can be lazed away on La Ciotat's wide sandy **beaches**.

In addition to food markets (see p93), an evening **arts & crafts market** is held on Saturdays from late June to early September.

Sleeping & Eating

A clutch of simple but appealing hotels clusters in the town centre; more rustic options dot the cliffside corniches.

Auberge du Revestel (☎ 04 42 83 11 06; www.revestel.com in French; corniche du Liouquet; d €55; ☎ closed Nov & Feb; ☎ ☎) Overlooking the sea 6km east of town, this inn has six breezy guest rooms, and a lime-painted restaurant (with stylised geckos climbing its walls) where chef Michel Siepen serves delights such as lamb with spring vegetables and potato gratin.

Yachtclub Chez Michel et Baya (☎ 04 42 83 64 69; av Wilson; mains around €45; ☎ lunch & dinner daily Jul–mid-Sep, lunch & dinner Tue–Sun mid-Sep–Dec & Mar–Jun) La Ciotat's prize dining catch is this increasingly buzzy place on the marina, which has just signed the *Charte de la Bouillabaisse Marseille* (see the boxed text, p108). Book two days ahead.

Getting There & Around

From La Ciotat train station, a 5km trek from the centre, there are trains on the Marseille–Hyères line (see p114).

The **bus station** (☎ 04 42 08 90 90; blvd Anatole France) adjoining the tourist office. Information is available from **Gotabus** (☎ 04 42 08 41 05; ☎ 9am–12.30pm & 1.30–7pm Mon–Fri, 8.45am–12.30pm & 1.30–7pm Sat) or www.lepilote.com (in French). Two to four buses daily serve Marseille (1½ hours, €2.40).

PAYS DE PAGNOL

North of La Ciotat and Cassis, on Marseille's easternmost fringe, the area around **Aubagne** (population 43,083) is affectionately known as Pays de Pagnol (Pagnol Country) after its much-loved son, Marcel Pagnol (see p66). The writer-film-maker moved to Marseille proper when he was two but evoked Aubagne's brick-and-tile factories and colourful Provençal characters in many of his works. Aubagne's **tourist office** (☎ 04 42 03 49 98; www.aubagne.com/tourisme; av Antide Boyer; ☎ 9am–noon & 2–6pm Mon–Sat) arranges Pagnol-themed **guided tours** (adult €10–18, child €6–13) and hands out maps plotting his trail.

Buried deep amid Aubagne's modern-day sprawl is its quaint, restored **Vieille Ville** (old town), where you'll find *santonniers* workshops (see the boxed text, p100).

About 5km east in **Gémenos** (population 5048), the outdoor **Théâtre de Verdure** (☎ 04 42 32 89 00; rte de St-Pons) hosts the world-music festival Les Arts Verts from June to July. Nearby is the beautiful *bastide* (country house) **Relais de la Magdeleine** (☎ 04 42 32 20 16; www.relais-magdeleine.com; rond-point de la Fontaine; s €85–100, d €95–185, tr €150–225, q €160–235; ☎ closed mid–Nov–mid–Mar; ☎ ☎ ☎ ☎ ☎). Run by the same family since 1932, this hotel lets you sleep on canopied beds, stroll gardens graced with century-old trees, curl up by the fireplace in the book-lined lounge, and – even if you're not staying here – dine on gastronomic cuisine such as Alpilles lamb at the exquisite restaurant (menus €30 to €55; open for lunch and dinner).

On the village's eastern edge, the rambling stone mill **Le Moulin de Gémenos** (☎ 04 42 32 22 26; rte de St-Pons; weekday menus €13–17, Sunday menu €26; ☎ lunch Tue–Fri & Sun) makes a picturesque stop before setting off on a pilgrimage to the nearby Massif de la Ste-Baume (p120).

CÔTE BLEUE

The contrast between the Côte d'Azur and the Côte Bleue is summed up by their very

names. Infinitely more down-to-earth than its romanticised counterpart, the rocky Côte Bleue, clambering from Marseille's western edge to Cap Couronne, has a string of rustic fishing villages and is a favourite with Marseillais at weekends.

L'Estaque

A once-untouched fishing village now butting onto Marseille's northern suburbs, **L'Estaque** (www.estaque.com) lured artists from the impressionist, fauvist and cubist movements. A fascinating artists' trail links the footsteps of Renoir, Cézanne, Dufy and Braque around L'Estaque's sheltered port, along its beach, and passes distinctive houses on blvd de la Falaise set back from the beach's western end, which Braque painted in both fauvist and cubist styles.

Around the water's edge, kiosks sell local specialities *chichi frégi* (sugar-coated doughnuts) and *panisses* (chickpea-flour cakes).

From June to August, Marseille's tourist office (p96) runs two-hour guided tours departing from 122 place de l'Estaque at 10am on Tuesday (€6.50), and one-hour tours at 2pm on Sunday (€3).

Carry-le-Rouet & Cap Couronne

Delectable *oursins* (sea urchins) can be sampled in **Carry-le-Rouet** (population 6200), a harbour town lying 17km west of L'Estaque. The prickly critters can be caught only between September and April; fishing for them in summer when they reproduce is forbidden. These *châtaignes de mer* (sea chestnuts) are exquisite accompanied by chilled Cassis white wine.

Each year, on the first three Sundays of February, Carry-le-Rouet's sea-urchin festival **L'Oursinade** sees a giant open-air picnic spill across the old-port quays. Restaurants and hotels set up stalls selling urchins, allowing everyone to taste the delicacy around shared tables. For more details contact the **tourist office** (☎ 04 42 13 20 36; www.carry-lerouet.com in French; av Aristide Briand; ☎ 10am–noon & 2–5pm Tue–Sat).

West along the coast, the marine-life-rich waters around the sandy **Cap Couronne** are protected by the **Parc Régional Marin de la Côte Bleue** (☎ 04 42 45 45 07, 06 83 09 38 42; perso.wanadoo.fr/parcmarin in French), marked by yellow buoys topped with St Andrew's crosses. In July and August the park authority organises one-hour **snorkelling** sessions (free), open to anyone aged

A PILGRIM'S DETOUR

From Gémenos, take the D2 east, following the signs for 'Vallée St-Pons & La Ste-Baume' for a couple of kilometres. The going soon gets green and dramatic, the smooth tarmac road snaking uphill through the **Parc Départemental de St-Pons**, whose dry scrubby terrain is protected by the same fire regulations as Les Calanques. After 8km, just as the sea pops up on the horizon, the road narrows and loses its smooth surface. A kilometre and several hairpins later, the road markings return for the final 2km climb to the **Col de l'Espigouler** (725m), a mountain pass with dramatic coastline views.

The winding descent is dominated by the **Massif de la Ste-Baume**, a hulk of a mountain with rolling ridged sides topped by a 12km-long shelf. After a couple of kilometres signs of habitation start to appear. At the D45a/D2 junction, continue on the D2 through **Plan d'Aups** (2km) to **La Ste-Baume** (8km), home to the **Ecomusée de la Ste-Baume** (☎ 04 42 62 56 46; 📄 various), where local flora, fauna and geology can be discovered; and the **Hôtellerie de la Ste-Baume** (☎ 04 42 04 54 85), where pilgrims stay. From La Ste-Baume, a 40-minute path through forest leads to the **Grotte de Ste-Madeleine** (950m), a cave in the mountain where Mary Magdalene is said to have spent the last years of her life. Daily Mass is celebrated here at 10.30am. Its entrance offers a breathtaking panorama of Provence's peaks Montagne Ste-Victoire, Mont Ventoux and the Alps.

For a fitting finish, take the D80 northeast via Nans-les-Pins then turn right on the N560 (about 20km all up) to reach **St-Maximin La Ste-Baume** (www.la-provence-verte.net). The pastel-hued town (population 9594) congregates around the Gothic **Ste-Madeleine Basilica** (☎ 04 94 59 84 59; place Jean Salusse; 📄 welcome office 9am-7pm except during religious services), built in 1295 as the home of the relics of Mary Magdalene, which were discovered in a crypt on the site around 1279. Should you feel like indulging in a gastronomic lunch or dinner, or need a place to rest your head, the adjacent convent now houses the sumptuous **Hôtellerie du Couvent Royal** (☎ 04 94 86 55 66; www.hotelfp-saintmaximin.com; place Jean Salusse; menus €26-35; 📄 lunch daily, dinner Mon-Sat; 📄 P). Doubles are €80 to €140; guest parking costs €8.

eight or over, aimed at discovering marine fauna and flora.

Étang de Berre

Buffering the Côte Bleue from the industrialised 6m-deep, 155-sq-km brine lake **Étang de Berre**, the uninhabitable massif **Chaîne de l'Estaque** protects the clear coastal waters from the pollution of some 24 million tons (30% of French production) of petrol produced per year at the lake's oil refineries.

The **Canal de Caronte**, at the Étang de Berre's southwestern corner (10km north from Cap Couronne along the D5), connects the Mediterranean's Golfe de Fos with one of the area's gems, the fishing port of **Martigues** (population 44,256).

Martigues' mostly pedestrianised old town sits on a little island crisscrossed by bridges, giving the town its nickname, the 'Venice of Provence' (its wines are under the AOC de la Venise Provençale). The old town's rainbow of brightly coloured houses is a legacy of the ancient tradition of fishermen using leftover paint from their boats on their homes. Medi-

eval jousting aboard boats is still a lively and popular sport – you'll see teams training on Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Fridays from around 4pm in summer on the Canal Gallifet on the island's southern side. The French tricolour (no, not red, white and rosé, but the national flag) originates from the town. It's also where Marseille-born Henri Fabre (1882–1984) invented, tested and took off in a hydroplane in 1910.

As elsewhere along the Côte Bleue, Martigues is blessed with bountiful seafood. Summer sees *sardinades*, during which sardines are grilled outdoors along the canals. Other specialities include *poutargue* (the 'caviar of the Provence', made with mullet eggs, which are salted, dried and pressed into lumps, costing a hefty €150 per kilo), *mêlets* (anchovies prepared with fennel) and *perles de l'étang* (pearls of the lake; cherries macerated in alcohol, coated in marzipan and covered with chocolate).

Martigues' **tourist office** (☎ 04 42 42 31 10; www.martigues-tourisme.com; rond-point de l'Hôtel de Ville; 📄 9am-7pm Mon-Sat, 10am-1pm & 3-7pm Sun Jul & Aug,

9am-6.30pm Mon-Sat, 9.30am-1pm Sun Sep & Easter-Jun, 9am-6.30pm Mon-Sat & 10am-12.30pm Sun Oct-Easter) has information on *chambres d'hôtes* and hotels.

On the Étang's de Berre's southeastern edge, **Marignane** (population 34,238), is dominated by Marseille-Provence airport. A reproduction of Henri Fabre's wooden hydroplane hangs in its hall. Five kilometres north, the *étang's* vast industrial landscape can be surveyed from the ruins of an 11th-century Saracen tower, teetering on top of a rock in **Vitrolles** (population 37,087).

Getting There & Away

Bus 34 links Marseille's bus station with Martigues (€6.20, one hour, hourly). A couple of buses a day continue to the industrial helm, Fos-sur-Mer. Bus 35 from Marseille's Vieux Port drops you at L'Estaque's port.

More than a dozen daily trains (fewer in winter) trundle from Marseille along La Côte Bleue stopping at L'Estaque (€2.10, eight minutes), Carry-le-Rouet (€4.30, 25 minutes), La Couronne (€5.70, 35 minutes) and Port de Bouc (€7.20, 55 minutes), from where the line heads inland to Miramas (€7.90, 1¼ hours), on the northern shore of the Étang de Berre.

SALON DE PROVENCE

pop 40,000

Shrouded by olive groves around 15km north of the Étang de Berre and 35km west of Aix, Salon de Provence is famed for its *savon de Marseille* (Marseille soap), made from the trees' oil, and as the place where the philosopher Nostradamus (1503–66) wrote his prophecies.

Against the atmospheric backdrop of its walled city, this former Arles bishops' residence celebrates its medieval heritage most years in July with street festivities, elaborate costumes and traditional music. The town's many Art Deco façades are a legacy of an earthquake that struck in 1909.

Engines roar in the skies above Salon on Thursdays between noon and 2pm from September to April when France's military flying school, the École de l'Air et École Militaire de l'Air, stationed here since 1936, take to the air when not on tour. The **tourist office** (☎ 04 90 56 27 60; 56 cours Gimon; 📄 9.30am-12.30pm & 2-6.30pm Mon-Sat, 9.30am-12.30pm Sun Jul & Aug, 9.30am-12.30pm & 2-6pm Mon-Sat Sep-Jun) runs guided tours (€46) taking in training sessions along with a gourmet lunch – book several months ahead.

Sights & Activities FLYING

To take to the skies yourself in a glider, contact **Centre de Vol à Voile de la Crau** (☎ 04 90 42 15 38; 20min baptism flights €60).

MUSEUMS & MONUMENTS

A mushroom-shaped, moss-covered fountain, **Fontaine Moussue**, is the centrepiece of Salon's prettiest square, place Crousillat, just outside the walled old city opposite the **Tour de l'Horloge** (Clock Tower; 1626).

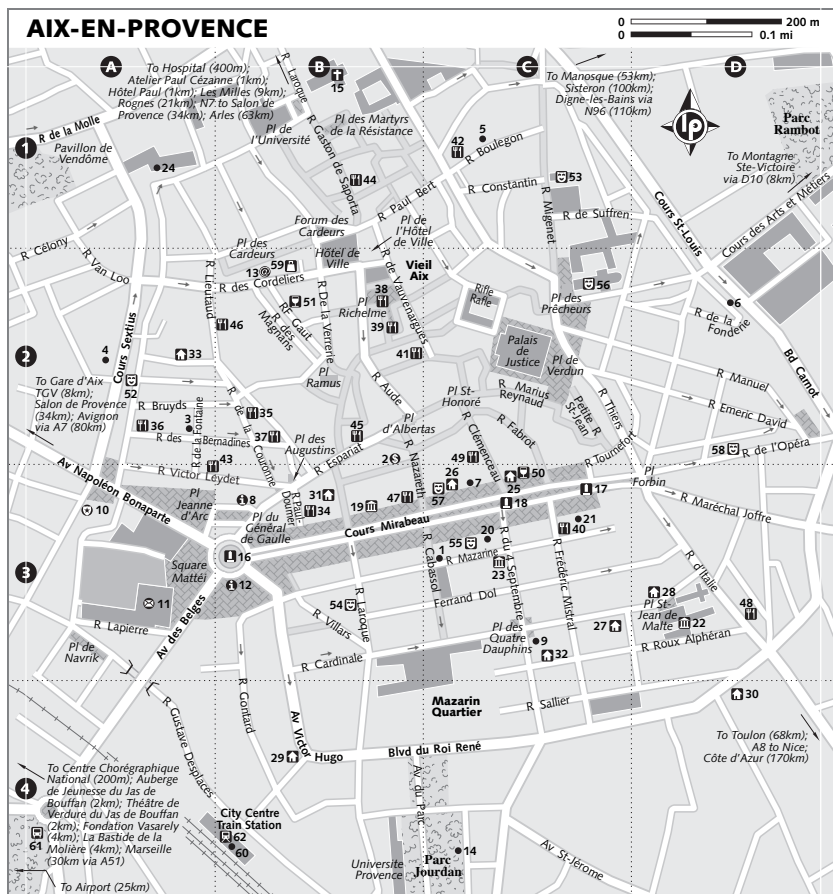
Inside the pedestrian *Vieille Ville* is the **Maison de Nostradamus** (☎ 04 90 56 64 31; 11 rue Nostradamus; adult/student €3.05/2.30; 📄 9am-noon & 2-6pm Mon-Fri, 2-6pm Sat & Sun), where the philosopher lived from 1547 until his death in 1566. Scrolls of Nostradamus' prophecies line the walls, while often-macabre wax figures recreate key scenes from his life accompanied by piped commentary in several languages (tell the front desk what language you'd like and they'll run it on the next available loop). Nostradamus' remains lie behind a plaque inside the **Collégiale St-Laurent** (place St-Laurent), built in 1344.

More wax figures – some 56 – depict local legend and lore at the **Musée Grévin de la Provence** (☎ 04 90 56 36 30; place des Centuries; adult/student €3.05/2.30; 📄 9am-noon & 2-6pm Mon-Fri, 2-6pm Sat & Sun).

Immense medieval halls within the **Château-Musée de l'Empéri** (☎ 04 90 56 22 36; place du Château; adult/child 7-18yr €3.05/2.30; 📄 10am-noon & 2-6pm Wed-Mon Dec-May, Sep & Oct, 10am-6pm Wed-Mon Jul & Aug), home to the archbishops of Arles from the 9th to the 18th centuries, display more than 10,000 exhibits dedicated to French military history up to WWI.

Peer up inside the **Tour du Bourg Neuf**, part of the fortified ramparts built around the city in the 12th century, to see the statue of the Black Virgin. The ebony colour is said to come from the smoke of candles held by women who venerated the statue in the 13th century hoping to conceive.

Recalling the town's medieval past, Gregorian chants are sung at Sunday Mass (9am) in the 13th-century **Église St-Michel** (place St-Michel) on the first and third Sunday of the month, September to June. The **statue of Adam de Craponne** on place de l'Hôtel de Ville commemorates the designer of a canal channelling water from the River Durance to irrigate the Crau Plain in 1559, allowing Salon's olive groves to flourish.



Orientation

Cours Mirabeau extends eastwards to place Forbin from place du Général de Gaulle, a roundabout with a huge fountain commonly referred to as La Rotonde. The city's mostly pedestrianised old town, Vieil Aix, is north of cours Mirabeau. Radiating from La Rotonde, av des Belges leads southwest to the bus station; while av Victor Hugo brings you southeast to the train station – the tourist office is on the southern edge of La Rotonde between the two. The TGV station is 8km from the city centre, linked by shuttle buses.

South of cours Mirabeau is the Mazarin Quartier, with a street grid laid out in the 17th century. The city centre is ringed by a series of maddening one-way boulevards.

Information

Book in Bar (☎ 04 42 26 60 07; 1bis rue Cabasol) Secondhand and new English-language books; with a bohemian reading café out the back.

Librairie Goulard (☎ 04 42 27 66 47; 37 cours Mirabeau; ☞ 10.30am–7.30pm Mon, 9am–7.30pm Tue–Sat) Provence's best selection of Lonely Planet guides in English.

Paradox Librairie Internationale (☎ 04 42 26 47 99; 15 rue du Quatre Septembre) Dublin-style shop paradoxically stocking foreign books and groceries.

EMERGENCY

Police (☎ 04 42 91 91 11; place B Niollon)

INTERNET ACCESS

Virtualis (☎ 04 42 26 02 30; 40 rue Cordeliers; per

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15min/hr €0.15/€3.80; ☞ 9am–midnight Mon–Fri, noon–midnight Sat & Sun) Central and state of the art.

LAUNDRY

Laundrettes (open 7am or 8am to 8pm) include those at 3 rue de la Fontaine, 34 cours Sextius, 3 rue de la Fonderie and 60 rue Boulegon.

MEDICAL SERVICES

Hospital (Centre Hospitalier Général du Pays d'Aix; ☞ 04 42 33 50 00; av des Tamaris)

MONEY

Commercial banks mass along cours Mirabeau and cours Sextius, which runs north–south to the west of La Rotonde.

Change Nazareth (7 rue Nazareth; ☞ 9am–7pm Mon–Sat, to 5pm Sun Jul & Aug)

POST

Post office (place de l'Hôtel de Ville)

TOURIST INFORMATION

Maison de la Nature et de l'Environnement

(☎ 04 42 93 15 80; 2 place Jeanne d'Arc; ☞ 10am–12.30pm & 2–6pm Mon–Fri, 10am–1pm Sat) Green source for information on the environment and ways to explore it (nature walks, discovering Mediterranean flora and so on).

Tourist office (☎ 04 42 16 11 61; www.aixenprovence tourism.com; 2 place du Général de Gaulle; ☞ 8.30am–7pm Mon–Sat, 10am–1pm & 2–6pm Sun) Extended hours in summer.

Sights & Activities

Art, culture and architecture abound in Aix. The city's literal and spiritual heart is the graceful **cours Mirabeau**, laid out during the latter half of the 1600s and named after the revolutionary hero Comte de Mirabeau. Cafés spill out onto the sunny northern footpaths. The southern side shelters a string of elegant Renaissance *hôtels particuliers*; **Hôtel d'Espagnnet** (1647) at No 38 is among the most impressive (today it houses the university's economics department). The Marquis of Entrecasteaux murdered his wife in their family home, **Hôtel d'Isoard de Vauvenarges**, at No 10, built in 1710.

Cours Mirabeau is bookedend to the west by the cast-iron fountain **Fontaine de la Rotonde**, dating from 1860; at its eastern end, the fountain by place Forbin, **fontaine du Roi René**, is decorated with a 19th-century statue of King René clasping a bunch of Muscat grapes, which he's said to have introduced to the region. The mossy **Fontaine d'Eau Thermale**, at the intersection of cours Mirabeau and rue du Quatre Septembre, spouts 34°C water, as the name suggests.

Rue Mazarine, one block south of cours Mirabeau, also has some splendid buildings. Two blocks further south again, the fountain at **place des Quatre Dauphins** dates from 1667. More fine architectural examples are found at the eastern continuation of cours Mirabeau,

VISA FOR AIX

Buy a €2 *Visa pour le Pays d'Aix* from any tourist office for a stack of discounts on admission fees, transport tickets, guided tours and the like, in and around Aix.

and there's a 5th-century sarcophagus in the apse. More recent additions include the 18th-century gilt baroque organ. The acoustics make the Gregorian chants (usually sung at 4.30pm on Sunday) an unforgettable experience.

CÉZANNE SIGHTS

His star may not have reached its giddiest heights until after his death, but the life of local lad Paul Cézanne (1839–1906) is treasured in Aix. To see where he ate, drank, studied and painted, you can follow the **Circuit de Cézanne** (Cézanne trail), marked by footpath-embedded bronze plaques inscribed with the letter C. Corresponding with the plaques is an informative English-language guide *Cézanne's Footsteps*, available free from the tourist office, where the circuit begins.

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), while it doesn't hold any of his works, is painstakingly preserved as it was at the time of his death, strewn with his tools and still-life models, giving the impression he's just popped out to the shops and will be back any moment. The atelier is 1.5km north of the tourist office on a hilltop; take bus 1 to the Cézanne stop.

See p131 for information about trailing Cézanne further afield in the countryside where he painted his landscapes.

Tours

Between April and October the tourist office runs a packed schedule of **guided bus tours** throughout the region, in English and in French. Literary buffs can take a guided Émile Zola literary walk, or follow the free, self-guided *Literary Walk* brochure. Ask for the free *Guide Map* at the tourist office for details of all tours or check its website. Prices start from around €28.

Festivals & Events

Aix's sumptuous cultural calendar is capped by the month-long **Festival International d'Art Lyrique d'Aix-en-Provence** (International Festival of Lyrical Art; www.festival-aix.com) in July. It brings classical music, opera and ballet to city venues such as the Théâtre de l'Archevêché, outside the Cathédrale St-Sauveur, while buskers keep cours Mirabeau's festive spirits high.

Comic books, animation and cartoon art feature during the **Rencontres du 9ème Art** (www

.bd-aix.com in French) festival in March. Other highlights are the two-day **Festival du Tambourin** (Tambourine Festival) in mid-April and the **Fête Mistralienne**, marking the birthday of Provençal troubadour, Frédéric Mistral, on 13 September.

Sleeping

The city centre fills up fast in summer and during busy conference and exam times. The tourist office has extensive accommodation lists including farmhouses for longer stays. Hotel and *chambre d'hôte* bookings are coordinated through the email address resaix@aixenprovencetourism.com.

CHAMBRES D'HÔTES

La Bastide de la Molière (☎ 04 42 52 36 04; www.bastidelamoliere.com; 3797 rte de Galice; s €65–100, d €70–105; (P) (S)) This rambling *bastide* outside the town centre amid Romanesque gardens has four graceful and surprisingly affordable guest rooms. It's (understandably) popular for weddings so you'll need to reserve ahead. Breakfast is an extra €6.50. From town, continue past the Jas de Bouffan stadium through three roundabouts; it's about 1km ahead on your left.

Bastide du Cours (☎ 04 42 26 10 06; www.cafebastide.ducours.com; 43–47 cours Mirabeau; d €171–245; (S)) In the beating heart of Aix, this café right on cours Mirabeau has a delightful interior garden where you can get a culinary taste of Provence with dishes such as slow-roasted lamb shank with wild thyme and locally grown tomatoes (mains €16.50 to €28). It also has four richly adorned *chambre d'hôte* rooms with a visual taste of Provence's striped, flowered and checked fabrics. Rates jump about 30% in July. Breakfast is an additional €13 to €19.

OLD-FASHIONED PAMPERING

When in Aix, do as the Romans did when they were here back in the 1st century BC and bliss out at the thermal spas. Built on the site of Roman Aquae Sextiae's thermal springs, the excavated remains of the Roman spa are displayed beneath glass in the lobby of **Thermes Sextius** (☎ 04 42 23 81 82; www.thermes-sextius.com; 55 cours Sextius). Decadent hydrotherapy treatments include a 'Zen spray massage'. A day's access to the fitness centre or a massage starts at €37; all-day pampering packages are available.

HOTELS Budget

Hôtel Paul (☎ 04 42 23 23 89; hotel.paul@wanadoo.fr; 10 av Pasteur; d €39–49, tr €60) Close to Cézanne's atelier and the thermal spa, the single-star Hôtel Paul is a bright and cheery little bargain, with a sweet garden, telephones in its 24 rooms, and a salon to watch TV.

Hôtel Concorde (☎ 04 42 26 03 95; fax 04 42 27 38 90; 68 blvd du Roi René; d €43–69; (P) (S)) Definitely ask for a room with views over the hills at this 50-room place just on the southeastern edge of the city centre. Some have small balconies, and higher-priced rooms come with air-con and minibars; but skip the dark ground-floor rooms out the back. Parking costs €7.50.

Midrange

Hôtel Le Manoir (☎ 04 42 26 27 20; www.hotelmanoir.com; 8 rue d'Entrecasteux; d €57–85, tr €78–85, q €93; (S) closed Jan; (P) (S)) Elegantly set within a 14th-century cloister reconstructed in the 16th century, Le Manoir has 40 antique-furnished rooms in a secluded but central wedge of the old town; with a lovely, leafy garden and free private parking.

Hôtel Cardinal (☎ 04 42 38 32 30; fax 04 42 26 39 05; 24 rue Cardinale; s/d €58/68, self-catering ste €80; (S)) Beneath stratospheric ceilings, the Hôtel Cardinal's 29 romantic rooms are beautifully furnished with antiques, tasselled curtains, and newly tiled bathrooms. Try for room 8, with double sets of French doors opening to a narrow street-facing balcony. Small self-catering suites are annexed half-a-dozen doors up.

Hôtel des Quatre Dauphins (☎ 04 42 38 16 39; fax 04 42 38 60 19; 54 rue Roux Alpheran; s €55, d €65–85; (S)) Close to cours Mirabeau, a skylit central staircase gives on to 13 coir-carpeted rooms with freshly laundered Wedgwood-blue and pale-pink quilts and curtains. Four quaint attic rooms have sloped beamed ceilings (maybe not ideal if you're pushing 6ft). Wi-fi is available for €5 per 24 hours.

Grand Hôtel Nègre Coste (☎ 04 42 27 74 22; www.hotelnegrecoste.com; 33 cours Mirabeau; d €70–140; (P) (S)) The only hotel right on cours Mirabeau isn't as grand as it was when Louis XIV stayed here in 1660. It has musty corridors and blased service, but rooms are cheered up with Provençal colours, and there aren't many spots more central than this. Garage parking is €10.

Top End

Hôtel des Augustins (☎ 04 42 27 28 59; www.hotel-augustins.com; 3 rue de la Masse; d €97–240; (S)) A

MUSEUMS

Coinciding with the centenary of Cézanne's death, Aix's exceptional **Muse Granet** (☎ 04 42 52 88 32; place St-Jean de Malte; ☎ 11am–6pm Wed–Mon) reopened in 2006 after nearly three years of works, tripling it in size. Housed in a 17th-century priory of the Knights of Malta, its collections include 16th- to 20th-century Italian, Flemish and French paintings, including the museum's pride and joy, eight of Cézanne's works. Ongoing admission prices not yet finalised at the time of writing.

Musée Paul Arbaud (☎ 04 42 38 38 95; 2a rue du Quatre Septembre; adult/student €3/1.50; ☎ 2–5pm Mon–Sat) connects you to Aix's literary heritage with displays of books and manuscripts. It also exhibits Provençal faïence (tin-glazed earthenware).

Galérie d'Art du Conseil Général des Bouches du Rhône (☎ 04 42 93 03 67; 21bis cours Mirabeau; admission free; ☎ 10.15am–12.45pm & 1.30–6.30pm Mon–Sat) showcases photography and contemporary art.

The Bauhaus-style edifice **Fondation Vasarely** (☎ 04 42 20 01 09; 1 av Marcel Pagnol; adult/child under 7 €7/4; ☎ 10am–6pm Mon–Sat) is 4km west of town. Built in 1976, its 16 hexagonal spaces house vast architecture-meets-art works by Victor Vasarely, the 'father of optical art'. Take bus 4 from La Rotonde to the Vasarely stop.

CATHÉDRALE ST-SAUVEUR

A potpourri of architectural styles, the **Cathédrale St-Sauveur** (rue J de Laroque; ☎ 8am–noon & 2–6pm) was primarily built between 1285 and 1350. A Romanesque 12th-century nave is incorporated in its southern aisle, the chapels were added in the 14th and 15th centuries,

heartbeat from the hub of Aixois life, this former 15th-century convent has volumes of history: for example, Martin Luther stayed here after his excommunication from Rome. Decorated with hand-painted furniture, the largest, most luxurious abodes have Jacuzzis; and two have private terraces beneath the filigreed bell tower. The stained-glass foyer has free wi-fi.

Hôtel Cézanne (☎ 04 42 91 11 11; www.hotelaix.com; 40 av Victor Hugo; d €140-155; ♿ ♻️ ♻️) In an elegant white building with royal purple canvas awnings and interiors, this place has personalised touches including monogrammed towels, free stamped postcards, and free (nonalcoholic) minibars. Downstairs, the open bar is lit by designer lamps and strewn with purple glass pebbles and bowls of seasonal nuts and fruits such as cherries and clementines – just as Cézanne himself would have painted.

HOSTELS

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) This cyclist-friendly HI, with a fun bar and tennis courts, is a landing pad for many of Aix's foreign-language students. The hostel's 2km west of the centre; take bus 4 from La Rotonde to the Vasarely stop.

Eating

Aix excels at Provençal cuisine. Terraces spill across dozens of backstreet squares, including place des Cardeurs, forum des Cardeurs, place de Verdun, place Richelme and place de l'Hôtel de Ville. Place Ramus, off pedestrianised rue Annonciade, is a restaurant-filled square where buskers often play.

RESTAURANTS

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 turning out delicious, simple home cooking, including incredible *crème brûlée* (a cream or custard dessert covered with caramelised sugar) from the open kitchen. In summer, feasting takes place outdoors in the garden, and there's a comfy lounge room to unwind pre- or post-repas.

Chez Grand Mère (☎ 04 42 53 33 47; 1 rue des Bernardines; mains €12.50-21.50; ☎ closed Sun dinner & Mon) In the old town, this friendly place, characterised by colourful murals, serves French fare in-

AUTHOR'S CHOICE

Amphityron (☎ 04 42 26 54 10; 2-4 rue Paul-Doumer; mains €23; ☎ lunch & dinner Tue-Sat) Amphityron combines the talents of co-owners Patrice Lesné and Bruno Ungaro. Patrice masterfully oversees the sleek dining rooms of studded red banquettes and outdoor 15th-century cloister terrace; passionate chef Bruno visits the markets each morning for seasonal specialities, which might include 15 different types of tomatoes. The attached Comptoir de l'Amphi (mains €12 to €14) is an affordable alternative; and there's a piano where guests knock out a tune after a cognac or two.

cluding frogs' legs and the like. If you missed out on *bouillabaisse* in Marseille, this is your chance to make up for it (minimum of two diners; order two days before).

Bistro Latin (☎ 04 42 38 22 88; 18 rue de la Couronne; menu €21; ☎ lunch & dinner Tue-Sat) Readers rave about this bistro and with good reason. Engaging and affordable (it's definitely worth booking ahead), Bistro Latin has extensive *menu* choices spanning cod, scampi risotto and a myriad of meat dishes cooked with saffron, spinach and cream.

Le Zinc d'Hugo (☎ 04 42 27 69 69; 22 rue Lieutaud; mains €14-18; ☎ lunch & dinner Tue-Sat) Outside this rustic bistro of stone walls and chunky wooden tables, a blackboard chalks up daily specials such as a terrine of foie gras with confit of vegetables, as well as highlights from its 80-strong wine list.

l'icône (☎ 04 42 27 59 82; 3 rue Frédéric Mistral; 2-/3-course menu €17/25; ☎ lunch & dinner Mon-Sat) The designer Italian-Mediterranean fare matches the designer boxlike teal armchairs and dark timber lining this glam place just off cours Mirabeau; with a stainless-steel bar and DJ spinning electro lounge beats.

L'Aixquis (☎ 04 42 27 76 16; 22 rue Victor Leydet; mains €18-25; ☎ lunch & dinner Tue-Sat) You'll probably be tempted to whip out your camera to photograph elaborately presented *plats* such as truffle-infused St-Jacques scallops at this small peach-coloured restaurant, which has a way of giving even the most humble vegetables panache. The *carte* (no *menus*) changes seasonally, but the magical *minute chocolat noir* (a tray of petite desserts) is a year-round fixture.

Le Formal (☎ 04 42 27 08 31; 32 rue Espariat; mains from €14; ☎ lunch & dinner Tue-Fri, dinner Sat) Actually the namesake of its chef, Jean-Luc Le Formal, who's gaining a reputation in France's foodie circles, this first-class establishment has impeccably mannered service both at its whitewashed-stone lounge/reception area at street level and in its vaulted-cellar dining rooms.

SELF-CATERING

Aix is blessed with bountiful **markets** (see p130).

There are around 20 *calisson* makers in town (see p130), as well as plenty of patisseries. Fresh, often still-warm loaves cram the shelves of **La Boulangerie du Coin** (4 rue Boulegon; ☎ Tue-Sun). It's also one of the few *boulangeries* to bake on Sunday, along with the **boulangerie** (5 rue Tournefort) that never closes.

Pick up gourmet goodies at **Jacquèmes** (☎ 04 42 23 48 64; 9 rue Méjanès; ☎ closed Mon am & Sun), a fantastic *épicerie* (grocery) that sells cheese, cold meats, sausages and 500 types of whisky. **Le Comptoir des Oliviers** (14 rue Gaston de Saporta; ☎ closed Mon) sells olive oil, as does **Place aux Huiles** (59 rue d'Italie), which also dispenses chocolates, coffees and teas, and culinary advice.

Staples are on hand at **Monoprix** (cours Mirabeau; ☎ 8.30am-9pm Mon-Sat).

Drinking

Pavement cafés gracing cours Mirabeau provide a plethora of people-watching and posing ops. Open-air cafés also saturate the city's squares, especially place des Cardeurs, forum des Cardeurs, place de Verdun and place de l'Hôtel de Ville.

Les Deux Garçons (☎ 04 42 26 00 51; 53 cours Mirabeau) The best – since 1792 and still resplend-

ent – is the legendary café where Cézanne and Zola used to hang out. Be waited on by white-aproned waiters in the gilded olive-painted salon and outdoor terrace, or head upstairs to the jazz club-piano bar.

L'Orienté (5 rue de Félibre Gaut; ☎ 1pm-1am) For a mellow change of pace, smoke a *shisha* (Turkish water pipe) and soak up the Buddha atmosphere, along with more than 50 different flavours of tea.

Entertainment

Flip through a copy of the monthly *In Aix* (free from the tourist office) to find out what's on where.

THEATRE, OPERA & CLASSICAL MUSIC

August brings open-air performances (theatre, cinema, cabaret, circus, video projections etc; tickets €1) to Parc Jourdan (p126), **Théâtre de Verdure du Jas de Bouffan** (av St-John Perse), and the Carrières d'Ocre in Rognes (p131) during the month-long Les Instants d'Été.

Théâtre du Jeu de Paume (☎ 04 42 99 12 00; 17-21 rue de l'Opéra) was built in 1756 on the site of a royal tennis court; the curtain rises in the ornate Italianate auditorium most evenings from June to September.

Classical concerts (☎ 04 42 99 37 11) are held in two enchanting churches, **Église Ste-Marie Madeleine** (place des Prêcheurs) and the 17th-century chapel **Chapelle de Ste-Catherine** (20 rue Mignet).

Aix will imminently be graced with a stunning new 1300-seat theatre, designed by Italian architect Vittorio Gregotti – check with the tourist office for updates.

LIVE MUSIC & DJS

Like all good student cities, the scene in Aix is fun, but fickle. The areas on and around

DANCE IN AIX

Long at the forefront of contemporary dance, Aix is now home to France's first purpose-built choreography centre, the **Centre Chorégraphique National** (CNN, National Choreographic Centre; rue des Allumettes). Opened in October 2006, this glass, steel and black-concrete box, Pavillon Noir, houses a 378-seat auditorium, roof deck and glass-walled rehearsal studios. The skeletal building, masterminded by French architect Rudi Ricciotti, allows passers-by to peer into the illuminated studios to watch the agile artistry of dancers, including resident dance company **Ballet Preljocaj** (☎ 04 42 93 48 00; www.preljocaj.org). The cutting-edge Preljocaj, founded in 1984, presents some of Europe's most creative – and at times shocking – works. Performance schedules are posted on the company's website; its other programmes (when not on tour) include dance workshops for adults and children.

For more on dance in Aix – and Provence – see p70.

rue de la Verrerie and place Richelme are prime for nightlife. Listings on the website www.marseillebynight.com (in French) also cover Aix.

La Belle Époque (☎ 04 42 27 65 66; 29 cours Mirabeau) Many a 'beautiful time' has been had at this place, which sees DJs spinning Latino, house and funk every evening. Opening hours vary.

Bar Sextius (☎ 04 42 26 07 21; 13 cours Sextius; ☎ 7am-2am Mon-Sat) With live music and DJs playing house, reggae and raga, depending on the night, Bar Sextius is *le* local gathering spot – ask the in-the-know crowd here about Aix's latest in-spots.

CINEMA

Aix's arty-intellectual student population makes for great cinema offerings, from Oscar contenders to cult flicks, very often in English: **Ciné Mazarin** (cinemazarin@wanadoo.fr; 6 rue Laroque; adult/student €7.50/6.50)

Cinéma Renoir (☎ 08 92 68 72 70; 24 cours Mirabeau; adult/student €7.50/6.50)

Le Cézanne (☎ 0 892 687 270; www.lecezanne.com in French; 1 rue Marcel Guillaume; adult/student €8.50/6.70)

Shopping

Shopping is at its most chic along pedestrian rue Marius Reinaud, which winds behind the Palais de Justice on place de Verdun. Elegant boutiques also grace cours Mirabeau.

Local wine vendors include **Cave du Felibrige** (18 rue des Cordeliers), which has a splendid array – some very expensive.

SWEET TREAT

Aix's sweetest treat since King René's wedding banquet in 1473 is the marzipan-like local speciality, *calisson*, a small, diamond-shaped chewy delicacy comprising 40% ground almonds and 60% fruit syrup, wrapped in a communion wafer and glazed with white icing sugar. When the Great Plague came into town in 1630, *calissons* supposedly staved off the disease. Traditional *calissonniers* still make the sweets, including **Roy René** (☎ 04 42 26 67 86; www.calisson.com; 10 rue Clémenceau), which also runs guided tours for €1 at its out-of-town factory/museum (at 10am on Tuesday and Thursday; book at the shop in town). Eight or nine plainly wrapped *calissons* (100g) cost around €3 to €4.

Trestle tables set up each morning for the **produce market** on place Richelme, selling olives, goats cheese, garlic, lavender, honey, peaches, melons and other sun-kissed products. Another **food market** (place des Prêcheurs) takes place on Tuesday, Thursday and Saturday morning.

Rainbows of flowers fill place des Prêcheurs during the Sunday morning **flower market**; and place de l'Hôtel de Ville (Tuesday, Thursday and Saturday mornings). Quirky vintage items can also be found at the **flea market** (Tuesday, Thursday and Saturday mornings) on place de Verdun.

Getting There & Away

BUS

Aix's **bus station** (☎ information office 08 91 02 40 25; av de l'Europe) is a 10-minute walk southwest from La Rotonde. Numerous companies' services include buses to Marseille (€4.40, 35 minutes, every 10 minutes, every 20 minutes on Sunday), Arles (€10, 1½ hours, five daily), Avignon (€13.90, one hour, six daily) and Toulon (€10, one hour, six daily Monday to Saturday).

Buses serve the Gorges du Verdon – see p239 for details.

CAR & MOTORCYCLE

Circumnavigating the one-way, three-lane orbital system encircling the old town is nightmarish in heavy traffic. Street parking spaces are like hens' teeth, but secure, pricier covered parking is plentiful.

The following car-hire agencies also have offices adjacent to the Gare d'Aix TGV train station:

Avis (☎ 04 42 21 64 16; 11 blvd Gambetta)

Europcar (☎ 04 42 27 83 00; 55 blvd de la République)

Hertz (☎ 04 42 27 91 32; 43 av Victor Hugo)

National Citer (☎ 04 42 93 07 85; 42 av Victor Hugo)

TRAIN

Non-TGV trains chug between Aix's **City Centre Train Station** (☎ 5am-9.15pm Mon-Fri, 6am-9.15pm Sat & Sun, information office 9am-7pm) and Marseille (€6.20, 35 minutes, at least 18 daily), while TGV services use Gare d'Aix TGV, 8km west. Within the region the only destinations served by TGV are Marseille (€7.80, 15 minutes), Avignon (€25, 20 minutes) and Nice (€32.50, 3¼ hours).

Getting Around

TO/FROM THE AIRPORT & TGV STATION

A half-hourly **Navette** (☎ 04 42 93 59 13) links Aix's bus station with both the TGV station (€3.90)

A HORRIBLE DETOUR

Drive 6km west of Aix along the D9 to reach **Tuileries des Milles**, a red-brick tile factory in Les Milles that manufactured 30,000 tonnes of bricks and tiles a year from 1882 until 31 August 1939, when it was turned into a WWII concentration camp. By June 1940 some 3500 artists and intellectuals – predominantly Germans living in the Marseille region, including surrealist painters Max Ernst (1891-1976) and Hans Bellmer (1902-75) – were interned at **Camp des Milles**. Poignant paintings and prose inscribed on the walls by the prisoners in the refectory remain untouched, as does one of the wagons used to transport prisoners by rail from Les Milles to Auschwitz.

Unnervingly almost intact, since 1993 the camp has been preserved as a **memorial** (☎ 04 42 24 34 68; admission free; ☎ 9am-noon & 1-4pm Mon-Fri); the wagon can be visited by appointment only.

and the Marseille-Provence airport (€7.90), 25km away, from around 5am to 11.30pm.

BICYCLE

Those with a used public-transport ticket for that day can get a discount on their wheels from **Relais Aix en Vélo** (☎ 04 42 26 78 92; La Rotonde, 2 av des Belges; ☎ 9.30am-noon & 12.30-6pm Mon-Sat).

BUS

The city's 14 bus and three minibus lines are operated by **Aix en Bus** (☎ 04 42 26 37 28; ☎ 8.30am-7pm Mon-Sat). The information desk is inside the tourist office.

La Rotonde is the main bus hub. Most services run until 8pm. A single/carnet of 10 tickets costs €1.10/7.70; a day pass costs €3.50. Minibus 1 links the bus station with La Rotonde and cours Mirabeau. Minibus 2, starting at the train station, follows much the same route.

TAXI

You can usually find taxis outside the bus station. To order one, call **Taxi Radio Aixois** (☎ 04 42 27 71 11) or **Taxi Mirabeau** (☎ 04 42 21 61 61).

AROUND AIX

Mountains painted by Cézanne, a truffle kingdom and a chilling WWII concentration camp are a short drive from Aix.

Montagne Ste-Victoire

Before leaving Aix, make sure you pick up a copy of the tourist office's *In Cézanne's Footsteps*. Between 1902 and 1906 Cézanne produced 11 oil and 17 watercolour paintings in the surrounding countryside, including *La Montagne Ste-Victoire au Grand Pin* (1887).

Heading east on the D17 from Aix, you pass local artists at their easels in the roadside pine forests recreating Cézanne's favourite haunt,

the magnificent mountain ridge Montagne Ste-Victoire. Garrigue covers the mountain's dry slopes, which are skirted by 32 sq km of vineyards producing Coteaux d'Aix-en-Provence wine.

Cézanne's cubist works *Les Baigneurs* and *Les Baigneuses* (The Bathers) were painted in the **Vallée de l'Arc** around the small mining town of **Gardanne** (population 19,679), 10km south off the D6.

Mountain flora and fauna can be found at **Écomusée de la Forêt Méditerranéenne** (☎ 04 42 51 41 00; www.institut-foret.com in French; chemin de Roman; adult/child under 15 €5.30/3; ☎ 10am-12.30pm & 1.30-6.45pm Sun-Fri Jul-mid-Aug, 9am-12.30 & 1-5.45pm Sun-Fri early Sep-Jun, closed mid-Aug-early Sep) in Gardanne; and along the *sentier de découverte* (discovery path) at the **Maison de Ste-Victoire** (☎ 04 42 66 84 40; ☎ 10am-6pm) in St-Antonin-sur-Bayon. The latter, in converted stables, shelters fauna and flora exhibits and has mountains of information on **walking** and **mountain-biking** around Montagne Ste-Victoire. The entire mountain, save the roads that cross it, is closed between 1 July and 1 September due to the threat of forest fire.

Returning to Aix via the westbound D10, you pass Vauvenargues, with the 14th-century Château de Vauvenargues, in the grounds of which Picasso is buried. The red-brick castle, purchased by the artist in 1958, still belongs to the Picasso family and cannot be visited.

Rognes

pop 4191 / elev 311m

Originally built on the slopes of Foussa, part of the Chaîne de la Trévaresse, Rognes' little village tumbled down to the bottom of the hill in 1909 after an earthquake struck.

Almost 75% of Provence's black truffles are snouted out here. The village's **Grand Marché Truffes et Gastronomie** (Truffle & Gastronomy

Market), held the Sunday before Christmas, opens with a *Bénédiction des Truffes* (truffle blessing) in the church. Rognes' **tourist office** (☎ 04 42 50 13 36; www.ville-rognés.fr in French; 5 cours St-Étienne; ☎ 3.30-6.30pm Mon, 10am-noon & 3.30-6.30pm Tue-Sat, 10am-noon Sun) knows what's on at the **Carrières d'Ocre** (rte de St-Cannat), a theatre in a former quarry; and has information on *chambres d'hôtes* in the area.

Truffle ice cream, lamb roasted in truffle juice and *foie gras de canard* (duck foie gras) are among the creations of Chef Paul Dietrich at his gorgeous countryside manor, **Les Olivarelles** (☎ 04 42 50 24 27; chemin Font de Vabre; menu €32; ☎ lunch Tue-Sun, dinner Tue-Sat Jun-Aug, lunch & dinner Fri & Sat, lunch Sun Sep-1 Jan & 15 Jan-May; 🍴), 6km northwest of Rognes along the D66 amid scented garrigue.