

Var Provence



Think 480 km of coastline and 300 days of sunshine each year

Think unspoilt nature, quaint villages, old churches and museums

Think lavender, art, luxury, marinas, beaches and fun

Think 10 coastal cruise destinations from Saint Tropez to Toulon



Executive summary

Along 50 nautical miles of France's beautiful Mediterranean coastline there are ten ports that provide access to the natural beauty of the Var region.



The Provençal department of the Var is situated on the Mediterranean coast in the southeast of France. With 430km of coastline and 300 days of sunshine each year it is the country's most popular region for tourists after Paris. Its climate makes it France's largest producer of fresh flowers, and also its second most forested area.

The Var is home to some of France's most important national parks and areas of natural beauty. Among them are Port-Cros, home of Europe's first submarine garden; the national botanical conservatory at Porquerolles; and the regional park Gorges du Verdon, Europe's largest canyon. Some of France's foremost national monuments are also to be found in the Var: Le Thoronet Abbey, Fréjus cloister and Saint-Maximin basilica among them.

The Var is blessed with a generous soil, which forms the basis for the production of chestnuts, figs, olive oil and wines – in particular rosé varieties and the famous Bandol AOC wine.

The people of the Var have their own 'art of living', celebrated in flower festivals (*the Corso*), the *bravades*, and of course *pétanque* tournaments. And authentic local arts and crafts include production of cork and earthenware goods – including Salernes pottery, which has been produced here for 4,000 years.

The Var's Mediterranean coastline stretches from Saint-Cyr, Bandol and Sanary, east of Toulon, to St Tropez and St Raphael to the west. There is one protected deep water harbour for even the largest of cruise ships, and nine anchorages alongside chic and beautiful marina harbours – ideal for

deluxe and premium class small ships that can access the smaller ports.

- Toulon offers cruise lines the best protected natural harbour in the Mediterranean, with no tides, currents or wind to deal with – all year round. It has become the safe and reliable option among captains during the winter season in the western Mediterranean.
- The city centre terminal is just a five minute walk from Toulon's old quarter with its bustling Provençal market, cathedral, shady squares, monuments and fountains surrounded by cafés, boutiques and restaurants.
- Toulon-Hyères airport is a short 20 minute drive from the port. From Hyères there are over 10 flights a day to London, Amsterdam, Brussels, Paris and Breast. Nice International airport is 90 minutes from Toulon and Marseille International



airport is just 60 minutes.

- The Var region is ideal for pre- and post-cruise stays as it has many luxury and boutique hotels equipped to the highest international standards. Many are located in chic St Tropez.
- The Var region is gateway to medieval hilltop villages, arts and craft workshops, monasteries and exceptional natural sites such as the Verdon Gorge – Europe's largest canyon.
- The Var region is rich in activities for golfers, mountain bikers, white water rafters and gliding enthusiasts – and of course there are plenty of water sports to go with the 40km of beaches.
- The Var offers wine tasting, cooking classes, off-the-beaten-track walking tours, exclusive picnics on beaches alongside vineyards, famous botanical gardens and helicopter tours.

Var Provence Cruise Club

Launched in 2008 by the Var Chamber of Commerce and Industry and the Var General Council, the Var Provence Cruise Club represents a network of ten ports to berth and/or anchor in Provence d'Azur: Saint-Cyr-sur-Mer, Bandol, Sanary sur Mer, Six Fours/ Les Embiez, Toulon/La Seyne, Hyères/ Porquerolles, Le Lavandou, Cavalaire sur Mer, Saint-Tropez and Saint-Raphaël.

Contact the Var Provence Cruise Club for detailed information about operations in Var Provence region: transit or turnaround requests, excursion offers, events, nautical distances between ports, marine maps, distances and access, technical and useful contacts and information about all ten ports.

Cruise companies calling in Var Provence

MSC, Iberocruceros, Thomson Cruises, Island Cruises, Royal Caribbean International, Celebrity Cruises, Oceania Cruises, Silversea, Noble Caledonia, Seabourn, Star Clippers, Hapag Lloyd, Windstar Cruises, Seadream Yacht Club, Sea Cloud Cruises, Crystal cruises, Azamara cruises, Regent Seven Seas, Club Med, Compagnie des Iles du Ponant, Holland America Line and Ocean Village.

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Saint-Cyr-sur-Mer

An unspoiled introduction to the breathtaking Calanques



First stop at Saint-Cyr is the Statue of Liberty! Sculpted and signed by Bartholdi, the creator of the original, this gilded small-scale model stands in the centre of this pretty Provençal village. Here you can find cafés, shops and a market on Sunday.

Pack your swimming gear and head for the nearby seaside resort and port of Les Lecques. This is perfect for a day out, with a long sandy beach and a promenade humming with shops and restaurants. There is also the Museum of Tauroentum, which commemorates the town's history as a Greek trading port.

One must-do while you are here is the Underwater Trail along the Port d'Alon *calanque*. There are several of these rocky, fjord-like inlets along the coast from Saint-Cyr west to Marseille, and they provide a fantastic opportunity to bathe in sheltered, clear blue waters and study the marine environment below.

AROUND SAINT-CYR

Cassis is a pretty little port tucked in between the massif of the *calanques* and the majestic Cap Canaille to the east, and is a great day excursion. The village, with its Museum of the Mediterranean, is full of ancient Greek artefacts recovered from the seabed. There are boat trips to explore the secluded *calanques* to the west. Artists such as Dufy, Matisse and even Winston Churchill were persuaded by the beauty of the scenery to set up their easels here.

For wine and olive oil, there is the Domaine de Souviou, an estate with a 16th century *bastide* or farmhouse. Here there are guided tours of the estate with tastings of wine and olive oil – the twin flavours of Provence.

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Bandol

The vineyard capital of Provence



Bandol is one of the oldest and largest Riviera resorts. It is also famous for its wines – red, white and rosé – which benefit from the unique Provençal combination of cold northerly mistral winds and hot ripening sun. Bandol itself is set in a sheltered bay with many sandy beaches. It is a friendly seaside resort with a tree-lined promenade, a casino and a large yacht harbour, with pretty boutiques along the seafront open every day of the week. The tiny streets around the 18th century church of St François de Sales are also lively with restaurants and shops.

AROUND BANDOL

The vineyards of Bandol extend 15km inland; they are built on terraces known as *restanques*. Organised wine-tasting trips can be arranged by appointment at any of the wine estates. Domaine de

la Bégude, however, is the highest and most northerly and, housed in a building and chapel dating from the 7th century where wine-tasting and Provençal cooking courses can be enjoyed in the most beautiful surroundings.

Golfers will enjoy the Ronald Fream-designed golf course at the Dolce Frégate Provence resort. The setting of its 27 holes overlooking the blue Mediterranean, is considered one of the most beautiful in Europe.

The Paul Ricard motor-racing circuit at Castellet has been renovated and modernised to Formula 1 standards. The pretty village of Le Castellet is built on a fortified hilltop, with a 15th century château. With its arts and crafts shops and medieval history, Le Castellet and its neighbour, La Cadière d'Azur, make a fascinating day excursion.

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Sanary-sur-Mer

A picture postcard setting

Sanary-sur-Mer is a pretty little village with colourful 'pointu' fishing boats bobbing at the quay. White and pink cottages line the shallow sandy beach.

The small shady squares, local shops and cafés are all typically Provençal. The atmosphere oozes security and the comfort of old traditions. German intellectuals such as Thomas Mann and his brother Heinrich, Bertolt Brecht, Stephan Zweig and the painter Lion Feuchtwanger fled to this haven in the late 1930s to escape Nazism. British writer Aldous Huxley lived here in the early 1930s, a period his biographer Sybille Bedford captures in her novel *Jigsaw*.

The underwater explorer Jacques Cousteau carried out his experiments here that led to the development of the modern aqualung. One of his original assistants was Frédéric Dumas, and the



museum here that bears his name has a collection of old-fashioned diving gear.

The Exotic Garden and Zoo has a display of hundreds of rare and beautiful plants, and a collection of typical animals of the region. Dolphin-watching excursions depart from the port; you can spend all day observing these gentle creatures frolicking in the azure waters of the Mediterranean.

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AROUND SANARY

The pretty village of Ollioules has at its centre a huge 11th century Romanesque church. Winding streets lead up to a 13th century ruined château, surrounded by terraced hills, where the locals grow oranges and lemons as well as flowers to supply the huge wholesale flower market. The village is set at the entrance to a deep gorge with many mysterious caves, where bandits used to hide.

Six-Fours and Les Embiez island

For lovers of nature and diving

The town of Six-Fours-les-Plages is situated on the Sicié peninsula, giving access to a range of great beaches.

The town has a string of modern beach bars and restaurants and has a market on Tuesday and Saturday mornings. In the nearby port of Le Brusca to the south, there is a market on Thursdays, and a night market on selected evenings in July and August.

The town is dominated by a massive 19th century fort. Sheltering in its shadow is the 11th century Romanesque collegial chapel of St Peter, enlarged in 1608.

The Cap Nègre battery, built in 1846 to dominate this part of the coastline, is to the north of Six-Fours. Here the interactive museum brings to life the history of the battery, coastal defence and the role of the French navy.

AROUND SIX-FOURS

North of Six-Fours, the Notre Dame de Pepiole chapel is one of the oldest Christian churches in France, dating back to the 6th century.

The tree park at Coudou Park is a fantastic experience for all the family, allowing you to swing like Tarzan through the giant pine forest canopy. There are nine different courses to suit all ages.

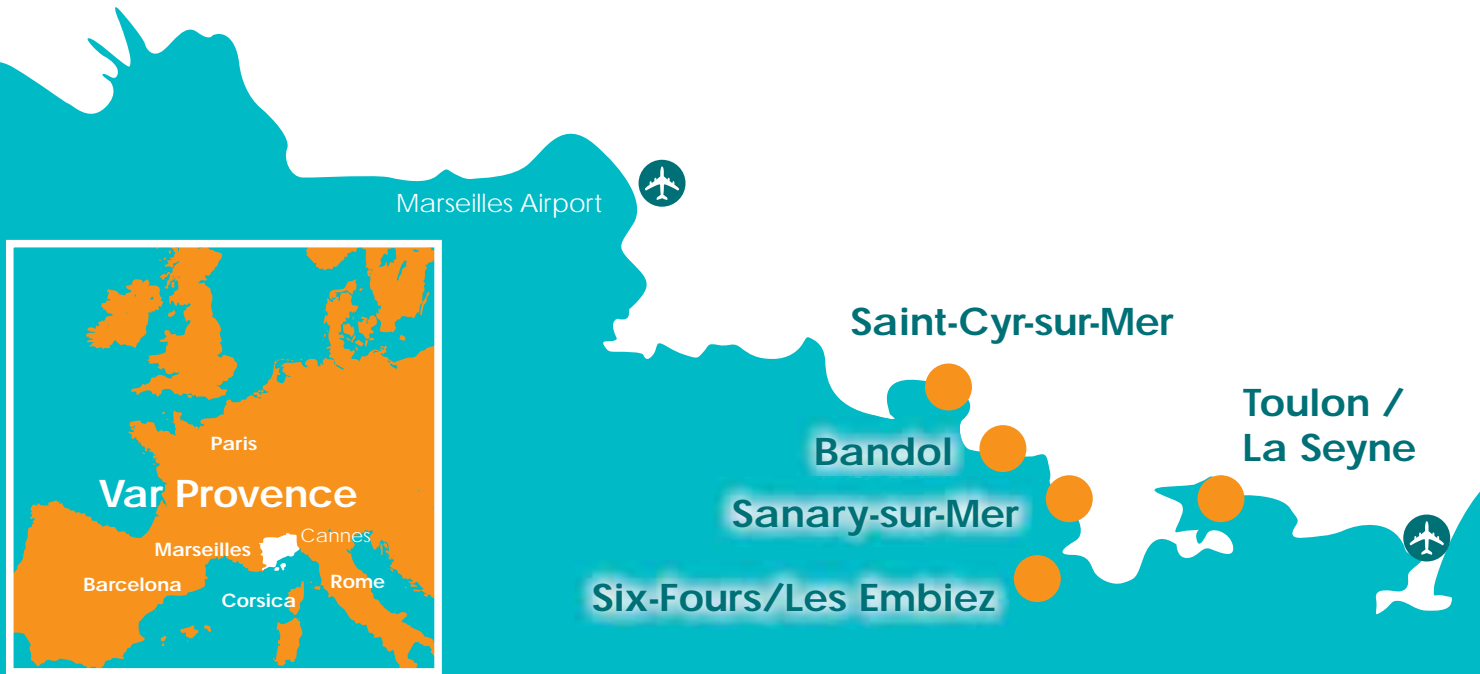
This is a paradise for nature lovers; divers will love the clear water, and there is a long nature trail to follow. Les Embiez island is famous for the Paul Ricard Oceanographic Centre. The smaller Gaou island has concerts every summer.



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Destination highlights



SAINT-CYR-SUR-MER

- Saint François de Sales church
- Pointe Grenier and Pointe du Deffend headlands
- Ile de Bendor
- Tauroentum Roman Museum
- Sebastien's Art Center
- The Statue of Liberty
- Provence Space
- The Calanques of Port d'Alon
- Sandy beaches
- Provençal market

BANDOL

- Bendor island
- Maison des vins
- Eglise Saint François de Sales
- Dolce Frégate Golf
- Museums
- Residence Athena
- Tuesday's market
- Littoral path: Pointe Grenier and Pointe du Deffend

SANARY-SUR-MER

- Provence tournaments between knights on the open sea
- The port and its pointus
- Sanary exotic garden and the zoo
- St Nazaire church
- Medieval tower
- Chapels
- Forts and batteries
- Frédéric Dumas diving museum
- Arts and crafts galleries and boutiques through the pedestrian district

SIX-FOURS AND LES EMBIEZ ISLAND

- Aquarium museum at the Paul Ricard Oceanographic Institute
- Museum of the Environment
- Ste Cécile Chapel
- Les Embiez' Cellar
- Round the island on foot, by bike, or on the little train
- Arena
- Beaches
- Saint-Pierre church
- Cap Nègre fort
- Pépiolle chapel

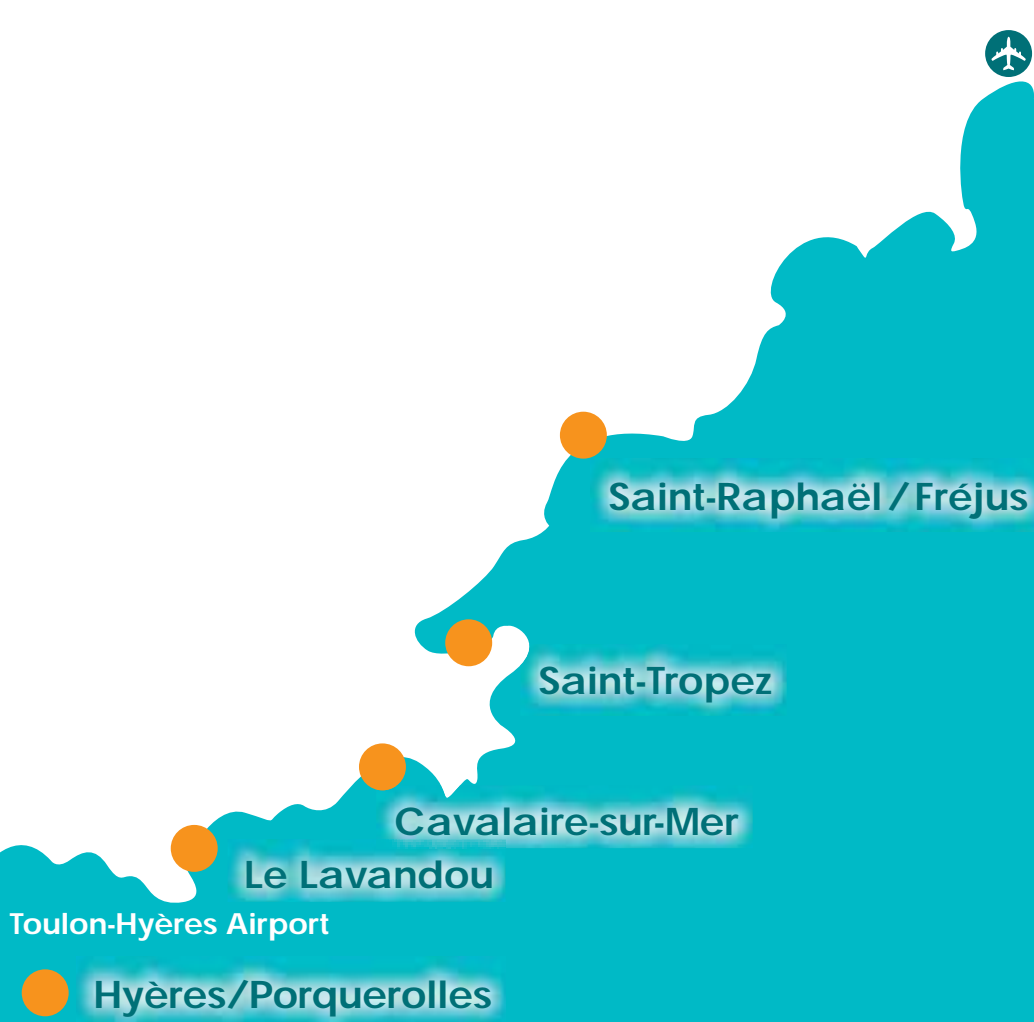
TOULON / LA SEYNE

- Mont Faron
- Toulon bay
- Tour Royale
- Shady squares and pedestrian streets through the medieval district
- Ste Marie de la Sedo cathedral
- Pierre Puget's Atlantes figures
- Original port entrance, Porte de l'Arsenal (entrance of the former naval museum)
- The bell of the port's clock tower
- Landing memorial in Provence
- Saint Louis fort
- Galeries Lafayette building
- Former Caisse d'Epargne building
- The fountains footpath
- Art museum
- Hôtel des Arts modern art centre
- Photography centre
- Museum of old Toulon
- National marine museum
- Asian arts museum
- Natural history museum
- Alexander I gardens





Nice Airport



HYÈRES/PORQUEROLLES

- The House of the National Park and the Emmanuel Lopez Garden
- The Fort Sainte Agathe
- Le Moulin du Bonheur, a typical Provençal windmill
- Jazz Festival in Porquerolles
- Port Cros National Park
- Porquerolles beaches
- Villa Noailles
- The templars' tower & castle in Hyères medieval district
- Les Salins birds' sanctuary

LE LAVANDOU

- The 12 sandy beaches
- Provençal open-air market on Thursday mornings
- St Louis Church
- The fishermen
- The painters
- The fountains footpath
- Excursions by boat towards the islands
- Discovery of the Maures Hills

CAVALAIRE-SUR-MER

- Rayol's Mediterranean Gardens
- Outstanding scuba-diving site
- Champion jetski site
- Fish market
- Le Massif des Maures
- Cavalaire's Casino

SAINT-TROPEZ

- International Saint-Tropez Polo Cup (June-July)
- Ramatuelle Festival (music festival in July-August)
- 'Les voiles de Saint-Tropez' – Saint-Tropez's International sailing regatta (September-October)
- Bravades of Saint-Tropez
- Famous Gendarmerie of Saint-Tropez, from French actor Louis de Funès' movie scenes
- Place des Lices (pétanque playground)
- Saint-Tropez yacht marina promenade
- Brigitte Bardot's exhibition (June–October 2010)

- Pedestrian streets and luxury shops
- The fish market
- Annonciade museum
- The butterfly house

SAINT RAPHAËL / FRÉJUS

- Provence tournaments between knights on the open sea (nautical jousting)
- Corniche d'Or Estérel massif (characteristic ochre mountain hills)
- Festival of string quartets in Pays de Fayence
- Archaeological museum of Fréjus
- Notre Dame de la Victoire de Lépante Basilica
- Chapel known as Knights Templar chapel
- Villa Magali (garden and restored art sculptures from Palais des Tuileries in Paris)
- Megaliths
- Memorials dedicated to the Provence Landings on 15 August 1944
- Jean Cocteau Chapel
- Roman aqueduct and amphitheatre in Fréjus



Toulon / La Seyne

The city-centre cruise port, the most beautiful and protected bay in the Med



spices and herbs. In the afternoon the street food market transforms itself into a crafts market.

Here too is where the Museum of Old Toulon is to be found. Directly opposite is the Cathédrale Ste Marie de la Sedo, dating from the 11th century. Its Baroque façade was added when it was extended in the 17th century, and it was used as an arms depot during the Revolution.

The National Naval Museum, down on the dockside, houses a fine collection of scale models of the French fleets up to the late 18th century, along with accounts of the finest hours of the French Navy. One of the interior walls is all that remains of the Le Bagne penal colony, immortalised by Victor Hugo in *Les Misérables*.

The luxuriant gardens of Le Mourillon are located in the area to the east of the port. This became Toulon's chic quarter in the 19th century. It has a fine promenade lined with grand houses and a daily food market, as well as seaside bars and restaurants.

The city of Toulon is set in one of Europe's biggest and most beautiful bays, and is home to the French fleet. It has a fascinating history; forts top the ochre-red cliffs around the bay and the white cliffs of Mount Faron rise above as a backdrop. The town has a medieval centre and the largest street market in Provence; it also has the Opera, museums and galleries. It is a good place for a range of shore excursions deeper into Provence.

There is the cable car up to Mount Faron, which at 584m offers fabulous views over the Bay of Toulon. Here there is a zoo with its wild cats and monkeys, and the Allied Landings Memorial Museum, housed in a 19th century fort.

Down in the town itself, the market is a good place to start exploring. Every day except Monday the Cours Lafayette becomes a colourful, bustling *souk* selling Mediterranean fruit, vegetables, flowers,

AROUND TOULON

To the west of Toulon is La Seyne, where you can find Fort Balaguier, a gun tower built in 1643 and reinforced by the renowned French military architect Vauban. Now a naval museum, the fort also tells the story of Napoleon's capture of the Royalist port in 1793. There are fine views across the bay from the terrace and beautiful gardens. The Tamaris coast road in La Seyne takes you to the pretty beach resort of Les Sablettes, and features exotic Mexican, Oriental and Swiss-style villas.

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Hyères/Porquerolles

History and unspoiled natural landscapes

Hyères is the oldest of the southern French winter resorts, and was particularly popular with Robert Louis Stevenson who wrote part of *Kidnapped* here in 1886, Queen Victoria who visited in 1892 and Edith Wharton who wrote *The Age of Innocence*. The town still retains an old-fashioned charm with its casino, racecourse, botanical gardens, opulent belle époque houses, oriental-style villas, and boulevards lined with palms.

The medieval quarter rises behind the new town, with the ruins of a feudal castle towering over it. The main church is the 13th century St Louis, in the Romanesque and Provençal Gothic style. The 11th century church of St Paul is full of 17th century ex-votos, giving thanks for divine help and guidance. Students of architecture will seek out the modernist Villa Noailles, built in 1924, once the scene of bohemian parties with guests including Picasso, Buñuel, Man Ray and Stravinsky.

The salt road is the thin isthmus connecting the mainland to the peninsula of Giens where there is a wealth of birdlife, including storks, herons and flamingos, as well as rare water lilies and orchids.

AROUND HYÈRES

The three Hyères Islands, about 10km off the coast, have a rich history of conquest and piracy. Porquerolles is worth visiting for the superb views from the fort of Saint Agathe, which was a 12th century manor house. Just a few minutes away is the 'Windmill of Happiness', built in the early 18th century – the 'golden age' of Provençal windmills.

Visit the Domaine de la Courtade organic vineyard and taste some of the unique island wines. The National Botanical Conservatory has magnificent gardens which can be visited by groups, by appointment.

The island of Port-Cros is a national park,



and has magnificent woodlands of myrtle, holm oak and strawberry tree. Because of the clear waters and undisturbed marine life, it is also a great spot for diving or snorkelling.

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Le Lavandou

The quaint old town with 12 sandy beaches

This former fishing village has the unique feature of 12 sandy beaches with different colour sand; Le Lavandou has a busy pleasure-boat marina where the fishing port used to be; this is now the centre for watersports. The old village retains its charm, with a market, lots of artists, galleries and exhibitions, and miles of coastal track to walk. There is a pretty 19th century church of St Louis in the heart of the pedestrianised shopping area. The main square has views over two of the Hyères islands, Levant and Port Cros.

AROUND LE LAVANDOU

The Massif des Maures is a mini-mountain stretching from Hyères to Fréjus, and is one of the wildest areas of Provence. One of the area's 26 small villages is Collobrières which is famous for its chestnuts and chestnut products, such as chestnut ice cream and *marrons glacés*. The *confiserie* is also a museum of the industry, with old machinery and copper pots on display.

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Cavalaire-sur-Mer

Water sports in championship conditions

This lively resort has 4km of sandy beaches and is the perfect spot for watersports including diving, windsurfing, sailing dinghies and catamarans, but especially jetskiing. In September each year Cavalaire hosts the Jet Games championship for the top jetski pilots. This is also a centre for paragliding and microlight flying.

FROM AROUND CAVALAIRE-SUR-MER

The Rayol Garden is a celebration of flora from Mediterranean climates all around the world. Lovingly created by landscape gardener Gilles Clément, this beautiful garden is a must-see.



Gassin is set on the top of a rocky spur and offers 360-degree views of the whole peninsula. The town has a medieval fortress, tiny alleyways and beautiful old stone houses jostling around the church.

At Cogolin you can visit the *Manufacture des Tapis* to see the hand-made Jacquard rugs for which the village

is famous. These rugs can be found in the Elysée Palace and even the White House.

Cogolin's pipe-making industry, begun in 1802, is based in one of the world's oldest pipe factories.

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Saint-Tropez

This playground of the famous and glamorous remains at heart a tiny fishing village, full of charm. It is easy to get lost among the tiny winding streets. The waterfront is ideal for watching the fishermen mixing with the millionaires on their magnificent yachts. The best view of Saint-Tropez is from the sea, so that you can appreciate the imposing citadel.

The Annonciade Museum is where the

From myth to reality

works of the artists such as Matisse, Vuillard, Bonnard, Dufy, Braque and Picasso are to be seen. The House of Butterflies is in the medieval part of town and contains a collection of 4,500 butterflies found in France, and rare species from the Amazon.

The town is known for its year-round

events programme: one of the highlights is the International Sailing Regatta in the last week of September and first week of October; this brings 300 or more of the most beautiful modern and traditional boats to the harbour.

AROUND SAINT-TROPEZ

One of the most famous beaches, La Pampelonne, is actually about 6km out of town, around the peninsula in the direction of Ramatuelle. This is a very attractive walled hilltop village with a Saracen gate, a tree-lined square and some good restaurants.

Another must-see village in the area is Port Grimaud, which has been described as France's most beautiful waterside town. It is built on piles and is traffic-free, with bridges and canals, tiny alleys and multicoloured fishermen's cottages.

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Saint-Raphaël/Fréjus

From the Roman times to the trendy French Riviera



This historic town sits prettily against a backdrop of the huge, ochre-coloured Massif d'Estérel. Its striking position may have attracted the first holidaymakers, wealthy Romans coming down from Fréjus to take the sea air. There are many beautiful 19th- and early 20th century buildings, and some of the medieval town still survives. The Notre Dame de la Victoire de Lépante Basilica, built in the 19th century to accommodate the newcomers, is a magnificent Roman Byzantine pile, built in pink sandstone, with rounded vaults and mosaics.

The town has a historic past: Napoleon landed here in 1799 after his defeat at the Battle of the Nile. At the nearby Dramont beach, on 15 August 1944, 20,000 US soldiers of the 36th Texas Regiment landed with tanks and heavy artillery to begin the liberation of the Provence region.

There are four golf courses to choose from, and several scuba diving centres. And for the less physically active there is also a casino.

AROUND SAINT-RAPHAËL

Neighbouring Fréjus, with its Roman heritage and archaeological museum, is an essential excursion. Here you can see the remains of the oldest Roman city in Gaul, founded by Julius Caesar in 49 BC. The theatre, amphitheatre, aqueduct and 5th century baptistry in the Cathédrale St Léonce et Cloître is also the home of the Archaeological Museum. And there's the opportunity to learn about painting, pottery, glass-blowing and carpet-weaving in the town's old quarter.

On the way to Dramont, in the opposite direction along the coast, is 'La Corniche d'Or' coastal road, which has been voted the most scenic drive in France. In the foothills of the Alpes de Haute Provence, inland from St Raphaël, are the eight hilltop villages of Pays de Fayence. Their maze of lanes lead to castles and churches, medieval monuments, Saracen-style gates and grand houses. They are home to a resurgence of Provençal arts and crafts, especially pottery using traditional techniques, designs and local

multicoloured clays.

Saint-Raphaël is also the gateway to France's Grand Canyon, the Gorges du Verdon. This gigantic canyon is 25km long and up to 750m in depth. This ruggedly beautiful area offers great opportunities for climbing, canyoning, rafting, canoeing, hiking and horseriding.

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