



## Poitou-Charentes Tourism

Press Pack 2014

### Press Pack

# Atlantic Coast & Cognac Country

Poitou-Charentes

For more information, please visit our website

[www.visit-poitou-charentes.com](http://www.visit-poitou-charentes.com)

**Sophie COUSIN & Ghislaine DESEVEDAVY**

Région Poitou-Charentes - 15 rue de l'Ancienne Comédie - CS70575 - 86021 POITIERS CEDEX

Tel : +33 (0)5 16 01 40 45 - [s.cousin@cr-poitou-charentes.fr](mailto:s.cousin@cr-poitou-charentes.fr)

Tel : +33 (0)5 49 38 47 19 - [g.desevedavy@cr-poitou-charentes.fr](mailto:g.desevedavy@cr-poitou-charentes.fr)





Situated on the Atlantic Coast between Nantes and Bordeaux, Poitou-Charentes is particularly well known thanks to certain destinations:

- La Rochelle – Ile de Ré
- The Coast ( Ile d'Oléron, Royan, and Rochefort)
- Futuroscope - Poitiers
- Cognac country
- The Marais Poitevin (Green Venice)

## Profile

1 700 000 inhabitants

4 'Departements'

- Charente (16)
- Charente-Maritime (17)
- Deux-Sèvres (79)
- Vienne (86)

The coast

460 km of coastline  
110 km of beaches

Four Islands: Oléron (the second biggest island in France after Corsica), Ré, Aix and Madame

Wellbeing

- Six thalassotherapy centres
- Seven spas

Nature

- Five major walking routes
- 826km of road to Santiago de Compostela
- 2950 km cycle tracks
- 2195 km mountain bike tracks
- 220 km navigable roads
- 20 Golf courses

Heritage

Eight churches are classified by the Unesco World Heritage organisation of which six are situated on the road to Santiago de Compostela: the Churches of St Hilaire of Poitiers and Melle, the Church of St Pierre d'Aulnay-de-Saintonge, the Royal Abbey of St Jean d'Angély, the Church of St Eutrope of Saintes and the Hospital of Pilgrims of Pons. Two outstanding sites are registered by Unesco World Heritage: the Abbey of St Savin with her recently restored frescoes and St Martin de Ré which is within the framework of the network Vauban (since 2008).

Cities and Villages

Five cities and eight territories have the label 'country of art and history': Poitiers, Rochefort, Saintes, Royan, Cognac, Pays d'Angoumois, Pays Thouarsais, Pays de Parthenay, Pays Montmorillonais, Pays Mellois, Pays Confolentais, Pays de l'Ile de Ré, Pays Châtelleraudais.

Six villages are among 'The Most Beautiful Villages in France': Angles-sur-l'Anglin, Ars-en-Ré, La Flotte, Aubeterre-sur-Dronne, Mornac-sur-Seudre and Talmont-sur-Gironde.

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# Access

## all Areas

### Easy access from Paris, between the Loire chateaux and Bordeaux

#### By car:

From Paris

A10 motorway to Bordeaux, then directions to Poitiers (3.30) and La Rochelle.

A10 motorway and Nationale 10 road link Poitiers to Angoulême and Bordeaux.

A837 and Nationale 137 road link to La Rochelle, Rochefort, Saintes and Cognac.

#### By train

From Paris – Montparnasse: TGV services to Poitiers (1.30), Angoulême (2.15), Niort (2.15) and La Rochelle (2.50).

From Paris Charles de Gaulle: TGV services to Bordeaux with stops in Poitiers (2.20) and Angoulême (3.10).

From Bordeaux to Angoulême (55 mn) and Poitiers (1.35).

#### By air

Direct flights within France:

- Poitiers-Lyon with HOP !, with connecting flights from Lyon to Metz-Nancy, Mulhouse, Strasbourg, Marseille, Nice, Montpellier, Toulouse et Pau
- Poitiers - Ajaccio
- La Rochelle - Paris
- La Rochelle - Ajaccio

Direct flights to Europe:

Poitiers Airport:

- Londres Stansted / Edimbourg / Shannon with Ryanair

La Rochelle Airport:

- Lyon with Hop !, with connecting flights to Amsterdam, Francfort, Munich, Milan, Barcelone, Madrid ;
- Londres Stansted with Ryanair ; Londres Gatwick with Easyjet ;
- Bristol with Easyjet
- Birmingham and Southampton with Flybe ;
- Cork and Dublin with Ryanair
- East Midlands with Ryanair
- Manchester with Flybe
- Edimbourg and Leeds with Jet2
- Bruxelles, Charleroi with Ryanair
- Porto with Ryanair
- Genève with Easyjet







# La Rochelle

Historic Atlantic Port

Founded in the tenth century, La Rochelle started as a town of fishermen and salt merchants. Always turned towards the sea, this major port built its expansion on the salt and wine trade. Razed by Richelieu, the town still has visible vestiges of medieval walls. The Old Town, once a prominent Huguenot and Protestant enclave, is characterised by medieval houses with facades sculpted during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, streets with arcades and private mansions of big shipowners.

La Rochelle has four ports: the Old Port with its iconic towers, the commercial port – La Pallice, the fishing port 'Chef de Baie' and the Minimes Port which is the premier European pleasure port with 3,500 slips. The Minimes Port welcomes the 'Grand Pavois', a famous European nautical show every September.

Thanks to protective ramparts put in place in the 1970's, the town has safeguarded its historical centre, particularly its medieval and Renaissance architecture. The modern areas of the town are close to the Old Centre, notably the 'Gabut' quarter with its painted wooden buildings and the area near to the Minimes Port.

Nowadays visitors come to the town to stroll down the streets and around the ports. La Rochelle welcomes over three million tourists annually, 25% of which are foreigners, making it the third most visited town in France.



Our 'Coup de coeur'

## Hotel Atlantic

Just a few steps away from the Old Town and port of La Rochelle, is the new renovated Hotel Atlantic - the garden view family rooms in particular getting a total facelift. This is lovely eighteenth century building an ideal place to stay!

[www.hotel-atlantic.fr](http://www.hotel-atlantic.fr)



## La Rochelle Aquarium

New for 2014 are:

New film - 'The Sharks...in Questions' highlights the many features of this endangered species and shows how aquariums can help with their conservation.

New art show - 30 pieces by Jean Michel Benier - the artist who has been creating posters for the Aquarium for the last 40 years.

New app - a free app with a quiz, images, a game, news, an audio-guide, pictures and more!

[www.aquarium-larochelle.com](http://www.aquarium-larochelle.com)



Applications

## La Rochelle English App.

New from May 2013, 'La Rochelle Tour' is an app providing a complete guide in English to the town - where to eat, where to sleep, what to visit, etc.

Just one click and you may book and once you have had your La Rochelle experience another click will let you tell the world of your impression. Upload your app free from the App Store or Google Play.



# Ile de Ré

The White Island

Known as the 'White Island', the Ile de Ré is the most northerly of the four islands just off the coast and accessible directly from La Rochelle by a bridge. It is 30 kilometers long and five kilometers wide, and can be easily explored by bicycle thanks to a plethora (100 kilometers) of cycle tracks leading all over the island. The streets of Ile de Ré are lined with white houses decorated with colourful shutters, a type of house generally found throughout some of the most gorgeous villages in France ('Les Plus Beaux Villages de France'). Ars en Ré has a coloured bell tower that is a landmark in navigational circles; La Flotte has a famous old market and medieval covered market too. The Ile de Ré is connected to the mainland by a three kilometer bridge. The south end of the island is home to relaxing beaches, while the north boasts ports that have always contributed to the economic life of the island.

## Bicycle riding

Bicycles are a way of life on Ile de Ré, where more than 100 km of marked cycle tracks wind through vineyards, salt marshes and nature reserves. And with the highest point just 19 metres above sea level, it is small wonder that bikes are the most popular way to explore the whitewashed villages, sandy beaches and coastal defenses.

It doesn't matter when you cycle – early in the morning until late at night. For some, cycling is a way of life – for others a simple recreation, a sport or just a way of getting from A to B. In summer on the Ile de Ré the centre of most villages are closed to traffic so this is a great way to explore the island. There are several different cycle routes such as St. Martin to La Couarde – about 20 kilometers through vineyards and marine plantations, that remind one of the agricultural heritage of the Island.



## Ile de Ré App

This FREE app is now available in English for all the information needed on Ile de Ré. Simply connect through Iphone App or Android market and look for 'Ile de Ré Tour'.

Foreign visitors are able to book all their holiday requirements online, thanks to an English version of the website.

[www.holidays-iledere.co.uk](http://www.holidays-iledere.co.uk)



Our '**Coup de coeur**'

## Hôtel La Marée

The Hotel de la Marée occupies an idyllic spot on the Ile de Ré overlooking Rivedoux Plage and was one of the first hotels on the island. Undergoing a complete renovation in 2013; the two fork Michelin restaurant was refreshed and mini-bars, welcome trays and docking stations added to the superior rooms and finally a sauna was added to the wellness centre.

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



## La Route des métiers d'art

The Arts and Crafts Route on the Ile de Ré is new for 2014. Being both educational and fun it takes visitors to various locations on the island to watch artisans at work creating their various pieces, whilst explaining how they work.

[www.holidays-iledere.co.uk](http://www.holidays-iledere.co.uk)

# Atlantic coast

The coast of Charente-Maritime has been strategically important since the Middle Ages and the shoreline is still dotted with forts, citadels and ramparts, many of them accessible to the public. From La Rochelle, in the north, to the Gironde estuary, the coast is full of surprises: the islands of Oléron, Aix and Madame, the seaside resorts (such as Royan and St-Palais-sur-Mer) and Rochefort.

## Rochefort

Rochefort has been an important military town since the seventeenth century when the Royal Arsenal was installed there because of the strategic and protected nature of the coastline. This and La Corderie building are now listed as Historical Monuments. Just next to these buildings is the mooring where the frigate 'Hermione' is being restored.



### Hermione

Work began on the reconstruction of Lafayette's frigate 'Hermione' in 1997 - the ship that took Lafayette across the Atlantic in 1780 to assist General Washington in the American Civil War. He had convinced the French king to aid Washington with reinforcements and fought alongside the Americans on the 'Hermione' for over eighteen months.

The ship is 65 metres long, has three masts with over 1,500 square metres of sails and a hull built of oak. It was decided to rebuild the ship to commemorate the maritime heritage of France and more locally, the importance once held by the Arsenal of Rochefort.

2014 will see 'Hermione' undergo sea trials, probably in September and October. At the start of the year the Hermione- Lafayette Association will start recruiting personnel to work on board - about 80 people will be needed.

Work will finish and the ship will set sail once again across the Atlantic in March 2015 supported by the French and American Navy. She will stop at symbolic ports of call en route - Rochefort, of course, to the Canaries, Annapolis and Newport then finally New York and Boston. This journey originally took 38 days to complete. She will return to France in August 2015.

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



## Aix 'The Genuine' where Napoleon spent his last days on the French soil

Aix is a small island (120 inhabitants) located between Ré and Oléron. It is 600 metres wide and three kilometres long. There are no cars or buses - only a boat to reach the island! Looking toward Ré and Oléron, you can see Fort Boyard. The island is explored on foot, by bike and by carriage, taking about three hours to circumnavigate on foot.

Aix is reminiscent of Brittany with its rugged landscape and is the only true 'island' in Charente - Maritime. The main town is composed of small white houses embellished with climbing roses. There is a pearl factory, two museums (Napoleonic and African) and a fort (Liédot) which is the epitome of the art of fortification.

## Hôtel de France

The Hotel de France is a lovely 'hotel de charme' conveniently situated in the centre of Rochefort. The 25 rooms are all cosily comfortable with excellent facilities. The seventeenth century building sits just off the famous Place des Demoiselles which bustles with life, teeming with cafés, restaurants and bars.

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





# Atlantic coast

## Oléron 'the Luminous'

With an area of 175 km<sup>2</sup> this is the second largest island in France, linked to the continent by a viaduct. This area features the ponds where the famous Marennes-Oléron oysters are fattened up! Colourful oyster-loaded boats proliferate, with their captains carefully orchestrating their arrival and departure!

On the island, the unique countryside can be explored on foot, by bike or on horseback! Military and maritime Oléron possesses the citadel of Oléron and Fort Boyard (yes indeed, that's the fort known to French and English TV viewers!).



### Green oysters from Marennes-Oléron

Marennes-Oléron is Europe's leading oyster-producing area. The oysters infuse their flavour from the small basins in which they are placed to mature, taking on the taste specific to oysters from this area and their characteristic green colour due to the presence of the microscopic algae, the blue navicula.

The quality production is indicated by red labels and there are various «vintages» («crus») depending on the time the oysters have spent in the basins: «Fines» spend a month there; «spéciales» two months; the «pousses» four to eight months.

Traditionally, they are eaten raw with small sausages flavoured with white wine in Oléron, or accompanied by «grillons» (pork sausages) in Charente.



### Oyster Bar : La verte inconnue

The Relais des Salines is an oyster bar like no other! The family have been in the oyster/fishing business for around twenty years and now impart their knowledge of the business to their customers to whom they serve the finest examples of oysters and other fresh catches. The restaurant is open between June and September.

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

### Oysters 24/24 from a vending machine

The Gillardeau boutique on the Ile d'Oléron has been providing oysters to the Elysée Palace since the time of Francois Mitterand and are said to be the Rolls Royce of this shellfish. It has now installed a vending machine next to the shop where people can buy fresh oysters at any time of the day or night. The machine is kept at a low temperature and the oysters are changed every day. Prices are the same as in the shop. This is unique in France and probably the world.

[www.speciales-gillardeau.fr](http://www.speciales-gillardeau.fr)



### Our 'Coup de coeur'



### Novotel Thalassa Oléron Saint Trojan

Right on the tip of the island of Oléron, the Novotel has a calm, serene atmosphere as befits a thalassotherapy centre. There are beautiful views out to the ocean, even from some of the treatment rooms so you can have a massage facing the sea! In the summer holidays they have a mini-club for the children so you can take the whole family along to enjoy the island, the hotel even has bikes for you to borrow.

<http://bit.ly/1bv2Qn>

### Route des Huîtres

The Oyster Route is situated between the Château d'Oléron and Boyardville, taking in the channels and oyster beds which one visits by tractocar! Many of the old cabins are in use once again, inhabited by artists that have lovingly restored some of these charming old buildings. The coast here is beautiful with varied flora and fauna to admire. There is also a museum to visit that tells the story of oyster cultivation in the area.



# Cognac country

The capital of brandy production has great historical significance. The Château des Valois, for example, birthplace of King François I, delights history ...and cognac enthusiasts. It is now the property of Maison Otard. The 'liquor of gods', as Victor Hugo called it, cognac owes its character to the warm, humid climate in this part of Western France. Otard, Camus, Hennessy, Martell, Rémy-Martin and Courvoisier can be found here and all offer guided tours of their cellars and vineyards.

The vineyards of Cognac constitute the 2nd largest area of production in France after Bordeaux and cover an area of 80,000 hectares.



## Chateau Courvoisier

Dating back to Napoleonic times the House of Courvoisier sits on the banks of the River Charente occupying the Paradis Cellars where this distinctive cognac is aged in hand-made barrels. Guests can enjoy tastings and take a look in the museum- there are several options available all year round.

<http://courvoisier.com>



## The Master Blender programme at Ateliers Camus

Amongst many of the programmes offered at the Ateliers Camus is the Master Blender Programme. Participants take part in one of the vital stages in the creation of cognac. After an introduction to the art of cognac tasting, one steps into the world of the Cellar Master. Under his guidance, one creates one's own cognac blend by choosing 'eau de vie' from the finest vines of the region.

Duration: two hours at €160 per adult including one 50cl bottle of your own XO cognac.

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



## Otard Cognac

The Cognac House of Otard is the only house situated in what was a Royal Palace. Once home to Francois 1st of France, the chateau was purchased by Baron Otard after the French Revolution, as he saw it as the perfect place to age the cognac he started producing in 1795. Otard cognac is aged for a minimum of six and a half years whereas normally cognac, by law, has to age for two and a half years. The strict quality controls, eau de vie from the grapes and humid cellars in the castle all give Otard its distinctive taste.

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



## Circuit des Remparts

19<sup>th</sup>-21<sup>st</sup> September 2014  
Classic car street-racing in Angoulême

A highlight in any car enthusiast's diary is the annual 'Circuit des Remparts' held the third weekend in September. First staged back in 1939, the weekend-long events sees classic cars hurtling around the ancient, twisting roads of this pretty hill-top town. The track hasn't changed since that first race and it is one of the very few motor races to take place within the walls of a town, making it quite unique. The course itself is very demanding, twisting around the town ramparts and containing two right-angle bends and three hairpins.

[www.circuit-des-remparts.com](http://www.circuit-des-remparts.com)

# Marais poitevin

The Green Venice

Also known as 'Green Venice', the Marais Poitevin is the second largest temperate zone in France and the fifth in Europe. Nestled between the Atlantic Ocean and the town of Niort in Deux- Sèvres, these famous marshlands are blessed with a particularly agreeable climate.

The best way to discover this magical land is to explore the villages and marshland ports. There is evidence all around of the 'industrial' past of the area: washers, sluices, fountains, water passages, dovecotes... The countryside is in symbiosis with its environment...The Marais Poitevin is vast – over 90,000 hectares of green dissected by thousands of canals. Explore on foot, by fishing boat or canoe, by bicycle, in a carriage or on horseback.



Focus on

Marais Poitevin: Classified since November 2009 as one of the Great Sites of France, the Marais Poitevin (and more particularly the Marais Mouillé) was only the seventh site in France to be given the honour. There are 18,533 hectares over 24 communes that make up this Green Venice, which welcomes 700,000 visitors annually.

The 'Réseau des Grands Sites de France' was founded in 2000 and now groups together 35 sites throughout the country. The Marais Poitevin is one of two in the region, the other being

Brouage. The mutual objective is to preserve and restore the fragile yet breathtaking countryside. In the case of the Marais Poitevin, this means the rehabilitation of the grass land, planting ash trees and fixing the canals, as well as measuring the tide of tourism in and out of the area and promoting lasting development in the area of ecotourism. This involves providing tourist accommodation and ecological leisure activities such as canoeing and cycling.

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

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



Our 'Coup de coeur'

Stay in Niort – gateway to the Marais Poitevin :

Fenetre sur cour and Un coin en ville

These are two new gites created by the owners of 392bis which opened last year in the Marais Poitevin. Fenetre sur cour is a very modern gite just off the Place de la Brèche in Niort, gateway to the Marais Poitevin that can sleep up to four people. Just as the sister apartment, Un coin en ville, the buildings date from the beginning of the twentieth century and has thick stone walls and beams which contrast with the ultra-modern interior décor.

[www.le392bis.com](http://www.le392bis.com)

## The Marais Poitevin, a paradise for nature lovers

Explore the marshes by boat, by bike, on horseback or on foot. First, take a guided tour of 'Green Venice' in a flatbottomed boat. Or explore the Marais solo with a canoe or a rowing boat.

Alternatively, design a personal cycling tour and find out what a paradise for cyclists the area can be, with its 45 kilometres of secure marked trails.

Country scenes abound – villages nestling between the plains and the marsh, cows grazing quietly on the islets. To conclude, take a horse and carriage ride and trot at a leisurely pace through the traditional villages of the area.





# Poitiers

new town - new look

**Poitiers** ... a Romanesque town and, for a long time, the 'Saviour of France'

Poitiers is known as the 'Town of Hundred Bells' due to the 24 parishes and 30 monasteries within its boundaries. It is a supreme example of Romanesque art in France. Two famous battles have taken place in Poitiers – one against the Visigoths in 507 and the other against the Arabs in 732. The town is also associated with Clovis and Charles Martel.

The present day structure of Poitiers was given shape in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, with the addition of the Grands Boulevards, Blossac Park and the Haussmann-style roads, particularly between the Town Hall and the Police Headquarters.

Poitiers has 80 buildings classified as Historical Monuments, the most famous of which is the Baptistery of Saint Jean, which dates back to the beginning of Christianity in Europe; Notre-Dame-La-Grande church and the Saint-Hilaire church, which are both stops on the pilgrimage route of St.Jacques de Compostelle and classified by UNESCO. Now a university town and administrative centre, Poitiers is obviously dynamic, full of energy and a delightful place to visit, as it combines a heady mixture of vitality and tranquility.



## Brand new city centre 'Coeur d'agglo'

The latest example of this dynamism is the Coeur d'Agglo project which began in 2010 and encompasses a complete redesign of the centre of Poitiers. This will incorporate new green spaces such as the rue de Puygarreau, 4,000 new parking spaces, a new bus route, new public areas and pedestrian zones such as the Place Leclerc, new paving, street lighting, cleaning of buildings, new traffic circulation and an accentuation of the architectural heritage of the town. In all – three years work costing a total of 25 million Euros (around GBP 20.8 million) and involving 38,000m<sup>2</sup> of public space.



## Free WiFi in Poitiers

New for 2014, there is free access to Wifi throughout the centre of Poitiers. You can login for one hour at a time and access can be found at the Place Leclerc, Place Charles-De-Gaulle, the Médiathèque (4 rue de l'Université), the Place du Jardin des droits de l'homme and the Parvis de la Gare.

Applications

## Audio Guided Tour App.

By means of augmented reality and geo-localisation, this relaxed and interactive Poitiers- revisit guide, compatible with iphone and android versions, is a great tool to help you learn all you want to know about the history of the town that is so rich in historic and religious monuments.

Look for : *Poitiers Zevisit* on you Iphone App or Android market.



## Poitiers to become a UNESCO World Heritage site

At the end of 2013 in the presence of the Deputy Mayor of Poitiers, a contract with UNESCO was signed obligating the town to work towards full recognition as a World Heritage site by instigating a new education programme overseen by the Academy of Poitiers. This is a further stage along the way to their goal for the people of the town which begun back in 2012. The request for candidature has gone to Paris to be studied.



# Futuroscope

What's New at Futuroscope in 2014 ?

With almost 44 million visitors since it opened, Futuroscope is one of the best-loved leisure parks in France and the only one of its kind in Europe.

Futuroscope is the ideal place in which to relax, with 60 hectares of tranquil green countryside and 25 original experiences you won't find anywhere else: films in giant format, thrill-filled attractions, 3D rides with 4D effects, games, live shows, open-air activities and more....

The spectacular theatres inside Futuroscope are gigantic sculptures and their futuristic lines blend in smoothly with the surrounding landscape.

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

**New – Hubble Mission** - this 3D adventure propels audiences out to the Hubble Space Telescope to join the crew of the space shuttle Atlantis on a high-stakes repair mission. Their aim to keep Hubble observing! This rescue operation takes visitors on a journey to explore nebulae, galaxies, and stars and to unveil the mysteries of the universe.



© Toni MYERS/IMAX Space Ltd/Warner Bros/S LAVAL/FUTUROSCOPE

## New – The Time Machine

is an incredible journey back in time with the Raving Rabbids. Futuroscope has cranked up this attraction with a unique blend of art and technology to bring visitors an all-out intensive, immersive experience. The moving platform and polarised glasses take the audience through four historical scenes, each bursting with thrill after thrill against backdrops that merge with 3D computer-generated images and are boosted by 4D effects, immersing them in a key moment from history.



**New – AEROBAR** - the Aerobar lifts twelve lucky guests 115 foot in the air with drink (and snack) in hand to have twelve minutes of spectacular views over the Park. This is an entirely unusual foodtainment experience and can be enjoyed with family and friends. Feet dangling from an airship – you will not have drunk a glass of champagne like this before!



© JL AUDY/Aircopter/AEROPHILE/D LAMING, Architecte/FUTUROSCOPE. CDI\_2013-007 -- DLV 2018

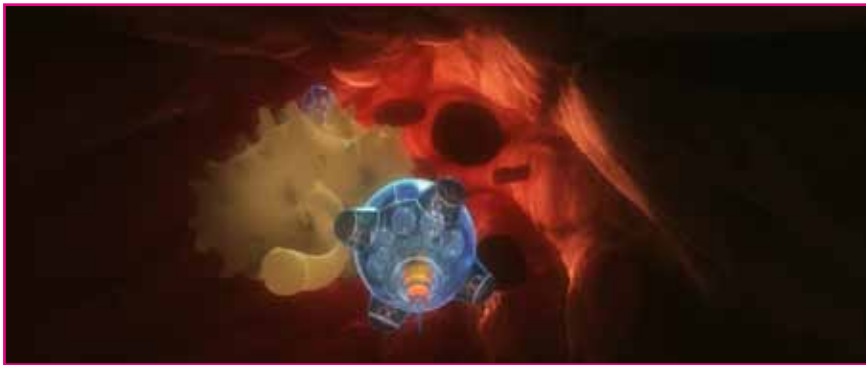


# Futuroscope

What's New at Futuroscope in 2014 ?

## Dances with Robots remixed by Martin Solveig

One of the top two attractions at Futuroscope, Dances with Robots gets a new club beat this year as the 23 foot high robot arms pick up their passengers and perform a brand new dance routine to remixes from the famous DJ who has, amongst other things worked with Madonna and is world famous on the Club scene. There are breathtaking new lighting and special effects.



© Nayade/Inserm/Futuroscope

**New-Virus Attack** - visitors are shrunk to a microscopic size and sent hurtling on a simulator ride into the human body, where they have to pass through muscle tissue, meander down the digestive system and fight off white blood cells in order to wipe out a dreaded virus - all with only a few minutes in which to do it!

## Lady Ô – New evening show

New in 2013 – the Lady Ô Evening Show sends guests spinning into a world of dreams and make-believe to end their day. A glorious extravaganza which combines art and technology to bring a ground-breaking spectacular bursting up from one of the largest water stages in Europe. A magical night-time experience you will never forget...

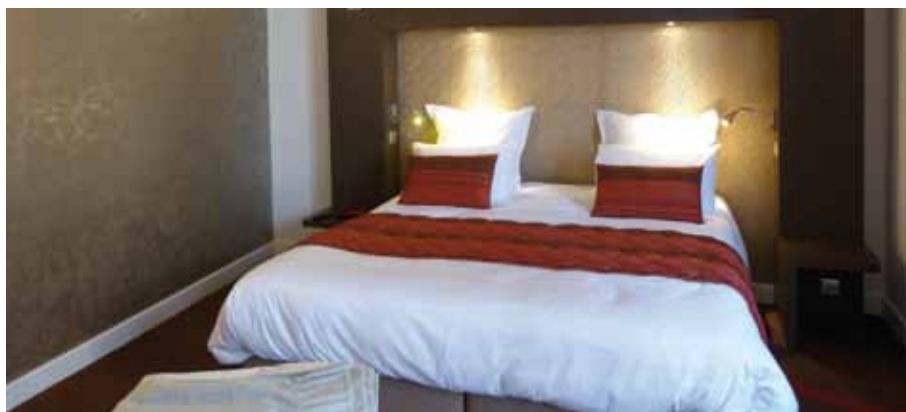


# Lifestyle - Accommodation

## Hôtel François Premier in Cognac

In the heart of Cognac, this luxury hotel welcomes you into a modern setting, perfectly balancing the elegance of the mansions of the nineteenth century with the audacity of contemporary design. Indoor pool and Hamman . The 'Bar Louise' serves incredible Cognac cocktails.

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



## Hôtel de Toiras \*\*\*\*

Villa Clarisse \*\*\*\* *Relais & Châteaux*

The Hotel Toiras is a 17th-century former ship owner's residence with a ideal location on Saint-Martin-de-Ré harbour. A perfect mix of elegance and luxury.

Villa Clarisse, the sister property, opened in 2012, was included in the 'It List Best News Hotels 2012' of Travel + Leisure: 'There's nothing we like more than uncovering a hidden gem. This new address Villa Clarisse is a petite hideaway on the picturesque French island of Île de Ré.'

[www.villa-clarisse.fr/en](http://www.villa-clarisse.fr/en)  
[www.hotel-de-toiras.com](http://www.hotel-de-toiras.com)

## Hôtel Mercure Poitiers Centre

Housed in the 1854 Jesuit chapel, designed by renowned French architect Magloire Tournesac, the hotel has over 50 bedrooms with some offering an unobstructed view over the town of Poitiers. The restaurant 'Les Archives' is located in the nave and chancel of the former chapel. The kitchens are run, by two talented young chefs Gil Elad and Ayako Ota.

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





# Lifestyle - Accommodation

## Villa des Demoiselles

The Villa des Demoiselles is a new 'chambre d'hotes' in the middle of Rochefort. It comprises just two rooms in a nineteenth century building, a few steps away from the square of the same name. The '60's décor evokes the famous Catherine Deneuve and Gene Kelly film by Jacques Demy - 'Les Demoiselles de Rochefort'.

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



## Les jardins du Lac

This is an ecologically friendly three star hotel where the restaurant is one of the Bonnes Petites Tables de Michelin and the views over the Lake du Bois Fleuri in Trizay are simply lovely. All rooms have a balcony and lake view, all produce is organically grown. Really relax by climbing into the jacuzzi or by taking in the panorama of green fields and woods.

[www.jardins-du-lac.com](http://www.jardins-du-lac.com)

## Les chambres de Coco

Les Chambres de CoCo is luxury bed & breakfast set in an early 19th century manor house which has been sensitively restored to provide great comfort and unique style. Located in Nabinaud, two minutes from Aubeterre sur Dronne - officially listed as one of the most beautiful villages in France, Les Chambres de CoCo is the perfect place from which to enjoy the many local restaurants, shops and explore the area's exceptional natural and cultural heritage. Alternatively, you might choose to relax in the grounds where there are beautiful terraces, a rose garden and 40ft outdoor swimming pool with loungers and parasols. There are just three luxury bedrooms and two suites.

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



# Short break ideas

## Poitiers, Angoulême & La Rochelle

4 days / 3 nights

### >> DAY 1

**Visit Poitiers:** Poitiers is a supreme example of Romanesque art in France but the present day structure of Poitiers was given shape in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Poitiers has 80 buildings classified as Historical Monuments, the most famous of which is the Baptistery of Saint Jean, which dates back to the beginning of Christianity in Europe; Notre-Dame- La-Grande church and the Saint-Hilaire church, which are classified by UNESCO. Now a university town and administrative centre, Poitiers had a complete redesign recently completed – the Coeur d'Agglo incorporates new green spaces such as the rue de Puygarreau, 4,000 new parking spaces, a new bus route, new public areas and pedestrian zones, new paving, street lighting, cleaning of buildings, new traffic circulation and an accentuation of the architectural heritage of the town.



**Shop and buy macaroons** – The Rannou-Metevier boutique has been making macaroons for over 90 years with a certain passion and creativity. Other specialities apart from the Macarons de Montmorillon include fine hand made chocolates and Bonne Mémé cake.

[www.rannou-metivier.com](http://www.rannou-metivier.com)

**Eat – at Le déjeuner sur l'herbe** – The chef at Le déjeuner sur l'herbe, Pierre Casadebaig has just won the coveted Gault Millau prize being named 'Young Talent of 2014'. His restaurant in Poitiers is already famous for the great cuisine; this is a young man who is going places. He says his goal is to be named Best Worker in France one day!(MOF) Built more like a rugby player than a chef, Pierre says he fell 'into the saucepan' thanks to his grandmother and since the age of three wanted to be a chef.

Phone number: +33 (0)5 49 55 39 30



**Overnight at the Hotel Mercure** – Housed in the 1854 Jesuit chapel, designed by renowned French architect Magloire Tournesac, the hotel has over 50 bedrooms with some offering an unobstructed view over the town of Poitiers. The restaurant is located in the nave and chancel of the former chapel. The kitchens are run, by two talented young chefs Gil Elad and Ayako Ota.

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



### >> DAY 2

**Visit Angoulême and the Comic Museum** – Located on the banks of the Charente River, Angoulême has long been associated with paper. Becoming the capital of paper in the Middle Ages, nowadays it is renowned as the capital of the image and more particularly, of the comic strip, with its annual festival and new museum.

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

In Angoulême city centre, it is also fun to follow the cartoon trail throughout the town, as there are works of comic strip art on every street corner with over twenty painted walls to admire! Famous cartoonists such as Yslaire, Zep and Moebius are featured. They place the comic strip and the image in the heart of the city.

**Shop – for chocolate at Chocolaterie Duceau** where Jean Christophe Crosnier has been elevating the standard of the hand made chocolates to new heights for the last eight years. Jean Christophe learnt his craft in Paris at establishments like the famous Fauchon. Since his





# Short break ideas



arrival in Angoulême he has risen to be named one of the top 100 chocolate makers in the whole of France.

[www.chocolaterie-duceau.com](http://www.chocolaterie-duceau.com)

**Shop – for anything and everything at Chez Cax** which is a boutique offering a vintage selection of furniture, lighting, clocks, objets d'arts etc from the '50's, '60's and '70's. Next door there is a contemporary art gallery showing works of young artists from the local area.

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

**Eat at – Le Jardin des Arceaux** – in the Hotel Mercure serves traditional French fare in a contemporary setting.

[bit.ly/JardinDesArceaux](http://bit.ly/JardinDesArceaux)

**Overnight- at the Hotel du Palais\*\*\*** housed in an elegant eighteenth century building (former convent of the Tiercelet order) is located in the heart of the charming old city of Angoulême. Recently renovated, it has been arranged and decorated with care to create a warm and friendly atmosphere. All rooms have common characteristics: simplicity and style, elegance and comfort – conducive to relaxation and rest. [www.hotel-angouleme.fr](http://www.hotel-angouleme.fr)

## >> DAY 3

**Visit La Rochelle by yellow bike** – taking in all the famous sites. Founded in the tenth century, visitors to the town can still glimpse vestiges of its medieval walls. The Old Town is characterised by medieval houses with facades sculpted during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, streets with arcades and private mansions of big ship owners.

La Rochelle has four ports: the Old Port with its iconic towers, the commercial port – La Pallice, the fishing port 'Chef de Baie' and the Minimes Port which is the premier European pleasure port with 3,500 slips. The Minimes Port welcomes the annual 'Grand Pavois', a famous European nautical show every September.

The modern areas of the town are close to the Old Centre, notably the 'Gabut' quarter with its painted wooden buildings and the area near to the Minimes Port.

**Visit the offshore islands by boat** – there are frequent and inexpensive boat trips to all of the nearby islands such as Oléron, Aix and the Ile de Ré.

[www.inter-iles.com](http://www.inter-iles.com)

**Eat – at Les 4 sergents** – Julien Gilbert took over the reins of this restaurant in 1998 from his father who had been at the helm for more than 30 years. The glass conservatory is a beautiful dining room created in the factories of Gustav Eiffel. The menu uses locally produced regional fare and the wine caller has a superb reputation. La Rochelle is lucky to have such a fine establishment that specialises in seafood!

[www.les4sergents.com](http://www.les4sergents.com)

**Overnight at Champlain** – The Hotel Champlain in La Rochelle is just five minutes from the Old Port and the old town so is ideally placed for the visitor to explore or otherwise simply enjoy the pretty gardens. The rooms are very comfortable and all have flat screen TV's and free Wifi.

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



# Short break ideas

## Oléron Gastronomy



For your holiday on the Ile d'Oléron stay at The Hotel Square, a charming two star property that was originally a town house dating back to the eighteenth century. It is situated in the centre of the capital of the island - St.Pierre d'Oléron, just a few steps from the lively restaurants and bars. Each of the 27 rooms is individually decorated, there is a pool for the summer and an interior courtyard garden where breakfast can be taken if you prefer.

[www.le-square-hotel.fr](http://www.le-square-hotel.fr)

### Visit - Route des Huîtres

The Oyster Route is situated between the Château d'Oléron and Boyardville and takes in the channels and oyster beds which one visits by tractocar! Many of the old cabins are in use once again inhabited by artists that have lovingly restored some of these charming old buildings. The coast here is beautiful with a varied flora and fauna to admire. There is also a museum to visit that tells the story of oyster cultivation in the area.

[bit.ly/RouteDesHuitres](http://bit.ly/RouteDesHuitres)

### Visit- Marché de la Cotinière

The market of this charming fishing village is so pretty that visitors are welcomed back time after time. Protected from the ravages of the ocean by a dyke it is home to a flotilla of over a hundred boats that fish for sole, crayfish and other 'noble' species of the deep! Once back to the village the fish is sold very quickly at the market, mainly to wholesalers who export the fish all over France. Until the thirteenth century the harbour of La Cotinière also served as a safe haven for ships on their way to and from La Gironde, taken unawares by bad weather. This lovely spot now attracts tourists who can also see the ruins of the St.Nicolas Chapel built in the thirteenth century and destroyed in the sixteenth, as well as the typical little houses snuggled up together for better protection against the elements.

[bit.ly/LaCotiniere](http://bit.ly/LaCotiniere)

### Visit - Le Port des Salines

This is where you can learn all about the important cultivation of salt and the work of the salt maker through exhibits and guided visits. Sea salt was always important to the economy of the Ile d'Oléron and this museum shows you everything you want to know about sea salt and the salt marshes. In the summer months you can even take a boat trip out onto the salt scape.

[bit.ly/PortDesSalines](http://bit.ly/PortDesSalines)

### Eat - Restaurant Saveurs des Îles

This gorgeous restaurant is situated in the centre of the village of La Menouinière which itself is just a few minutes from La Cotinière. There is a shady terrace and a lovely garden in which to relax and enjoy a creative menu influenced by the owners travels around the world using local produce.

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





# Short break ideas



## Tour through the historic centre of Poitou-Charentes

**Start your journey in Poitiers** - regional capital of Poitou-Charentes and a designated 'Art & History' town. Follow one of the three discovery loops marked on the pavement to visit beautiful historic monuments such as Notre-Dame Church, the Law Courts, and the St Jean Baptistery.

**Continue to Chauvigny** - to watch an exceptional display by birds from all over the world in one of the old fortresse. Eagles and buzzards, owls, parrots and many other species will skim right over your head.

**Continue to the Abbey of Saint-Savin** - an architectural masterpiece classified as a World Heritage Site by UNESCO. Its beautifully preserved Romanesque wall paintings are unique in Europe. It is well worth exploring.

**Visit the Château de la Rochefoucauld** - dating from the twelfth century with its imposing Renaissance staircase, the bedroom of Marguerite de Valois, and lavish ceremonial rooms.

**Continue to Angoulême** - where you can climb the ramparts to the chateau and stroll through the old streets to find the monumental wall paintings drawn by famous comic strip artists. Don't miss the fascinating comic strip museum either, the Musée de la Bande Dessinée.

**Visit Aubeterre-sur-Dronne** - south of the Charente and classified amongst The Most Beautiful Villages of France. You'll love its southern atmosphere and stunning underground church.

**Visit too the classified village of Talmont sur Gironde**, a 12th century citadel which never fails to delight with its Romanesque church perched on the edge of a cliff overlooking the sea.

**Continue to the seaside resort of Royan** - another Art & History town, which is famous as a typical '50's French seaside resort with lovely beaches and a relaxed atmosphere.

[bit.ly/HistoricCircuit](http://bit.ly/HistoricCircuit)



# Gastronomy ideas

## Cookery Courses

### Reza Mahammad – A star chef in Charente!

Reza Mahammad is a chef renowned on both sides of the Channel. He adores the Charente and started giving cookery classes there in 2013 to great acclaim. Reza feels at ease in the Charente – a second home to him after the “razzmatazz” of the life of a TV chef in the UK.

Reza's family was one of the first to install an Indian restaurant in London over fifty years ago – The Star of India. Reza has continued the pioneering spirit with this new initiative. The classes take place in a restored barn in Chez Cartier where there is also yoga and music classes to experience. Reza enjoys taking typically western food and adding an Indian touch so, for example, duck à l'orange is spiced with ginger and cinnamon.

contact: [warwick@chezcartier.com](mailto:warwick@chezcartier.com)



### Flavours of France

In the picturesque, seaside town of La Rochelle you will be able to learn to cook dishes using local, seasonal ingredients such as the Pineau sauce made with the region's local aperitif on the Flavours of France French cooking course. Laurent has a way to make the most complicated of dishes look simple. During your French cooking course you will stay in Résidence de France a beautiful hotel located in the heart of La Rochelle. Rooms are spacious and have en-suite facilities. A short walk from the harbour your accommodation is the perfect base to explore this historic, lively town and is walking distance from the cooking course venue.

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



### La Ribaudière

Thierry Verrat opened his restaurant in 1989; his expert cooking earned him a Michelin star. He now runs cookery classes too (in English as well as French). Students shop at the market with him in the early morning and then cook a three course lunch which is enjoyed with fine wines and an explanation from the sommelier.

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

### Restaurant du Chateau

In Jarnac, close to Cognac, you find the fine dining establishment of chef Ludovic Merle who combines quality produce with creativity! He plied his trade in New York then worked for Georges Blanc for four years before opening Restaurant du Chateau.

[www.restaurant-du-chateau.com](http://www.restaurant-du-chateau.com)



### Our 'Coup de coeur'



### Cocktails : Bar Louise – Cognac

Alexandre Lambert is head barman at the Louise Bar in the Hotel Francois Premier in Cognac and is helping put the Cognac cocktail firmly back onto the map. He was in the last eight of the Barcardi Legacy competition held in 2012 with his Barcardi Sling. The final eight battled it out in Puerto Rico in 2013.

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



# Going Green

## EU Eco-label accommodation club in Poitou-Charentes

Poitou-Charentes is one of the top regions in France in terms of EU eco-labelled accommodation. In 2006, 'Les Orangeries' in Lussac-les-Châteaux was the first establishment in France to be named as Eco-label friendly. Today, the region has 28 Eco-label accommodation products. A 'Club' of the Eco-labelled facilities was inaugurated in December 2009 and aims to put some common actions in place for all its members. This is the only official organisation of its type fully recognised by the EU.

Members must adhere to certain practices: reduced water consumption, reduction in amount of non-recyclable rubbish, reduction in energy consumption, use of reusable energy, use of ecofriendly products and materials, breakfast based on organic and local products, communication and putting in place good environmental practices.



## Hotels

### Hôtel Masqhôtel

17 rue de l'Ouvrage à Cômes  
17000 La Rochelle  
info@masqhotel.com  
www.masqhotel.com



**Hôtel La Gourmandine**  
22 avenue du Président Wilson  
86100 Châtellerault  
info@la-gourmandine.com  
www.la-gourmandine.com

### Hôtel Les Cleunes

25 boulevard de la Plage  
17370 Saint-Trojan-les-Bains  
contact@hotel-les-cleunes.com  
www.hotel-les-cleunes.com



**Hôtel Les Orangeries**  
12 avenue du Docteur Dupont  
86320 Lussac-les-Châteaux  
orangeries@orange.fr  
www.lesorangeries.fr

### Hôtel Spa Plaisir

57 avenue du Pas des Boeufs  
17580 Le Bois-Plage-en-Ré  
info@hotel-plaisir.com  
www.hotel-plaisir.com



**Hôtel Le Pigeonnier du Perron**  
22 lieu dit Le Perron  
86530 Availles-en-Châtellerault  
accueil@lepigeonnierduperron.com  
www.lepigeonnierduperron.com

### Hôtel P'tit Dej-Hôtel Ile de Ré

12 rue de la terre rouge  
17740 Sainte-Marie-de-Ré  
www.ptitdej-hotel-iledere.com



## Accommodation for groups

**Auberge de Jeunesse**  
Avenue des Minimes BP 63045  
17000 La Rochelle  
larochelle@fuaj.org  
www.fuaj-aj-larochelle.fr

### Hôtel Les Vignes de la Chapelle

5 rue de la Manne  
17740 Sainte-Marie-de-Ré  
hotel@lesvignesdelachapelle.com  
www.lesvignesdelachapelle.com



**Village de Vacances Océanique**  
Chemin des Peux Blancs  
17580 Le Bois-Plage-en-Ré  
iledere.accueil@touristravacances.com  
www.village-oceanique.com

### Hôtel Maison Flore

25 rue du Grand Port  
79210 Arçais  
contact@maisonflore.com  
www.maisonflore.com



**CPA Lathus**  
La Voulzie - BP 5  
86390 Lathus-Saint-Rémy  
info@cpa-lathus.asso.fr  
www.cpa-lathus.asso.fr

### Hôtel Le Moulin de la Sorinière

79250 Nueil-les-Aubiers  
contact@hotel-moulin-soriniere.com  
www.hotel-moulin-soriniere.com



**Le Chambon- sport et nature en Charente**  
16220 Eymouthiers  
info@lechambon.org  
www.lechambon.org

# Festivals & Events

## Nuits Romanes - 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary

28<sup>th</sup> June – 13<sup>th</sup> September 2014

This cultural spectacle will be celebrating its tenth anniversary this year. It encompasses over 156 evenings of entertainment by more than 750 performers in 300 different shows and welcomes more than 60,000 visitors a season. The productions take place all over the Poitou-Charentes region and incorporate all types of entertainment from street musicians to theatre and dance. There is something for adults and children alike. This amazing series of events takes place from 28<sup>th</sup> June – 13<sup>th</sup> September 2014.

<https://nuitsromanes.poitou-charentes.fr>







# Festivals & Events

## Francofolies - 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary

10<sup>th</sup> – 14<sup>th</sup> July 2014

All styles of French language music converge at one of France's leading festivals held each summer. Les Francofolies welcomes all genres from soul to folk as well as hip hop, electro, blues and rock. With more than 250 concerts in eight different venues programmed across five days and nights, there is plenty to keep the most enthusiastic festival-goers entertained.

Set in the historic town of La Rochelle, the festival - in its 30th year - promises an extra special line-up including Christophe Mae, Stromae, Shaka Pong. More than half of the concerts are free making it easy to combine sight-seeing with soaking up the festival atmosphere. With more than 185,000 spectators expected over the course of the festival, it is important to book accommodation before you arrive but good transport links mean that you can stay outside La Rochelle and journey in easily.

An important part of Francofolies is the development of new talent and young artists play a special role in the festival. In 1998, 'Le Chantier des Francos' was created encouraging young acts to perform throughout the year in La Rochelle and not just during the festival.

Tickets for Francofolies can be bought online and start from 35 €. A three day pass costs 96 €. NB - the headline concerts sell out fast!

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

### A tribute to Edith Piaf

Launched in La Rochelle (France) in 1985, Les Francofolies is now one of the main festivals in France and Europe. As soon as 1989, it traveled to Québec (Francofolies de Montréal) and to Belgium in 1994 (Francofolies de Spa).

On September 19th 2013, for the first time, Les Francofolies lived the American dream at the Beacon Theatre, for a tribute concert with around 20 French and international artists, who sang La Môme's songs to celebrate the 50th anniversary of her passing.



# Festivals & Events

## Cognac Blues Passions

1<sup>st</sup> – 5<sup>th</sup> July 2014

### World class music festival on the banks of the Charente

Cognac's most famous export is undoubtedly its namesake but the town's fame is now rising in the music world too thanks to its annual festival, Cognac Blues Passions. Stars are lining up to appear at the 2014 event and include Steven Seagal, Robert Plant, Lily Allen and Jonny Lang. Whilst the heart of the festival remains the blues and blues-derived music, the recent festivals have broadened their repertoire to include other music from across the world.

Choose from simply enjoying the festival atmosphere at one of the many pavement bars and restaurants or buy a ticket to one of the daily events held in the beautiful botanic gardens.

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



## Fête du Cognac,

24<sup>th</sup> - 26<sup>th</sup> July 2014



A celebration of the Charente area, the Fete du Cognac is a gastronomic event promoting cognac ... and music.

Over 22,000 plates of regional specialties were served last year and 55,000 glasses of cognac, pineau and various cocktails including the emblematic 'Summit'. So feast during the day – there are five bars and 350 volunteers ready to serve you – and then enjoy some top line musicians performing in the evening. Stars such as The Stranglers are artists that have recently made an appearance.

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





# Festivals & Events

## **Maraisthon** - Get ready to explore the Marais Poitevin 15<sup>th</sup> -16<sup>th</sup> June 2014

### 5th anniversary

Set in the heart of the Marais Poitevin, the pretty waterside town of Coulon is known as the capital of the Venice Verte (Green Venice). Here, throughout the year, you can hire flat-bottomed boats to explore the waterways from one of the many embarcadères. On one weekend each year however, the activity becomes land based when France's premier eco-marathon comes to town. The world renowned Maraisthon attracts over 1,000 competitors from all over the globe. It is now so popular that entrants for the various races have had to be limited.

The Maraisthon celebrates its fifth anniversary this year and to commemorate this they are supporting a new environmental project in Mali to preserve the local wood and emphasise the precarious energy problem they have there.

As it is a special birthday year the Marasthon winner's trophy will be made out of sweets (no colouring or preservatives will be used!) There will also be for the first time hot air balloon tours on offer.

As well as the marathon there is a 10km fun run (entry for both races must be reserved on the Maraisthon website). Plus, there is a 11km Discovery Walk led by knowledgeable guides which visit areas normally not accessible to the public. Discover the Marais Poitevin flora and fauna before returning to Coulon to explore the eco-market and exhibitions. Guides are available in English.

Getting there: Coulon is a short 45 minute drive from the Atlantic coast, La Rochelle and the Ile de Ré. The TGV station at Niort is nearby. There is ample parking close to the village centre.

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



# Festivals & Events



> **Jazzelleraut** - Châtelleraut - 17th - 24th May

As night falls and the first notes ring out, so the fireworks begin and some of the biggest stars of the jazz world like Wynton Marsalis start to play. The festival takes place at different venues all over town and the festivities last for a whole week. 2013 promises not to disappoint. [www.festival-jazzelleraut.com](http://www.festival-jazzelleraut.com)

> **Musiques Métisses** - Angoulême - 6th - 8th June

[www.musiques-metisses.com](http://www.musiques-metisses.com)



> **Polychrombies Notre Dame La Grande** - Poitiers - June - September 2014

Light show that takes place every evening in the summer on the facade of this wonderful church.

> **International Film Festival** - La Rochelle - 27th June - 7th July

The 41st festival is held in La Rochelle. In 2012 82,429 spectators watched 389 performances of 142 long films and 61 shorts. [www.festival-larochelle.org](http://www.festival-larochelle.org)

> **A Violin on the Sand** - Royan - 19th - 26th July

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

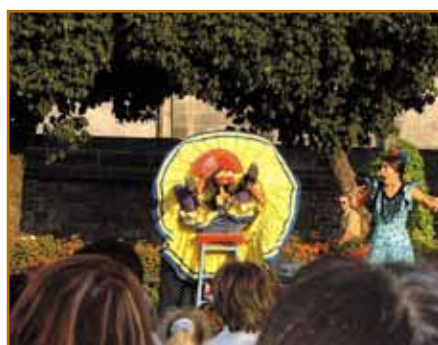


> **M. Haydn's Holiday** - La Roche-Posay - September 2014

These eight annual, classical music concerts are exceptional. There are no reservations, you pay what you like and tickets only go on sale 30 minutes before each performance. There is a mix of old and new instruments, favourite golden oldies and contemporary masterpieces. [www.lesvacancesdemonsieurhaydn.com](http://www.lesvacancesdemonsieurhaydn.com)

> **Festival de Confolens** - Confolens - 12th - 17th august

This is the best of its kind, a world music and dance celebration that has been going for over 50 years. [www.festivaldeconfolens.com](http://www.festivaldeconfolens.com)



> **Coup de Chauffe** - Cognac - 5th - 7th September

The 19th arts festival takes place annually in Cognac with thirty or so regional, national and European companies taking part to show more than 60 free shows - art in the streets. [www.avantscene.com](http://www.avantscene.com)

> **Jazz between Two Towers** - La Rochelle - October 2014

This is one of the best known jazz festivals in France attracting stars such as John Scofield, Joe Louis Walker and Michelle Hendricks. The beautiful setting between the towers of the old port of La Rochelle is exceptional. [www.larochelle-jazz-festival.com](http://www.larochelle-jazz-festival.com)





# A bit of America in Poitou-Charentes

## New York began as Angoulême

How many New Yorkers realise that their city was originally named after Angoulême in Poitou-Charentes? The first European to discover New York was Giovanni da Verrazano who sailed into the harbour on 17 January 1524 on board La Dauphine. The captain's expedition was sponsored by Francis 1 of France, born in Cognac and known as Francis of Angoulême until he became king in 1515. So Verrazano dutifully named the harbour Angoulême in honour of the monarch. The name appears on many 16<sup>th</sup> century maps but the town was renamed New Amsterdam in 1625 when it became a Dutch colony, and finally New York when taken by the English in 1664.



## Hermione – The ‘Freedom frigate’

In 1778, General La Fayette set sail from Rochefort across the Atlantic in a brand new frigate named Hermione, his mission to lend military aid to General Washington and the American colonies fighting for independence from the British. Thirty-eight days later, Hermione arrived in Boston to start a campaign that was to continue for 18 months and finish with American victory in Chesapeake Bay. In 1997, construction began on a replica Hermione in the dockyard where the original frigate was built, and in spring 2015, the new Hermione will sail the route of her predecessor, returning to Rochefort in mid-August.

## Samuel de Champlain

Born in Brouage near Rochefort around 1567, Samuel de Champlain served in the French Navy as Maréchal des Logis under King Henri IV. **Between 1599 and 1601, he explored the West Indies, but his name is forever associated with Canada.** From 1604 to 1607, de Champlain helped found the first French colony on the shores of Port Royal in Nova Scotia, the hub of the French territory christened Acadia. De Champlain himself continued down the St Lawrence, founding Quebec in 1608, discovering the region of the Great Lakes, and leading several expeditions against the Iriquois. He went on to become Governor of New France, and died in Quebec on Christmas Day 1635.



## New Rochelle

When a group of French Protestants or Huguenots fled religious persecution in 1688, they crossed the Atlantic and bought 6,000 acres of fertile farmland along the shores of Long Island Sound, settling in an area very similar to the one they had left behind. **They called the community New Rochelle to reflect their home port of La Rochelle** - last Huguenot stronghold in France - and they made their living from farming and fishing, transporting their produce along navigable waterways to the centre of New York. Today, New Rochelle is the seventh largest city in New York State and maintains strong links with the French port where the story began.

## Nicolas Martiau the ancestor of George Washington

On 11 October 2007, the U.S. Ambassador to France, Craig R. Stapleton, inaugurated a statue of George Washington in the garden of Ernest Cognacq Museum in Saint Martin de Re (Ile de Re). A tribute to the most famous 'Rétais' - Ile de Ré native - in the U.S.: Nicolas Martiau, his direct ancestor. Naturalized British in 1619, he started to work for the Count of Huntington and sailed to America. He contributed to the foundation of the town of Yorktown which earned him the nickname of "Father of Yorktown". But his fame in the U.S. comes from its descendants: by his eldest daughter, Elizabeth, he is the earliest emigrant ancestor of George Washington.



# PRESS CONTACT

**Sophie COUSIN**

Tel: + 33 (0)5 16 01 40 45  
s.cousin@cr-poitou-charentes.fr

**Ghislaine DESEVEDAVY**

Tel: + 33 (0)5 49 38 47 19  
g.desevedavy@cr-poitou-charentes.fr

<http://press.visit-poitou-charentes.com>