

# Vendée

2022  
2023

**Tourism Panorama**



PRESS KIT - COLLECTION 2022-2023

# SUMMARY

## HOW TO GET TO VENDÉE?

**BY CAR:** 2 motorways (A83 et A87)

**BY PLANE: 2 airports:** Nantes-Atlantique and La Rochelle-Ile de Ré

*All destinations and timetables on: [www.nantes.aeroport.fr](http://www.nantes.aeroport.fr) et [www.larochelle.aeroport.fr](http://www.larochelle.aeroport.fr)*

**1 aerodrome:** Les Ajoncs in La Roche sur Yon

*All destinations and timetables on: [www.larochesuryon.fr/aeroport](http://www.larochesuryon.fr/aeroport)*

### BY TRAIN :

**Nearest TGV stations:** La Roche sur Yon, Les Sables d'Olonne, Nantes, Niort, La Rochelle.

**SNCF stations for connections:** Saint Gilles Croix de Vie, Challans, Luçon, Montaigu.

*All destinations and timetables on: [www.oui.sncf](http://www.oui.sncf)*

## PHOTO LIBRARY:

To access the Vendée Tourisme photo library, go to:  
[tourisme.vendee-expansion.fr/kit-de-communication](http://tourisme.vendee-expansion.fr/kit-de-communication)

Fill in the fields in the right-hand banner to request access to the communication kit. You will then receive them by email and can enjoy more than 1 400 photos and more than 54 videos.

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# VENDÉE

# THE MAGNIFICENT

## THE MAGNIFICENT VENDÉE

**Magnificent battle:** Puy du Fou® and its impressive epic tales, frequently awarded and voted "best park in the world".

**Magnificent Ocean:** The Vendée Globe with its extreme conditions is the only non-stop solo round the world race without assistance.

**Magnificent Chef:** Alexandre Couillon, with 2 Michelin Stars and one of the Top 10 best Chefs in the World, at the controls of La Marine restaurant in Noirmoutier.

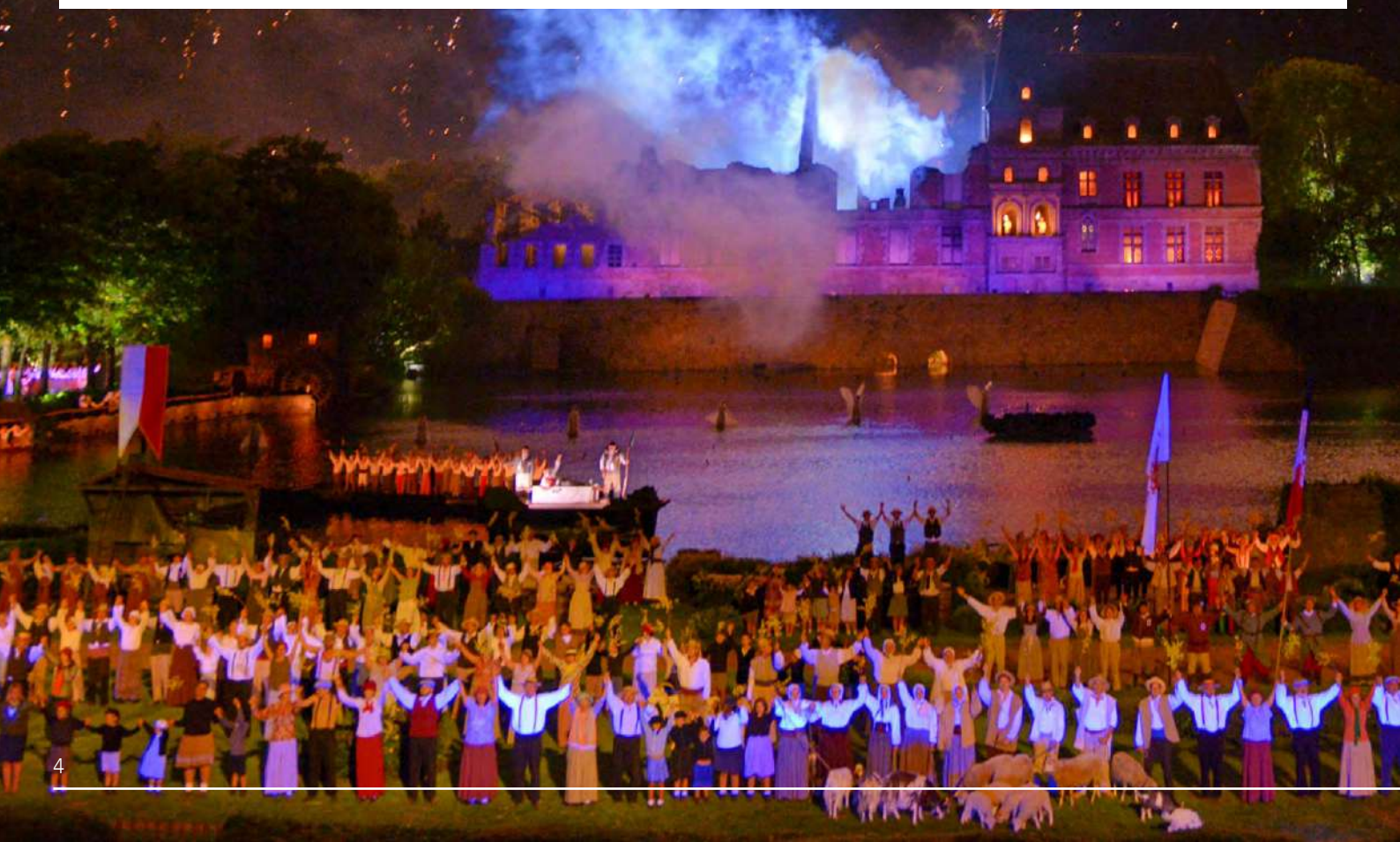
**Magnificent nights:** From the Cinéscénie®, the biggest night show in the world, to Poupet's more human-sized Festival, no less than 800 events each year.

**Magnificent Canal:** Crossing the Grand Ouest, mountain biking by the river Sèvre and its rough waters or at the top of a viaduct aboard a stream train.

**Magnificent spaces:** The estuary of Payré, the tip of Arçay, the dune of Veillon and 250 km of coastline along the Atlantic.

**Magnificent crossing:** Le Gois, a causeway that connects the island of Noirmoutier to mainland France, the longest in Europe. International athletes challenge the weather and rising tide once a year on the occasion of "Foulées du Gois".

**Magnificent panorama:** The Vendée woodlands that unfold from the Mont des Alouettes, or the Vendée Breton marsh, the forest and the islands from Notre Dame de Monts.



# AND INTIMATE

## THE INTIMATE VENDÉE

**Little luxuries off the beaten path:** A picnic at Anse des Soux on the island of Yeu or freshly caught oysters facing the Payré estuary.

**Little small hours:** Rise at dawn and listen to the birdsong as nature awakens in the Marais poitevin.

**Little small coastal pleasures:** Learn the joys of sailing with the family on the Vendée coast - yachting, optimist, catamaran, windsurfing...

**Little Venice:** Stroll through the canals of "Venise Verte" and discover Maillezais, the Abbey of the marsh.

**Little hidden secrets:** Strolls in the heart of beautiful stones and their legends - from the fairy Mélusine (Vouvant) to Blue Beard (castle Tiffauges), the houses of the "Lady with shells" (Sables d'Olonne).

**Little escapes:** by bike along the 1800 km of bike path, between groves and salt marshes, in the vineyards or combine with a boat trip over the Sèvre Niortaise. Sailing or hiking, stops in small ports, those of Bec or la Meule on the island of Yeu.

**Little short rides:** on horseback along the beach, in forested valleys or in the bucolic setting of the Yon Valley. There are 56 km of marked trails and 5 circuits for all levels.

**A little gluttony:** Sweet treats - berlingots with shortbread, not to mention the famous brioche vendéenne.



**18**  
SEASIDE  
RESORTS

**2**  
ISLANDS

**140**km  
OF SANDY  
BEACH

**14**  
MARINAS

**250**km  
OF  
COAST



**+**  
**1800**km  
OF CYCLE  
PATHS

**+**  
**100** ON MORE THAN  
PROTECTED NATURAL  
AREAS **2600**  
HECTARES

**+**  
**300**  
TOURIST  
ATTRICTIONS

# THE KEY NUMBERS

The **VENDEE** is located in the West of France, on the Atlantic coast, south of the Loire, between the cities of Nantes and La Rochelle.

- **PARC DU PUY DU FOU®** voted **Best Park in the World in 2012 and 2014** and **Best Attraction in the World** in 2015, 2016, 2018 et 2019. More than 2.3 million visitors each year.

- A **multitude of water sports** to practice in all seasons.
- An unsuspected variety of **landscapes**: dune and forest sectors, rocky and wild coasts, hedgerow, marshes...

- 2 thalassotherapy centers, 8 golfs courses, 5 of which have 18-holes.
- Nearly **3,000 festivals and events organized** each year.
- **3 congress centers**
- **Flagship events**: Vendée Globe (Departure on November 8, 2020), Tour de France...
- **Gastronomy** highlighted with **6 Michelin-starred chefs**

## A DYNAMIC TOURISM ECONOMY

- Tourism occupies a prominent place in the Vendée economy.
- **MOST VISITED DEPARTMENT ON THE FRENCH ATLANTIC COAST** with more than **35 million overnight stays**.
- **5 million tourists** welcomed - 87% of which are French (mostly from the northwest, Paris area...), the other 13% are foreign (British, Belgian, Dutch, Germans...).
- An **average length of stay of 10.5 days**.
- A **tourist season** that today spans **7 month**, from April to October with nearly 92% of stays overnight, plus a real trend towards year round appeal.



# THE VENDÉE LAND OF BIG EVENTS

# THE VENDÉE GLOBE:

## An extraordinary human adventure

Called "Everest of the Seas", by stipulating a single-handed non-stop round-the-world trip with no assistance, the Vendée Globe is considered an extreme example of individual endurance and the ultimate test in ocean racing.

Preparation is essential: between searching for superfluous weight and carrying the necessary equipment, there is a subtle balance.

Find out who will set off for the three long months of the race. With the arrival of new monohulls featuring "foiled" daggerboards against proven machines, with French and foreign skippers in command at the highest level, everything combines to make this race a constantly changing incredible adventure.

The Vendée Globe is a race that captures the imagination of all, it's simple, yet extreme: Race around the world, on your own, without stopping, without assistance, on 60ft thoroughbred racing yachts.

The race is regarded as the ultimate test in sailing. The adventure has attracted the greatest sailors : Titouan Lamazou, Christophe Auguin, Vincent Riou, François Gabart, Ellen MacArthur, Alex Thomson and Samantha Davies to name a few. Only one has won twice: Michel Desjoyeaux, in 2001 and 2009. The record of the event is held by Armel Le Cléac'h in 74 days.

From Les Sables d'Olonne, the skippers are engaged in a three-month race aboard their monohull OPEN 60 IMOCA class surrendering themselves to the elements, crossing three major capes: Good Hope (South Africa), Leeuwin (Australia) and Horn (Chile). All this before returning up the Atlantic and completing their world tour at its starting point, at the end of a journey of just over 21,000 nautical miles on the world's oceans.

### The Vendée Globe Village:

This is the link between the general public, the skippers and their boats thanks to access to the pontoons.

A welcoming place, where you can discover the world of the sea, observe the preparations for a great race, while enjoying some local specialties - and all this for 3 weeks.

Opening of the Vendée Globe Village, 3 weeks before departure.

**Departure on November 10, 2024.**

# 1 THE VENDÉE, 1000 SHADES OF BLUE...

Stretching 250 kilometers  
between Brittany and Marais...  
poitevin, The Vendée is a land

of many facets, where from  
the Atlantic Ocean to the  
Green Venice, through the  
canals carved by man and by  
the sea, the blue is  
omnipresent.

OVER

THE WATER



## LES SABLES D'OLONNE: A City Break with your feet in the sand

The capital of sailing and water sports Les Sables D'Olonne welcomes, every 4 years,  
the start and finish of the famous Vendée Globe race.

Our day begins with a trip to the **Central Market**, a testament to the city's historic and architectural past, and afterwards why not take a break at **Amanda Chocolaterie's** tearoom overlooking the sea. Then, we let ourselves be guided by chance, **l'Île Penotte** with its quaint streets located in the city center with houses covered in frescoes of shells; or we can venture into one of the narrowest streets in the world, the "**street of hell**". After a lunch by the harbor, perhaps we will opt for a meeting with felines or lemurs at the **Zoo des Sables** or perhaps immerse ourselves in colours and art forms at the **Museum of Contemporary Art at the Abbey Sainte-Croix** ("The Masc"). Afterwards, take a trip on a paddle board on the **canals of Ile d'Olonne**. End the day with dinner at **Cayola** restaurant with a breathtaking view of the bay and exquisite food that will be a delight for gourmets. For a souvenir to take home: a visit to Les Petites Bohêmes for something chic to wear.

# LA CÔTE DE LUMIÈRE

The Vendée coast - which owes its nickname 'The Coast of Light' to the abundant sunshine, can be explored along sandy beaches (over 140 kms), on the edge of forests, dunes or rocky coves. The shallow slope of the beaches makes them safe to enjoy swimming, even with the little ones. 18 seaside resorts stretch along the coast, each with its own identity. Saint Gilles Croix de Vie can be explored between its fishing port and its Grande Plage (a well named beach). For an atmosphere of a village by the sea and for the fans of gliding, go to La Tranche sur Mer. Lovers of water sports or those who enjoy casual strolls around the lanes and stylish seaside villas will be found between Les Sables d'Olonne and Saint Gilles Croix de Vie, on the coastal route.



## LA TRANCHE SUR MER AND THE TITTLE "FAMILY PLUS"

Nicknamed "Little California", La Tranche sur Mer, with its 13 kms of beach, has earned its title "Family Plus" thanks to the many leisure interests and activities offered for the family throughout the season. This title has also been awarded to the island of Noirmoutier.

## SAINT JEAN DE MONTS : BETWEEN BEACH AND FOREST

This seaside resort is famous for its 8 kms of beautiful, long, gently sloping sandy beaches and for the quality of its bathing waters. Thanks to 26 kms of cycle paths and 30 kms of hiking trails, Saint Jean de Monts is an ideal starting point to explore the dunes, the Vendée Breton marsh, and the Pays de Monts national forest – at your own pace, of course.



## OTHER HIGHLIGHTS OF THE SHORELINE

The Veillon dune and the Pointe du Payré in Talmont Saint Hilaire can be explored on a 5 kms hike. The walk starts in the forest of Jard, with its green oaks and verdant groves, before reaching a plateau of cliffs and the ocean. After winding along a coastal path to the beach at Veillon, you will find the Payré estuary where three rivers meet, before returning to your starting point through the forest.



# THE SPIRIT OF THE OPEN SEAS



CITY BREAK "SLOW LIFE"

## SAINT GILLES CROIX DE VIE

A small but lively maritime city with a marina and fishing port in the heart of the town, it enjoys the label "site remarquable de goût" for its flagship product, sardines.

In search of local flavors, you can enjoy the atmosphere of the auction when the fishing boats come in before tasting the little blue fish from a food truck - which is aptly named Le **Banc des Sardines** (The shoal of Sardines), with good reason. To learn all about this industry or to shop you can visit the "**l'Atelier de la Sardine**" The Sardine Workshop – and take home "la Perle des Dieux" - Gods Pearls. To travel back in time, head for the Quartier du Maroc near the port, built by sailors descended from the Moors of Spain – Moroccans - in the sixteenth century. Push the door of the **Fisherman's House**, an old fisherman's habitat from the beginning of the century. 3 2 ' æz ' %œœ " ' Å ¶ Uæi 2 z -æ æ¶ ' æz ' %œœ – OÜ z æi g¶ 2 æ¶ i z ' ø¶ i U öœœ ' æ¶ ' Øi YgOœ ' ; | goæ Ø' æ¶ qœ¶ g¶ öz U æz ' ] z œœ q ' æz ' Ygz 2 z Y ' %œœ " ' O2 q ' œ¶ n ' ' 2 ¶ ö jœ¶ ö Ê It signalled the desires to take off, or at least to walk the length, of the Vendéen costal road to an ancient island now connected to the continent by the rock deposits, arriving at the cave called the "Trou du diable" – The Devils Hole. You can then chill at la **Cabane de Brem**, an old oyster house located at the confluence of two rivers. Why not indulge in contemplation while enjoying some oysters, a fishing party or riding on a stand-up Paddle board.

End your day at **Théo Spot** and admire the sunset or attend a concert, "**Les Musicales**" in season. Among the souvenirs to take home: a bowl with your name from the pottery Nistar.

# ...IN THE ISLANDS



## YEU ISLAND

17 kms off the Vendée coast, the island of Yeu is the island furthest from the mainland on the French Atlantic coast. For a long time Yeu had the premier tuna port on the Atlantic coast, there is still an active fishing port, with boats landing fish on the quays of Port Joinville for its bars; monkfish, sole, turbot, sea bream, hake and shellfish. If hiking or biking is your preference (there is a marked trail), Yeu is a wild island to explore with lots of different sites to discover - from the Old Castle to the port of La Meule, through the Citadel, the church of Saint-Sauveur, or the many beaches. It is worth noting that the Old Castle is thought to have inspired "The Black Island" the 7<sup>th</sup> book in Hergé's Adventures of Tintin.

## NOIRMOUTIER ISLAND

This is a seaside paradise for nature lovers: light blue salt marshes cover a third of the island, warm sand dunes swept by the winds, undergrowth scented with the smell of green oaks, shrubs and maritime pines... In the Bois de la Chaise area nestle the large typical villas of Noirmoutier, witnesses of the Belle Epoque and "bains de mer" – sea baths. Its sandy coves (40 km of beaches) are punctuated by bucolic landscapes with harbors and the characteristic architecture of white houses with blue shutters, it is because of this that it is nicknamed the island of mimosas.

Access to the island is particularly easy thanks to the bridge linking it to the mainland. Another original way to reach the island is the famous Passage du Gois.



## THE GOIS, AS NOWHERE ELSE

"Le Gois" is a 4-kilometer causeway, passable at low tide, connecting Beauvoir sur Mer to the island of Noirmoutier. Curiously unique in the world, the passage of Gois has long played the role of umbilical cord for the island, until the construction of the bridge in 1971.



# VENDÉE BRETON MARSH

Near Saint Jean de Monts, the Vendée Breton Marsh covers 45,000 hectares. It is a space of canals, wet meadows and unique polders in France. There are channels that drain the marsh, these are small waterways through which salt marshes and the sea communicate and also four harbors, including the Port du Bec, known as the "Chinese port". Let yourself be enchanted by this picturesque area with its oyster huts. Take the time to taste some "Oysters Vendée Atlantique" too.

The true capital of the Vendée Breton Marsh, is the town of Challans which dates back to the beginning of the twentieth century. For four Thursdays during the summer, they hold the "Autrefois Challans" an old time fair which celebrates the traditions of the Northwest Vendée. You can walk with the Elegant gentry or visit the pig fair, while attending folk dances or watching the passage of the Tour de France 1910 style.



# MARAIS POITEVIN

With an area of nearly 100,000 hectares, the Marais poitevin is the second largest wetland in France and the fifth largest in Europe. It is classified as a "Grand Site de France" and includes 3 types of landscapes.

## THE WET MARSH

Commonly known as "The Green Venice" (28,000 hectares), it is a flood zone during winter. The wet marsh is the most famous part of the Marais poitevin with 320 km of navigable waterways and marked routes, which can be explored by boat or canoe.

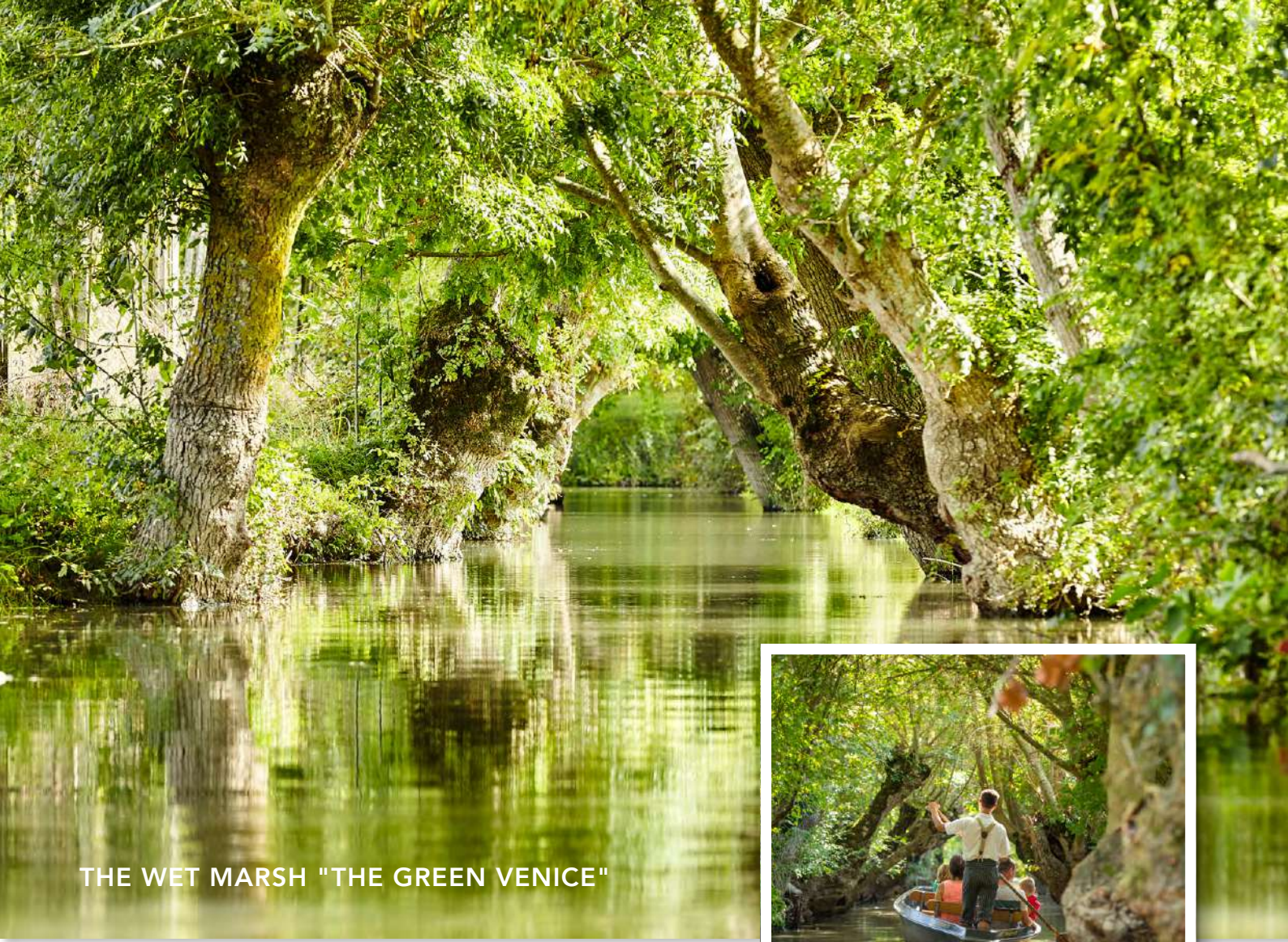
## "DRY" MARSH

This large area (approximately 47,000 hectares) of reclaimed or so-called dry marsh, is a special place where you can find rare aquatic flora and mammals, for example the European otter.

## LA BAIE DE L'AIGUILLON

This is a point of convergence for the canals and rivers draining wet and dry marshes, the Bay of Aiguillon is a key link in the ecological balance of the Marais Poitevin. The landscape changes with the daily rhythm of the tides: an area dominated by gigantic mudflats only showing the salt meadows before the almost total immersion of the bay...

The bay is one of the most important French sites for the arrival of migratory waterfowl. It is considered a wintering and staging site of national and international importance. Observatories have been set up in the heart of the Marais Poitevin Nature Park, allowing you to observe more than 330 species of birds...



THE WET MARSH "THE GREEN VENICE"



THE DRY MARSH

## THE LANDING STAGE OF THE ABBEY

Located in the heart of the Marais poitevin, the Embarcadère de l'Abbaye offers the chance to discover the Green Venice by boat, canoe, bike and even paddle board - with a guide or just going where the fancy takes you!



LA BAIE DE L'AIGUILLON

# 2 THE VENDEAN HEARTS IN HISTORY

Recognized by all from the historic coat of arms - crossed hearts are the icon that identifies the Vendée and symbolises the momentous occasions in the history of this area.



## GO BACK IN TIME TO THE HEART OF AN ANCIENT FOREST AT THE PUY DU FOU®

Voted Best World Park in 2012 and 2014, Best Attraction in the World in November 2015, 2018, Puy du Fou is a park that will make you run out of superlatives. In a natural area of over 55 hectares, Puy du Fou carries the visitor through time and history thanks to the many villages in the park – Starting with the Fort of the Year 1000 to the town from the 1900s, via the Medieval City and the eighteenth century village and that is not all there is to see. Dive into the action - between special effects, impressive stunts, bold stage sets, breathtaking scenery, 7 major shows are offered. Puy du Fou is also home to more than 1500 animals, some of whom also appear in the shows. In the evening, Cinéscénie® is a blockbuster with a 23-hectare stage, 2,400 actors, 28,000 costumes, it's amazing special effects including, projection on to a water wall, all provided for the 12 million spectators each year!

In 2023, the Puy du Fou presents a new major show, "Le Mime et l'Etoile". Inspired by a universe never before staged at the Puy du Fou, this show has been in preparation for more than 3 years. It has been created in a new and original location, specially designed and built in the heart of the park to immerse the visitor in an extraordinarily ambitious creation.

## THE VENDÉEN BOCAGE, COUNTRYSIDE OF PUY DU FOU

To follow in the footsteps of history in another way, you can travel through the Vendée Bocage. This landscape of small valleys punctuated by hamlets and farms where pastures and fields are surrounded by hedges of trees and round shaped bushes. This landscape inherited mainly from the Middle Ages, has stood witness to the history of the Vendée. One ventures into this fascinating area, called the Haut Bocage Vendéen at the Mont des Alouettes, for its panoramic views and its windmills that played a significant role in the Vendée wars. You can also explore the Church of St. Michel Mont Mercure, the highest point of the bocage at nearly 290 metres. You can walk around castles with their proud keeps, chapels, mansions or stroll along the river Sèvre Nantaise which crosses this land. It is to the north of the Vendée bocage, near Les Herbiers, that the Puy du Fou is located.

# THE WAR OF THE VENDÉE

The north of the Vendée, which is largely within the Vendée bocage, is also known as the "Vendée militaire". At the time it extended over an area of more than 10,000 km<sup>2</sup>. The Vendée war whilst short-lived was nonetheless extremely violent, as can still be witnessed today by the numerous monuments and crucifixes which honour the great Vendéen leaders. The uprising of the western provinces in 1793 started as a reaction to the taxes penalising the rural community and was followed by the massive mobilisation of the national guard of the revolutionary regime in Paris. The first half of 1794 saw the vicious armoured columns of General Turreau ravage the Vendée. After a brief year of calm following the signing of the Treaty of La Jaunaye under the leadership of the Vendée General Charette, the second battle of Vendée began in 1795. It ended with the capture of General Charette in 1796, not far from the site of La Chabotterie. He was taken to Nantes for trial and then shot by firing squad.



## IN THE FOOTSTEPS OF THE VENDÉE WAR:

With an original architecture designed to merge with its environment, which nevertheless evokes the bocage, the **Historial de la Vendée** (Museum of the Vendée) covers the local area and its history from prehistoric times to the twentieth century. This museum, which prides itself on recreating what life was like through the ages and using modern technology, has a hall dedicated to the War of Vendée.

Other places offer an immersion both in the traditions of the bocage and the significant events of this period:

- The **Memorial of Lucs sur Boulogne** and **the windows of the church** recall the massacre of February 28, 1794 (564 victims, including 110 children under 7, refugees in the church).
- In Saint Sulpice le Verdon, the **Logis de la Chabotterie** offers an evocative discovery of the charm of life in the countryside at the end of the 18th century.
- In Brouzils, the **Refuge de Grasla** evokes the life of the refugee population in the heart of the Grasla Forest during the winter of 1794, both culturally and in terms of entertainment.
- At **Puy du Fou®** at Les Epesses, the show "Le Dernier Panache" and Cinéscénie bring to life these great moments in the history of the Vendée.



# STROLL THROUGH HISTORY

## Picturesque Gardens and Villages

MÉLUSINE  
TOWER



In the Vendée history and nature mingle, following a country path or at a bend in the river you glimpse an abbey or a castle. To stroll in the gardens or in the passageways of villages inevitably brings to mind the history of the area.

### 4 REMARKABLE GARDENS IN THE VENDÉE

Venue of the famous Festival "In the Gardens of William Christie", let yourself be enchanted by the Gardens and Manor House in Thiré - including its hedges and groves cut into living sculptures. Not to mention the garden at Logis de Chaligny, the bucolic charm of Park Auneau or the Medieval Garden of the keep at Bazoges en Pareds.

### THE FESTIVAL "IN THE GARDENS OF WILLIAM CHRISTIE"

The first festival "Dans les Jardins de William Christie" was in 2012, a joint venture between the Conseil départemental de la Vendée (Vendée County Council) and the Franco-American harpsichordist and conductor William Christie. A one of a kind event has been created, in a score where the green notes of the gardens respond to those of the music playing in the air, during certain evenings and afternoons in August.

### SMALL CITIES OF CHARACTER

The distinction "Petites Cités de Caractère" (Small Cities of Character) is awarded to small towns and villages with a remarkable architectural and landscape heritage. Reflecting on the diverse character of the Vendée, you will be enchanted by: Noirmoutier en l'île, Apremont a few kilometres from the coast, Mallièvre, Mouchamps and Pouzauges in the Vendée Valley, Vouvant, Faymoreau, Foussais Payré and Nieul sur l'Autise in the south Vendée.

# FOR THE FAMILY

## THE STORY YOU ARE THE HERO

Like books where you can adapt the story you can take the family back in time and create your own legend, in this iconic time.

Famous for one of its residents, Gilles de Rais, companion of Joan of Arc, **Tiffauges Castle** is also called "Blue Beard's Castle". At the castle you can see the history of the largest medieval fortress in the West of France with shows and 3D movies. You can even learn, as you would have at that time, to fire a crossbow. Tiffauges also has the largest collection of working medieval war machines in the world!

For a different ambience in **the Salines**: take a walk and explore the salt marshes and the history of salt, whether by boat or following the routes of this historic area. Intrigues, games, discovering the huts and secrets of salt workers, wildlife observatory... all will delight young and old. It is by following Margaux the water fairy in this symbolic place, the Marais poitevin, that is **the home of the Master of Dykes** that children can venture into the landscapes of the marsh and discover the daily life of the dyke master.

To submerge yourself in the day to day life of the Vendée War, head for the **Refuge de Grasla**, a historical reconstruction of a rebel camp from 1794, located in the heart of the Grasla forest. During the season, live shows are presented on Thursday evenings and Sunday afternoons. For another stopover in history, make it a day of it at the **Château des Aventuriers**. Riddle courses, tablet survey, forest discovery tour, castle tours, inflatable games and games of skill... Everything is designed to learn about history while having fun in this family orientated leisure park. There is even a route for the "little ones".

Not to mention a gourmet break always welcome.

At the **Chocolate Museum**, you can explore the history of cocoa and chocolate, in particular that of Maison Gelencser, artisan-Chocolatier since 1956.



## QUEST FOR ADVENTURE

Large spaces and a true adventure course, enough to delight the whole family. **The Grand Défi** offers tree climbing, paintball, galactic laser, disc golf, pony rides and orienteering courses. Lions, giraffes, Amur leopards, monkeys, red pandas and giant anteaters... The stuff of children's dreams. All can be seen a stone's throw from the beaches, at the **Zoo des Sables**. There are 500 exotic animals in a landscaped and green environment. In the natural setting of the forest of Saint Jean de Monts, **Explora Park** is a tree climbing park to explore with the family. On a walk to the north of Fontenay le Comte, you can take the opportunity to encounter 300 animals in the heart of the Mervent forest at **Natur'Zoo**. Lions, lemurs, bears, giraffes ... that inhabit large areas under the trees. The second largest water park in France, **O'Gliss Park** and its 5 fun universes promises an enjoyable day with friends or family. Children or teenagers, they can never have enough new experiences. To vary the adventures and sensations, and with 6 sectors to experience at **O'Fun Park**: Water jump, tree climbing, paintball, fun zone, Duel Arena, and last but not least the zone XPerience game, the Indian Forest has got it covered.





## CITY BREAK

# FONTENAY LE COMTE, CITY OF ART AND HISTORY



**Architectural pearl of the Vendée, Fontenay le Comte displays its remarkable facades of the 16th century, witnesses of the golden age of the Renaissance.**

For lovers of art and culture through all ages, you can get lost in the passages of this jewel of the Green Venice, which reveals to the curious visitor its hidden squares between sumptuous mansions and architectural treasures. Visit the **Château de Terre Neuve** which has welcomed in its time famous personalities such as the Duke of Sully or Agrippa d'Aubigné and artists, including the writer Georges Simenon, creator of the fictional detective Maigret. You can look over the city of Fontenay le Comte while walking through the air, there's nothing like a break at the **Parcabout in the Park Baron**: a 2000 m<sup>2</sup> course where you can walk in the treetops, inside huge suspended cargo nets. Why not have a lunch break at the **Ateapick**, a friendly destination, with its loft decor and menu that changes with the seasons, why not enjoy one of the specialties "Fontenay-Brest". Direction **Original Bike Tour** to follow the "Transfontenaysienne". There are three cycle routes that explore the city and three different environments to experience: the Vendée river and its pier, a loop through the countryside along the old railway line between hedgerow and marsh, or a ride in the fresh air of the valley Seillot. A well-deserved break is offered at **the hotel Le Rabelais' spa** or at its restaurant, which pays tribute to regional products in the tranquillity of its grounds.

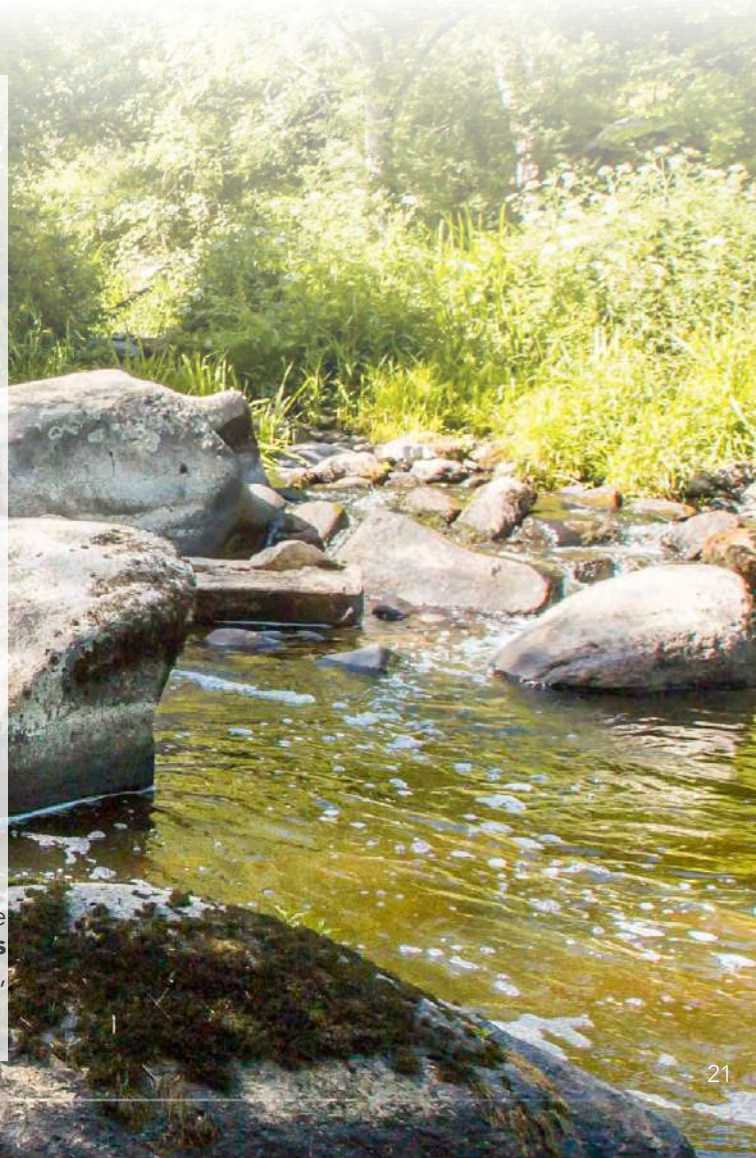


# CITY BREAK

## LA ROCHE SUR YON

### A CIRCUIT AROUND LA ROCHE SUR YON THAT WILL DELIGHT WHETHER YOUR APPETITE IS FOR CULTURE OR BUTTERFLIES.

**Napoléon** founded the city of La Roche sur Yon and created its pentagon shape, which is why the main square is called Place Napoléon. In the square you will find 13 animals made of wood and steel on the water, it is possible to manipulate them from the banks. Rumour has it that they have been brought from Napoléon's Egyptian campaign's secret collection. Stop at **Place de la Vieille Horloge** to see the Renaissance House and the exhibitions it hosts. Sip a coffee with the flavours of yesteryear at the **1987 Coffee House**, house blended coffee from a traditional espresso machine. With a colonnaded entrance, a cupola and crystal chandelier in the foyer, you can indulge in the charm of the Italianate theatre. A stop at the **Chocolate Museum** with its 6 chocolate journeys into the history of cocoa will delight young and old. For lunch, why not enjoy a "mogette goret" (pork and beans) or casserole in the restaurant **Les P'tits Ventres de Terre**. Afterwards perhaps a walk in the Yon Valley at **Chaos de Piquet**, site of an old spinning mill where nature has taken over, or an equestrian show at the **Haras de la Vendée** (Vendée Stud). For dinner, return to the city at **Les Reflets**, a bistronomic with flavours of the Vendée, which is also a delicatessen.



# THE VENDÉE OF YESTERDAY AND TODAY

## IN **10** ESSENTIAL SITES



### ABBAYE DE NIEUL SUR L'AUTISE

Founded in 1068, the abbey has benefited from the protection of the dukes of Aquitaine and was granted the status of royal abbey in 1141 by Aliénor of Aquitaine, who was queen of France at the time. At the heart of Nieul sur l'Autise a Small City of Character this Abbey is an architectural jewel of romanesque art, enhanced by a unique restoration.

### ABBAYE SAINT PIERRE DE MAILLEZAIS

The Abbey of Maillezais is the largest historic site in the Marais Poitevin. Whether looking at the romanesque, gothic or renaissance influences, the building has always been looked on as a model for others. Its majestic ruins still stand as silent witnesses of a great history: the history of France.



### HARAS DE LA VENDÉE

In a 4.5-hectare park in the heart of La Roche sur Yon, Haras de la Vendée (Vendée Stud), the cultural site of the Vendée Department, shares its passion for the horse with visitors.

### PRIEURÉ DE GRAMMONT

Founded in the late twelfth century in Saint Prouant, Vendée, under the leadership of Richard the Lionheart, this priory is one of the best preserved in France with its chapel and monastic buildings.



### HISTORIAL DE LA VENDÉE

7000 years of history in a museum with astonishing architecture: Geology, Prehistory, Antiquity, the Medieval epoch, the Modern Era, the War of Vendée, the XIXth century, from the dawn of the 3<sup>rd</sup> millennium to Les Lucs sur Boulogne...



### LOGIS DE LA CHABOTTERIE

A house with rustic and delicate charm that still seems inhabited, the house offers a surprisingly evocative feel of the appeal of living in the countryside in the eighteenth century. It is also the place of the arrest of General Charette in 1796, and as such a historic landmark that signalled the end of the Vendée War in Saint Sulpice le Verdon.

**LE CHÂTEAU DE TERRE NEUVE**  
A splendid work of sixteenth century architecture overlooking the city of art and history that is Fontenay le Comte. Learn about: its alchemical chimney, its suns gilded with the fine gold of Chambord, its ceiling...



### CHÂTEAU DE TALMONT

The castle of Talmont, a listed fortress of the eleventh century, invites visitors to experience life in the Middle Ages, in Talmont Saint Hilaire.

### LE DAVIAUD

To learn about the Breton marsh, Le Daviaud in La Barre de Monts opens the doors to a poetic and authentic marsh. This site with 800 m<sup>2</sup> of indoor exhibition and a 1 km outdoor trail evokes the true spirit of the marsh and its heritage.



### LA ROUTE DU SEL (THE SALT ROAD)

In the Vendée Breton marsh, in Sallertaine, you can board a canoe with from 2 to 16 places and explore the old salt marshes through a guided paddle or, if you prefer, walk where you will and discover your own route.

# 3 NATURE & SENSATIONS

## RIDING THE WAVES, IN TOTAL FREEDOM

With no less than 120 clubs and associations, the Vendée is the ideal spot for lovers of beach activities or water sports, whatever their tastes. Two towns are even labelled city of surf: **Les Sables d'Olonne** and **Longeville sur Mer**. With 250 km of coastline and 140 km of beaches, the Vendée is a land of almost limitless possibilities for those who like to take to the waves, paddle quietly in a canoe, challenge the elements or glide over the water in a sailing boat.



## IN THE MOOD TO CYCLE

Thanks to its 1800 km of cycle paths, of which 1150 km are used in departmental circuits, the Vendée has the largest network of cycle paths in France, enough to satisfy lovers of all styles of cycling. You can pedal at your own pace according to your ability or mood within the mosaic of landscapes that make up the area, between dunes and forests, marshes, vineyards or hills...



## THE VÉLODYSSÉE IN VENDÉE

The Véloodyssée is the French part of Euroveloroute 1 which takes you from Norway to Portugal. There are 1200 kms along the French Atlantic coast from Brittany to the Spanish border. In the Vendée this coastal cycle path runs from Bouin to l'Aiguillon sur Mer, you can enjoy the benefits of sea spray and a sea view; 200 kms have been developed along this coastal route (more than 125 kms of which are on dedicated cycle routes).

## HOME BIKE

"Accueil Vélo" is a national organisation whose objective is to promote tourism and leisure services located near marked and secure cycle routes. These must meet the national specifications of veloroutes and green routes as well as the expectations of those touring by bike. There are more than 150 establishments labelled Accueil Vélo in 2018 in the Vendée region.





## WALKS: FOR CONTEMPLATION OR FOR SPORT

A hiking trail along the coast from north to south of the department is 221 km long : there are many opportunities for hikers to choose separate sections of the trail to walk in different scenery each time – the fisheries of the marsh, dunes in the forest, from the rocky coast to the immense sandy beaches... The **GR8** national long-distance hiking trail starts from Bouin in the north, where you follow the trail used by the excise men, and as far as the Bay of l'Aiguillon sur Mer in the south.

You will discover three unusual places along this journey. There are the legendary **"Five Pineaux"**, five isolated rocks on the edge of the ocean at the end of the cliffs of Sion. It is said that they could be the 5 monks charged to watch the Devil who is shut up not far away in **the cave called the "Devil's Hole"**. Secondly, **the estuary of Payré** reveals its salt marshes depending on the tides between the dunes and cliffs. Accessible only at low tide, the **Pointe d'Arçay** is a path between mudflats, dunes, salt marshes and beaches.



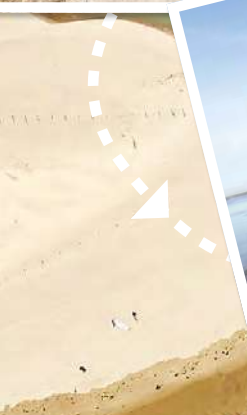
## 4 DAYS IN CHANTONNAY



In May every year

A large event for all hikers

There is a change of scenery every day for 4 days, thanks to the 20 circuits devised by the 350 volunteers of the association R4JCV. There were no less than 5,200 walkers enrolled for this annual gathering which has a very sociable atmosphere, with many festive activities organised to coordinate with the event. Chantonnay and its surroundings provides a range of environments to walk in, from natural to architectural heritage. Different routes and the choice between several distances in a line (not in a loop) of 8, 12, 21, 28 and 42 km are offered. It is possible to walk 1, 2, 3 or 4 consecutive days.



## STROLLING IN THE VENDÉE

**Whether you are returning or are on your first visit, the Vendée offers a range of contrasts and sensations.**

Take the time to taste the oysters from the Vendée Atlantique on the Oyster Road along the Vendée coast - La Barre de Monts, Fromentine to La Faute sur Mer via Talmont Saint Hilaire.

In tranquil waters, you can restore your calm aboard a punt in the Marais poitevin.

Change the mood and scenery during a mountain bike trip in the heart of the Mervent forest.

Various bird species can be seen in the "Michel Brosselin" National Reserve at Saint Denis du Payré where shellfish are harvested on the Passage du Gois, before going to test the sensation of surfing or riding the waves in other ways at Longeville sur Mer, called "Surf town". In the evening, enjoy a candlelit dinner with the owners at Château de la Flocellière.

The next day you can decide to board a train, but not just any train, a former Orient Express carriage for lunch. Afterwards why not go to yoga paddle at La Tranche sur Mer or explore the countryside at the wheel of a 2CV with Vendée Deuch.

# WELL-BEING ACTIVITIES TO HELP YOU "GET AWAY FROM IT ALL"

## THALASSO THERAPY

Enjoy the benefits of the sea at the **Relais Thalasso Les Sables d'Olonne** covering an area of 1500 m<sup>2</sup> with a peaceful atmosphere and 26 treatment areas. You can let yourself be cosseted whilst experiencing a massage under a fine shower of sea water, remineralizing wraps, the revitalizing effect of seawater or cryotherapy at the Marine Spa. Don't forget the effect on the radiance of your skin when choosing beauty treatments.

The mud wraps of the Bay of Bourgneuf at the **Thalasso of Saint Jean de Monts** have made its reputation. This marine mud, a true concentrate of trace elements, the virtues of which have been recognized for the treatment of rheumatism and skin problems. Covering an area of over 3,000 m<sup>2</sup> in the heart of the pine forest, an invitation to serenity and escape, the thalasso also offers relaxation areas, algotherapy and hydrotherapy.



## NEW AND UNUSUAL "WELL-BEING" ACTIVITIES

### YOGA METHODS

#### • YOGA PADDLE AT LA TRANCHE SUR MER

Practicing yoga on a paddle board with Maud Chevalier, in partnership with Wave School, is the new rendezvous for new sensations at La Tranche sur Mer - every Sunday morning in July and August.

#### • HAMMOCK YOGA IN SAINT MATHURIN

If you want to have the impression of flying and feeling light, opt for hammock or Flying yoga. It is accessible to all. The courses take place in the morning or evening with a 2-hour session.

### YOGA AND SURF RETREATS AT DOMAINE JOLLY CHÂTEAU

Combining castle life and its lovely guest house with sea surfing and yoga sessions is what Domaine Jolly Château offers in collaboration with the surf school Esprit Surf of Longeville sur Mer. These yoga and surf retreats are limited to a dozen people. Sometimes with your feet in the water sometimes in the green garden of this charming house, you can take the opportunity to disconnect, in a relaxing way.

### MEDITATE WITH TREES IN OLLONE SUR MER

These meditation workshops are like no other, they take place in the heart of the Ollonne sur Mer forest.

Under the leadership of Josianne Melier, organiser and eco-exponent for the Association for the Defence of the Environment in the Vendée, you are initiated into an intimate encounter between yourself and the trees.

### TRAVERSE THE GREEN VENICE ON A PADDLE BOARD

Along the waterways, l'Embarcadere de la Venise Vert at Mazeau in the South Vendée offers new paddle board rides in the heart of the Marais poitevin. After the boat and the canoe, this new experience allows you to recharge your batteries in a privileged setting.

# 4 THE VENDÉE TERROIR

## GASTRONOMY TREND BETWEEN LAND AND SEA

**ON THE COAST:** The iodized flavours of the coast awaken the taste buds. Monkfish, bass, red mullet, turbot, without forgetting the crustaceans and the much sought after blue lobster are the delight of the Vendée tables.

Among the flagship products to eat on the spot or to take home : the Sole des Sables and the Vendée Atlantique oysters. The marshes and the mild climate are favourable between Noirmoutier, Talmont Saint-Hilaire and the Bay of l'Aiguillon for the production of these delicacies. Don't forget the sardines of Saint Gilles Croix de Vie, the first wild fish to be granted the "label rouge", a mark of quality in France.

All these gourmet flavors are heightened by the addition of that which is locally known as white gold, salt from salt marshes.

**ON THE LAND:** the "Moquette de Vendée", a white bean, is a traditional food from the Vendée bocage. They are enjoyed with meat or for connoisseurs on toast buttered and flavoured with garlic. They can also be served with Vendéen ham – cured by being rubbed with salt, sprinkled with "eau de vie" (a local spirit distilled from wine) and spices; it is then pressed before a short period of drying. Before a meal, try "Préfou" as an appetiser, it is slightly leavened bread stuffed with garlic and butter, it is best eaten when it is still hot. For those with a sweet tooth, at the end of the meal or at any time of the day, try the beautiful Vendéen brioche and gâche braided by hand.



# IN RHYTHM WITH THE SEASONS

## THE MICHELIN STARS



The Vendée has 9 Michelin starred chefs, who draw on the subtle flavours and the nature of the terroir, as well as the abundant seafood.



### ALEXANDRE COUILLON (3 STARS) IN THE TOP 10 OF "100 CHEFS OF THE YEAR"

RENOWNED AMONG THE BEST TABLES IN THE WORLD

Alexandre Couillon, Chef of the 3 Michelin star restaurant La Marine on the island of Noirmoutier continues to shine. After winning the title "Chef of the Year" in 2017 awarded by the French restaurant guide Gault Millau, he now ranks 9<sup>th</sup> in the 2019 world ranking of the "100 Chefs of the Year" chosen by the professional magazine Le Chef, and in January 2019 he joined the elite group of the 180 best restaurants in the world. To qualify for this prestigious classification, it is necessary to be a 2 or 3 Michelin Star Chef, present food of indisputable quality and to respect the values of the profession. Experience this captain of gastronomy and his creative recipes that enhance each ingredient.



### NICOLAS COUTAND (1 STAR)

In a renovated country house with a warm atmosphere, this young chef offers a "bistronomic" lunch at the "Les Genêts" restaurant in Brem sur Mer and a gourmet menu in the evening. Originally from Vendée, he revisits the flavours of the land and the sea with originality.



### BENJAMIN PATISSIER (1 STAR)

On the 22nd March 2022, Benjamin Patissier was awarded his first Michelin star. His restaurant "La Chabotterie" is located in Montréverd, near the Logis de la Chabotterie. In this emblematic site marked by the Vendée's history, Chef Benjamin Patissier welcomes you to savour his exceptional cuisine. He even has been nominated as "Meilleurs Ouvriers de France" or MOF (a unique and prestigious title awarded by different professions in a contest between professionals) in 2015.

### 2023 NEW 1 STAR CHEFS OF THE VENDÉE

- Restaurant **MAISON DESAMY**, Simon Bessonnet - Mareuil sur Lay
- Restaurant **L'ABISSIOU**, Boris Harispe - Les Sables d'Olonne
- Restaurant **LES REFLETS**, Nathan Cretney - La Roche sur Yon

### OTHER STARRED CHEFS OF THE VENDÉE (1 STAR)

- Restaurant **LES BRISANTS**, Jean-Marc Pérochon, Brétignolles sur Mer
- Restaurant **LA ROBE**, Xavier Giraudet, Montaigu
- Restaurant **LA TABLE DU BOISNIARD**, Valentin Morice, Chanverrie

# FIEFS VENDEEN VINEYARDS

## THE VENDEEN DOMAINES

Since 2011, the vineyards of the Vendée Fiefs have been designated AOC ("appellation d'origine contrôlée"). The vineyards are located in the south and north-west of the department, and in five separate terroirs: Brem, Chantonay, Mareuil, Pissotte and Vix. AOC Fiefs Vendéen is today made up of 16 wine producers who all work to improve the appellation. 22% of production is white wine made from Chenin or Chardonnay grapes. The red wines represent 36% and the rosés 42%, using Pinot noir, Gamay noir, Cabernet franc, Cabernet Sauvignon and Négrette grapes. The geological wealth of Vendée combined with a mild climate can be found in aromatic palette of these wines.

## A ROAD TRIP AT THE HEART OF THE VINES

On a 20-kilometer route, by bike or electric car, both equipped with a GPS, tourists can independently discover the vineyards of the Lay Valley.

The point of departure is the cellar of Domaine Mourat, who devised this original initiative. The circuit leads to the foot of a windmill where, in a beautiful pastoral setting, families or groups of friends can take a break around a delicious gastronomic picnic accompanied by appellation Fiefs Vendéen Mourat wines.







**in-vendee.com**

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## WEBSITES

**vendee-tourism.com**

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