

# ECOTOURISM

PROVENCE-ALPS-COTE D'AZUR

GROWING GREEN IDEAS INTO THE TOURISM OF TOMORROW

2014  
EDITION



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## SHORT PRESS RELEASE

**In recent years, the environmental dimension has found its place in tourist practices with infrastructures opening the way in adapting their products and services to this growing demand for new experiences.**

Provence-Alps-Côte d'Azur Tourism Board follows this trend and strives to raise awareness in tourism behaviours. To help you discover the regional eco-friendly offers, we have carefully selected new activities and accommodations and unusual sites, all of which guarantee a "green" holiday experience. Ideas are endless: from new mobile applications for hiking in Les Écrins to a stay in a straw bale house in the Alps, or photo outings in the Luberon, gardening classes for children in the Jardins de la Méditerranée of Le Rayol-Canadel or lessons on how to become a "gardian" (herdsman) in Camargue!

Provence-Alps-Côte d'Azur is the Region of Metropolitan France with the greatest biodiversity and the largest number of Nature Parks (10 Regional and National Parks). In 2014, over 230 accommodation structures - hotels, campsites, holiday villages, gîtes, guesthouses - and some sixty service providers have earned a label rewarding their environmental commitment.

Many labels have appeared to advise the public on wiser choices. Since this profusion can easily lead to confusion, we provide a list of their guidelines at the end of this document.

In 2013, Provence-Alps-Côte d'Azur Tourism Board created the [www.ecotourismepaca.fr](http://www.ecotourismepaca.fr) website to encourage web users to become responsible tourists and prepare "Eco-friendly" holidays.

This trilingual site offers a selection of regional service providers whose activity has limited environmental impact. The website received the 2013 Grand Prize for innovation in tourism.



## WHAT'S NEW IN 2014...

### For active holidays

Our Region was already the setting for sporting activities respectful of Nature 150 years ago. At the time, a group of Alpinists undertook the first ascent of Barre des Écrins, culminating 4,102 m. above sea level. Today, more than ever, the environment is pivotal for unique adventures in the Provence-Alps-Côte d'Azur Region. The beauty and diversity of these territories offer a unique playing field for completely new experiences.

### 700 KM OF MARKED TRAILS

and a handy new website

<http://rando.ecrins-parcnational.fr/>

Choosing from a family outing or a sportier trek, discovering flora, high-altitude lakes or local architecture is made much easier thanks to this website devised by Les Écrins National Park. It is designed to select the best suited itineraries according to web users' wishes. The filters are organised by level and by theme. For each itinerary, an interactive map points out the "not-to-be-missed" sites for their natural or cultural interest. Les Écrins National Park readily reveals information on the hidden treasures of its territory and all the details of each itinerary can be printed or exported to a GPS or to Google Earth for visualisation in 3D.

**A specific smartphone application further bolsters this tools' mobility!**

### IDEA FOR AN UNUSUAL STAY IN LES ÉCRINS

#### A STRAW-BALE GUESTHOUSE

This environmentally-friendly project is worthy of admiration especially from the aficionados of "eco-construction". At Saint-Martin-de-Queyrières, a village near Les Écrins National Park, four spacious rooms with private bathrooms offer comfort and hospitality in this house whose walls are made of straw-bales. For dinner, the table d'hôtes offers taste treats concocted by Lydie and David using fresh local produce (reservation required). A hot tub (outdoor warm bath - 37 degrees Celsius) is available to guests.

**Good news for groups: the entire house can be rented like a gîte!**

[www.brindepaille.com](http://www.brindepaille.com)

### A NEW HIKING/CYCLING AREA

#### AT L'OUSTAOU GROUP GÎTE IN CASTELLANE

This group accommodation also offering B&B in Castellane signed the European Charter for Sustainable Tourism in Protected Areas in 2013. In 2014, to improve hospitality for cycling or hiking buffs, they built up a room to accommodate specific gear. Along the Verdon Canyon "Gorges du Verdon" just 300 metres from the town of Castellane - hub of outdoor activities - L'Oustaou is a "must" for low-budget active holidays.

[www.oustaoucastellane04.fr](http://www.oustaoucastellane04.fr)



**NEW IN THE VERDON****PARAGLIDING FROM THE “VIA ROMANA” WITH ROC N’VOL**

Roc n’Vol earned the “Qualité Tourisme” label in 2012 and the Verdon Regional Nature Park “brand label” in 2014. With Roc’n’Vol, hike up along the “Via Romana” (ancient Roman Way) from Moustiers (40min); enjoy 20-30 minutes of paragliding before walking back down on the “Via Romana”. No need for a vehicle to reach the take-off point which makes it a wonderful “green” experience, both active and contemplative...

[www.rocnvol.com](http://www.rocnvol.com)

**NEW IN THE VERDON****AN UNUSUAL MEETING BETWEEN CANOE AND... TRUFFLE**

Did you know that the 2/3 of the black truffle production (Tuber melanosporum variety) is French? and that Provence grows more truffles than any other region (80 % of the French production)? Driven by this wealth, Gaëtan Hémerly, a certified canoe guide from the company “Canoe Verdon” has created a package tour including kayaking in the lower Verdon Canyon with a stop for a truffle ‘aperitif’ on board the canoe-kayak.

At the end of the outing, a truffle-hunter meets the group and explains his know-how over a picnic with local products and some truffles, of course! This activity, which is available in French and in English, has been very successful since it was launched in the summer of 2013!

**Useful tip:** Gaëtan also offers 2-days/1-night package including a tour of Correns, 1<sup>st</sup> organic village in France on the 1st day and the truffle/canoeing outing on the 2nd day.

**More information at**  
[www.canoe-verdon.com](http://www.canoe-verdon.com)

**TOUR DE FRANCE : SAVE THE DATE!**

The Tour de France will leave from Tallard on 20 July 2014, just a few kilometres from Rives du Lac campsite. This eco-labelled campsite is located in a fantastic natural setting on the shores of a lake (lac de Veynes) in the Southern Alps. Many activities are available such as walking, hiking, mountain biking. They are all listed and detailed on their website. Bike rental is also available (mountain-bikes, hybrid bikes - VTC - or event electric bikes).

**More information at**  
<http://alpesprovence.camping-lac.com>

## for contemplative holidays

Ecotourism is synonymous with taking your time, living in the moment in exceptional settings, being pampered by professional well-being experts or watching in silence as a flock of elegant flamingos soar overhead.

Give yourself over to the relaxed pace of life in Provence-Alpes-Côte d'Azur and discover the many surprises that Ecotourism has to offer.

### ACCOMMODATION

#### TRIP IDEAS

#### **ECO-FRIENDLY CAMPSITE AND GUIDED WALKS LED BY NATURE SPECIALISTS AROUND LAC DE SERRE-PONÇON (EUROPE'S LARGEST MOUNTAIN LAKE)**

In partnership with Le Petit Liou campsite (EU Ecolabel & LPO - bird-protection association refuge), ecologist, mountain and nature guide and environmental engineer Olivier Eyraud brings visitors a brand-new package holiday.

Visitors will embark on mountain treks to gather and cook wild plants, enjoy a tour of Lac Serre-Ponçon to learn about bird calls and song and visit the Muséoscope for a spot of evening stargazing. Professional equipment rentals and photography advice are provided.

Come nightfall, guests will be spoilt for choice with a range of chalets, cabins, Ecolodges or wooden and canvas tents in which to kick back and relax. Meals based on local organic produce are prepared at the campsite by Pascal, or are available at Bistrot de Pays de Baratier.

**Heads-up:** Le Petit Liou also offers weekend getaways with a mountain-biking monitor.

[www.serreponcon-tourisme.com](http://www.serreponcon-tourisme.com)  
[www.camping-lepetitliou.fr](http://www.camping-lepetitliou.fr)

#### NEW

#### **5-STAR BIVOUAC IN CAMARGUE AT MAS DE PEINT - MANADE JACQUES BON**

This prestigious and renowned establishment is typical of Camargue, offering authentic charm and a warm welcome for every guest. This year, Lucille, Jacques and Frédéric Bon have given traditional hotel accommodation an interesting spin, bringing guests closer to nature and giving them the opportunity to stargaze under France's clearest skies. Standing 3 metres tall and measuring 5 metres in diameter, the tents have been custom-built, designed for all types of events and capable of accommodating between 1 and 8 people for a 'luxury' or 'back to basics' stay.

[www.masdepeint.com](http://www.masdepeint.com)

#### NEW

#### **TRADITIONAL CHINESE AND THAI MASSAGES AT CLOS DE ROHAN IN THE EASTERN LUBERON**

This 65-hectare estate encourages a sense of serenity and brings guests closer in line with nature. It is home to a charming 19th century farmhouse that was renovated with a view to preserving natural resources while offering top-notch service. The walls, for example, have been insulated using a mixture of ground lavender straw and lime, the distempers have been limewashed and tinted using local natural pigment. For breakfast, Françoise bakes delicious organic cakes for guests, served alongside her home-made jams, fruit juice and honey sourced from the estate's beehives! For total relaxation, a Chinese medicine practitioner is on hand this year and works with organic essential oil.

[www.le-clos-de-rohan.eu](http://www.le-clos-de-rohan.eu)



ACCOMMODATION

SNORKELLING AT LE PRADET

**AN ECO-RESPONSIBLE  
OUTDOOR ACTIVITY AT LOU PANTAÏ**

This year, the Lou Pantaï campsite in Le Pradet is offering free use of its diving equipment, including flippers, masks, snorkels and a map, along with insider tips and suggestions to set off and discover the inky depths of the Mediterranean at some of the best diving spots around the Pradet beaches.

**Heads-up:** environmentally-aware guests will enjoy the guide to eco-friendly activities available at this EU Ecolabel-certified seaside campsite.

[www.campingloupantai.com](http://www.campingloupantai.com)

BRAND NEW AT THE HOLIDAY GREEN CAMPSITE

**AN ECO-FRIENDLY TOUR OF THE ESTATE**

This EU Ecolabel and Clef Verte-certified campsite just never stops. To discover this year: a new 2,000 sqm deck around the pool area equipped with a lounge bar and private beach, 2 new covered Astroturf tennis courts, a new village of cottages with brightly coloured façades and fully hooked up to all the latest mod-cons (TV, DVD, iPod docking station and Wi-Fi), a spa with new “Sultane de Saba” products and treatments, an eco-friendly walk to introduce you to the estate’s flora as well as an art trail during which you’ll learn more about the 15 artworks scattered around the estate, particularly the 8 monumental sculptures in the artistic gardens.

[www.holidaygreen.com](http://www.holidaygreen.com)

2 ECOLABELS

**FOR MAS DES GRÈS IN LAGNES  
IN THE LUBERON AREA**

Nina and Thierry Crovara’s hard work and commitment has earned them the Clef Verte and Géoparc labels for 2014.

Yet another fantastic reason to visit this family-run establishment, which offers some great getaway packages for 2014, themed on topics as varied as truffles, Provençal cuisine, golf or well-being retreats, weekends with the girls, activities for toddlers, great packages for retired guests, and a plethora of other good ideas.

Find out more on their website

[www.masdesgres.com](http://www.masdesgres.com)

“ALPILLES AND ITS WILD BIRDS” WEEKEND

**PEACE OF MIND WITH THE PLAISIRS  
& MAISONS DE PROVENCE AGENCY**

Provençal high-end tourism and ecotourism specialists Plaisirs & Maisons de Provence is the only in-coming travel agency in France to have received Green Globe certification in recognition of the agency’s commitment to sustainable tourism.

Discover the Alpilles in all their authenticity with Plaisirs & Maisons de Provence’s 2-day package to include a nature guide. Walkers will be guided through a unique landscape bursting with a rich mix of diversity, along cliff edges to spot local birds along the way, from Bonelli’s Eagle to the Eurasian Eagle-Owl and its craggy nesting places. Accommodation and meals are organised with peace, quiet and contemplation in mind!

[www.provence-plaisirs.com](http://www.provence-plaisirs.com)

[www.joyofprovence.com](http://www.joyofprovence.com)



ACTIVITIES

**NEW**

**PHOTO OUTINGS IN THE LUBERON**

Luberon enthusiast and photographer **Eric Bouisson** has joined forces with nature guide Fabrice Teurquety to take small groups on an unusual outing to explore the Luberon Regional Nature Park’s hidden side. Learn about landscapes and miniature photos taken of the tiniest of insects. This nature guided tour will end with an unveiling of the Park’s extraordinarily rich flora and fauna - along with a few well-kept secrets. With a little luck, you may see the very rare Curculionidae, a small yellow insect with a long snout that loves showing off in front of the camera...

[www.cavaillon-luberon.com](http://www.cavaillon-luberon.com)

**NEW**

**CARRIAGE TOUR OF THE OCHRE CLIFFS WITH PROVENCE HIPPO SERVICES**

Vaucluse’s geological features resulted in the earth in and around Roussillon being tinted in a symphony of colours, vibrant oranges, reds and yellows clashing beautifully with the deep emerald of the pine trees and the azure sky. A naturally sumptuous backdrop that serves as a stunning backdrop for a variety of activities, from painting and crafts to pottery-making and woodwork — as well as afternoon wanders down the region’s many trails and sights.

Olivier Augier dashes over these ochre uplands aboard his horse-drawn carriage. He shares his knowledge of the history of the ochre-tinged landscape, its geology and flora and fauna in 4 languages (French, English, Spanish and Portuguese). This local man is proud of his Provençal region’s traditional values and loves nothing more than sharing his passion over the course of outings that range from 2 hours to a full day.

Founded in March 2013, the company offers other themed tours, such as focusing on the vineyards in autumn or the lavender fields in the summer season.

Come the first winter frost, the horse-drawn carriage is covered and passengers can snuggle up in “pad” blankets similar to those used on sleighs, ensuring they stay toasty and warm throughout the journey!

For individuals or groups (up to 21 participants) - booking is required.

[www.provencehipposervices.com](http://www.provencehipposervices.com)

**QUIRKY SIGHT-SEEING**

**THE POWER OF PLANTS IN LAURIS**

Les plantes tinctoriales sont des plantes dont certaines parties peuvent servir à préparer des colorants et des teintures. Utilisées par l’homme depuis l’Antiquité pour la teinture des vêtements, leur usage a presque totalement disparu depuis le début du XX<sup>e</sup> siècle, avec l’apparition des colorants de synthèse. Le jardin des plantes de Lauris cherche à les réhabiliter, car d’une part elles sont utiles pour la biodiversité et d’autre part, elles font partie de notre patrimoine artisanal. Les animateurs du jardin des plantes proposent des formations ou des visites en anglais et en français pour l’initiation à la teinture.

[www.couleur-garance.com](http://www.couleur-garance.com)



ACTIVITIES

REOPENING OF THE RECEPTION AREAS

**AT CHÂTEAU VAL JOANIS - LUBERON**

Renowned for its "Remarkable Garden"-listed garden, this estate is reopening its doors after intensive renovation works that have resulted in more space in which to offer a broader selection of events. In the summer season, the estate is home to exhibitions, outdoor cinema, the start of the wine harvest (ban des vendanges), jazz picnic sessions and other events highly-anticipated by its many regulars.

[www.val-joanis.com](http://www.val-joanis.com)

REOPENING

**OF THE MUSÉE DE LA CAMARGUE**

On 2 November 2013, the Camargue museum reopened after a year of renovation works. The Museum provides visitors with an introduction to their stay in the Camargue Regional Nature Park territory.

"Bull horns" are used to learn about Camargue through sound, listening to information on the fauna, flora and the lives of the people who made this land their own. A large touch screen displays a map of the delta, allowing users to move through space and time. The different natural environments are illustrated both with photos and small models, with integrated 3D processes.

Finish off your trip to the Museum with a stroll (3,5 km) through the Mas du Pont de Rousty estate (modern farming activity, crop fields, pastures, marshes, reed beds, traditional huts, etc.). The trail is dotted with informative signposts, observatories and interpretive centres.

A wooden hut was built by Tadashi Kawamata in February 2013, enabling visitors to get some distance from the ground to contemplate the landscape, taking in views that stretch from rice fields to marshland via reed beds (roselière) and saltmarshes (sansouïre).

[www.parc-camargue.fr](http://www.parc-camargue.fr)



## for authentic holidays

Only through studying its specific know-how can you come to truly understand a region.

From local produce picked up from organic farms and flavourful cuisine infused with fragrant herbs, to the ancestral rites of the Camargue 'gardian' herdsman, lavender farmers and the creativity of the region's craftsmen - discover everything the region has to offer!

### A NEW FAMILY ACTIVITY

#### **AT THE DOMAINE DU RAYOL: "LES MAINS DANS LA TERRE" (HANDS IN EARTH)**

Following in the footsteps of the successful "Les pieds dans l'eau" (Feet in Water) activity, the Domaine du Rayol, owned by the Conservatoire du Littoral and nestled between Le Lavandou and St-Tropez, has put together a new activity for families with children: "Les mains dans la terre" (Hands in Earth).

Under the watchful eye of a gardener guide and their parents or grandparents, children age 6 to 12 spend 90 minutes observing different types of plants, exploring the soil in search of its tiny inhabitants and carrying out gardening tasks - later taking home the fruits of their labour!

[www.domainedurayol.org](http://www.domainedurayol.org)

### GLEANNING INSIDER KNOWLEDGE

#### **OF PROFESSIONAL CAMARGUE HORSE-RIDING**

Les Cabanes de Cacharel manager Olivier Terroux lives in the midst of traditional marshland, ponds and saltmarshes. For several years now, he has been organising horseback outings through the Réserve des Impériaux, guiding visitors along the ponds to observe the local fauna. For those who prefer not to ride horseback, outings in horse-drawn carriages are also available.

This year, he wanted to give visitors the gift of discovering his trade: breeding Camargue horses. Participants can see stallions and a herd of mares with their colts in their natural environments, and learn about the proud guardians, our very own breed of Camargue cowboys. Olivier's new themed tour is supported by the Camargue Regional Park.

[www.camargueacheval.com](http://www.camargueacheval.com)



## FEEL TIME STAND STILL

### AMIDST A SEA OF LAVENDER

Family-run farm business Aroma Plantes opened the Aromatic'Bar last July for the entire summer season.

Specialising in the organic production of aromatic and medicinal plants, the distillery is located on the Plateau de Sault, an area known for its lavender perched 800 metres above sea level on the slopes of Mont-Ventoux. The Aromatic'Bar offers a chance to sample products from the farm: 100% organic syrups and cordials, syrup-infused lemonades (and the exceptional "Champagne des Fées": lemonade made from syrup), herbal teas, coffee and spelt pancakes.

All visitors are invited to watch the plants being distilled during the lavender harvest season. The looped paths leaving from the distillery have been cleared and signposted for those who wish to explore the countryside and surrounding lavender fields at their own pace.

[www.distillerie-aromaplantes.com](http://www.distillerie-aromaplantes.com)

## LEARN TO COOK

### "GREEN CUISINE" WITH A SOLAR COOKER

Head to the "Loubatas", where groups can stay in an eco-friendly visitor cottage gîte that runs on renewable energy deep in the heart of the forest.

This is the first accommodation site to have been awarded the Gîtes de France "ecogite" certification, and is also a certified Gîte Panda. It offers a year-round line-up of activities including cooking classes, foodie walking tours and now a brand-new educational tool: the solar cooker.

**Don't miss** the new interactive exhibition explaining how Le Loubatas works and the discovery trail around the site.

[www.loubatas.org](http://www.loubatas.org)

### BETWEEN THE VERDON VALLEY AND THE LAVENDER PLATEAU, THE MONASTERY OF SEGRIÈS CELEBRATES ITS 150<sup>TH</sup> ANNIVERSARY WITH A MAKE-OVER

Built in 1864, the Monastery of Segriès is undergoing restoration works to host concerts, workshops and events...

Located just 6km from Moustiers-Ste-Marie, the Monastery of Segriès, is the perfect guesthouse for group holidays. Anne-Marie and Dhruv are committed to sustainable tourism, as attested by the 'Accueil du Park' label granted for the 2013-2015 period.

**Heads-up:** for the past 30 years, CREA-Langues (headquarters at the Monastery), has been offering full-immersion language-learning stays for adults. These holidays combine French language classes and discovering Haute-Provence: [www.crealangues.com](http://www.crealangues.com)

[www.monastere-de-segries.com](http://www.monastere-de-segries.com)

## SUGGESTION INDIVIDUAL STAYS

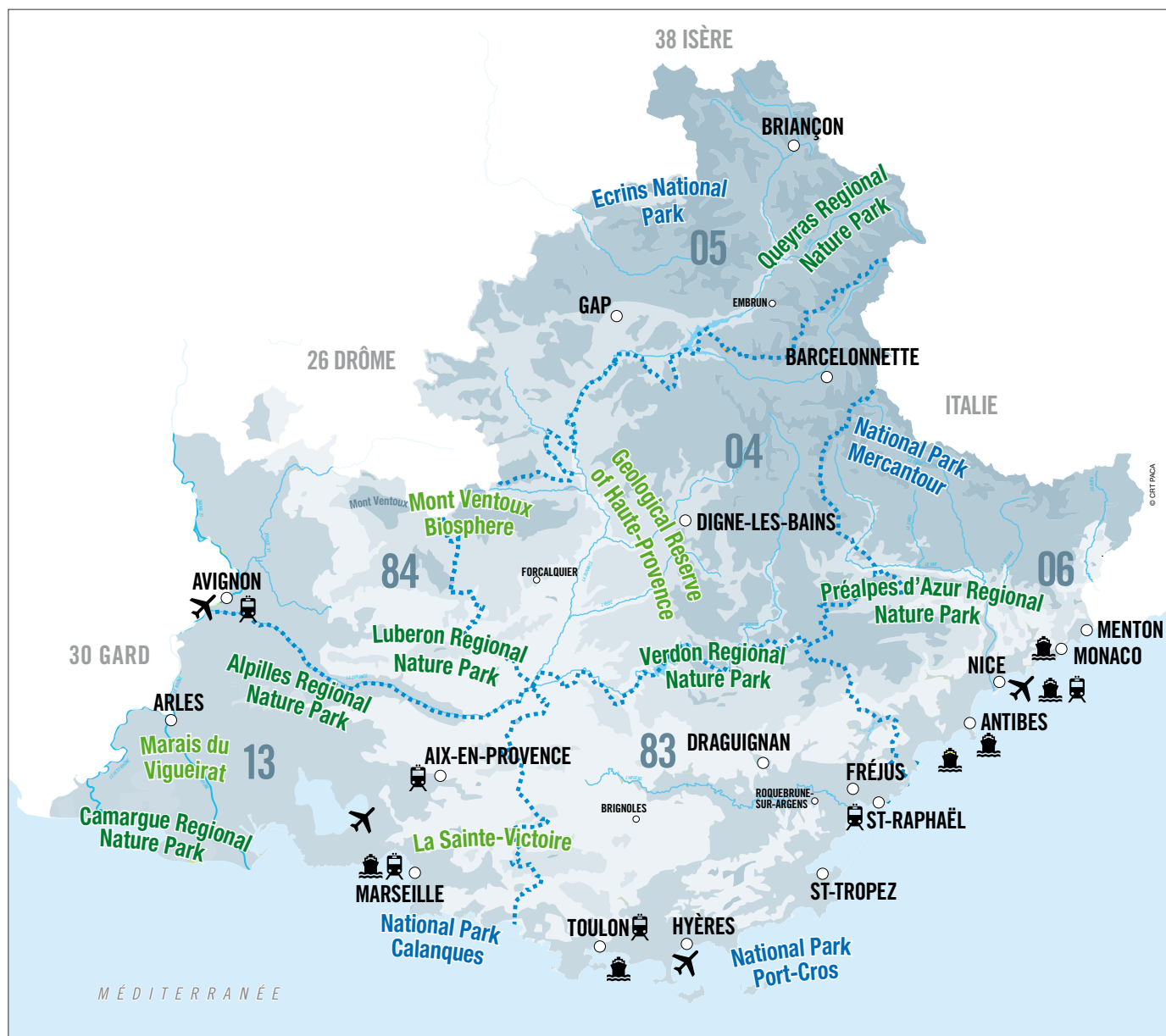
### AT THE FERME DU PETIT SEGRIÈS FARM, WHERE NOËL AND SYLVIE LEAD THEIR GUESTS DOWN THE AREA'S MOUNTAIN BIKING TRAILS

Noël Voyer and Sylvie Marquestaut are state-approved mountain-biking guides who offer mountain bike rentals and guided outings down the signposted trails of the Verdon Valley. In 2014, they are adding to their selection of activities by offering electrically-assisted bicycle rentals.

**Heads-up:** they offer all-inclusive packages combining accommodation, picnic lunches and communal family dinners.

[www.gite-segries.fr](http://www.gite-segries.fr)

# NATURAL AREAS IN PROVENCE-ALPES-CÔTE D'AZUR



## LEGEND

**National Park**

**Regional Nature Park**

**Natural Reserve and "Grand Site"**



# SPOTLIGHT ON PROTECTED NATURAL AREAS IN PROVENCE-ALPS-CÔTE D'AZUR

The Provence-Alps-Côte d'Azur region boasts more Natural Parks (10) than any other region in France. With its 4 National Parks and 6 Regional Nature Parks, our region is particularly well protected and preserved. These sites are wonderful places to discover local flora and fauna, enjoy sports, go on family walks or take time out to get back in touch with oneself and nature!

## Four National Parks

### What is a National Park?

A geographical area with a wealth of biological diversity, beautiful landscapes, high cultural value and historically-preserved character that justifies its need for protection and management in order to safeguard the longevity of its exceptional heritage.

National Parks aim to strike an eco-friendly balance between the heart of the space (high protection) and surrounding areas by implementing economic development of its heritage and sustainable development in the villages it encompasses.

### CALANQUES

The landscape of the Calanques is internationally-renowned, with its white cliffs plunging into the Mediterranean Sea's turquoise waters and its untamed vegetation mainly comprised of garrigue. Located at the gates to the France's second largest city, and under significant pressure from a variety of sources (pollution, excessive traffic and removal of resources, forest fires, etc.), this natural beauty had to wait a long time before receiving permanent sustainable protection when it became Les Calanques National Park in 2012. Today, visitors can enjoy environmentally-friendly hiking, climbing, mountain-biking, fishing, yachting, sailing and deep-sea diving in a protected space.

[www.calanques-parcnational.fr](http://www.calanques-parcnational.fr)

### ECRINS

At the meeting point of the Northern and Southern Alps, Les Écrins is the second largest and highest of the Alpine ranges after the Mont-Blanc range. Over one hundred peaks soar above 3000 metres in altitude, with the highest point located at the Barre des Écrins, 4102 metres above sea level. This protected mountain territory is a melting pot of origins and sweeping vistas, where a plethora of animal species roam side-by-side with hikers and mountaineers. Nearly 2000 plant species thrive in the deep valleys of Champsaur, Valgaudemar, La Vallouise, Embrunais and Briançonnais. To be explored: Mrs Carle's field, Fournel Valley, Dormillouse (the park's only inhabited village), the picturesque village of Prapic in the depths of the Drac Noir valley and the Gioberney site in Valgaudemar...

[www.lesecrins-parc-national.fr](http://www.lesecrins-parc-national.fr)



## MERCANTOUR

A former hunting reserve for the Kings of Italy, the Mercantour Park is the final stage of the Alps before the land opens up into the Mediterranean. Its unique nature stems from the diversity of its untouched landscapes. The Park is also home to two listed prehistoric monument sites: the “Val de Fontanalba”, famous for its thousands of rock paintings, and the “Vallée des Merveilles”, with its 40,000 Bronze Age petroglyphs (rock carvings).

[www.parc-mercantour.com](http://www.parc-mercantour.com)

## PORT-CROS

Port-Cros, Europe’s leading national land and marine park, boasts 35 km of trails, including a botanical trail, and is a stunning example of raw, untouched beauty. The Levant, which is not included in the National Park, is partly military and partly dedicated to nudism, offering rugged coastline draped in luxurious vegetation. NB: the National Park also manages the double tombolo of Giens and the Salins (salt works). The Isles of Hyères are also known as the Îles d’Or (Golden Isles), a haven of breath-taking nature located a stone’s throw from the coast. Porquerolles with its turquoise waters, white sand beaches, dramatic cliffs and eucalyptus and pine forests offers exceptional landscapes through which 54km of trails weave.

[www.portcrosparcnational.fr](http://www.portcrosparcnational.fr)

## Six Regional Natural Parks

Unlike National Parks, Regional Natural Parks have no core area, meaning a central part subject to stringent protection measures. They are, however, described as “inhabited land, essentially rural, with high quality landscapes, natural settings and cultural heritage, hanging in delicate balance.”

As key players in sustainable development, Regional Natural Parks encourage and promote implementation of sustainable tourism initiatives.

## CAMARGUE

Wild land, unique in France, born of the union of the sea and the Rhône, the Camargue enjoys international notoriety. It is called wild, yet in reality it is an environment managed by Man where the supremacy of the water allows the coexistence of marshes and paddy fields, of lakes and pasture lands.

The Camargue is a rich land for the observation of flora and fauna, and the Regional Natural Park maintains with passion. Keen to safeguard traditions, it offers numerous activities: paths for bird-watching, rides on horseback, visits to herds, local food...and many other things to discover...

[www.parc-camargue.fr](http://www.parc-camargue.fr)

## ALPILLES

From a great distance, its rugged peaks ranging in altitude from 300m to 400m above sea level create an illusion of some serious mountains, and between the Rhône and Durance Rivers, their icy blue points are thrust upwards, climbing ever-higher into the skies. The journey from one end of the range to the other is scattered with a stunning sequence of bucolic Provençal landscapes: olive groves and luxurious vineyards, especially on the gentler slopes on the southern side of the Alpilles.

**Must-see sites:** Les Antiques in Saint-Rémy-de-Provence and the mediaeval village of Les Baux-de-Provence.

[www.parc-alpilles.fr](http://www.parc-alpilles.fr)



## LUBERON

Protected to the North by the mountain range, with the waters of the Durance River lapping at its southern side, the Luberon Park offers incomparable sights. Visitors indulge in a stroll through the cedar forest of Bonnieux, discover the flamboyant colours of the ochre of Roussillon, admire the beautiful perched villages of Gordes, Lacoste and Ménerbes, and much more. A source of inspiration to famous British author Peter Mayle, the Luberon is also much-loved for its art of living. The Park is a UNESCO Biosphere Reserve for the diversity of its flora and fauna and GEOPARK site.

[www.parcduluberon.com](http://www.parcduluberon.com)

## VERDON

Dubbed the Grand Canyon of Europe, extreme sports rule in the Verdon Gorges. The site is unique in Europe, with its dizzying panoramas and perched villages. Its history dates back to the quaternary period and the formation of the Alps. A deep, wide cut in the landscape, the Verdon Gorges reach depths of 700 metres.

It would be simplistic to reduce the Verdon Natural Park to the Canyon only. The blend of Alpine and Mediterranean influences contributes to the diversity of flora and fauna in the area and adds to the appeal of the Verdon Park. Overlooking the left bank of the Verdon River, “Corniche Sublime” offers superb vistas over the left bank of the Verdon River, a name derived from the translucent green of its waters. Beyond the famous Gorges, there is much here to discover: Lake Sainte-Croix, the Grès d’Annot (sandstone), an exceptional climbing site and the Museum of Prehistory in Quinson, Plateau de Valensole.

[www.parcduverdon.fr](http://www.parcduverdon.fr)

## PRÉALPES D’AZUR

Nestled between the French Riviera and the Alpine peaks, on the first rocky foothills in the eastern region, the Préalpes d’Azur Regional Natural Park is the most recent of the region’s parks.

Its landscape is an open book recounting the history of the relationship between Man and the natural environment for over ten millennia. Since Neolithic times, human activity created an agro-sylvo-pastoral landscape which remains as a precious cultural artefact in itself.

[www.pnr-prealpesdazur.fr](http://www.pnr-prealpesdazur.fr)

## QUEYRAS

650sqkm of unoccupied land, colourful, dotted with some of the most beautiful sleepy villages the Alps have to offer. Here, trails lead visitors through the undergrowth of high-altitude larch forest, where sheep roam freely amidst the blue-green patchwork of pastures and sky. The paths and trails meander through landscapes of breath-taking variety, passing through fields of flowers from the Provençal, Arctic and Caucasus biozones which have all taken root in the region.

Hikers will also stumble upon tracks left by wild animals. In the summer, breathe in the crisp, earthy smell of freshly-cut hay and carved wood. The hospitality, care and warm welcomes that abound in Queyras are down to the openness of the locals. In 1977, they succeeded in securing their region’s future, and the future of their free-spirited, uncommon lifestyle, when the land was incorporated into a regional Natural Park, thereby guaranteeing sustainable development for both Man and Nature...and untouched landscapes for holidaymakers to enjoy.

[www.pnr-queyras.fr](http://www.pnr-queyras.fr)

## Three emblematic Nature Reserves

### Three UNESCO listed World Heritage Sites

#### SAINTE-VICTOIRE

The mountain immortalised by Paul Cézanne is a protected site, a vast natural area at the gates to the Aix-Marseille metropolitan area. Through the oak and pine forest, garrigue and high-mountain grassland where pastoral activity remains present, 20% of French flora can be seen, as well as over 130 bird species, including two pairs of Bonelli's eagles. Hiking, paragliding, rock climbing and mountain-biking enthusiasts make up 75% of the one million visitors who flock here every year, an area that is also home to a famous wine appellation...

[www.grandsitesaintevictoire.com](http://www.grandsitesaintevictoire.com)

#### VENTOUX

Widely known as the "Giant of Provence," Mont-Ventoux culminates 1,912 metres above sea level, overlooking all Provence. This listed UNESCO Biosphere Reserve brings together species and habitats of Mediterranean and Alpine origin. The land here has been visibly shaped by the human hand (vineyards, fields of aromatic plants and fruit orchards) and welcomes eco-conscious visitors who are looking to be fully immersed in the culture of Mont-Ventoux. Revered by poets, dreaded by cyclists, this is also an exceptional observation site for scientists and tourists alike. There are many ways to discover its exceptional natural environment: on foot, on horseback, by bike and even by car.

[www.lemontventoux.net](http://www.lemontventoux.net)

#### HAUTE-PROVENCE

Europe's largest geological reserve boasts fossils and landscapes of geological folds and fractures bearing witness to the last 300 million years of the Earth's past. A member of both the global and European geoparks networks, it can easily be explored with a little help from landscape guides scattered along the signposted trails (e.g. "La Route du Temps") from museum centres in Castellane, Sisteron and Digne-les-Bains. The Musée-Promenade is unique, central, and offers a year-round line-up of events and activities, serving as a real hub for a complete overview of the entire area.

[www.resgeol.org](http://www.resgeol.org)



## KEY FIGURES OF ECOTOURISM IN PROVENCE-ALPS-CÔTE D'AZUR

### Ecotourism in Provence-Alps-Côte d'Azur:

- Over **230** accommodation establishments certified with eco-friendly labels to suit all tastes: hotels, campsites, guesthouses, gîtes, holiday villages, etc.
- Around **sixty** activities certified with eco-friendly labels: gardens, outdoor activities, natural or cultural sites, etc.

### Biodiversity in Provence-Alps-Côte d'Azur:

- **10** Natural Parks: 4 National Parks (Calanques, Les Écrins, Mercantour, Port-Cros)
- **6** Regional Natural Parks (Alpilles, Camargue, Luberon, Préalpes d'Azur, Queyras and Verdon)
- A unique mosaic of landscapes made up of forests, farmland, untouched soil, moors, garrigue, savannah, wetlands...
- **A large concentration of French flora and fauna:**
  - > **85** % of mammals of metropolitan France
  - > **63** % of birds
  - > **70** % of reptiles
  - > **71** % of vascular plants

(Source : Observatoire régional de la biodiversité, ARPE, 2012).

## List of Ecolabels



### AGIR POUR UN TOURISME RESPONSABLE

Travel agents which are members of the ATR (Agir pour un Tourisme Responsable) Association are committed to obtaining AFNOR Certification for Sustainable Tourism. Members of the Association agree to promote tourism which is favourable to the sustainable development of host countries, ensure economic profits generated by tourism, is fairly shared and minimise the environmental impact of their activities.



### BISTROT DE PAYS

Choosing a Bistrot de Pays means choosing a restaurant that offers information on local curiosities, meeting and exchanging with local people and tasting local specialities which contribute to the wealth of these territories.



### CHOUETTE NATURE

The Chouette Nature scheme concerns holiday centres in the Cap France association based on the ISO 14001 standard which encourages continuous Improvement in terms of environmental management. This label imposes training and raising awareness of staff in the framework of a regional project involving local people.



Clef Verte

### LA CLEF VERTE

The Clef Verte label (Danish origin) features around one hundred mandatory and optional criteria enabling accommodation providers with the label to be recognised for their commitment to environmental quality. All forms of accommodation are concerned, from hotels to campsites, including furnished flats, guesthouses, gîtes cottages, youth hostels and even restaurants.



### ÉCOGÎTE® DE GÎTES DE FRANCE

The Écogîte® qualification identifies accommodation labelled Gîtes de France designed or restored with techniques and materials recognised for their low environmental impact from construction to dismantling. This qualification rewards services combining Eco-Management and Eco-Construction.



### EU ECOLABEL

The European Ecolabel is recognised in all European Union member states. Nearly 50 categories of products and services can receive this ecolabel, including tourist accommodation. In France, it is granted by AFNOR Certification, the organisation which guarantees long-term respect of the requisite criteria and duration.





### GÎTE PANDA

Gîte Panda is a qualification granted to gîtes cottages and guesthouses in the Gîtes de France network usually located in a national or regional natural park and co-managed with the WWF (World Wide Fund for Nature) international association. Owners of such establishments agree to protect the environment and organise awareness-raising activities to this end.



### GREEN GLOBE

Green Globe is a certification (Australian origin) with many criteria taking into account social, societal and environmental aspects by providing means of action on a corporate scale to fight issues such as the greenhouse effect, overconsumption of water, waste production and the destruction of biodiversity.

[www.greenglobe.com](http://www.greenglobe.com)



### HÔTELS AU NATUREL

Hôtels au Naturel is a brand developed by the National Federation of Regional Natural Parks for accommodation located in park territory. The system of reference for this brand is based on 3 key values for regional natural parks: attachment to a territory, consideration for the human aspect and respect for the environment.



### JARDIN REMARQUABLE

The Remarkable Garden label identifies gardens of a remarkable nature, both public and private, whether or not they are listed Historic Buildings or Sites. This national label is granted for five years and is managed by the Regional Cultural Affairs Department (DRAC).



### MARQUE "PARC NATUREL RÉGIONAL"

The "Regional Natural Park" brand is granted to products, skills or services that contribute to the uniqueness of park territories. Artisanal products, agricultural products and tourist accommodation, tours and cultural sights can all receive the Park brand.



## REGIONAL TOURISM BOARD

Provence-Alps-Cote d'Azur  
TOURISM



[www.ecotourismepaca.fr](http://www.ecotourismepaca.fr)  
[www.presetourismepaca.fr](http://www.presetourismepaca.fr)

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Région



Provence-Alpes-Côte d'Azur

