

Press Pack
The Vendée,
Holiday Destination

Collection 2015



www.vendee-tourisme.com

Contents



Destination Vendée

- Coastal beauties
- Vendée Islands
- Marais Poitevin and its unique village

Outdoor Activities

- Vendée by bike
- Rambling in Vendée
- Watersports in Vendée
- Unusual « gentle trips »

Top addresses in Vendée

- New additions
- Unclassifiable properties
- Holiday lets « for artists »
- «Timeless» properties

What's new in Vendée camping

- Major investments en 2015
- Back to nature
- Unusual accomodation options: sleeping at campsite!
- Themed campsites

Tourist attractions: what's new?

- Le Puy du Fou, the world's best leisure park
- Logis de la Chabotterie, a new stage design
- All the leisure parks: atlantic wave park, Indian forest...



Vendée Nature

- Biotopia, the world of the coast and the forest
- Maison du Maître des Dignes
- « Michel Brosselin » National Nature Reserve
- Even more « Nature » sites in Vendée

More new attractions in Vendée

- The site Saint Sauveur in Rocheservière
- Centre Minier de Faymoreau
- A portrait of William Christie (and an event)
- Cycling through Vendée on the « Vélo Francette » trail

Restaurants: the best of the best

- Vendée fine cuisine
- Restaurant: award-winning chefs
- Top terraces
- Focus on the Fiefs Vendéens and the vineyard trail

Well-being and golf courses

- Thalassotherapy centres and spa
- Vendée golfing... the must-play 18-hole courses

Vendée mills....

- Mills steeped in history
- Mills open to visitors
- Mill restaurants
- Mill accommodation

Where is the Vendée?

The Vendée is an area of Western France which lies on the Atlantic Coast, south of the Loire, between the cities of Nantes and La Rochelle. It is about 600 km from the UK.



How do I get to the Vendée?

It is really to get to the Vendée, thanks largely to the proximity of the airports at Nantes and La Rochelle, both of which are less than an hour's drive away and served by scheduled flights from the UK. The area has also opened up to road and rail traffic, making travel by car (via ferry or tunnel) or train equally viable.

By air (about 1 hour):

To Nantes-Atlantique Airport (83 km from the Vendée)

From London City (Air France by Cityjet)

From Manchester, Southampton (Flybe code share Air France)

From Liverpool, London Gatwick (Easyjet)

From Dublin and Shannon (Ryanair)

From Glasgow

To La Rochelle/Ile de Ré Airport (94 km from the Vendée)

From London Stansted, East Midlands and Dublin (Ryanair)

From London Gatwick and Bristol (Easyjet)

From Birmingham, Manchester and Southampton (Flybe)

From Leeds-Bradford and Edinburgh (Jet2)

By rail (about 6 hours):

From London Saint Pancras to Lille Europe (Eurostar), then TGV from Lille Europe to La Roche sur Yon/Les Sables d'Olonne

From London Saint Pancras to Paris Gare du Nord (Eurostar), then TGV from Paris Gare Montparnasse to La Roche sur Yon/Les Sables d'Olonne

Main stations in the Vendée: La Roche sur Yon, Challans, Saint Gilles Croix de Vie, Les Sables d'Olonne, Montaigu, Luçon.

By road via ferry/tunnel (about 7 hours):

To Saint Malo (265 km from the Vendée):

From Portsmouth (Brittany Ferries)

From Weymouth, via the Channel Islands

From Poole (Condor Ferries)

To Caen (393 km from the Vendée):

From Portsmouth (Brittany Ferries)

To Roscoff (402 km from the Vendée):

From Plymouth and Cork (Brittany Ferries)

To Le Havre (421 km from the Vendée):

From Portsmouth (LD Lines)

To Cherbourg (428 km from the Vendée):

From Portsmouth (Brittany Ferries)

From Poole (Brittany Ferries)

To Dieppe (484 km from the Vendée):

From Newhaven (LD Lines)

From Dover (LD Lines)

To Boulogne (604 km from the Vendée):

From Dover (Speedferries and LD Lines)

To Calais (636 km from the Vendée):

From Dover (P&O Ferries and SeaFrance)

From Folkestone (Eurotunnel)

To Dunkerque (676 km from the Vendée):

From Dover (Norfolkline)

Highlights



A dynamic tourism economy:

tourism is a **top-tier** component of the Vendée economy;

The No. 1 tourism département in France on the Atlantic seaboard with nearly **35.8 million nights** booked for tourism
5 million tourists welcomed each year

87% are French clients (Western France, Paris region, etc.)

13% are international clients (from Great Britain, Belgium, the Netherlands, Germany, etc.)

Reception capacity of **820,000 beds**

Average trip duration is **10.5 days**

The tourist season now lasts **six months** from April to September **with nearly 90%** of nights booked

A strong trend towards **year-round attraction**.

A diverse, high-quality tourism offering:

A **diverse, high-quality accommodation offering**

250 km of coastlines with **80% protection**, **140 km** of fine sandy beaches;

An unexpected variety of landscapes including dunes and forests, wild, rocky coastlines, bocages and wetlands, etc.

over **100 natural, protected areas** covering more than **2,000 hectares**

two islands (Yeu and Noirmoutier), **18 seaside resorts** and **eight marinas** (moorings for 6,400 vessels)

two convention centres, **two** thalassotherapy centres, **five** 18-hole golf courses and **one** 9-hole course

Over 1,000 km of cycling tracks

a vast range of **water activities** for every season

fine cuisine takes centre stage **with four Michelin-starred restaurants**

over **500 events** held every year

world-famous events: **Vendée Globe, Tour de France, etc.**

over **300 sites** to visit or for leisure activities

a unique sight-seeing venue that now welcomes over **1.74 million** visitors each year: **le Puy du Fou®** (voted the best theme park in the world in 2012 and in Europe in 2013).

Coastal beauties

Saint Jean de Monts: the children's favourite



With its 8 km of extremely safe beaches (the beach inclines gently and there is no current), Saint Jean de Monts is staking everything on family safety: identification masts, safety bracelets for children and many beach monitoring and emergency first aid stations! Pignon shellfish hunting. Many areas and activities just for children. The 15 km of fine sandy beaches by the ocean are an ideal place all year round to run with the wind: try sand yachting on the beach for a new experience...

Enjoy the resort on foot, on rollerblades, on horseback or by bike...

The esplanade is a pleasant venue for completely safe rollerblading. Most of the bicycle tracks are located in clean and secured sites for great rides across the forest and wetlands.

Saint Gilles Croix de Vie: strong maritime tradition

Saint Gilles Croix de Vie, une forte tradition maritime

Saint Gilles Croix de Vie, charmante station balnéaire classée, a su conserver au fil du temps, son art de vivre et ses traditions. Cette cité maritime offre une large palette d'activités à expérimenter en famille ou entre amis.

Sa réputation n'est plus à faire... La sardine de Saint Gilles Croix de Vie

De la mer à la criée, ce produit emblématique de Saint Gilles Croix de Vie réalise un parcours sans faute. Ce petit poisson sauvage se pêche au large de nos côtes essentiellement d'avril à fin septembre. La sardine est ensuite débarquée à la criée et c'est là que son avenir se joue. Elle sera vendue pour être consommée fraîche ou mise en boîte dans la dernière conserverie vendéenne. Quel que soit le sort qu'on lui réserve, la sardine vous invite à la gourmandise.

Fête de la sardine primeur – le samedi 2 mai 2015

Encore un peu de patience, la sardine primeur arrive... Rendez-vous sur le port de pêche à partir de 9h30. L'Association du Site remarquable du Goût de Saint Gilles Croix de Vie en collaboration avec les maris pêcheurs convie la population à assister à l'arrivée de la « 1ère sardine de printemps ». Une manifestation conviviale à laquelle participeront également la Confrérie de la Sardine ainsi que des groupes folkloriques locaux. À cette occasion, des sardines fraîches seront offertes au Maire ainsi qu'à une dizaine de restaurateurs



Coastal beauties

Les Sables d'Olonne: the sea town

Located only 90 minutes from Nantes and La Rochelle, les Sables d'Olonne is the Vendée seaside resort town famous for its long beach of fine sand and its legendary Vendée Globe race that starts at Port Olona every four years. With its strong maritime tradition testifying to its rich history, Les Sables d'Olonne, the sea town is an absolute must as a destination for all kinds of water sports.

Grande plage and Remblai

A favourite spot for walks all year round to enjoy the scenery, the sea and its changing reflections from one season to the next. All long Grande Plage, cafés, bars, restaurants, crêperies, shops selling accessories and souvenirs, and art galleries are delighted to offer visitors a welcome respite from busy lives.

The Vendée watersports capital

The Institut Sports Océan awaits you to introduce you to or improve your water boardsports or sailing: surfing, sea canoeing, hobie cat catamaran sailing and stand-up paddle surfing. The Atlantic Ocean with its waves and breakers is paradise for water board sports aficionados. Surfing and wave skiing championships are held at Les Sables d'Olonne and the world champions have even set up their own school there. Top-rank instructors!

A seaside town

Thanks to its port, fishing, commercial and marina activity, Les Sables d'Olonne is a dynamic town throughout the year with a cultural season programme during the off-season, free events on the sea front during the summer, arts and crafts markets, concerts, a pedestrian centre with a wide variety of stores and the Halles for fresh produce. A stroll along the little streets is a must to discover the town's heritage and living testimony to its past: old ship-owners' houses, 18th-century town houses, seaside villas with a variety of regional styles and fishermen's cottages, etc.

Focus on La Chaume, an unusual area

Access is via the "sea bus" ferry that crosses the channel to the three ports all year. The docksides with their colourful houses, narrow streets and the pointed church spire make this a favourite landscape for artists. La Chaume, once a rocky islet, became "l'île Vertime" and was connected to the mainland in the Middle Ages after the wetlands were drained. The wild coast of la Paracou makes a wonderful contrast with the rocky coastline along "la Route Bleue", a wetlands area just a short distance from the regional forest of Olonne. A gorgeous natural environment to enjoy.

La Chaume is still the neighbourhood for fishermen. A mural in place de l'Eglise depicts the area's unusual atmosphere. Dotted around are monuments such as Arundel Tower, the former keep of Château St Clair, the governor's residence when the town was still ruled by the English, the St Nicolas Priory and its canons pointing seawards in memory of a sea battle in the 17th century against an Anglo-Dutch fleet and the lighthouses and moles, Brise Lames and the semaphore. Not forgetting the streets with their evocative names: rue du Vilbrequin, rue de l'Echelle, rue du Hasard, rue du Regard, rue du Soupir, rue de l'Amour. A full agenda of things to see...



Coastal beauties

La Tranche sur Mer: a village by the sea

La Tranche-sur-Mer is one of the rare seaside destinations to have preserved its massive constructions and asphalted embankments. Thanks to its magnificent authentic scenery, its 13 km of beaches bordered by dunes and the quality of its bathing water, this little seaside village with a population of 2,700 has been committed to preserving the environment for many years.

After entirely redeveloping the municipality to promote gentler modes of transport, limit car traffic and improve conditions for tourists and residents, the village is now striving to become a "sustainable destination".



"Mamie malice et Papy complice" (Fun and games with Grandma and Grandpa) to highlight social bonds between generations



The Tranche-sur-Mer tourist office has launched an operation called "Mamie malice et Papy complice" (Fun and games with Grandma and Grandpa), for all grandchildren and grandparents. The project intends to highlight moments of sharing and complicity between generations. The operation began with a competition offering pairs of grandchildren and grandparents the chance to win weekends with activities to do together at Tranche sur Mer.

Several generations going on holiday together is a trend that's become more popular during the recession. The presence of large numbers of "grandparents" at the resort enables young people, children and teenagers to come on holiday and enjoy a wide variety of activities throughout the year. That's why we wish to highlight those special moments grandparents and their grandchildren share together that help our seaside village to exist and retain its identity as a young and dynamic family resort. Furthermore, the environmental approach adopted by Tranche-sur-Mer has validity only if it includes the sharing of knowledge between current and future generations who must in turn preserve the environment they will inherit. The "Mamie Malice et Papy Complice" project therefore came about through combining human values and economic realities. It is part of an approach to promote the value of social bonds between generations in families that are dear to our community.



Vendée islands

Noirmoutier: the mimosa Island



Noirmoutier island acquired its "île aux mimosas" nickname thanks to its exceptional microclimate and remains a little corner of paradise for nature-lovers: its blue salt-water wetlands stretch over a third of the island to contrast the white sandy dunes caressed by the ocean breeze and the woods of holly oak, strawberry trees and marine pine... Tucked away in the hollows of Bois de la Chaise, the large villas exemplify Noirmoutier and stand as witnesses to La Belle Époque and "sea bathing". Tourism and "classic yachting" were born in these sandy inlets facing the mainland.

In addition to a preserved natural environment, Noirmoutier boasts 40 km of beaches, a large number of water activities for all, including sailing schools, sea gardens for children, diving school, paddle surfing, land sailing and kitesurfing, jet skiing and sea kayaking, along with excursions on old sailing boats and for sea fishing, etc. The island also has three ports, port de l'Herbaudière and port Morin face the ocean, and the historic port of Noirmoutier en l'île.

Local flavours

Noirmoutier is at the crossroads of land and sea and lives according to the pace of its earliest activity all year long: fine oysters and tidewater mussels, early potatoes and the famous "Bonnotte" potato, fleur de sel sea salt and samphire, line-caught bass, sole and seafood. The region's culinary delights are brilliantly showcased by the island's chefs.

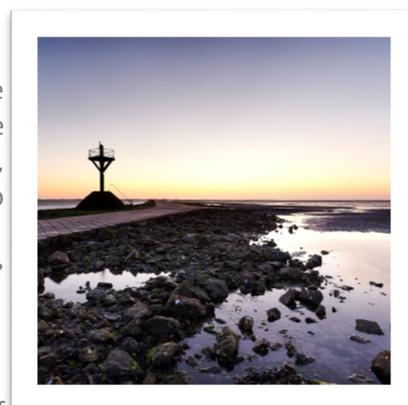
Le Gois, the only road of its kind in the world

The appeal of this island also stems from its unusual access. In addition to the bridge the island can be accessed by "le Gois". a 4 km-long route than can be used only twice a day at low tide. A curiosity that was the only one of its kind, the Passage du Gois long served as the umbilical cord connecting the island to the mainland until a bridge was built in 1971.

Les Foulées du Gois: "the race against the sea". Every June, 30 athletes race against the rising tide... a spectacular challenge pitting Man against Nature.

Noirmoutier and la Belle Plaisance

Noirmoutier is a temple to Belle Plaisance regattas. The magnificent stretch of water in Baie de Bourgneuf offers an outstanding area for sailing. Each summer, gorgeous international sailboats, fore-and-aft sails, requin and dragon vessels from the Atlantic coast meet up for three days of regattas starting at Plage des Dames. One example is the **Lissac Classic Noirmoutier** which regularly pitches 50 boats around the Pen Duick. And it's there that "La Chaloupe", has been organising the famous "**Régates du Bois de la Chaise**" for a quarter of a century. The event features nearly 70 working and Belle Plaisance leisure craft in a festive and friendly setting with as much to see on land as at sea.



Vendée islands

Ile d'Yeu: the pearl of the Atlantic



Enjoy the charms of the wild coastline listed as a "natural site" with its steep cliffs overlooked by the formidable "Vieux château" in île d'Yeu. The coastal path, which is currently being listed as a GR path, as well as the interior network, make the island a wonderful location for ramblers. Use the sign-posted routes as your guide or just relax with an enjoyable ramble. Ile d'Yeu boasts a wide variety of sea activities: sailing, deep-water fishing, sea kayaking, underwater diving, surfing, etc., but also many beaches for swimming or just relaxation. Ile d'Yeu was long the leading tuna port on the Atlantic and still gives pride of place to fishing, bringing to the docks of Port Joinville bass, monk fish, soles, turbot, sea bream, hake and various noble shellfish.

The wild coast

Between Pointe du But and Pointe des Corbeaux on the southern part of the island, the wild coast stands in testimony to the Celtic lands of Brittany and Ireland. The landscape is dotted with many capes and points. Enjoy the wide blue yonder from Pointe du Châtelet and la Tranche. Port de la Meule, a small fishing port landscaped into a ria over which stands proudly the iconic chapel of Notre Dame de Bonne Nouvelle, which serves as a natural shelter for mariners. Inlets with fine, sandy beaches are nestled amidst the cliffs: Belle Maison, Anse des Fontaines, les Sabias (a tiny beach with fishermen's huts), les Soux and les Vieilles.

Dune coast

The coast becomes gentler after Pointe des Corbeaux with a series of beaches alongside a dune environment dominated by marine pine and holly oak forests. Nearby, a network of wetlands is home to many protected species of birds. Between Marais Salé and Ker Châlon, rocky outcrops break the succession of beaches.

New: 28 km of the sentier douanier d'Yeu

Recently approved and listed in the GR catalogue by the French Rambling Federation, the tour of the island using the coastal path now known as GR80 will be possible from the spring of 2014. Ramblers will be able to enjoy the coastal scenery around the island along this 28 km-long circuit.

To enjoy just part of the GR path, the ID Bus service (which runs daily from April to October) connects Port-Joinville to the starting point of your choice and ends where you wish.

Also from spring 2014, people who prefer short walks will be able to choose from five routes each between 7 and 10 km in length and which are called "sentes". The sente des Marais, sente des Oïls, sente du Noroit', sente des creusland and sente de la Meule are all routes to enjoy the treasures of the seaside and also the most hidden spots of the island inland.



The unique villages of the Vendée

The “Petites Cités de Caractère” distinction is awarded to towns and villages with an outstanding architectural and landscape heritage. Apremont a few kilometres from the coast, Mallièvre and Mouchamps in Bocage, Vouvant, Famoreau, Foussais-Payré and Nieul sur l’Autise in the southern part of the department are all examples of the multiple facets of Vendée identity.



Apremont the stronghold

Apremont lies some 20 km from the coast in a fine green setting. It is crossed by the Vie, a small tidal river with a steep landscape. The castle's two Renaissance towers stand proudly in the heart of the village.

A fortress dominated the Vie valley in the Middle Ages. In the 15th century, the Lord High Admiral, Philippe Chabot de Brion, a childhood friend of King Francis I, had its imposing residence built there. The heritage discovery trail takes you on the exploration of the narrow streets, Gallo-Roman bridge, fine houses and residences and the church (built in the 20th century) and the watch path overlooking the village.

Mallièvre, an old weavers' village

The village of Mallièvre overlooking the white waters of the Sèvre Nantaise. Its origins go back to the mists of time. The village emerges after a bend beyond a fine stone bridge that has been well maintained on a rocky outcrop.

This is where you can really feel the area's charm. Here, the remnants of the medieval castle, the lofty residences of the masters and the houses perched on the granite rock set off the high dry-stone walls, the narrow alleys and floral rockeries... The former weavers' village has not forgotten the activity that made it prosperous. After touring its heritage, country paths along calm and green hillsides bring the visitor naturally back to the banks of the Sèvre.

Mouchamps: the gateway to Vendée

The quaint little village of Mouchamps is one of the gateways to Vendée. The village lies in the heart of the Vendée bocage. Perched on a rocky outcrop, Mouchamps dominates the Petit Lay river.

Its church, the former castle chapel, stands as a final witness of the old medieval site where a fortress was located. The Protestant church also bears witness to a Protestant community from the 16th century onwards. Several houses still have Renaissance features alongside 19th-century town houses. The Frères Martel monument was built in 1930 in memory of Cdt René Guilbaud who died in 1928. In Le Colombier, the Clemenceau family home, the man known as "The Tiger" was laid to rest close to his father in 1929.

Vouvant: the medieval village

The charm of the medieval village with its ramparts nestled in a river bend stems as much from the remnants of the Middle Ages with its magnificent church and exemplary Romanesque entrance as from its narrow, flowery streets. Ensclosed in the bend of the Mère river whose wandering course adds charm to the delightful little valley, the former medieval stronghold today defends only the tourist's view from the top of its rocky knoll. The quaint little village is replete with piety and legend; its impressive 11th-century Romanesque church seems to be in the throes of a timeless dialogue with the old keep, which legend say was built in one night by the fairy Mélusine. The church is listed as an historic monument and boasts a remarkable entrance with small columns capped by gorgeous sculpted archivolts. Its charming streets lined by houses of varying styles convey the gentle lifestyle of this small village.

Faymoreau: the mining village

A humble cobbler digging a well one day in 1827 hit upon a seam of coal. From that discovery, a short distance from the old village of Faymoreau, a mining town took root that was organised, structured and unexpected in the outstanding wetland countryside.

For 130 years people came from all over, united by courage and community spirit to share a fine human endeavour. Today, memories are evoked by the layout: mining cottages with straight façades, carefully tended allotments and fishing stages around the pond. Contemporary stained-glass windows by Carmelo Zagari in the old Mining Chapel cast light on the humble gestures of these men who laboured in the shadows. The museum, which is located in what used to be the glaziers' dormitory, brings out the glorious industrial past of the Faymoreau mining region. Far from forgetting its past, Faymoreau turns it into an asset for the present and the future.

Foussais-Payré: between Romanesque and Renaissance

At the edge of the Mervent forest on the banks of the Vendée river, the village of Foussais-Payré bears witness to two golden ages of architecture. Its Romanesque church built between 1050 and 1100 is one of the most outstanding of the Bas-Poitou region and has preserved vestiges of the Hundred Years' War and the Wars of Religion. At the chevet, the priory (now the town hall) stands out by its fine fireplaces and its wooden staircase dating from the 17th century. The Renaissance, another fertile period of builders' talent, prompted some impressive buildings in Foussais-Payré: the house of François Laurent (1552) had a loggia with an interior courtyard, the "auberge Sainte-Catherine", owned by the family of mathematician and humanist François Viète (1540-1603) and the Halles covered market, which were built in the 16th century. At the entrance of the village of Payré sur Vendée, former lime furnaces evoke the location's industrial activity in the 19th century.

Nieul sur l'Autise, curling up against its abbey

The great Eleanor of Aquitaine casts a long and enduring shadow over the abbey of Saint Vincent de Nieul sur l'Autise where she was born. Founded in 1067 by the Lord of Vouvant, the abbey and its neighbour of Saint Pierre de Maillezais cast a civilizing influence over the Bas-Poitou region. The land-reclaiming monks ensured the region's prosperity by creating the Marais Poitevin, which was reclaimed from the sea. Today Saint Vincent's Abbey is an outstanding testimonial to monastic architecture with its full arching sculpted façade, its chapter house and Romanesque cloisters (the only remaining intact examples in the west), which give this unique village its radiance. A well-inspired village which seems to blend, today as yesterday, into the beneficial proximity of its abbey. The Neolithic camp of Champ Durand is not far away, which makes its contribution to local memory, along with the watermill along the Autise river that shows that in Nieul, heritage is a past and present undertaking.



Marais Poitevin and its unique villages

Marais Poitevin: the land of wide open spaces



As the **second largest wetland area in France** after Camargue and the fifth largest in Europe, this area with its outstanding ecological variety, flora, fauna and cultural and landscape heritage was awarded the Grand Site de France label in 2010. From the Venise verte to baie de l'Aiguillon via the dried marsh, the area's diversity can be seen in a mosaic of landscapes shaped by mankind over the last ten centuries. A trip across its land and waterways reveals all the breath-taking and yet at the same time fragile beauty of these wetlands, as they depend on a very changeable balance. As the best place for bicycling, sailing, walking and ecological and sustainable tourism, this secret, poetic area is ideal for everyone who loves calm, peaceful nature.

Wetlands form the transitional border between land and water and are among the most exceptional areas for **ecological and biological diversity** on the planet. Wetlands serve as filters to clean and control the flow of water with extraordinary biodiversity thanks to their high concentrations of nutritional items. In addition to fisheries, shellfish farms and farming, the three activities traditionally located in these areas, tourism also plays a key role in the economy.

The Marais poitevin is a land of nature and greenery, but has also preserved its surprising **architectural heritage** from its particularly unusual history and lifestyle. Medieval abbeys, Romanesque churches and Renaissance châteaux all blend in harmoniously with the traditional habitat of simple fishermen's huts, mills and small ports... At the start of the second millennium religious fervour prompted a surge of monasteries and abbeys. In the 12th century the three abbeys of Maillezais, Nieul sur l'Autise and Saint-Michel en l'Herm combined forces to overcome the swamps and drain the surrounding territory. All three bear witness to the vitality of monastic life in the region and each is an architectural model. **Maillezais**, the necropolis of the dukes of Aquitaine, served as a **Benedictine abbey, cathedral and then fortress** and was a spiritual citadel with an international reputation in its time. Its capitals, modillions and interweaving foliage are all testimonials to the stone-cutter's art; its vestiges perfectly illustrate Romanesque, Gothic and Renaissance styles. As a masterpiece of Romanesque architecture, **the royal abbey of Nieul sur l'Autise** owes its prosperity to the patronage of Eleanor of Aquitaine, queen of France and then of England. Listed by Prosper Mérimée in 1862, it is one of the rare monastic complexes to remain complete with church, cloister and monastic buildings. The **abbey of Saint Michel en l'Herm** has been a family-owned property since 1818. It was founded in 682 and boasts a turbulent history. The main part of the keep (known as the "château"), refectory and monks' pavilion, which can be admired today, date from the end of the 17th century.

For more information, please request the special press kit "Le Marais Poitevin, 2014" - in French only – by phoning +33 (0)2 51 47 88 23, or emailing f.couton-laine@vendee-expansion.fr. It can also be downloaded from the press space on www.vendee-tourisme.com



Vendée by bike

The cycle is complete! Vendée is ready for cycling fans – professionals, amateurs, tourists, adults and children!

Dedicated and protected cycling tracks have been completed along with the *Vélodys-sée*, a section of a route that takes you from Norway to Portugal.

At last the car can be left in the garage so you can set off solely by bike. Getting to the beach, going shopping, out to a restaurant, exploring the valleys of the Bocage, getting lost in the Venise Verte, visiting the abbeys... Just hop on your bike and you can get there!

Cycling has the advantage of saving on fuel and getting us fit, whether racing off or affording the luxury of taking our time. Pop the children in the child trailer, some baguettes in the front basket and a picnic in the bag!

This is the life!



Vendée, the largest network of cycle tracks in France



The Vendée General Council initiated the départemental cycling network in 1995, which now stretches over **1,060 km** to make it the **largest network in France**. Enjoy the département in complete safety with family and friends using the various tracks crossing the Vendée landscape from the coastline of the Marais Poitevin to the Bocage. Since 2013 you can tour all of Vendée by bicycle with full peace of mind.

Vendée now has a cycling network aimed at sightseeing with outstanding diversity:

A wide range of landscapes: wetlands, forests, dunes, bocage

A wide range of developments: proprietary asphalted sites or sites with sanded surfacing along the coast, small country roads in the Bocage, the former rail track between La Roche sur Yon and Coëx, tow paths along the Canal de Luçon and in the Marais Poitevin

A wide variety of difficulty levels: from very flat on the coast and in Marais Poitevin to deep valleys in Haut Bocage.

Specific signage will guide you throughout your route along the cycling tracks in Vendée. Everything has been set up to ensure maximum safety: cycle paths have dedicated tracks or are on little-used roads, with signage for cyclists, etc. However do remain vigilant, especially on roads used by vehicles at some intersections. There are picnic areas for taking a short break before setting off again along the route.



The 25 finest circuits in Vendée

The département network and its 1,060 km of cycling tracks have been supplemented by a very dense local network that has been extensively developed just inland from the coast. Almost **1,000 additional km** extend the départemental offering. The small roads along the bocage, the coast, islands and Marais Poitevin are ideal for this form of exploration.

Cycling fans will enjoy the new "bike" circuits that will help them connect both to the département track and local networks.

A short circuit in Brétignolles sur Mer

Go round the small seaside resort of Brétignolles sur Mer in just 8.7 km (50% on départemental tracks). The track goes through the tiny hamlets of the village before returning to the départemental cycling track along the coast, from which you can enjoy the bays and beaches of Marais Girard and then La Parée. Have a quick stop-over in Le Rocher de Saint Véronique.

Explore the circuit of Noirmoutier island

Various tracks will enable you to enjoy the multiple facets of the Noirmoutier island. The "Entre marais et moulins" track, for example, is 19.6 km long and meanders through the saltwater marshes before returning to the village of La Guéribière with its small white houses, windmills and narrow streets. A quick trip across the forest before a stopover in Port Morin (a small marina) from where the view is breathtaking: wild, natural beaches as far as the eye can see.

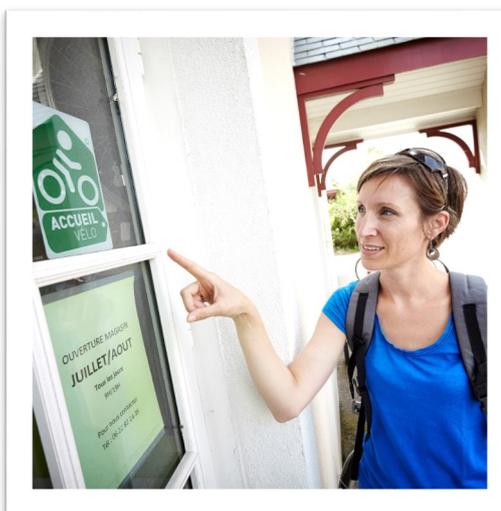
Between vineyards and bocage in Rocheservière

In Rocheservière, start off by breathing in the atmosphere of the medieval village with its bridge whose foundations hark back to Roman times, its narrow streets, its "Maison des Arts et Traditions" watermill, bijou châteaux and the La Boulogne river. Then set off for Saint Philbert de Bouaine via the small roads along the Muscadet vineyards. The "vignes et bocage" circuit is 26.8 km long and offers a refreshing change of scenery.



"Accueil Vélo" in Vendée

A brand for the perfect cycling holiday!



"Accueil vélo" is a national brand that guarantees cycling tourists high quality reception and services tailored to their expectations in listed tourist establishments.

The brand is awarded to various kinds of tourism established on the strength of a quality charter: accommodation, bicycle rental and repair specialists, sightseeing and leisure sites and tourist offices.

In choosing an "Accueil Vélo" establishment, the cycling tourist is certain to find equipment and services that meet his or her expectations for perfect cycling holidays. Services and features range from secured bicycle shelters provided by accommodation facilities to specific information in tourist offices and include a bicycle parking area in visitor sites and the availability of luggage storage facilities at the bicycle rental agencies to guarantee you a high-quality welcome.

At the end of 2013 Vendée had **169 service providers listed as Accueil Vélo specialists**. Cycling tourists can therefore choose from 102 accommodation facilities, 27 tourism sites, 13 bike renters and 27 tourist offices, all listed as Accueil Vélo compliant.

Vélodyssée at the heart of the Euro Vélo route 1

Imagine a route **along the Atlantic coast** where cyclists and nature reign supreme. A véloroute where you can feel to go at your own pace, explore and contemplate, a véloroute that makes it possible to recharge your batteries and get away from it all gently. Don't forget: this **véloroute is the longest in France**. Welcome to Vélodyssée, a new 1,253 km route of cycling tracks, 70% of which have been created as dedicated car-free tracks for cycling that crosses France from Brittany to the Basque coast.

Fair stands the wind for England, Spain, the Black Sea...

Developed with openness in mind, Vélodyssée is a fully European route. In taking it, you travel part of the Eurovélo route 1 which connects Norway to Portugal via the UK, France and Spain.

You will also be connected to several international routes such as Eurovélo route 4 (from the English Channel to the Black Sea) and route 6 (Eurovélo routes along rivers from Nantes).

Vélodyssée in Vendée

The cycle track along the Vendée coast between Bouin and L'Aiguillon sur Mer via the Noirmoutier and Ile d'Yeu islands is currently the most complete with 89% having been finished. To date 200 km have been developed along the coastline, 150 km of which as dedicated sites.

For more information, please ask for the specific "VELODYSSÉE" press pack.



"Vélodyssée" break idea: COTE DE LUMIERE BY BIKE

Roving break (290 km), 6 days / 5 nights

€549 per person

The Côte de Lumière will enthral you with its sun, beaches, dunes and holly oak and pine woods. A stay-over in each port, a detour via the wetlands and a return trip through the bocage hinterland. A wild trip to Noirmoutier island.

Roving break with the following main stay-overs: Les Sables d'Olonne / Saint Gilles Croix de Vie / Bouin / Noirmoutier (or Ile d'Yeu as an option).

Prices include accommodation (half-board) in 2-star or 3-star hotels (beverages not included) based on a double room, a "cyclists'" breakfast, luggage transfer from one hotel to the next with a travel pouch provided.

Possible options: bike hire and one day on Ile d'Yeu.

More information available on www.vendee-tourisme.com – "Idée Séjour" [break ideas section]

<http://www.reservation.vendee-tourisme.com/> – tel. 02 51 62 76 82

Rambling in Vendée



Vendée on foot... absolute bliss!

Given its location at the edge of the Armorican peninsula and the Aquitaine basin, Vendée boasts outstanding diversity in geological formations across the ages along with a wide range of scenery to explore when rambling.

Which is all to the good! The département is criss-crossed with signposted pathways with **1,027 km of GR® and GRP®** and over **4,000 km of Promenade et Randonnées (PR®)** routes, including **95 signposted circuits totalling 1,047 km.**

GR® 8, the Vendée customs path

On the GR8, walk along the Vendée coastline with its **221 km of signposted paths**. Explore the customs path from Bouin in the north to Baie de l'Aiguillon in the south.

Follow a route with a mosaic of highly different landscapes, from fishing ports to wetlands, from dunes to forests, from a rocky coastline to broad fine-sand beaches... The circuit has many surprises in store for extraordinary vistas and fine local encounters.

Level: no difficulty

Type of route: ramble

GR8 signage: white and red

Three selected sections of the GR8

From Bouin to Barre de Monts... 28 km in the heart of the Marais Breton Vendéen

Imagine broad meadows stretching as far as the eye can see, intersected by estuaries and canals; a coastline of traditional ports and fisheries where oyster farming reigns supreme. Nature-lovers will enjoy spotting the many types of birds that make this location famous for bird-watching. Move on to the picturesque port du Bec with its coloured boats before resting your backpack at Barre de Monts.

From Saint Jean de Monts to Saint Gilles Croix de Vie... 23 km to explore the Vendée corniche

Follow a pine-scented path redolent with the scent of the sea: you will cross the pine and holly oak forest before getting to the village of Sion. Then, to get to St Gilles Croix de Vie take the "Corniche vendéenne", three kilometres of granite rocky coastline between the ocean and *Belle époque* villas. The corniche is listed as an outstanding natural site. The timeworn cliffs feature many natural treasures you can explore along your route. St Gilles Croix de Vie is worth tarrying over at night. Walk along the dockside to the jetty and enjoy the fishing village atmosphere...

From Brem sur Mer to Les Sables d'Olonne... 31 km along the Côte de Lumière

The path varies between wetlands, dunes, forest and rocky coastline along this route. Follow the bends of the saltwater marshes and stop off at the bird observatory. Take a guide and don't forget your binoculars to admire grey heron, the black-winged stilt, the elegant avocet... The vista is gorgeous. Before arriving in Les Sables d'Olonne, cross La Chaume, a quaint little fishing village with coloured houses and narrow streets. In going back along the seafront, stroll in the famous quartier de l'Île Penotte with its houses decorated with seashells.



Break idea: Vendée on foot... ramble along the GR8

"Group special offer"

Break: Five days / four nights

From **€225** per person

The five-step rambling circuit will reveal the northern section of the GR8 route from Bouin to Les Sables d'Olonne.

The break includes accommodation for four nights (selection of various facilities according to your budget), half-board from day 1 to day 5, visit to an oyster farm and vineyard and 24-hour telephone assistance along with detailed maps of the circuit and the guide to perfect rambling.

For more information: www.vendee-tourisme.com – Séjours Groupes [group trips] section – tel. 02 51 62 65 27

Break idea : For individuals, "Vendée on foot", ramble along the GR8

Same programme as for groups

From **€250** per person (based on a double room)

For more information: www.vendee-tourisme.com – "Idée Séjour" [break ideas]

<http://www.reservation.vendee-tourisme.com/> section – tel. 02 51 62 76 82



The 2014 event: The 15th "4 jours en Chantonnay"

29 May to 1 June 2014

The "4 jours en Chantonnay" event is *the* rambling event in Vendée featuring four days of walking, 18 circuits and its night-time circuit.

In 1999 one Andreas Van Den Brink contacted the Chantonnay town authorities to propose a walking concept from his native Holland: walking over 20 km in at least two consecutive days and being part of the International Marching League (I.M.L.). The "Association Randonnée 4 jours en Chantonnay" was set up in July 1999. It opted for the maximum number of walking days (4) and the longest distance (42 km).

Today the event transcends France's borders. The only town in France to be listed in the International Marching League is Chantonnay, which therefore represents its country alongside 23 other towns and cities in the organisation such as Barcelona, Washington D.C. and Blankenberge etc.

Nearly 5,000 walkers (a quarter of whom are from abroad) meet up **during the four days over the 18 circuits on offer... with a different route each day and choice of distances: 8, 12, 21, 28 and 42 km** (routes are straight-line, not as a circuit; transfers are provided). The "4 jours en Chantonnay" event also features many theme-related actions and a night-time ramble.



Water sports in Vendée



Fair stands the wind for Vendée and its water sports!

Vendée is a French département that leads the world in the water sports industry. The flagship of the Vendée economy is firmly rooted in marinas, yachting clubs and associations that add life to all kinds of water sports on a serious or recreational level. The people of Vendée compete with the best in the world in practically every discipline. The Lissac Classic and Régates du Bois de la Chaise in Noirmoutier, the vital stages of the Course du Figaro, the Tour de France à la Voile, the Edhec and the Transgascogne in one of Vendée's marinas, the Reef Vendée Pro en surf event at the spots at Brétignolles-sur-Mer, a round in the French kitesurfing championship and the Everest des Mers, and not forgetting the Vendée Globe, all are events hosted along the Vendée coast. Vendée firmly embraces the wide blue yonder and the future with the concern to preserve its environment and heritage.

For more information about water sports in Vendée in 2014 and its calendar, ask for the "Vendée, Destination nautisme 2014" press pack – *in French only* – by calling 00 33 (0)2 51 47 88 23, or by emailing f.couton-laine@vendee-expansion.fr. It can also be downloaded in the press space on www.vendee-tourisme.com

The Va'a, the Polynesian canoe

As the latest arrival in the water and sailing sports world in mainland France, the VA'A is becoming increasingly prevalent along the Vendée coastline. Sea-watchers have been able to see rather unusual vessels with their left-hand outrigger for some years now. Polynesian canoes known as "va'a" brave the sometimes calm, sometimes turbulent waters of the Vendée coast. **From 29 to 31 May 2014**, Vendée will host again the spectacular Polynesian canoe race: **The "VENDEE VA'A"**. Aboard their V6 (a canoe with six rowers), over 15 teams will battle it out in a race 100 km long in three legs over two days from Les Sables d'Olonne, Saint-Gilles-Croix-de-Vie, Ile d'Yeu and then back to Sables where the arrival will be judged



SUP (Stand-Up Paddle Surfing) is the latest thing!

Stand-up paddle surfing is gaining more and more aficionados along the Vendée coast. The water sport imported from Hawaii arrived on French coastlines in 2006 and became a hit immediately. It may look very simple "you row standing up on a large surfboard", in fact, it's nothing of the sort. It is a highly technical sport "well, for those doing it in waves!"

Caroline Angibaud, the Vendée queen of SUP

Caroline Angibaud is not at her first attempt in the world of water sports. Caroline is a former world Wave-Ski champion and began her sporting career on a surfboard before moving onto the Longboard.

Caroline says she began Stand-Up Paddle Surfing entirely by chance. She discovered SUP when she was taking part in a pairs surfing competition with Loïc Caillet in Hawaii in 2010. "I wasn't much good", says Caroline. "The board was too big and too heavy... I was clumsy". But Caroline persisted. She took part in a competition in California with her brother Lionel in October 2011. She managed to catch a wave and finished second behind the world's best competitor in the discipline. Today, Caroline confesses that she's "no longer 20" and concentrates on the sport with more than honourable results. In 2013 she was champion of France for SUP and first in the Coupe de France circuit. In the World Cup, she was first in Abu Dhabi, third in Huntington Beach, second in la Torche, and fourth in the World Championships.

For Caroline, Vendée is ideal for SUP. "Here we have different types of waves, wind and exposure. You can always find somewhere to practice. We don't often get the perfect wave, but it's very technical", she explains.



Break idea : Surf at Côte de Lumière (six days / five nights)

Starting at €338 per person

Discover the joys of water sports and sailing at Grande Plage in Saint-Gilles-Croix-de-Vie, which is reputed to be ideal for learning to surf! Professionals will instruct you throughout the courses that can be done at any age. A sporting break and a moment of true relaxation to share with family or friends!

For your comfort an apartment hotel is located 900 metres from the beach, and close to the port. At the end of your day, once you've had your fill of adrenaline, why not relax in the indoor, heated pool in the residence with its integrated Jacuzzi!

The price includes (on the basis of four people) 5 surf sessions, accommodation in the apartment hotel, bike rentals and breakfast.

For more information: www.vendee-tourisme.com – Idées Séjours section or 02.51.62.76.82

Unusual "gentle trips"

Ballooning over the bocage

Wandering as a cloud...

What about allowing yourself to get the big picture without looking down at people! Well, of sorts. Tempting, isn't it? Take a gondola, some hydrogen, some canvas, put it all together and inflate it. Off you go in a hot air balloon, ready to stand over the world and look over the countryside in Vendée and Puy du Fou®! Happy landings!

If such a journey is a dream come true for you... a hot air balloon trip is unforgettable. As free as a bird, fly over Puy du Fou® and the gentle hills of the Bocage. Explore the unknown countryside that peaks your curiosity. Experience unique sensations when ballooning in complete safety. Drift away on the wind...

It's showtime for the earth from the skies!

Montgolfière du Bocage – Saint Pierre du Chemin



Night-time canoe trips in the Marais Breton Vendéen

For 30 years the Route du Sel has been using canoes to navigate through the maze of former salt marshes in Baie de Bretagne. Using a sustainable tourism approach, a wide variety of walks and rambles start around Sallertaine, a typical village of the Vendée wetlands. Historic heritage and rich contemporary culture are a permanent team around the village of artisans with its windmills, Ile Chauvet and its abbey...

Bivouac rambling

"Why are we creeping forward stealthily like Indians on the warpath?" "Because we're gliding over the waters in the heart of the Marais". Silence is golden for the magic to work, to make the most of the life flourishing in the reeds. On the return trip an abbey rises on Ile Chauvet; further off, with night falling, the windows of a small farmhouse offer a glimpse of candles on a laid table, the scent of something cooking on a grill, a wood fire. In the early hours of the morning, frogs croak, herons fly over. This is a renewal, your awakening, that of the inhabitants of the wetlands and its spectacular nature. The unusual breakfast awaits you not far away...

Prices per person: €89 including canoe hire, a guide, a barbecue dinner in the great outdoors with candles and champagne, a night in a bivouac and breakfast. Duration: approximately 21 hours.

La Route du Sel – Sallertaine – www.laroutedusel.com



Venise Verte in a horse-drawn caravan



The wandering life for a few days... Keep the reins in hand and command your destiny. You're free! There's no need to go in for long speeches, nor speak the language of horses to live one's destiny in a horse-drawn caravan. But we can offer one tip... It pays to be friends with the horse. After all, s/he's the one pulling the caravan! Remember to feed and care for the horse and pat it too. If you do, the horse will take you to the heart of Marais Poitevin.

At the pace of a horse's trot, the secret "Venise Verte" will reveal all her splendid nature. Here, the wildlife pays little heed to horses on these pathways. On the contrary, it goes about its usual business. Here the grey heron hunts the canals for frogs.

Practical information:

Set off on an adventure in a caravan for four (every convenience) and follow the country routes for a six-day break. Nothing is left to chance; there are stopovers for supplies and food in several villages.

Les Roulottes de l'Abbaye – Maillezais

Marais Poitevin by kayak...

from Venise Verte to the ocean in six days

This six-day journey is recommended for people who love nature and are looking for something new... Six days to get to Baie de l'Aiguillon... Six days to canoe to your heart's content in the second largest wetlands in France, the fifth largest in Europe (100,000 hectares).

From Fontenay le Comte where it is possible to pick you up at the station, after preparing the kayaks, the small team (there must be at least four people, but no more than ten) goes down the "Vielle Autize" river to bivouac in the Venise Verte. Day 2 of the programme includes: passing through two locks and a tour of the drainage works. Night 2 is spent in a campsite under a tepee. Day 3: the group is advancing in the Venise Verte and comes near to the royal abbey of Maillezais (with a tour possible). A second bivouac is organised close to Vix. Day 4: Sèvre Niortaise, the central artery of the marshes. The journey continues with the day ending at the campsite to rest. The ocean approaches on day 5 with a stopover in a mussel port followed by a shuttle to the centre of Ile de Ré for a final bivouac. On day 6 the group will go along the coast in the morning before a final picnic and return by road.

Canoe nature in southern Vendée – Fontenay le Comte



BREAK IDEA: Marais Poitevin in a kayak

Starting at **€299 per person** (6 days – 5 nights) on the basis of 12 people

Starting at **€399 per person** (6 days – 5 nights) on the basis of six people

The break includes hot meals (breakfast and dinner cooked and eaten together), picnic lunches, canoe hire (single or twin-seater) and the presence of a qualified instructor and nature guide.

More information about "Unusual trips in Vendée" on www.vendee-tourisme.com – Idée Séjour section

<http://www.reservation.vendee-tourisme.com/> – tel. 00 33 2 51 62 76 82

Top addresses in Vendée

"New" additions

Ec lodge Marais Girard, Brétignolles

The Marais Girard coastal farm offers the ideal combination of traditional rural architecture, modern buildings and a stunning setting. It is the pride and joy of its current owners, Marylène and Damien, who have lovingly restored the property. With a passion for heritage and eco-friendly design, they have truly captured the spirit of the place.

Pontoon villas: The pontoon villas are located in the "wildest" part of the estate, with wood-clad façades that stand alongside the waterway that runs through the reeds. Their large glass walls open out onto terraces, which make the ideal place for relaxation and contemplation...

The Ferme du Marais Girard is a place where guests live among the elements, where pleasure is gained in shared experiences at the counter in the barn, alongside the natural lake or on the pontoon by the villas under starry skies.

The owners have decided to make the spaces accessible to all guests, with an open bar, tea room, kitchen, and Marylène's organic pantry. All produce served at the farm is organic.

The Ferme du Marais Girard offers a unique tourism concept, based on the owners' firm commitment to eco-friendly practices.

The old buildings have been carefully restored using a combination of traditional materials and modern comforts. All waste from the renovation process was recycled on site.

A new wooden, tile-covered building was added as an extension to the original farmhouse, providing a natural linen-drying facility.

New for 2015: Marais Girard B&B

in July 2015, the owners open in the barn , a bar , tea room , catering, local produce shop. Everything will be open to guests of the villas " pontoons " and the guest rooms, but also to any outsider.

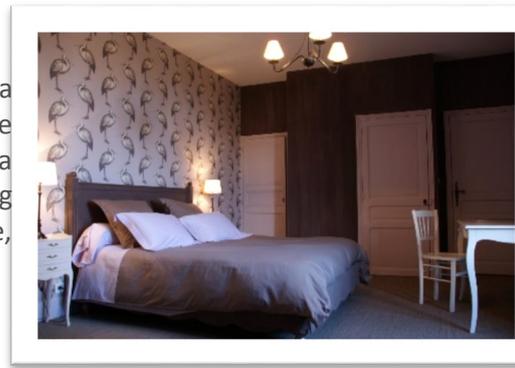
116 rue du Marais Girard - Brétignolles-sur-Mer



Beaux Esprits, Fontenay-le-Comte (B&B)

The Beaux Esprits B&B is located in the old centre of Fontenay-le-Comte, in a tastefully restored and decorated 18th century town house. It features three rooms, each decorated in the style and spirit of their era. The property offers a warm welcome and generous breakfasts, which are served in the large dining room. There is also a meeting room, which can accommodate 20 to 30 people, on the ground floor of the property.

Les beaux esprits - 9 rue Goupilleau – Fontenay Le Comte



Aux 4 Cornes, Longèves (B&B)

In 2013, Stéphanie and Pascal decided to embark on a new, simpler way of life. They began searching for a home that matched their new plans. They discovered this former fortified farm with its unusual tower, and fell in love with it immediately. It was this strange tower that gave the place its name, "Aux 4 Cornes".

They carefully renovated one of the former farm outbuildings, seeking to preserve the existing architecture as far as possible. It now houses four of the property's five guest rooms, each with its own unique ambiance (So-design, Grain de sable, Charme d'antan, etc.). The fifth room is located in another part of the house, and is accessed via an external staircase.

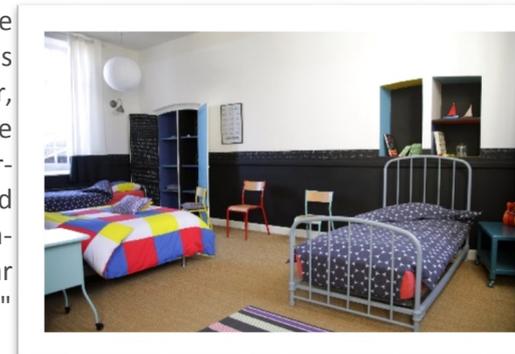
The B&B also boasts a heated pool at the foot of the tower, and its very own "table d'hôtes", where the lady of the house produces dishes based on seasonal produce and her own inspirations.

Aux 4 Cornes – Panteuil – Longèves



La Bonne École, Landes-Génusson (B&B)

Built in 1877 in the centre of Landes-Génusson, these former classrooms have been renovated to create simple, warm guest rooms. They feature extra touches such as dashes of colour, comfort and humour. Philippe, a food photographer, and Alice, a painter, have breathed new life into this stunning building while keeping true to its original spirit, with large, authentic spaces. The rooms overlook the green, flower-lined playground, while a selection of traditional board games will take older guests back to their childhoods. A "table d'hôtes" is available on Fridays and Saturdays, subject to reservation, and is extremely popular with guests. This summer will see the opening of two new rooms: "Les Scouts" and "Les Jeannettes".



The property is highly rated by guests, and won the prize for best customer comments at Booking.com in 2014.

La bonne école - 11 rue de Judée - Les Landes-Genusson

Le Moulin de Pilet, Mortagne-sur-Sèvre (holiday let)

An ancient stone building bursting with charm, nestled in a magical setting on a footpath on the banks of a river... This is more than just a holiday let. It's a way of life.

This former 16th century mill is located in the heart of the Sèvre valley close to Le Puy du Fou. Its owner, Pascal Goislot, offers a warm welcome at this charming, relaxing location. The warmth continues inside, with an interior dominated by grey, red and white, and by stone and wood. The result is a harmonious marriage of style and charm.

Le Moulin de Pilet – Evrunes – Mortagne sur Sèvre



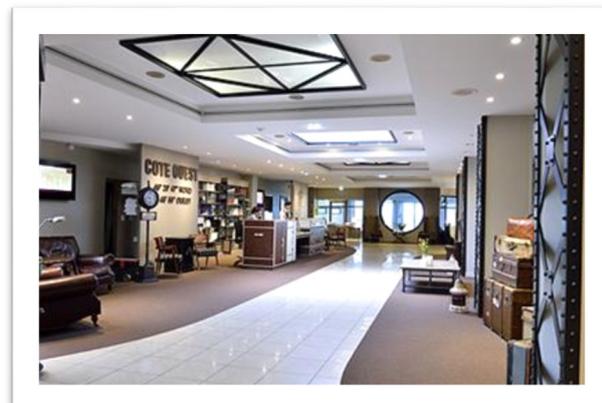
"Unclassifiable" properties

Just like an ocean liner...

The Hôtel Mercure Côte Ouest & Relais Thalasso faces the ocean with an outstanding view of Les Sables-d'Olonne bay. Tucked away in a 3.5-hectare pine forest by a lake, the establishment makes the most of its west-facing exposure which provides great light from sunrise to sunset. The site's features guided the renovation style for the hotel in 2013: Destination Côte Ouest, the ambiance of a cruise ship in the 1930s.

"Set your sights on the lighthouse, put down your luggage and untie the mooring ropes"

Hôtel Mercure Côte Ouest - Route du Tour de France - Les Sables d'Olonne



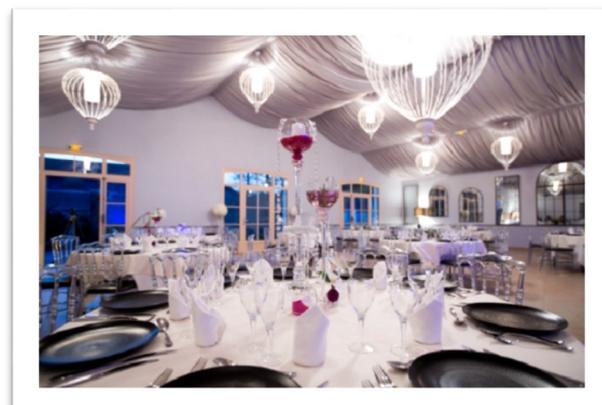
Domaine du Brandois, La Mothe-Achard

Weddings by Brandois (new for 2014)

This stunning setting is the perfect place to hold an unforgettable wedding.

The Château serves as a magnificent backdrop, the Salle de l'Ecuyer with its outdoor terrace is the ideal setting for drinks receptions and toasts, and the majestic Grande Salle des Amazones is perfect for a formal lunch or dinner. The hotel offers two wedding packages: the "Happy Wedding" and "Dream Wedding" variants. The hotel takes care of everything, from flowers, chauffeur-driven car and photographer, to orchestra, hairdresser, make-up artist and the civil ceremony itself.

Domaine de Brandois – Hôtel 4 étoiles - La Forêt – La Mothe-Achard



Hôtel Frédéric, Saint-Hilaire-de-Riez – HOTEL

This hotel was opened in the 1930s on the site of the former Frédéric restaurant. It is managed by Frédéric Berthomé, a local celebrity known for his unique personality.

It was a prestigious venue and hosted festivities and events for 40 years. It re-opened in spring 2000, still overlooking the ocean and just a stone's throw from the beaches and pine forest. Its 13 rooms are decorated in 1930s style, boast a sea view and feature all modern comforts.

Hôtel Frédéric – Sion - Saint Hilaire de Riez



Holiday lets "for artists"

Le Prieur, luxury artistic holiday let, opening in June 2015

Capacity: 14 people

Morgane Soland Chausse and David Chausse have created a holiday let that serves the professional needs of artists, with luxury facilities and a culturally inspired, eco-trendy setting. This vast, modern barn in a coastal location offers exceptional views of the surrounding undulating, uninhabited landscape.

The Domaine du Prieur will feature the very latest energy consumption technologies. With unspoilt views over the surrounding countryside, the Le Prieur holiday let provides the ideal location to connect with nature and inspire art and creativity. It boasts a 120 sq. m living room, with a terrace and covered, heated pool open all year round.

It is a place where time seems to stand still. Outside, there is a Storvatt (wooden outdoor hot tub), hanging gardens in the grounds, and the option to organise your own fireworks display.

The property's décor will be inspired by great modern designers such as Herman Miller, Le Corbusier, Charles Eames and other Scandinavian designers. This family-friendly, creative living space is inspired by a constant search for the new.

Gîte « Le Prieur » - Nieul Le Dolent



"Timeless" properties

Maison Marie Barrault, Les Herbiers – B&B

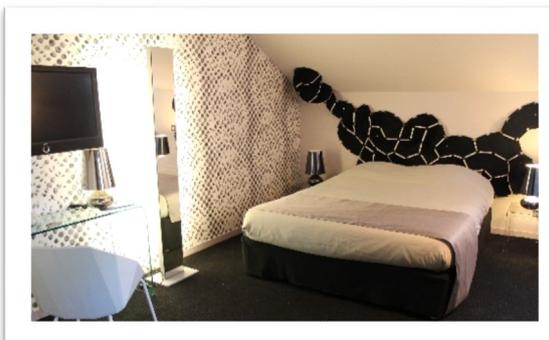
Maison Marie Barrault is a B&B located in Les Herbiers, near Le Puy du Fou.

The house was built in the late 18th century by Lord Boistissandeau to house his maid, Marie Barrault. This charming property has been fully renovated and now features guest rooms set in a designer atmosphere.

This B&B has five rooms, available on a per-night basis, and two studios for longer stays. Outside, it boasts a large tree-lined garden, a pool and a jacuzzi that are extremely popular with guests. Guests can also enjoy the facilities at the spa (sauna, heated pool and jacuzzi).

The owner, Nadine, offers a warm welcome to all guests, whether visiting for business or pleasure. Meals are prepared using local produce, including items from the property's own garden, and the lady of the house creates fabulous seasonal dishes.

Maison de Marie Barrault - 57 R. Monseigneur Masse - Les Herbiers



Le Gîte de la Pommeraie à Landeronde

The Gîte de la Pommeraie is located 20 minutes from Les Sables-d'Olonne and 10 minutes from La Roche-sur-Yon. It is the perfect place for a family break by the coast, yet set among peaceful countryside surroundings. The owners, Marie-José and Jean-Paul, have restored the property's two spacious, comfortable guest rooms with dedication and passion.

This former restored barn boasts two rooms on the first floor and its set in 4 hectares of wooded grounds. There is a car park on site, as well as children's games. Come and enjoy the peace and quiet on offer, and fish on a private lake just 3 km away.

Gîte de la Pommeraie - La Pommeraye - Landeronde



Chambres Oze, La Chaize-Giraud Bed & Breakfast – Gîtes de France - listed as 3 épis

Michaël Ezanno, a sculptor by trade, welcomes you to this Gîtes de France approved property in the heart of La Chaize-Giraud. This former 19th century wine-producing farm is located close to Brétignolles and Saint-Gilles-Croix-de-Vie, and is ideally situated for a relaxing countryside break.

Each of the three rooms at Chambres Oze has its own terrace overlooking a colourful garden. They are decorated in a tasteful yet understated style, featuring modern yet simple works by the artist himself. Two of the rooms are adjoining, and can be combined to create a family suite. Communal facilities are available, including a library and Wi-Fi internet access. There is also a "table d'hôtes" service, where the owner creates original, modern and spicy dishes that reflect his personality.

Les chambres Oze - 4 Place de la Mairie - La Chaize-Giraud



La Martinière, Corpe

The La Martinière bed & breakfast features two guest rooms in a 17th and 18th century property, located in small commune in the Bocage Vendéen, in private grounds of 1,800 sq. m. The ground floor features a large room with small, private garden. It boasts a double bed, open bathroom (bath and jet shower) and toilet. On the first floor: a family suite consisting of two rooms (double and twin), bathroom and toilet. TV in all rooms. There is also a small, indoor heated pool (5 x 10 metres) that opens out onto the garden, a wellness area with sauna, a relaxation room, a cross trainer, a rowing machine, grounds, garden furniture, a table tennis table and deck-chairs. Car park on the property. The "table d'hôtes" dishes are made exclusively from vegetables from the garden and local produce.

La Martinière - Corpe



What's new in Vendée camping

Vendée enjoys a warm climate thanks to the influence of the Atlantic along with pleasant temperatures. Nestled between verdant nature and sandy coastlines, camping in Vendée makes it possible to appreciate the beauty of its countryside and cultural activities in a different way.

It isn't mere coincidence that "camping" today now means "open air hotel".

Relaxation and a change of scenery are the key concepts of your camping trip! Many campsites (listed with 3, 4 and 5 stars) have swimming pools, some with slides for children to enjoy and even fitness areas for adults.

In tepees, bungalows, mobile homes, caravans, yurts, bubble rooms and treehouses, the emphasis is on comfort or even the unexpected.

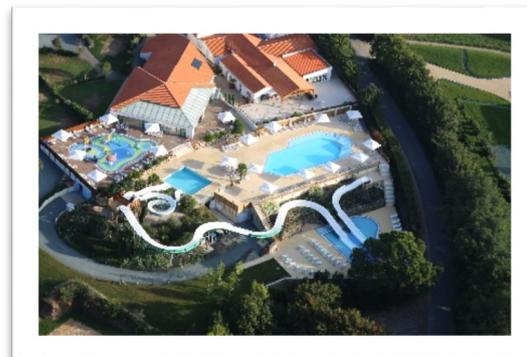
Major investments in 2015

Le Pin Parasol, La Chapelle-Hermier

The Le Pin Parasol***** campsite is open from April to September. It is located just 10 minutes from the Vendée beaches and close to Lac du Jaunay, making it the ideal place to enjoy nature and the outdoors. The campsite has been committed to environmental protection for more than 10 years, and was awarded the European Ecolabel in 2011.

Guests at Le Pin Parasol have a choice of 379 comfortable accommodation options, all set on spacious, demarcated pitches, standing in peaceful grounds of 12 hectares. The campsite celebrated its 20th birthday in 2014. Over the years, the team has gained extensive experience in listening attentively to customer needs and providing warmth and hospitality to guests.

With the extensive facilities of a five-star campsite, Le Pin Parasol has decided to expand the range of events and entertainment on offer throughout the summer season (mini club, sports competitions, evening family entertainment, etc.). This year, the campsite plans to modernise its bar and terrace (representing investment of around €300,000). It also plans to expand the snack bar menu to ensure that all guest requirements are met. These new investments come alongside the expansion of the heated pool complex (2,500 sq. m) to include two rubber ring water slides, one of which is 80 metres long, making it the largest in Vendée. Total investment in 2014 will stand at €1,000,000.



Camping Le Pin Parasol (cinq étoiles) – La Chapelle-Hermier

L'Océano d'Or, Jard-sur-Mer

Franck Chadeau, managing director of Chadotel (13 campsites and holiday complexes), is investing more than €1 million in the L'Océano d'Or campsite in Jard-sur-Mer. When the campsite opens for the 2015 season, guests will discover a brand new aquatic centre measuring 3,000 sq. m (twice the size of the previous facility) with water slides, rapids, a jacuzzi, solarium and covered pool, where visitors will be able to swim and relax without having to worry about the weather. The entire complex will be decorated with modern materials and plants. The campsite employed the services of a special aquatic centre contractor to carry out the work.

"L'Océano d'Or opened in the 1990s. This new investment is not attempt to outdo the competition. Our customers are becoming increasingly demanding, and it's our job to adapt and try to win new business," explains Franck Chadeau.

The campsite boasts a wide range of rental options, including charming holiday lets that combine tradition and modernity, as well as various mobile homes including the VIP model, with two bathrooms and luxury accessories. The next step for the campsite will be to accommodate groups and seminars by opening several new meeting and catering rooms.



Camping Chadotel L'Océano d'Or - Jard sur Mer

Back to nature

Campéole Plage des Tonnelles

The Campéole Plage des Tonnelles campsite has direct access to the beach and is located in the heart of the Pays de Monts national forest. The campsite has signed a nature charter in partnership with the Office National des Forêts, to protect the natural environment that this 25-hectare facility offers. There are numerous cycle paths around the outskirts of the campsite, and the sand dunes provide access to the Plage des Tonnelles, which is monitored in summer. Whether you're visiting with friends or family, you're guaranteed to enjoy a relaxing and refreshing holiday. The campsite features various organised events and entertainment in the high season for adults and children alike, as well as a heated pool, a fitness facility, and a wellness area with sauna and jacuzzi.



La Plage des Tonnelles - Route de la Tonnellé - Saint-Jean-de-Monts

Camping Le Littoral, Talmont-Saint-Hilaire

The Le Littoral Yelloh! Village campsite is located in grounds planted with evergreen oaks and coastal pines, providing a colourful destination for guests.

The campsite is open from April to September and features a covered, heated pool, heated outdoor pools with five water slides for all ages, a splash pool with various play activities, poolside beaches and 540 sq. m of water facilities for everyone to enjoy. In high season, the campsite offers a free shuttle service so you can take the whole family off to the beach.

It boasts a wide range of luxury accommodation options, including fully equipped cottages and chalets that offer a "home from home". The accommodation is arranged into landscaped, pedestrianised areas and cars are not permitted on site (CAUE departmental innovation award, tourist hospitality category, 2013).

Looking for a holiday in the great outdoors? Le Littoral offers pitches for your own tent, caravan or motor home.

There is a programme of events and entertainment both day and night, offering both invigorating and relaxing activities, and there are children's clubs where little ones can make new friends.



Le Littoral - Le Porteau - Talmont-St-Hilaire

Camping L'Île Cariot, explore the Marais Poitevin by bike

This small, three-star campsite is located in natural surroundings in Chaillé-les-Marais, at the heart of the Marais Poitevin. Set among the canals of the dry marshes, it is just 30 minutes from the southern Vendée beaches and close to Green Venice. It offers the ideal location for relaxing holidays exploring the great outdoors.

This wooded campsite boasts a friendly, family-oriented atmosphere, with 38 spacious pitches for tents, caravans or motor homes. It also has two canvas bungalows, five mobile homes and five chalets, as well as a range of services, a heated pool and a programme of events and entertainment. The pitches are separated by hedges for added privacy.

It has been awarded the "Acceuil Vélo" label for being a bicycle-friendly campsite, and provides direct access to the cycle paths of the Marais Poitevin. Guests can bring their own bikes or rent one of the many bikes available at the campsite. The campsite also provide free canoes, allowing guests to travel along the canals of the dry marshland and explore the local flora and fauna.

L'Île Cariot - Rue Du 8 Mai - Chaillé-les-Marais



Le Colombier, a naturist campsite that is at one with nature

Le Colombier is a four-star naturist complex that has been awarded the "Clef Verte" label in southern Vendée. It is a haven of peace and tranquillity, set in natural surroundings close to the Atlantic beaches and among a landscape of undulating valleys, making it the perfect base for walking and cycling.

Le Colombier covers an area of 50 hectares within a valley with a stream, lake and meadows, surrounded by 14 hectares of forest. The centre of the resort is where the entertainment takes place, around a former manor farm and tower dating from the middle ages, and a large heated pool and wellness area (sauna, steam room and jacuzzi). The campsite provides everything guests need for a relaxing holiday away from the hustle and bustle of daily life. The accommodation options range from spacious pitches to rented mobile homes.

Le Colombier is the ideal place to discover naturism in a friendly, family-friendly environment. As part of our commitment to the environment, we have equipped our toilet and washroom facilities with solar panels.

The campsite is the ideal place to explore part of the vast Marais Poitevin (known as "Green Venice") and the rich heritage that Vendée has to offer.

Le Colombier – lieu-dit Le Colombier – Saint Martin Lars



Unusual accommodation options: sleeping at a campsite!

Camping Plein Sud, Saint-Jean-de-Monts: sleeping under the stars

The Camping Plein Sud**** is the perfect place for a relaxing holiday in Vendée. It's the ideal family destination, located just 800 metres from the beach and with direct access to cycle paths.

The four-star Flower Camping Plein Sud is small campsite with 110 pitches, an aquatic fun centre (new for 2014) with outdoor heated pool and splash pool, a multi-sports pitch, two playgrounds and a pétanque area.

The campsite offers large, demarcated pitches, as well as one, two or three-bedroom mobile homes, canvas bungalows and cosy "Nature" tents to rent, combining design and practicality for holiday-makers seeking greater privacy.

New for 2015: "Camp Étoile"

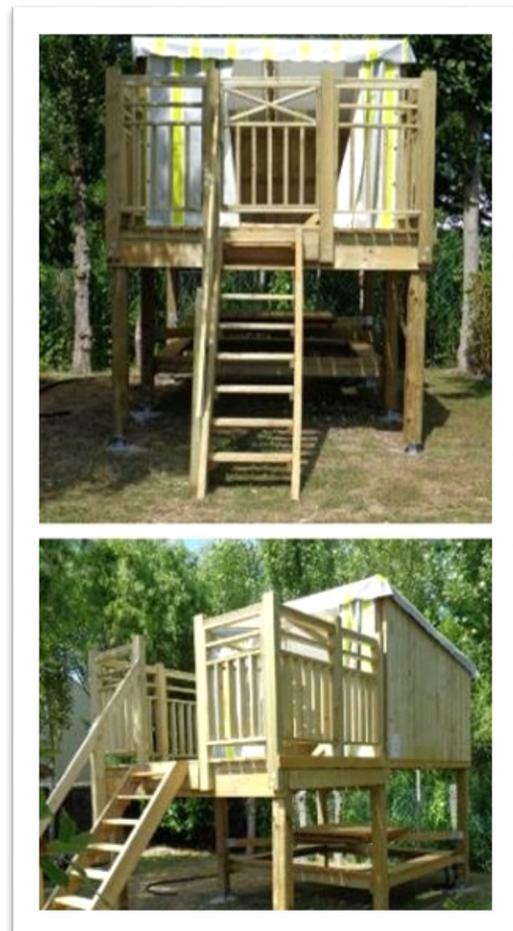
Everyone dreams of sleeping under the stars... well now you can!

Camping Plein Sud offers an unusual type of accommodation that brings you closer to nature. This small, warm cabins on stilts are the perfect place to spend the night with your family. The cosy cabins consist of a sleeping area with box-spring beds, and a privacy curtain so you can admire the night sky in complete privacy. There is also a picnic table with benches, under the cabin, where you can enjoy a meal after a day's exploration.

Benefits of this accommodation: - ideal for walkers who don't want to carry a tent with them - save space in your car and save time, giving you more time to enjoy your holiday

- comfort (natural insulation from the sun and humidity)

Plein Sud - 246B Rue de Notre Dame, 85160 Saint-Jean-de-Monts



A VIP area at Domaine des Salins

The Domaine des Salins campsite, located just 800 metres from fine-sand beaches, features a stunning new VIP area.

The campsite's owners have taken every care to offer a unique experience and make guests' stays as pleasant as possible, with comfort, well-being and a range of services on offer. This VIP area features seven luxury, equipped wooden chalets, each with three spacious bedrooms. This private area blends seamlessly into its environment and is located on the edge of the forest, featuring many different tree species.

Residents of this area also benefit from an exclusive barbecue.

In 2015, even more services will be introduced: to make guests' stays even more relaxing, each chalet will be equipped with an energy-efficient dishwasher, and new plants will be installed outside to provide added privacy and blend even more seamlessly into the surrounding environment.

Domaine des Salins - 43 Chemin du Quart du Matelot – St Hilaire-de-Riez



Themed campsites

Horse-riders welcome at Camping La Garangeoire

The La Garangeoire Castel Camping five-star campsite is located just 15 minutes from the beaches at Brétignolles-sur-Mer, set among a preserved natural environment within tree-lined grounds of 200 hectares.

Guests are spoilt for choice when it comes to activities and new experiences, with fishing in the property's four fish-filled lakes, walking, horse-riding, cycling, tennis, football, basketball, archery, canoeing, pedal boats, trampolines and a go-kart circuit.

The La Garangeoire equestrian centre is open all year round and features activities for novice and experienced horse-riders alike, including pony games, riding lessons in the schooling yard, and treks among the 200 hectares of private woodland, forest and bridle paths around the La Garangeoire lakes. Julie, a state-qualified instructor, is assisted by a second qualified instructor in July and August.

The riding centre features 20 horses and ponies of different sizes and levels, ensuring that each rider has the right animal for his or her abilities, comfort and safety.

Courses are available during the Easter holidays and during the Ascension and Pentecost holiday weekends (mid-May and late May respectively). Beginner's courses are available for children aged 6-12 during July and August, in conjunction with the Children's Club coordinators.

New for 2015: the campsite is providing additional facilities for guests visiting with their horses (in rented accommodation or tents) and groups of walkers, offering a full range of services that includes accommodation, half-board, indoor or outdoor horse accommodation and route advice.

Good food and camping are not mutually exclusive!

The restaurant at Camping La Garangeoire serves up traditional French cuisine, made from fresh and mainly local produce. The restaurant is open between May and late September, with 70 places indoors and 60 on the outdoor terrace. It features a comprehensive menu for evening meals, and a special "dish of the day" menu at lunchtimes.

The professional-standard kitchen was extended and fully renovated in 2009. In high season, the kitchen is run by a head chef, a deputy head chef, two station chefs, an assistant and a pot-washer.

In 2013 and 2014, the head chef held the prestigious title of Maître-Restaurateur de France.

In 2008, the chef won second prize in the Hôtellerie de Plein Air chef competition, held in Lyon. The panel, chaired by chef Gilles Troump and member of the Toques Blanches Lyonnaises federation, judged the candidates on the originality of their recipes, presentation, taste, suitability for the market, and price on the campsite restaurant's menu.

The campsite offers a free childcare service for children aged 3-12 during meal service times, to allow parents to enjoy dinner as a couple or with friends.

Camping La Garangeoire – La Garangeoire – Saint Julien des Landes



Horses welcome at Camping La Buzelière

The "La Buzelière" stables are located within the grounds of the campsite, offering indoor or outdoor accommodation and feed for your horse all year round. The stables are situated on the fringes of the forest of Pays de Monts and just a 15-minute ride from the beach of Saint-Jean-de-Monts.

The stables offer direct access to bridle paths and to the forest of Pays de Monts. To get to the beach, simply ride through the forest!

La Buzelière - Rue de Notre Dame - Saint-Jean-de-Monts



Miniature farm at Camping La Grande Métairie

The Camping La Grande Métairie is located to the south of Les Sables-d'Olonne, between the land and the sea. It is a haven of greenery just 5 km from the beaches of Jard-sur-Mer and Longeville-sur-Mer.

Denis and Bénédicte have created a miniature farm within the grounds of the campsite, featuring goats, sheep, ponies and poultry. During school holidays, children can take part in the kids' club events, including feeding and tending to the animals and exploring the vegetable garden, where cabbages, courgettes, tomatoes and other vegetables are grown.

After spending a day at the new playground, Denis will take the children on a short trip around the campsite in a tractor with the campsite's mascot, "the rabbit".

For the **2015 season**, the "Côté ferme" restaurant will feature a newly renovated terrace, where parents can keep any eye on their children once they have left the table to play with the animals. Some additional work will also be carried out inside the restaurant, in keeping with the same theme.

A new indoor, heated splash pool will also be opened within the existing pool complex in April, and a free shuttle bus service will be introduced to take guests to the beach in July and August.

La Métairie - 8 Rue de la Vineuse en Plaine - Saint-Hilaire-la-Forêt



Tourist attractions: what's new

Le Puy du Fou, the world's best leisure park

In 2014, Cinéscénie won the award for the "Best European Seasonal Event 2014" at the Parksmania Awards in Rome, Italy. One month later, Le Puy du Fou received the Applause Award from the IAAPA in Orlando, Florida.

When arriving at Puy du Fou visitors forget the 21st century and plunge into a journey back in time. In **over 50 hectares** visitors explore a magnificent **natural park** with unforgettable experiences and discoveries to share with all the family. Listed in the top 15 tourism sites in France, le Puy du Fou was the first to obtain "**Green Globe**" international certification in 2012.

In Puy du Fou, the natural and the authentic are the common themes in every décor. The thatched huts at Fort de l'An Mil and the drawbridge in Cité Médiévale are completely genuine. To ensure the authenticity of the location Puy du Fou has availed itself of the leading specialists, artisans and historians. **Five major shows** plunge the visitor into action with the *Signe du Triomphe* (35 mins), *Vikings* (28 mins), *Secret de la Lance* (28 mins), *Bal des Oiseaux Fantômes* (33 mins) and finally the *Mousquetaire de Richelieu* (36 mins).

Le Puy du Fou is a haven for **over 1,400 animals** that sometimes play a major role! In its horse-riding academy, the park boasts **the largest show stables in Europe** (nearly 175 horses). The Académie de Fauconnerie boasts 500 birds of prey from 80 different species.

New for 2015 at the Grand Parc: "The Lovers of Verdun"

Stories of heroic soldiers are told through love letters between a soldier and his fiancée set in the snowy trenches in the middle of winter 1916. As Christmas approaches, smoke fills the trenches, the ground shakes with each new explosion, sirens are ringing out... All seems lost, but this year on 24 December, the soldiers are yet to realise that they are about to have a Christmas to remember!

Grand Parc opening dates: 11 April to 27 September 2015

Cinéscénie: What's new in 2015

In just a few years, Cinéscénie has entered a new dimension with many new features:

- new light scene
- new 3D video projects and décors
- eight new scenes in five years with new special effects.

In 2015, Cinéscénie will really blow you away!

Dates: Saturday 6 and 13 June and every Friday and Saturday evening from 19 June to 12 September 2015.

Le Puy du Fou- Les Epesses





Logis de la Chabotterie, a new stage design

A major location in the Guerre de Vendée as it was here that Charette was arrested on 23 March 1796, Logis de la Chabotterie is a typical Bas-Poitevin house.

A visit of the nine historic and furnished rooms is experienced as a journey back in time, plunging into the end of the 18th century just before the French Revolution. The gallery of models affords an unusual tour of Vendée houses with an overview of 12 buildings encapsulating this architectural approach.

Alongside the logis, the walled garden has been rearranged in keeping with old plans for the works done in the 1990s. Beauty and utility are combined in this living example of a French-style garden, as could be seen in bas-poitevin houses in the 17th and 18th centuries.

In Domaine de la Chabotterie, chemin de Charette is a green route that takes you to the heart of the bocage environment to bois de la Chabotterie at the very spot where the Vendée general was captured. A monument erected in 1911 commemorates his arrest.

New in 2015: new stage design

Thanks to an ingenious personal audio guide system, you can walk in the footsteps of Charette at your own pace. Who was he really?

Who were the other leaders of the Royal Catholic Army? What were the main steps and decisive battles in this civil war? How did an army of peasants stand up to the Republic's armies? Why did it ultimately fail? At the height of the repression, under what circumstances did the "elusive" Charette end up being captured in bois de la Chabotterie? Why did the arrest, which was followed by his execution, bring an end to the Guerre de Vendée?

All these questions can be answered in this experience boasting many technological innovations: image walls, projections, touch screens, interactive systems, videos, animated films and models... a new approach to the Guerre de Vendée!

Logis de la Chabotterie – Saint Sulpice le Verdon



Atlantic Wake Park, cable skiing, new for 2015

The first leisure park 100% dedicated to water skiing and wakeboarding in Vendée!

Come and experience a new, thrilling activity with family or friends – fully supervised and accessible to ages 6 and above.

Whether you're a novice or experienced wakeboarder, you can take advantage of the activities on offer at the Vendée Wake Park any time of day.

This new facility allows you to enjoy water skiing or wakeboarding (the water-based version of snowboarding) whatever the weather, with no noise and no harmful emissions. Daring newbies and experienced riders seeking an adrenaline rush can come and enjoy the various modules (kicker, slider, fun box) installed along the course.

Atlantic Wake Parc – two courses:

- Dual-pulley cable skiing that allows users to practise at their own pace, from simple beginners to highly complex manoeuvres.
- The large cable skiing system, where nine people can travel simultaneously along a 760 metre circuit with several modules available.

Feeling hungry or thirsty? The complex features a social area and snack bar where visitors can enjoy a bite to eat or drink in a relaxed atmosphere. The large terrace offers panoramic views over the lake and beach. Fun and excitement guaranteed! Free to access and open to visitors.

Atlantic Wake Park - allée Banc Cantin - L'Aiguillon sur Mer



The Grand Défi, or an adventure on the trees

The **Grand Défi** park is located a few kilometres from Les Sables-d'Olonne and Saint-Gilles-Croix-de-Vie. This year, it is expanding to give adventurers an even greater choice.

In 2015, the tree-top adventure park will feature no fewer than **21 routes** (including four new routes for 2015). These include five routes specifically designed for children aged 2 and above, **16 zip-wires** (four new in 2015) that pass over the lakes, and **two "black" routes** that pose extreme challenges!

For those who don't have a head for heights, the Grand Défi park also offers **paintballing, orienteering courses, disc golf** (new for 2014, a Frisbee game in which the aim is to reach the basket in as few throws as possible around an 18-hole course) **and pony trekking.**

New for 2015: the orienteering courses will be even more fun and suited to younger children.

Le Grand Défi / Paintball Loisir - 40 rue de l'Etoile - St Julien des Landes



Indian Forest, France's biggest adventure park

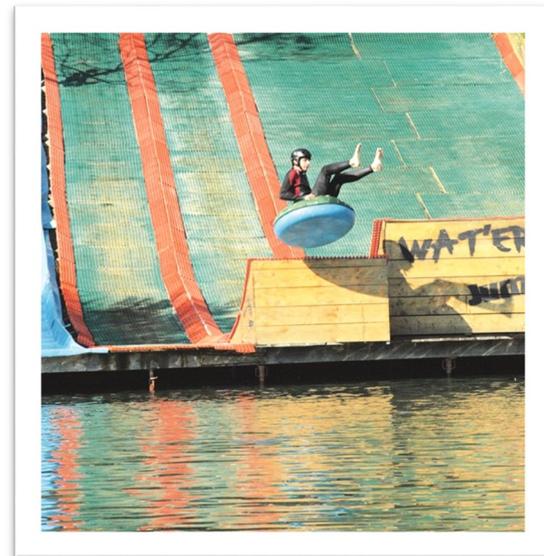
Go hell for leather down the steep track of the Dévalkart and try to break the record! Follow in the footsteps of Passe Muraille and face the challenge of the 20 trials in Fort Débrouillard. Come and share many activities with family and friends: adventure circuits, circuits without harnesses, Maxi tyroliennes, paintball, minigolf, Les Mystères du bois Lambert, ponies, extreme jumping and *défi-fun*. Adventure welcomes you, free access for visitors!



The Water Jump gets bigger for 2015

This new attraction, unlike any other in western France, opened in spring 2014 and is now growing... Be one of the first "riders" to surf on the new attraction making waves in Vendée. The tracks and trampolines are available to test your incredible positions in skiing, surfing, BMX, biking, rubber ring-riding, and bodysurfing... But what is the Water Jump? *"The aim is to go down on skis, surfboard, BMX, buoys or body surf or on your backside, a slide with ramps that are 5-10 metres high depending on the level and land on a trampoline that boosts you up to make freestyle figures for the most experienced before coming back down into a pool of water with no risk."*

Also new for 2015: a brand new Circus Training course for children, a water zip-wire, and a new "Défir ball" area (a version of football where players are surrounded by a large air balloon).



Event on 4 October 2015: FRAPPADINGUE VENDEE X'TREM

The event will be held in Vendée for the first time, in the town of Moutiers-les-Mauxfaits, on 4 October 2015. The "frappadingue" obstacle course event will take place in the ideally situated Indian Forest!

The leisure park's facilities will be used for the event, creating a series of original obstacles. For the first time, the event will start and finish at a leisure park.

The route will measure 12 km in total, but since the course is strictly off-road, the distance is not the main concern! The aim is to find a "station" (obstacle) every 400 metres... and the fun is in taking part and saying "I was there and I finished!". More to follow...



Indian Forest - Les Mauxfaits - Le Givre

Parc de Pierre-Brune, the ancient history of Mervent

Parc de Pierre-Brune recounts the history of a place and its inhabitants, at the heart of the largest forest in Vendée. It all began at the foot of a cave carved into the rock that overlooks the valley of Pierre-Brune. Father Grignon de Montfort, a famous name in western France, made the cave into his hermitage in 1715. Following his beatification and devotion to the Virgin Mary, the "Grotte aux Faon", now known as the "Grotte du Père Montfort", became a place of pilgrimage. In 1955, Isaie Normand built a miniature golf course not far from the cave. In 1959, his son Robert returned from Spain with a miniature train that would become the "Tortillard", the first tourist train in provincial France. The story continues today, with the fourth generation of the Mervent-based family now extending the park and opening it to an even broader audience.

Attractions for children: a miniature carousel, a ball pool and inflatables, miniature go-karts, etc.

Attractions for adults: high-flying carousel, bungee rope, etc.

Attractions for the whole family: Tortillard miniature train, fun bikes, bumper boats, giant slide, water-ball, inflatable course.

What's new in 2015

The Rotor Jump: this year, the park introduces a new attraction for families and friends alike. Inspired by crazy obstacle courses, it offers fun and laughter guaranteed.

Le Parc de Pierre Brune - Lieu-dit Pierre Brune - Mervent

more fun to be had at even more parks!

Château des Aventuriers

The Château des Aventuriers offers guaranteed fun and excitement for the whole family.

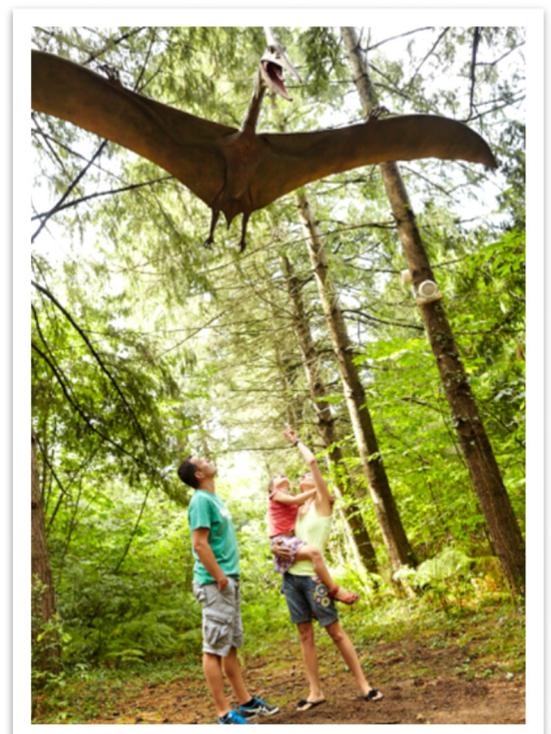
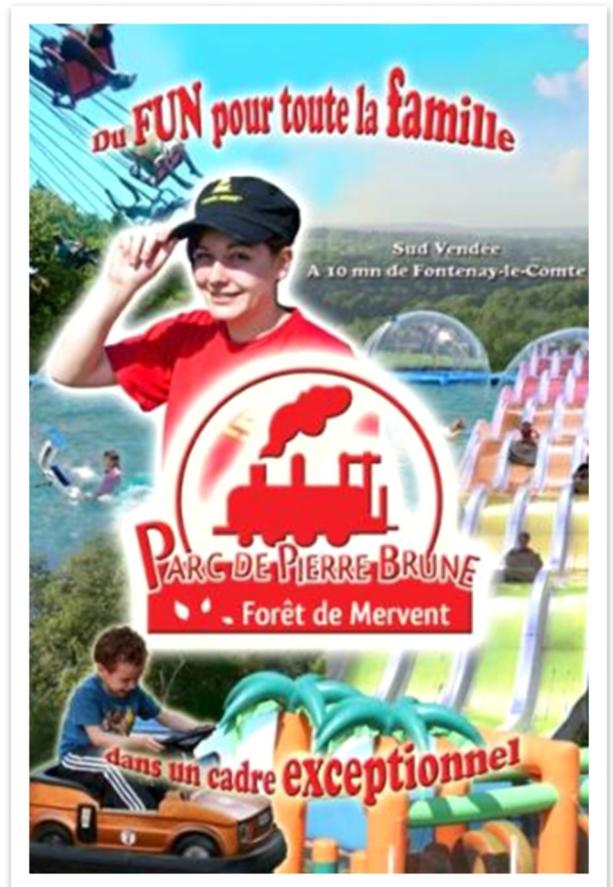
Elementary, my dear! Once inside, with your tablet or smartphone at the ready, you'll need to solve the mysteries and unveil the secrets of the château...

Dinosaurs and Prehistory "Don't be afraid!": Outside, you'll encounter some of the fabulous creatures that walked the Earth more than 100 million years ago. Then take a leap forward in time and discover the very first humans and their prehistoric habitat.

Mystery Tours: "The Pirates" transports players on a quest to find a magic medallion, via a series of 20 clues. Learn about the real day-to-day lives of pirates, their adventures, some famous names and stories...

Other entertainment: "Young explorer" (a world tour for 3-7 year-olds) and "Once upon a time!" (tour of the château).

Le Château des Aventuriers – Avrillé



Vendée Nature

What's new: "Nature" sites in Vendée

Biotopia, the World of the Coast and the Forest

New: opening in April 2015 (1 page)

It's everyone's dream: to see those parts of the coast and the forest that cannot be seen with the naked eye.

This new nature discovery site enables visitors to explore the world of the coast and the forest, both visible and invisible, at different sizes and across different time periods. It features an array of innovative multimedia technologies, as well as sensory systems that are suited to all ages.

A 250 sq. m interactive exhibition

After watching a film, travel back in time to 18,000 years ago. The tour continues in a vast, interactive exhibition space that stimulates the senses. Listen, look, smell and touch the hidden side of nature!

Explore the fauna and flora of the dunes and forests with simple gestures and multimedia technologies. Take a surprising voyage to a world that is both infinitely large and infinitely small...

The site is suitable for children and families (shared experiences), school parties (innovative technologies) and disabled visitors of all types.

A 40-hectare outdoor trail

Biotopia stands in a remarkable landscape, consisting of **beaches** between the ocean and the dune, the **dune** itself with its various profiles, and the **forest** of evergreen oaks, pines, and cypresses planted by humans to protect the fragile Marais Breton.

There are various ways to experience this space:

- > Take a **GPS-guided tour**
- > Take a **tour with a guide**, including the heron colony walk, unusual night-time walks, and the "forest to beach" walk
- > **The virtual augmented-reality trail**

Use a tablet PC with geolocation technology to explore the coast and the forest on this unusual route.

Find the seven points of interest dotted along the trail. The augmented reality technology will help you to see the hidden side of nature, including animals blended into the landscape (wild boar, squirrel, butterflies, etc.), videos produced by specialists (explaining the marks on a tree, the sea shore, man-made activities, etc.), games and challenges.

Distance: 1.5 km – Duration: 90 minutes

Also on site: footpaths and walking trails (including an arboretum accessible to disabled guests), cycle paths, rest and relaxation areas, and picnic areas along the footpaths and walking trails.

Raising awareness and protecting the environment through science

This **environmental awareness site** provides scientific information and adopts an educational approach, seeking to promote dialogue between forest and coast managers and users. Biotopia is a **leading research centre** and the headquarters of the Observatoire du Littoral du Pays de Monts, supporting scientists in their various research projects throughout the year. It is also a **resource centre** that provides evidence-based data about the risks to the coast such as rising sea levels, and the associated protective measures.

Scientists answer visitors' questions!

At the end of their tour, visitors can learn more by sending questions to the scientists. The answers will be published online at www.biotopia.fr.
Biotopia – 50 Avenue Abbé Thibaud – Notre Dame de Monts



Maison du Maître de Dignes (Marais Poitevin)

The Collardeau family were "guardians" of the dykes, a title passed down from father to son.

The history of the "Maîtres de Dignes" dates back to the mid-17th century, after the lands were divided up following the drying-out of the marshes by the "Syndicats des Marais". The adventure began in Chaillé-les-Marais, at the heart of the Marais Poitevin. Next to the headquarters of the Syndicat de Marais du Petit Poitou stands a single house, known as a "cabane" around these parts, which houses the "Maître de Dignes" and his family. This former home has now been converted into an eco-museum, where you will learn about the key role that the Maître played in managing the dykes, with responsibility for water levels, maintenance, water works, etc. Without the dykes built in the Middle Ages under the powerful authority of the Abbays of Saint-Michel-en-l'Herm, Maillezais and Nieul-sur-l'Autise, the Marais Poitevin would never have existed. And without careful day-to-day management of the dykes and the hard work of the people of the Marais, Green Venice, the dry marshlands and the Baie de l'Aiguillon would be little more than a vast, inaccessible swamp.

This resolutely human story is recounted in detail at the Maison du Maître de Dignes. The museum takes visitors on a journey back to the 19th century to meet Frédéric Collardeau and his family. The Maître de Dignes, his daily life in the "cabane" and the role of the "huttiers" form part of a unique world that is inextricably linked to the management of this region.

La Maison du Maître de Dignes - Chaillé-les-Marais

"Michel Brosselin" National Nature Reserve (Marais Poitevin)

The nature reserve, with its wetlands, is a well-known bird sanctuary and a haven of peace and tranquillity for many species. The site is managed by the **Ligue Pour la Protection des Oiseaux** and the **Office National de la Chasse et la Faune Sauvage**. Despite its modest size, it is not short of diversity, with a recent census listing some 272 different species of birds. There is a high-quality observatory that enables visitors to explore this remarkable natural landscape.

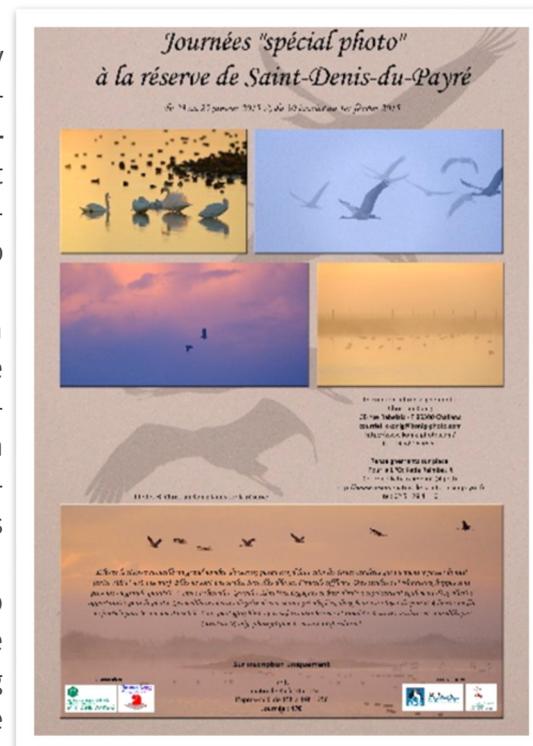
Themed openings : Catch a glimpse of rare and magical sights and gain a unique insight into the life of the reserve and its inhabitants. Over the seasons, the reserve hosts a variety of iconic species such as the Eurasian spoonbill, the common crane and the great egret. There are a thousand and one ways to experience the magic of the reserve and explore its wildlife, including a multitude of themed events, as well as photography and art courses.

Discovering the common crane: During this exceptional display, up to 450 cranes descend on the reserve to spend the night here, filling the air with their calls and performing their magical dances. After attending a classroom presentation about this wading bird, you can experience the birds arriving at the reserve for yourself.

The early birds (new): In the early hours of the morning, under moonlit skies, the reserve and its inhabitants begin to awaken. Come and observe this magical time of day for yourself.

The reserve at dusk: At this special time of day, the birds get ready to settle down for the night under the red skies of dusk. Come and see this unforgettable display for yourself.

Réserve Naturelle « Michel Brosselin »— Saint Denis du Payré



Even more "Nature" sites in Vendée

The Route du Sel

Climb into a canoe in the natural environment of the ancient Baie de Bretagne and set off on a free or guided tour, where you'll learn about the history of the site and the ancient salt marshes. You can also take a night-time stroll and enjoy a romantic candlelit dinner to make the perfect end to your evening.



Kulmino, the water tower

Standing 70 metres tall, the water tower offers an unspoilt view across the marshes, the dune, the forest and the island, with binoculars and an information board. There is also an interactive exhibition explaining the workings of the water tower and the supply network.

The Maison du Marais

The ideal base for exploring the Marais Poitevin by boat or canoe. Follow the educational trail that lasts for two hours and features explanatory information boards about the flora and fauna every 300 metres. The safe and enjoyable way to explore the charming canals of the Marais Poitevin.

The Folie de Finfarine

Enter this giant beehive (interactive museum) dressed as a bee. Take a guided tour of this open beehive and even make your own honey. There's also a great treasure hunt for children aged 4 plus!



The Centre Beautour

The Centre Beautour is a place for meetings and discussions, featuring exhibitions, events and lectures. It also boasts an estate of 8 hectares, with a willow maze, an insects' enclosure and educational ponds...

The Maison des Libellules

Come and learn about the dragonfly in its natural habitat (the Vallée de l'Yon) in this 400 sq. m exhibition space. The garden is the perfect place to observe and relax, and is teeming with great tips for creating your very own eco-friendly garden. The centre organises a range of events and night-time entertainment between March and October.

The Maison de la Rivière

Visit this former water mill, learn about the river and experience the life-size spectacle for yourself.

The Cité des Oiseaux

This bird sanctuary is one of the largest wetland areas in the department. It's the perfect place to learn about birds, and includes a discovery trail with a museum area, an observation post, and footpaths that wind around the three lakes at the site.

The Nalliers Departmental Nature Reserve

This 132-hectare nature reserve stands at the gates to the wet marshes and provides numerous walks through the prairies, canals and roads lined with pollarded ash trees. It is home to a vast array of species, including herons, otters, genets, frogs and butterflies. It's the perfect place to explore the marshes.



Even more new attractions in Vendée

The Site Saint-Sauveur in Rocheservière

The Chapelle Saint-Sauveur

Nicole Renard, a resident of Saint-André-Treize-Voies, spent 24 years of her life embroidering a 140-metre tapestry that tells the story of the Gospel According to John. In order to keep the tapestry in the department, the Vendée General Council supported a project to exhibit it in the chapel at the Site Saint-Sauveur. Nicole Renard donated her tapestries to the General Council, which gave funding and expertise to create a display based around her work and the chapel altarpiece.

In the St John tapestry, Nicole Renard reproduced colourful biblical scenes in a combination of textiles and images. Each of the seven 20-metre rolls was embroidered without a drum, and without tensioning the fabric. This incredible work of art must have required the patience of a saint to complete!

The "Maison Saint-Sauveur": a space dedicated to the visual arts and the artist

New for 2015

The chapel annexes will be renovated internally and, in 2015, will house resident artists. The "Maison" will include an art studio and exhibition space, and a documentation space, while the artist will be housed elsewhere in the canton.

This new facility will create a new, artistic dialogue between the two spaces at the Site Saint-Sauveur.

Discussions, events and workshops will be held, both on-site and elsewhere, for the public.

Site Saint Sauveur – 4 Rue des Alouettes – Rocheservière



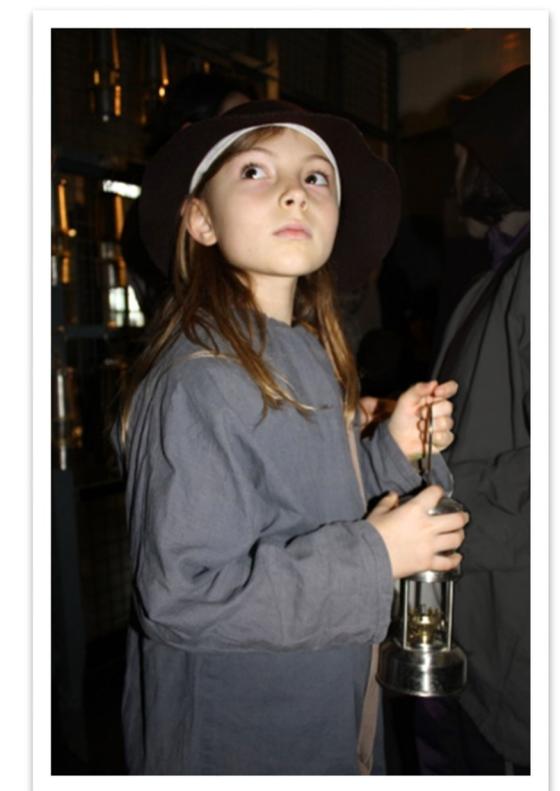
Centre Minier de Faymoreau

The mining village of Faymoreau is officially listed as a "Petite Cité de Caractère" (Village of Character). It is home to a mining centre, which recounts the history of coal mining between 1827 and 1957. The site organises a range of activities throughout the year, including a Musée de France accredited museum with its clothes-hanging room, the lamproom, a descent into a recreated mine, a film, the mining village with its miner's cottages, typical late 19th-century housing, and a chapel with 19 stained glass windows designed by Carmelo Zagari in memory of the miners.

Highlights of 2015:

- the "Témoins de la Mine, portraits" photo exhibition
- the "Séismes et Tsunamis" exhibition
- "VIS TA MINE en famille": new ways to explore the mine as a family
- "Pit boy" Wednesdays (7-12 years): new workshops
- "Little pit boy" Wednesdays (3-6 years): new

Centre minier - 8 Rue la Haute Terrasse - Faymoreau



A portrait of William Christie

William Christie is a Franco-American conductor who specialises in Baroque music. In 1985, he fell in love with a dilapidated late 16th/early 17th century house and decided to save it from ruin.

Stripped bare of vegetation, it was the ideal place for the musician to recreate a garden inspired by the Italian and French gardens of his favourite period. The Jardin du Bâtiment has been in a state of change since its creation more than 20 years ago, constantly growing and expanding... all under the watchful eye of the great conductor himself.

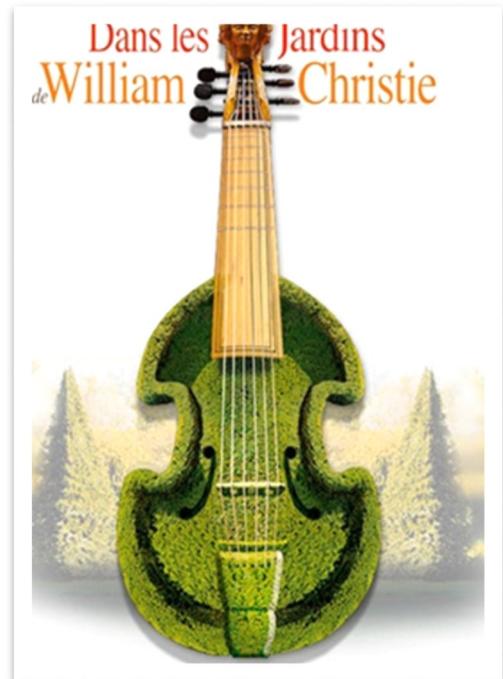


Event: the William Christie Festival, 22–29 August

A Baroque music festival orchestrated by the famous musician himself. Enjoy walking musical journeys, family workshops, concerts and meditation sessions while admiring the sumptuous gardens in Thiré.

The festival, entitled "Dans les Jardins de William Christie, Rencontres musicales en Vendée", is intended to showcase the southern Vendée, reveal its hidden gems, and stage an international cultural event in the region. In the longer term, it is expected to support the creation of an artistic and cultural centre – a project initiated by the "Les Jardins de Musique de William Christie en Vendée" fund, which has already received substantial support from American patrons.

Dans les Jardins de William Christie – Rue du Bâtiment – Thiré



Cycle through Vendée on the "Vélo Francette" trail

This cycle trail starts at the Channel and winds down through Normandy, the Mayenne valley, the Loire valley, the Thouet valley and the Marais Poitevin, as far as the towers of the port of La Rochelle on the Atlantic coast. It is an unforgettable journey that passes through some of France's most stunning river valleys and takes riders past incredible heritage sites. It offers a different way to explore France, take in the fresh air and cycle along narrow country lanes, canals, greenways and tow paths. The Vélo Francette trail passes through Vendée for 9 km, at the heart of Green Venice (the Marais Poitevin).



Restaurants: the best of the best

Vendée fine cuisine

Between land and sea, Vendée offers comprehensive and traditional menus to try. With marine infused flavours from the coast, seafood takes pride of place on your plate: from sea ortolan to oysters, not forgetting "sablaise" sole and bass. The Vendée terroir has not been overlooked: charolaise beef, salt meadow lamb, poultry from Challans, and foie gras... Meat and poultry will win you over and appeal to every taste, whilst Vendée charcuterie owes its flavour to the salt marsh products: fleur de sel sea salt and samphire in particular.

The traditional *mogette* and *Bonnotte de Noirmoutier* beans gently enchant the taste buds and are best served with soups and vegetables, all washed down with a subtle Vendée wine (AOC) from a wine-making tradition harking back to the Middle Ages. To end your meal on a sweet note, the Vendée menu boasts many desserts, brioches, *gâches* and fritters, not forgetting our *gourmandises*, fruit pastries and ancestral candy... a final and vital tasty treat.

New in 2015: a young chef talent at "La Table du Boisniard "

To rise in luxury gastronomy, the restaurant of the hotel Château Boisniard just provide the services of a talented young chef Aurélien Jousseume. Born in Vendée, the 26 years old man began in large well-known restaurants such as The Guy Savoy (Paris - 3 stars Michelin Guide) , Le Grand Vétour in Paris, La Table de Monstequieu in Gironde, and then recently the Hostellerie de Plaisance (2 stars Michelin guide in Saint Emilion).

Le Domaine du Château Boisniard – Hôtel 5 - Chambretau*

New! La Romazière

This traditional restaurant is also a tea room in the afternoon and a wine and tapas bar in the evening. Chef Jérémy Laidin has travelled between France and New Zealand for 10 years. His partner, Marine Durberg, is a manager with a business school degree. Together, they have concocted a compact menu based exclusively on fresh, seasonal produce. The prices are affordable and the cuisine is refined. This menu reflects the latest culinary trends, and is served in an attractive, bistro-style setting.

La Romazière – 10, rue des Artisans – Challans

La Villa Les Genêts

New fine dining restaurant (opened in 2014)

Amélie and Nicolas Coutand have renovated a former town house with two dining rooms, each with a different atmosphere. The chef offers a "bistro cuisine" style for lunches and a "fine dining" style for dinners. In its first year of business, it received a young talent award in the Gault & Millau 2015 guide, and was awarded two chef's hats as a result.

Les Genêts – 21 bis, rue de l'Océan – Brem-sur-Mer

New! Le Pousse Pied

A bistro-style seafood restaurant.

This seafood bistro, which opened in 2014, is a new and extremely popular destination in La Tranche-sur-Mer. Charles Feibel and Anthony Lumet (a former pupil of Alexandre Couillon, the dual-Michelin-starred chef based on Noirmoutier Island) have built up a strong reputation through word of mouth.

These two locals are experts at working with fresh, seasonal, market produce. Everything is home-made, right down to the artisan breads and ice creams. The seafood-based menu is constantly updated. The restaurant offers an evening "Tasting" menu (booking required), which takes guests on a culinary journey through the creative expertise of the chef and his assistant.

Le Pousse Pied – 84 Bd des Vendéens – La Tranche sur Mer



New! L'Apart

Head chef Xavier Yvernogeu is a member of the Académie Culinaire de France and took part in the Bocuse d'Or World Cooking Contest in 2010. He received two chef's hats in the Gault & Millau guides for 2014 and 2015, and was listed in the Michelin guide for 2014. Xavier and his partner, Nathalie, run an innovative, trendy and elegant restaurant that serves dishes based on seasonal produce.

Highlights include the jazz evenings and wine-tasting events.

L'Apart – 38, Route de Soullans – Challans

Stefiouz

This friendly snack bar, opened in 2011, serves up carefully crafted, high-quality cuisine at an extremely affordable price. Farid Derrouaz offers a warm welcome that reflects his refined, local food.

Stefiouz – 41bis rue Maurice Samson – La Tranche-sur-Mer

Le P'tit Marais

This restaurant, located near the covered market in La-Roche-sur-Yon, is a popular destination for locals and frequent visitors alike. The menu is based on local, fresh, seasonal produce, and the owners have found a real niche in the market, offering surprising flavours and tastes.

Le P'tit Marais – 24, rue des halles – La Roche sur Yon

Le 18B

Opened following the redevelopment of Place Napoléon in December 2013, Le 18B (in reference to Napoleon's coup of 18 Brumaire) is the "place that everyone was waiting for". It offers a stylish, friendly environment where people come for breakfast, a working lunch, dinner, or simply for a drink. With its vast glass walls inspired by greenhouses, this restaurant offers an unbroken view across Place Napoléon with its strange animals created by La Machine.

Le 18B – 30 Place Napoléon – La Roche-sur-Yon

Le Sale Gosse, New-York style restaurant

This modern bistro serves up fresh market produce and seasonal dishes in a unique setting. The atmosphere is inspired by the New York loft/studio style, which marries perfectly with the slate service and the constantly updated menu.

Le Sale Gosse - 7, rue du Président de Gaulle - La Roche sur Yon



Restaurant: award-winning chefs

Alexandre Couillon at La Marine

New award: chef of the year in the Champéard 2015 guide

In Noirmoutier the "La Marine" restaurant and its chef **Alexandre Couillon** have joined the gastronomic firmament... with a well-deserved award. In early 2013 the restaurant won its second star from the Guide Michelin®. And, as good news never comes alone, Gault et Millau awarded Alexandre with a fourth *toque* in October. Moreover, in October 2014, he was described as a "sensitive, artistic, constantly changing chef" and "innovative like no other" in **the Champéard 2015 guide**.

In the opinion of those who were able to judge and decide, "it pays tribute to a clear and agile cuisine with a sea tang... a valiant menu that puts itself at sea level to garner its promise: sea-food depending on catches with a bouillon of red onions and cherries; lobster and cauliflower smoked with pine needles, beetroot and blackberry...".

In a contemporary black and white décor facing the fishing port of L'Herbaudière, the chef surprises guests with his creative and meticulously executed recipes that never betray the nature of the produce... Never a detail escapes his wife Céline who oversees the perfect completion of each dish right to the dining room.



Restaurant La Marine – 5 Rue Marie Lemonnier – Noirmoutier en l'Île

Chef Thierry Drapeau, the pleasure provocateur

A first in Vendée: in the idyllic setting of Logis de la Chabotterie, Thierry Drapeau's restaurant now has its entry (January 2014) in the prestigious "**Relais et Châteaux**" guide. "It's the best brand image you could have!" says chef Thierry Drapeau delightedly.

This is a fine reward for the chef with two Michelin macarons who offers a cuisine flavoured by the regions of France that he has visited in the course of his career. His fine and streamlined cuisine is generous in emotions and sensations. He constantly looks for novelty, creation and lightness. He attaches much importance to the presentation and decoration of his dishes. He studies how colours go together, the volume of his produce and their texture.

Thierry Drapeau is constantly looking to offer unusual dishes using produce from Vendée such as the local truffle, which he works into golden turnips au gratin with bone marrow, a puff brioche with fleur de sel sea salt from the salt marches in Les Sables d'Olonne. His menu includes abalones from Bouin worked with coco beans from Vendée, Vendée *Gros gris* snails from Saint Paul en Pareds and hard-boiled eggs from Les Brouzils.

In his brand new hotel, "Le Domaine de la Chabotterie" in Saint Sulpice le Verdon, Thierry Drapeau also offers **cooking workshops "just like at home"**. Thierry didn't hesitate for a moment when considering the plans for his future course: his cooking of choice is the housewife's. The chef must adapt his classes to the environment of his participants, not the other way round... In the new "cuisine" workshop Thierry proves that fine cuisine can be achieved with basic equipment available to everyone.



Restaurant Thierry Drapeau – La Chabotterie – Saint Sulpice le Verdon

Jean-Marc Pérochon, one Michelin star for Les Brisants

A Michelin star for Les Brisants in Brétignolles sur Mer

On the sea coast of Brétignolles sur Mer, the restaurant of the *hôtel Les Brisants* has just been awarded its first star by Guide Rouge Michelin® (February 2014). The talented chef, Jean-Marc Pérochon, hails from these parts and is known as a committed ambassador of the region. The chef's menu includes oysters from the oyster farm in nearby La Sauzaie, local shrimps, 100 day-old Challans poultry, line bass fresh from Saint Gilles Croix de Vie, a hazelnut crumble with kamok (a Vendée coffee liqueur)... All of Vendée between the land and the sea can be enjoyed on your plate! At the piano, Jean-Marc Pérochon is a man who has travelled around from Germany to the Caribbean, from Provence to the USA. He discovered flavours in the islands and brought back brands that leave no doubt: "I memorised scents, discovered exotic flavours, ginger, vanilla and mango... My cuisine changed", he explains.



Restaurant Les Brisants – 63 avenue de la Grand'roche – Brétignolles sur Mer

Top terraces

Le Spot Bar

This venue, run by Karine and Raphaël (who is also chef at La Table 9 in Saint-Jean-de-Monts) offers guests a truly unique experience. The two partners – one a painter and decorator, the other a tapas chef – have created a menu based on local market produce, high-quality cooked meats and original creations that are perfect for sharing. The interior décor has a "bric-a-brac" feel, while the exterior is made from recycled pallets. Both offer a panoramic view over Brétignolles bay. Guests come here to experience the original, relaxing and sun-drenched setting, and to enjoy a delicious snack created by this highly skilled chef.

1 Avenue de l'Océan - Plage de la Parée - Brétignolles-sur-Mer



La Cabane, a place like no other in Vendée

This former oyster farm building was once a departure point for canoe, kayak and stand-up paddle boat rides on the Vertonne and Auzance rivers. It has now been converted into an oyster bar. Its sun-drenched terrace offers a panoramic view and makes the perfect place to enjoy a breathtaking sunset. It serves up Gachère oysters, accompanied by a sumptuous bottle of Brem-sur-Mer wine, in a relaxing and friendly environment.

The "rustic" setting is one of its highlights. It is also a popular destination among the board sports community.

Chemin de la Ch'noüe - lieu-dit La Chabossière - Brem-sur-Mer



L'Anguilla Beach

Not to be missed! This restaurant, with its seaside location, is known for its terrace, which offers a panoramic view of Tanchet bay. The highly skilled team serves up traditional French cuisine, specialising in exotic interpretations of local fish and seafood.

2 Avenue Nina d'Asty, 85180, Le Château-d'Olonne



Le Bac à Sable

This beach restaurant and bar, with its very own terrace, is run by Véronique, Raphaël and their team. It serves up oysters, salads, fish dishes, grilled meats and home-made desserts... which you can enjoy right by the water's edge!

Rotonde Promenade Lafargue – Les Sables-d'Olonne



Focus on the Fiefs Vendéens and the vineyard trail

The Fiefs Vendéens designation of origin (AOC) consists of 17 wine-makers who are passionate about promoting their designation.

Wine was first produced here in the Roman period, and continued with monks in the Middle Ages. However, it was after the Second World War that the battle for quality really began. The vineyards joined forces under the name "Fiefs du Cardinal" in 1953, later changing their name to "Fiefs Vendéens" in 1965. In 1974, the wine-makers obtained the "Vin de Pays" title. This was followed in 1984 by the award of the "Appellation d'Origine Vin Délimité de Qualité Supérieure" label. Following several applications for AOC status in the 1990s, it was finally awarded in 2011.

The main varieties are:

White: Chenin

Rosé: Gamay Noir and Pinot Noir

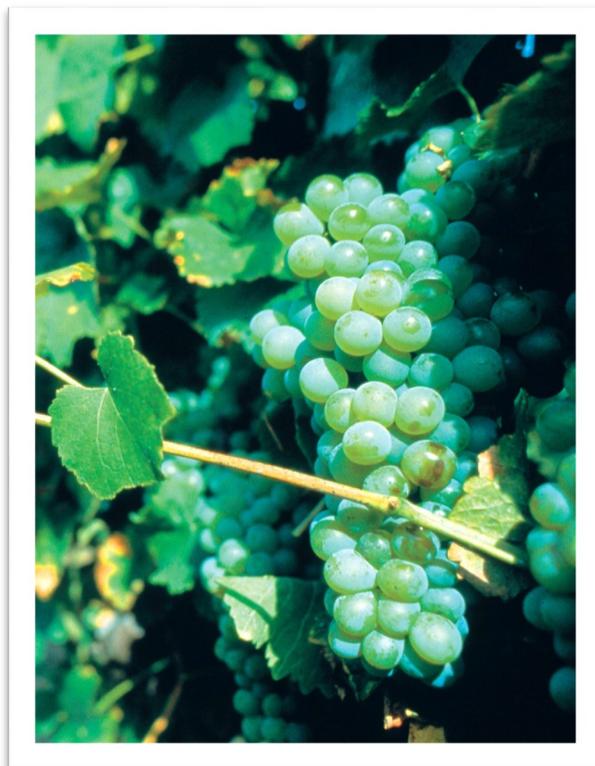
Red: Cabernet Franc, Négrette and Pinot Noir

A mosaic of charm and tradition

The Fiefs Vendéens AOC covers a vast area, extending from the Atlantic coast at Brem-sur-Mer, the banks of the Lay around Mareuil and Chantonay, and the marshlands of Vix, to Pissotte, the southernmost point of the designation. This area covers some 20 communes of the Vendée department.

Portrait of the Michon family in Brem-sur-Mer

In 1960, Patrice Michon moved to Brem-sur-Mer to take over a vineyard of a few hundred square metres belonging to his father. Over time, he bought more vines and began to extend his estate. In 1970, he built a modern wine storehouse in Ile-d'Olonne. In 1984, he was joined by his two sons, Thierry and Eric. Together, they revolutionised traditional Vendéen practices at their St-Nicolas estate, using biodynamic agriculture techniques to produce their wines. This method places particular emphasis on the soil, focusing on creating the right balance between the earth, plant and environment to produce favourable conditions for growth. The vineyard now covers 40 hectares and is managed by Thierry Michon and his son, Antoine. They are last remaining wine-makers in the commune.



Well-being and golf courses

Côte Ouest, a new lease of life for the thalassotherapy centre in Les Sables d'Olonne

In Les Sables d'Olonne, the Hôtel Côte Ouest & Relais Thalasso faces the ocean with an outstanding view of Les Sables d'Olonne bay. Tucked away in a 3.5-hectare pine forest by a lake, the establishment makes the most of its west-facing exposure which provides great light from sunrise to sunset.

Outside, a huge lighthouse guides you to canopies that protect you from the weather. Although the infinity pool by the beach draws the gaze, the 200 parking places are now hidden by the pine forest.

The tone is set in the foyer: a desk evocative of old trunks, metal beams... in the lounge bar are club armchairs, Chesterfields, old pedestal tables, all creating an ambience with a hint of "British Empire" to it. The restaurant faces the sea and is reminiscent of an old, restored ship hangar with its old bricks and metal beams. The place is given that extra touch thanks to huge light fixtures with crystal pendants (Timothy Oulton). There is a lovely cosy feel to the staircase. The 94 rooms and three suites have been entirely renovated in a 'cabin' approach with paintings by Rod Stribley (an English painter who specialises in old ships) and lights by Eicholtz, Flamanta and Chehoma.

For a fabulous **spa break**, the **new cocoon area** with eight booths, three of which face the sea, offer sculpting massages, gentle beauty rituals and time out to enhance your beauty.

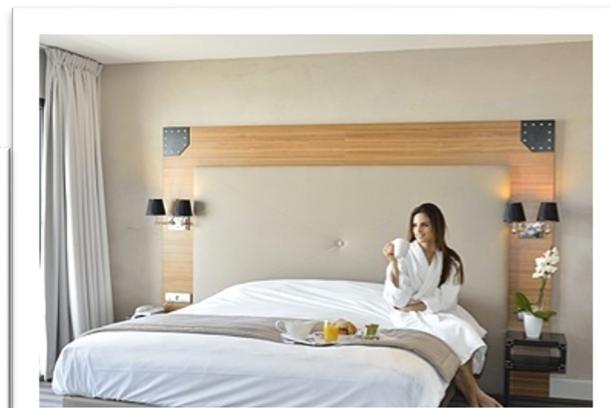
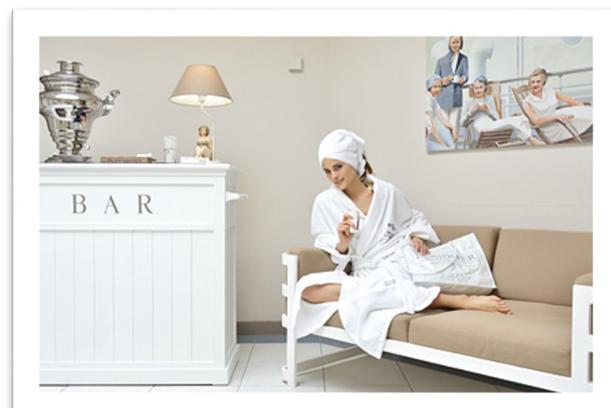
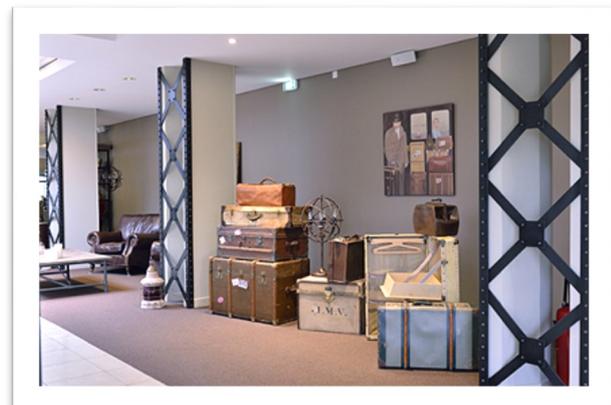
And to improve your **health resources**, the **hydromarin treatment** is a real bonus: seawater pool heated to 32°C, swan neck jets, bubble benches, counterflow walking, Jacuzzi, underwater jets and an area for aqua-aerobics. The **well-being area** also includes a fitness room (with professional instructors), a sauna, an oriental hammam and an aromatherapy room.

Popular in 2014!

The opening of the VIP suite, with the duo "cardboard" wrap and the special teenager treatment passport, which was a great success.

2015: what's new at Côte Ouest

Further investment will be made in 2015 to create a warmer, more "zen" ambiance at the Spa, including the installation of new jacuzzis and renovation of the steam room...



Hôtel Mercure Côte Ouest (4 stars) Relais Thalasso

– Les Sables d'Olonne



Sea Mud: exclusive to the Thalasso de Saint-Jean-de-Monts

The Thalasso de Saint-Jean-de-Monts is the only saltwater spa treatment centre that uses the famous sea mud from Bourgneuf bay. This fresh, non-recycled mud is applied at a temperature of 45°C or less, according to the doctor's prescription.

The mud is only used once. Once applied, the recipient is showered in hot sea water to prevent breaking the ion chain that penetrates the skin. This mud is rich in mineral nutrients and possess analgesic, healing properties. It comes from the nearby Bourgneuf bay, which is famous for the quality of its water, rich in plankton and responsible for the development of a vast oyster population between the mainland and Noirmoutier Island.

The mud is made up of fine sediments transported by the tides of the Loire and carved out of the banks by the sea. Over time, they are washed repeatedly by the waves and the tides, accumulating slowly on the bed of the bay. These rich terrestrial compounds are supplemented by marine elements such as plankton, algae and mineral salts, deposited in layers to create complex, microscopic structures known as "honeycombs", which trap molecules of sea water inside.

New for 2015: the "100% Me" treatment

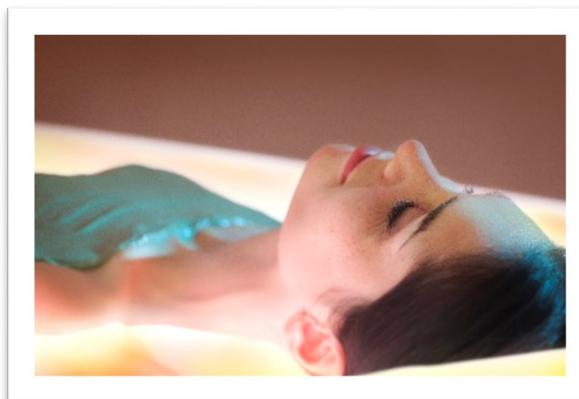
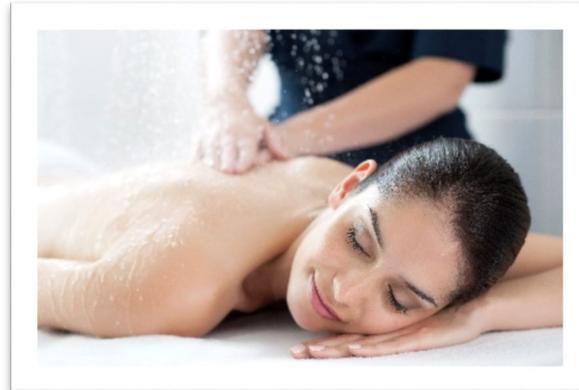
A comprehensive treatment: 100% freedom, 100% effectiveness! What if you could choose the content of your treatment yourself? Whether you want a massage, exfoliation or bath treatment... select your own treatment options to suit you. Not sure what treatment you want or need? The experts at Saint-Jean-de-Monts are on-hand to answer your questions and build the perfect treatment package for you.

The aim is to relax and restore your body's essential minerals. Choose your treatment options to suit your goals.

The treatment programme allows you to choose from the full range of treatments on offer at the centre: 1 x 60-minute Phytomer facial, 1 x body exfoliation, 6 x hydrotherapy treatments, 6 x algae therapy treatments, 3 x 20-minute massages, 3 x 50-minute massages, 2 x aqua fitness sessions.

Price: €1,428 for a 7 day/6 night break, per person, half-board (based on two sharing a double room), in a three-star hotel.

12 Avenue des Pays de Monts – Saint-Jean-de-Monts



New for 2015: Spa Les Orangeries, Château-d'Olonne

The Spa Les Orangeries, which opened in December 2014, boasts a wellness area that is the perfect place to relax and pamper yourself in refined, elegant surroundings.

It also features a 30 sq. m space that is ideal for meetings, relaxation therapy sessions, yoga, pilates, relaxation, etc.

Spa les Orangeries – 51 Avenue René Coty – Le Château d'Olonne



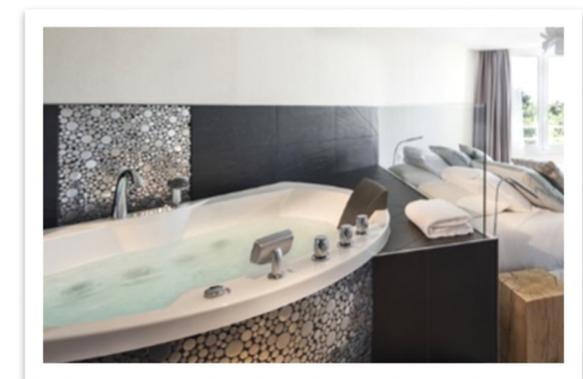
What's new at Hotel Atlantic Thalasso

This Best Western hotel is connected directly to the spa treatment centre and was entirely renovated and overhauled in 2011. This vast seaside hotel combines simplicity, harmony, elegance and high-quality service.

In June 2014, the hotel introduced three new "Suite Bulle" rooms, with a private indoor jacuzzi bath or outdoor jacuzzi bath on a private terrace ("Suite Bulle Horizon"). Each room has a lounge area, is south-facing and is fully air-conditioned.

The meeting room was fully overhauled (new furniture and décor) in February 2014.

12 Avenue des Pays de Monts – Saint-Jean-de-Monts



Vendée golfing... the must-play 18-hole courses

Golf de la Domangère [Nesmy]

With the highest slope in France and an exceptional diversity of plays, the charming Domangère course is a must-play venue for golfers searching for new challenges.

Golf des Fontennes [L'Aiguillon sur Vie]

Esteemed for its training facilities, this course with a clear "bocage" character provides a series of pleasant water obstacles, marine pines and oaks along 6 km.

Golf des Olonnes [Olonne sur Mer]

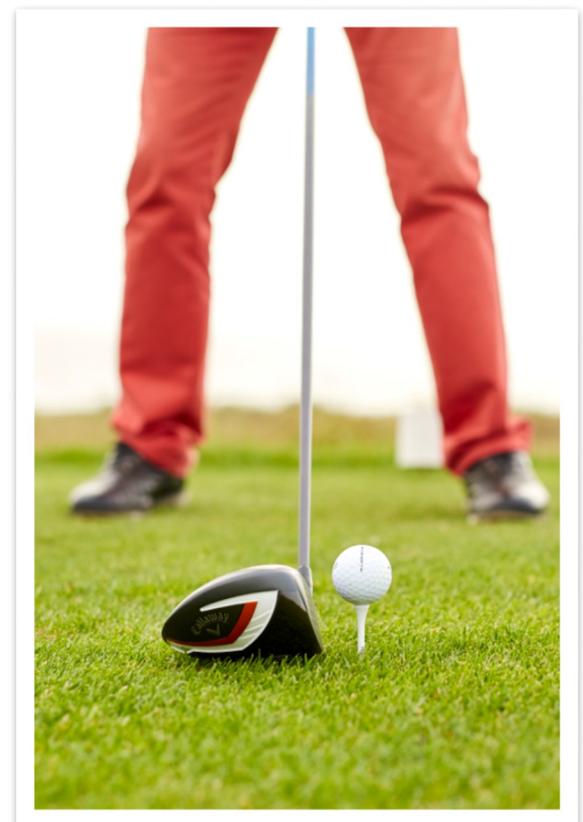
Located 3 km from Les Sables d'Olonne, Golf des Olonnes enjoys an outstanding location with a panoramic view. It stretches over a naturally undulating site with beautiful water courses.

Golf de Port Bourgenay [Talmont Saint Hilaire]

By the sea and at the edge of a national forest overlooking the marina, Port-Bourgenay offers a happy succession of bocage and pinewoods and practically makes up two different courses! The course also features the **first 18-hole Pitch & Putt course in France**.

Golf de Saint Jean de Monts

In the purest Scottish tradition, this course has a lot of variety and can be played all year long thanks to its sandy sub-soil. There are nine holes in pinewoods and links on the return with splendid view of the ocean and Ile d'Yeu. The starting point at hole 4 and the green at hole 13 have just been redone with imported English lawns.



Vendée Mills...

The Vendée mills turn with the winds of every season and are inextricably linked with the history of this department and its people...

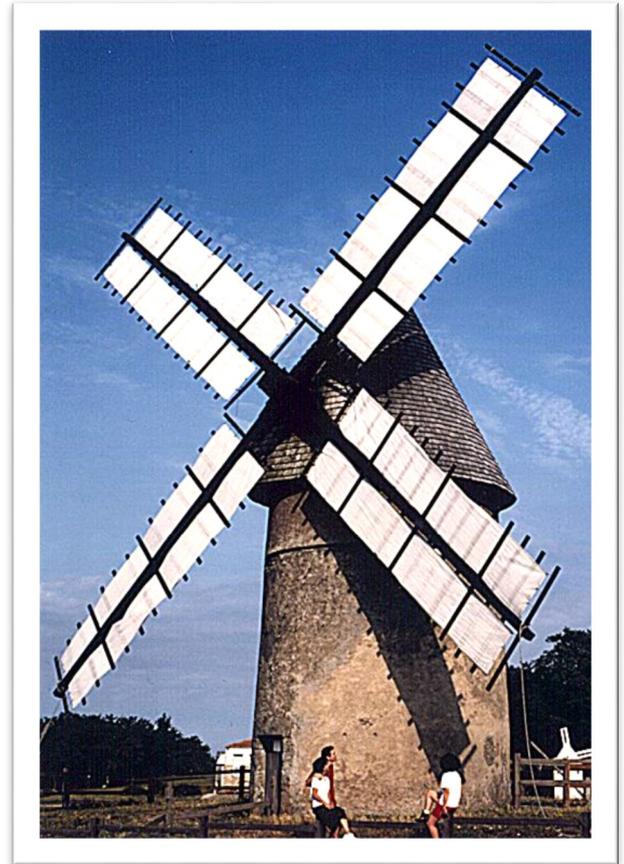
Mills steeped in history

The mills of the Mont des Alouettes

Despite its name (which translates as "Lark Mountain"), you won't find many of these birds with their pleasant spring-time song here. The Romans and their famous "Larks Legion" once set up their camp here. While the Romans are long-gone, the name remains.

Here in Vendée, we don't fight against windmills... we take advantage of them! From the summit of the Mont des Alouettes, one of the high points in Vendée (232 m), the seven windmills that dominated the landscape played an important role in the Vendée Wars (1793-1796). This strategically important site was used by Vendéen watchmen to observe the advancing Revolutionary fighters and communicate their positions to their own troops.

This site of historical importance in Vendée retains three of its original, stunning windmills. One of them is still used to grind wheat to this day.



Noirmoutier: the island of a hundred mills

It is a title that is certainly justified, and reflects reality on the island over the course of its history. Some 23 of these mills remain visible today, standing proud in the warm summer heat. Sadly, none of these mills remains in use today, since the era of the mill... turning, grinding and making flour... is long-gone.

The island's very first mills were probably built by monks from Saint-Philbert in the 7th century. These mills harnessed the movement and power of the tides as a source of energy. Indeed, the engineers who built the Rance Tidal Power Station weren't doing anything new!

This island's mills have once again been restored to their former magnificence, and while their great wheels no longer serve a practical purpose, they have been lovingly preserved by new occupants with a passion for their history... and the history of the area. Famous examples include Jacques Demy and his wife, film director Agnès Varda, and Alain Dominique Perrin, a leading figure in the luxury goods industry. Indeed, Mr. Perrin has even made a name for himself in the camping world, having created a **four-star campsite in the grounds surrounding his mill, with ultra-comfortable tepees and eco-lodges. And what has he called his campsite? "Le Camping des Moulins" (the mills campsite)... no word of a lie!**



Mills open to visitors

The Moulin à Rêve, the Garden of the Wind

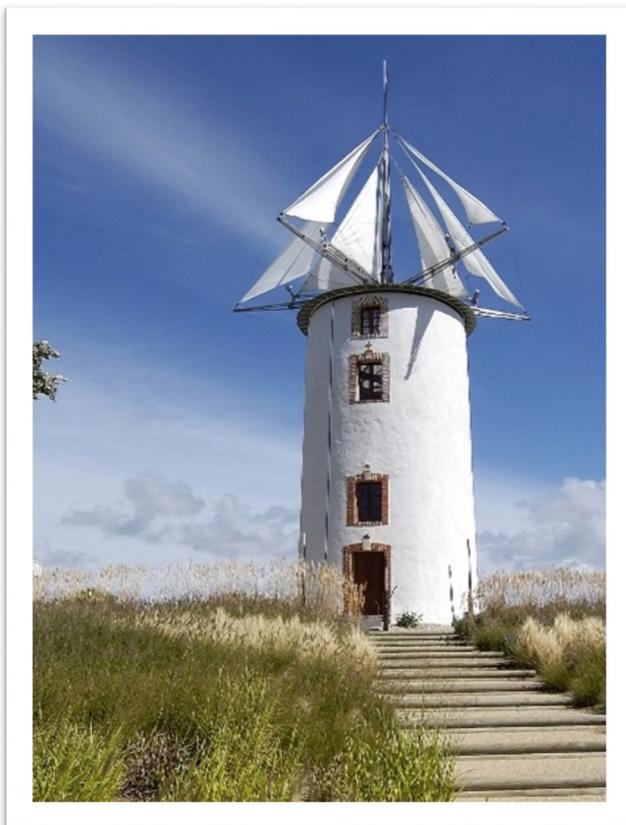
At the heart of the village of Notre-Dame-de-Monts, atop the dune that rises over the Atlantic Ocean, stands a wind tower with some strange-looking sails. Its jibs and forestaysails move in harmony to indicate the strength and direction of the wind. What's more, the Garden of the Wind is more than just a passing breeze, too.

Beneath a strange-looking mill stands an unusual garden that offers visitors an artistic, amusing and educational environment. This surprising trail features animated sculptures, wind games, legends and weather information, all set around a compass rose and a haven of greenery.

The site is awash with constant sounds and movements, featuring exhibitions, workshops, encounters with the mischievous wind and even an outdoor theatre. In short, it is a living, breathing, expressive place.

Where has "Ventouse" gone? On arrival, families wishing to visit the Garden of the Wind will be given a mystery puzzle booklet, which will help them explore the natural spaces and scientific installations along the route in a fun, educational way. The aim of the booklet is to discover "Ventouse", a famous wind known to the ancients. It features a range of anagrams, riddles and games to entertain visitors.

Jardin du Vent à Notre Dame de Monts



The Grain Mills of Rairé (1555) and Nieul-sur-l'Autise

In Vendée, the millers do more than just sleep... At the Rairé windmill in Sallertaine, generations of millers have been producing flour since 1555. It also boasts the unique record of being the only mill in France that has been in continuous use since its construction. What's more, these are proper millers... there are no electric motors turning the sails of this particular windmill! This mill is a bold testament to traditional techniques and ancient expertise.

Nieul-sur-l'Autise is a "Petite Cité de Caractère" (Village of Character) known for its royal abbey – a jewel of Poitevin Romanesque art. Yet it is also the site of an entirely different story... the resurrection of its water mill... by a troop of little frogs! That's right... the association known as "Les Gueurnivelles" (the local dialect word for "little frogs") has worked tirelessly over the years to restore this magnificent structure to its original glory. Thierry Limoges is the head of this noble operation, passing from village to village to collect wheat from the local farms. Today, Thierry the miller is a happy man, carrying out this age-old task and producing up to 80 tonnes of flour, much of which is then delivered to local bakeries.



The twin mills of Terrier Marteau, Saint Michel Mont-Mercure

The mills were built in the 18th century but destroyed by the "infernical column" that ransacked Pouzauges in 1794. They were rebuilt in the 19th century, and subsequently abandoned in the early 20th century. It wasn't until 1986 that they were brought back to life. They have since been fully renovated, and one now contains its full mechanism in working order.

Open during the summer months only.



The Moulin de Rambourg

This mill in Nesmy is the last survivor of the 40 water mills that once stood along the Vallée de l'Yon. It still houses a full complement of original equipment, dating from the first half of the 20th century. Visitors can take a guided tour of the mill and explore the history of this "repeater" mill and the rich natural environment that surrounds it.

Open during the summer months only.



Mill restaurants

Dinner is served! When the oven and the mill come together...

At the Moulin des Gourmands in Saint-Révérend, visitors can take a tour of the mill before settling down to enjoy a crêpe made from flour produced on-site. The miller provides an experience that engages all the senses. First, listen to the mill and its gear-wheels as they crack and grind in motion. Eventually you'll hear a small bell ring in the mill... it's up to you to find out why! Next, smell the aromas of wheat as it is transformed into flour, as well as the signature odours of wood and grease. Finally, watch as the miller manipulates, compresses and brushes the flour by hand – a process he uses to check the quality of the flour.

Tours and food available between April and late October.



At Restaurant Le Moulin in Rocheservière, Béatrice will introduce you to a haven of peace and tranquillity inside a former water mill. There can be nothing better than relaxing on the terrace that overhangs the river and forgetting about the hustle and bustle of daily life. The food is simple yet creative, and everything that Béatrice produces is "home-made". The menu changes with the seasons, with a focus on local dishes...



Ferme Auberge de Moulin Migné, Cheffois

There are no industrial products here. Isabelle and her husband produce everything themselves at the "Ferme de Moulin Migné", a pretty water mill at the heart of the Bocage Vendéen. Rolland plants, cultivates and grows his crops patiently, while Isabelle digs, gathers and transforms the crops into delicious dishes.



Mill accommodation

Selection of four accommodation highlights It's just like entering a mill...

La Vallée de La Roche, a water mill converted into guest rooms and holiday lets

Five-star accommodation!

The setting is simply stunning... The mill is located in Tiffauges, alongside the Sèvre Nantaise in the Bocage Vendéen. There's not a soul in sight for miles around. All you can hear is the trickle of water under the small Roman bridge and passing through the water wheel.

The building itself is truly magnificent... a former water mill that Philippe and Catherine lovingly restored over a period of five years. Their visionary approach has produced truly stunning, luxury accommodation. It's a genuinely impressive building, with stunning design and a stone exterior nestled in natural surroundings.

La Vallée de la Roche - Tiffauges



Le Moulin de Pilet, Mortagne-sur-Sèvre

Holiday let – Gîtes de France – 3 épis

This former 16th century mill is located in the heart of the Sèvre valley close to Le Puy du Fou. Its owner, Pascal Goislot, offers a warm welcome at this charming, relaxing location.

See what's new in 2015

Le Moulin de Pilet – Evrunes – Mortagne sur Sèvre



Le Manoir du Moulin, Sainte-Hermine

Bed & Breakfast – Clévacances – 4 clés

The manor is surrounded by a large private garden alongside a small stream and greenery. The ambitious restoration of this former watermill began in 2011 when the two new owners, Shari Swan and Warren Coulson, set up there. The two entrepreneurs are Canadian and had been living in Amsterdam for the previous 15 years.

Shari and Warren provide four luxury rooms with bathroom and a family suite with two rooms and a bathroom.

The building's architectural features have been preserved as much as possible with its high ceilings, stone walls and solid wood floorboards. The furniture has been made to measure. Beds are made with fine, pressed cotton linen, soft quilts and microfibre pillows.

The bathrooms feature Italian tiling with large rain shower heads and a bath, and beauty products from Compagnie de Provence, towel racks and bathrobes.

Le Manoir du Moulin – Sainte Hermine



Le Moulin des Rivières, Saint-Jean-de-Monts

Bed & Breakfast – Clévacances – 3 clés

This windmill, built in 1780, stands near the beaches of Saint-Jean-de-Monts, Noirmoutier Island and the Ile d'Yeu. It now houses a bed & breakfast (four double/twin rooms).

Le Moulin des Rivières – Saint Jean de Monts





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