

### **Top Reasons to Rendez-Vous in Rhone-Alpes in 2014**

The second economic and tourist region in France, the Rhône -Alpes is one of the favorite tourist destinations in the country thanks to the diversity and richness of its renowned sites.

#### **Lyon: An Urban Hotspot**

A European crossroads at the confluence of the rivers Rhône and Saône, Lyon is a major destination with its architectural finery and gastronomic reputation. The former capital of the Gauls, the city is home to a wealth of historic landmarks designated World Heritage Sites by UNESCO, including: Fourvière Hill with its basilica and Gallo-Roman ruins; the medieval Vieux Lyon quarter; Bellecour, Europe's largest pedestrian square and more. These places of great historical significance juxtapose the forward-looking spirit of this major city undergoing a metamorphosis, boasting new developments such as the Confluence district, which has inspired top architects.

#### **Foodie Heaven**

It was in the Rhône-Alpes that Rabelais found inspiration for his gluttonous giant Gargantua. The 18th century gourmet Brillat-Savarin gave his name to a delicious cheese, and octogenarian Paul Bocuse is still delighting diners in his restaurant in Collonges-au-Mont d'Or. Since time immemorial, the region has enjoyed a passionate, almost carnal, relationship with the culinary art. In all, it boasts nearly 80 Michelin-starred restaurants. In addition to the aforementioned 'Monsieur Paul', four other chefs have achieved the ultimate accolade of three Michelin stars: Michel Troisgros in Roanne (Loire Department), Georges Blanc in Vonnas (Ain Department), Anne-Sophie Pic in Valence (Drôme Department) and Emmanuel Renaut in Megève (Haute Savoie Department). The latter two, talented chefs in their forties, are proof of the emergence of a new generation whose brilliance is rivaled only by their creativity. Constantly evolving while remaining true to its traditions, the region's cuisine certainly merits its prestigious reputation.

#### **A Growing Wine Destination**

Wine tourism is enjoying a boom in the Rhône-Alpes. In response to the public's increasing interest in oenology, the region's wine tourism offerings are growing rapidly. Around the region's vineyards, winemakers are thrilled to explain to visitors the details of their profession. The cellars of the great wine estates like Guigal, packed with row upon row of barrels and bottles, give an authentic setting for the wine tasting sessions that are a feature of the many wine trails that crisscross the region. In the Beaujolais, the Route des Vins runs from Saint Amour to Les Pierres Dorées. In the Upper Rhône Valley, the steep hillsides running down to the river are lined with ranks of vines ripe for exploring.

#### **Viarhônga, the riverside way**

The ambitious cycle route project will ultimately connect the shore of Lake Geneva with the beaches of the Mediterranean. The banks of the Rhône River are becoming a new-found haven of motor-free travel, gradually transformed into greenways and cycle lanes, with several sections already in use. This stunning riverside journey explores a wealth of natural and heritage interest along the way and will run for almost 435 miles, 280 of which are in the Rhône-Alpes.

**Design with a capital 'D'**

A symbol of the vitality of its new creative quarter, the Cité du Design was opened in 2009 on the site of Saint Etienne's former arms factory. Dedicated to innovation and the future of design, this space of nearly 20,000 square yards houses a world-famous Biennial event. The space is open to students, professionals, designers and the general public. It is a stunning showcase of the future for a major city that in 2010 was awarded the highly prized title of UNESCO Creative City, alongside the likes of Beijing, Berlin and Montreal.

**Skiing in the Rhône-Alpes**

When it comes to snow sports, France is the world's leading ski destination, ahead of the USA and Austria. It owes this top spot mainly to the flagship resorts of the Rhône-Alpes, the prestigious high points of the world's largest winter sports arena, with 180 resorts featuring an unrivaled variety of styles and sizes. Their slopes come together to form seventeen major ski areas that thrill-seekers can traverse for hours on end without ever having to take off their skis. The Portes du Soleil, encompassing part of the Haute Savoie and neighboring Switzerland, boasts 403 miles of slopes accessed via fourteen resorts, more than any other in the world, followed closely by the Three Valleys with its 372 miles spread over the mountainsides of Savoie.

**Innovation and ambitious projects**

The Rhône-Alpes will also open a host of innovative and ambitious projects, including the inauguration of the Confluences Museum in Lyon, dedicated to science, art and society as well as the opening of the reproduction of the prehistoric Chauvet Cave in Ardèche.