

LATEST NEWS FROM FRANCE

Positive tourism figures, increased investment and a whole host of special events, commemorations, new attractions and transport links sets the tone for an exciting 2016 in France.

Tourism Facts and Figures

Rise in UK visitor spend

The latest provisional 2015 figures from the ONS suggest that the first 9 months of the year saw a steady flow of British visitors heading to France, and an increase of more than 5% in visitor spend year-on-year. Feedback from local partners over the summer season also suggests that British visitors are coming back. Further official figures will follow soon.

Increased investment in tourism

At the first annual tourism convention held in Paris in October, Laurent Fabius, Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Development expanded on measures which are being taken by the Government to improve their offer to tourists, including areas such as welcome, electronic communications and social media, booking systems, and professional training.

Countdown begins to Somme 2016

The Battle of the Somme was the first major Allied offensive of World War I, the infantry attack launching on 1 July 1916 after a week of artillery bombardment designed to annihilate German positions. But the bombardment had failed and the battle became one of the worst of the whole war. On the first day alone, the British Army lost 60,000 men, of whom 20,000 were killed. The Thiepval Memorial to the Missing, designed by Sir Edwin Lutyens and unveiled in 1932, is one of the main focal points for remembrance in the Somme. Every year on the 1st July, a commemorative service is held here in remembrance of the men who fought and died during the Battle of the Somme, but in 2016 the British and French Governments will host a significantly larger event. .

Official centenary commemorations will start on July 1st 2016, not just at Thiepval, but at locations such as Lochnagar and Beaumont-Hamel, with an evening concert by Barbara Hendricks in Albert. Events will continue throughout the summer to remember the fallen

from all nations, including South Africa and Australia, with a rich cultural, scientific and artistic programme continuing in Amiens, the closest city to the Somme Front. Two websites, www.somme2016.org and www.somme-battlefields.com will provide all the information needed for visiting the Somme Battlefields in 2016.

Euro 2016

A record 24 sides will contest the 15th UEFA European Championship in France next year with more than 50 games taking place over 32 days in 10 host cities. The action for Euro 2016 kicks off on June 10 and finishes on July 10 in Paris. From northern France to the Rhône Valley, the Atlantic Coast to the Riviera, host cities will be providing an extra special welcome to fans who can not only enjoy top class football but also the hospitality and atmosphere of some iconic sporting towns. Host cities: Bordeaux, Lens, Lille, Lyon, Marseille, Nice, Paris, Toulouse, Saint-Denis, Saint-Etienne

<http://www.uefa.com/uefaeuro/finals/hosts/france/index.html>

Lascaux IV

Located in the Vézère Valley, Lascaux IV will open in the summer of 2016, an extraordinary replica of almost the entire original cave copied using state-of-the-art techniques and guaranteed to give visitors a real sense of life here in prehistoric times. Experience a steppe landscape dominated by animals, then fast forward to 1940 and the discovery by four young boys of the cave entrance. Visitors will enter the dark, damp replica cave in small groups for the most authentic experience possible, then discover the full story of cave life and rock art through exhibitions and interactive displays. www.projet-lascaux.com/en

Bordeaux Wine Museum

It promises to be an exciting year for Bordeaux which unveils the city's emblematic new building in 2016. On the banks of the Garonne in an up-and-coming dockland area, a vast glass tower in imaginative modern design will dominate the skyline. A wine museum to celebrate and showcase the region's flagship product, the Cité des Civilisations du Vin is a 'lighthouse' that shines with the expertise of thousands of years of winemaking. Visitors can discover the relationship between wine and culture across the world from ancient times to the present day and enjoy a panoramic view over city and vineyards from the observation deck 35 metres high and the 7th floor restaurant. Opening early June 2016

<http://www.laciteduvin.com/accueil.html>

Porquerolles hosts contemporary art in island setting

Contemporary art in an idyllic natural setting, that's the aim behind the Carmignac Foundation's forthcoming expansion to the unspoilt island of Porquerolles in the heart of the Port-Cros National Park Reserve. Located off the coast of the French Riviera near Hyères, the car-free island measure just 7.5 x 3km and boasts turquoise seas, white sandy beaches and woodland paths. Starting in 2016, it will act as a focal point for the various movements in contemporary art both in France and abroad, and will become increasingly vibrant as paintings and sculptures are gradually created in harmony with their unique surroundings.

<http://www.fondation-carmignac.com/>

Inauguration of the European equestrian route 'd'Artagnan' in 2016

The European equestrian route 'D'Artagnan' will be inaugurated in at the end of 2016. It will set of the Lupiac (Gers) – birthplace of the famous Musketeer and lead to Maastricht in the Netherlands, where he lost his life in 1673, via Belgium. Riders will be given a roadmap and at each leg it will be validated in order for them to achieve the "D'Artagnan" gold, silver or bronze medal (depending on the mileage).

The equestrian statue of D'Artagnan *, inaugurated August 9, 2015 in Lupiac marks the start or finish of the equestrian route. * This bronze statue is the work of sculptor Daphne du Barry. More informations (link in French only):

<http://www.lanouvellerepublique.fr/Loir-et-Cher/Loisirs/Patrimoine-tourisme/n/Contenus/Articles/2015/10/21/Une-route-equestre-sur-les-traces-d-Artagnan-2507148>

Normandy Impressionism Festival

Normandy's third Impressionist festival kicks off on 16 April 2016 with a whole host of exhibitions and events throughout Upper and Lower Normandy, drawing to a close on 26 September. Theme for this year's much-anticipated festival is Impressionist Portraits, and masterpieces have been lent from around the world for landmark exhibitions.

Contemporary French and foreign artists have also been invited to produce new works on Impressionist themes. Expect musical, theatrical and literary events as well as artworks as you discover another face of Impressionism. www.normandie-impressionniste.eu

Normandy – The Grand Départ

The Tour de France has already visited la Manche 23 times, but in 2016 the department will be hosting the Grand Départ for the very first time. Six cities in la Manche have welcomed the Tour, but the Grande Boucle's oldest ties are with Cherbourg, that the peloton has visited by seventeen times. The first time, in 1911, future winner Gustave Garrigou took home a Norman bouquet. The Grande Boucle has often shied away from the tip of the Cotentin peninsula, but two stages have finished in Avranches and the last one, in 2002, was one to remember: Australian Bradley McGee promised to win the stage before the start and was as good as his word. The Tour's recent visits to la Manche have been marked by the two finishes at the foot of the Mont-Saint-Michel. Belgian Johan Museeuw was the first to triumph at the "Wonder of the Western World" back in 1990. Twenty-three years later, German Tony Martin claimed a time trial during the 100th edition of the Tour.

Battle of Hastings

2016 is the 950 anniversary of the Norman invasion and the subsequent battle.

Hotels Reopening

Following extensive renovations the legendary Hotel Ritz and Hotel Crillon are soon re-opening. Hotel Ritz is currently set to re-open in June and Hotel Crillon at the end of 2016 / beginning of 2017

<http://www.crillon.com/en/> <https://www.ritzparis.com/en-GB>

Tonnerres de Brest – new look maritime festival

Enjoy all things nautical in the Breton port of Brest from 13 to 19 July. Every four years since 1992, a major maritime festival has taken place here, culminating in a huge 20th anniversary spectacular in 2012. Now 2016 marks the start of a new phase of festivities. Star turn will be the Hermione, replica of La Fayette's frigate, but historic ships and pleasure craft from every ocean will be gathering here to enjoy maritime parades, firework displays, concerts and other quayside events. www.brest2016.fr

New and recent new flight connections UK & IRL

BA :	London – Biarritz (29 April 2016)
Cityjet:	Cork – La Rochelle (Summer 2016) Cork – Nantes (Summer 2016)
Aer Lingus:	Dublin – Perpignan : Extension seasonal flights April - October 2016 Dublin – Montpellier (Summer 2016)
SWISS:	Dublin – Genève (Summer 2015)
Eastern Airways:	Southampton – Lorient (10 July – 17 August)
Bmi regional:	Bristol – Nantes
Monarch:	Manchester – Genève (December 2015)
Flybe:	Norwich – Genève (Winter 2016)
Jet2:	Manchester – Genève (Winter 2015)
Easyjet:	London Southend – Lyon (12 December 2015) Manchester – Marseille (June 2015)
Flybe :	Cardiff – Chambéry (25 October 2015 – 29 February 2016)

For further information please contact

Anne Pedersen, Head of Public Relations Department, Atout France

anne.pedersen@atout-france.fr

Tel. 020 7061 6624, www.france.fr