

ONION JOHNNIES
UNCOVERING LAYERS OF HISTORY

NÎMES SHORT BREAK
ANCIENT CITY - NEW SIGHTS

FRANCE

TRAVEL | FOOD & WINE | CULTURE | HISTORY

August 2018 | Issue 239

HAUTE CUISINE
The rise of Alpine
gastronomy

**FOOD
& DRINK**

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- Eating out in Orléans
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FLIGHTS OF FANCY

Where to spot France's
mightiest birds

*Vive la
Vendée*

Discover the charms of the Atlantic coast

Francofile

Discover more about Loire-Atlantique and Vendée



GETTING THERE

By air: Lara travelled to Nantes with Flybe, singles from £35.99 (tel: 0371 700 2000, flybe.com).

By rail: The journey from London via Paris or Lille to La Baule takes from 6hr 25min. Single fares start from €158 (tel: 0844 848 5848, oui.sncf).

By road: La Baule is a 2hr 30min to 4hr 30min drive from the northern ports (Saint-Malo is the closest).

WHERE TO STAY

Hôtel Barrière L'Hermitage

5 Esplanade
Lucien Barrière
44504 La Baule-Escoublac
Tel: (Fr) 2 40 11 46 46
hotelsbarriere.com
Luxury five-star hotel opening on to the impressive sandy beach over which some rooms have a stunning view. Behind the hotel is the area's native pine forest. Check out the chocolate fountain at breakfast! Doubles from €206.

Le Général d'Elbée Hôtel & Spa

2 Place d'Armes
1 Quai Cassard
85330 Noirmoutier-en-l'Île
Tel: (Fr) 2 51 39 10 29
generaldelbee.fr/en
This four-star hotel offers comfort with charm and a great location near to the harbour. It has its own spa using products by Nuxe, and the home-made breakfast offerings are superb. Doubles from €110.

Côte Ouest Thalasso & Spa - MGallery by Sofitel

Route du Tour de France
85109 Les Sables-d'Olonne
Tel: (Fr) 2 51 21 77 77
hotel-coteouest.com
With an interior and rooms designed to give the feeling of a cruise liner, this modern four-star hotel is a bit different. Many rooms have a sea view (from €163), as does the restaurant.

WHERE TO EAT

Restaurant Le Shore

35 Boulevard de l'Océan
44500 La Baule-Escoublac
Tel: (Fr) 2 40 22 38 03
shore-la-baule.com
Smart seaside restaurant specialising in super-fresh seafood and fish. The salads are amazing. Lunchtime menu from €18.

Fouquet's

Hôtel Barrière Le Royal
6 Avenue Pierre Loti
44500 La Baule-Escoublac
Tel: (Fr) 2 40 11 48 48
hotelsbarriere.com
Opulent branch of the famous Parisian eating establishment, located in La Baule's other Barrière hotel. Black and white photos of film stars dot the walls, and the delicious food is beautifully presented. Three-course *Menu Fouquet's* €49.

Crêperie Roc Maria

1 Rue du Vieux Marché
aux Grains
44350 Guérande



For a break of a week or more for a family or group of friends, **Le Domaine de Vertmarines in Saint-Jean-de-Monts is good value from £410 for a self-catering villa (sleeps four) with its own private swimming pool and garden. The quiet complex lies near the pine forests, a short drive or scenic bike ride from the town and its beaches and restaurants.**
Tel: 0203 475 4756, summerfrance.co.uk

Tel: (Fr) 2 40 24 90 51
hotel-creperie-rocmaria.com
Enjoy traditional *crêpes* and *galettes* in a cosy traditional restaurant with wooden beams and flagstone floors. The restaurant also has rooms. Three-course *Menu Galette* is a good choice at €11.50.

Le P'tit Noirmout

10 Rue du Marché
85330 Noirmoutier-en-l'Île
Tel: (Fr) 2 28 10 79 52
www.le-ptit-noirmout.com
This small restaurant is always packed, so booking is advisable. Fresh, modern food is prepared using the best local ingredients, particularly fish and seafood. The three-course *Menu du Jour* is fantastic value at €24.80.

Club House Golf de Saint-Jean-de-Monts

33 Avenue des Pays de la Loire
85160 Saint-Jean-de-Monts
Tel: (Fr) 2 52 56 00 22
golf-saintjeandemonts.fr
The terrace with its views of the golf course and sea beyond are the main draw, but the food is good, too, from light bites to bistro classics. Three-course lunch menu from €19.

Côte Ouest Thalasso & Spa - MGallery by Sofitel

Lac de Tanchet
85100 Les Sables-d'Olonne
Tel: (Fr) 2 51 21 77 88
restaurant-cote-ouest.fr
Evening meals are well cooked and presented, but the Sunday lunchtime seafood (and dessert) buffet is the star (€59pp).

WHERE TO VISIT

Guérande Salt Marshes

Terre de Sel Pradel
44350 Guérande
Tel: (Fr) 2 40 62 08 80
terredesel.com

A guided tour of the salt marshes lasts about 45 minutes and includes an explanation of the history and processes of salt production, as well as stunning views over the marshland landscape, with its bird population. The shop sells salts, salted caramel products and other local specialities. Guided tours from €9.

Le Grand Blockhaus

Allée Dervin
44740 Batz-sur-Mer
Tel: (Fr) 2 40 23 88 29
grand-blockhaus.com
This authentic command centre of the Atlantic Wall houses five floors, showcasing the history of the local World War II defences. Admission €7.50/€5.50, open daily April-Nov, 10am to 7pm.

GETTING AROUND

Nantes and La Baule area - Bike 'n Tour (biketour.com); Île de Noirmoutier and Saint-Jean-de-Monts (including Rosalie) - Cycl'hop (cyclhop.fr); Les Sables-d'Olonne - Veloo de la Forêt (veloodelaforet.fr).



TOURIST INFORMATION: Bretagne-Plein Sud, labaule-guerande.com; Île de Noirmoutier, ile-noirmoutier.com; Saint-Jean-de-Monts, saint-jean-de-monts.com; Les Sables-d'Olonne, lessablesdolonne-tourisme.com; Vendée, vendee-tourism.co.uk; Pays de la Loire, paysdelaloire.co.uk.
Départements: Loire Atlantique (44) and Vendée (85).