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TRAVEL / FESTIVALS AND EVENTS

A Quick Guide to Enjoying Cannes Outside the Film Festival

Historic, gorgeous, and located right on the French Riviera, the city of Cannes is more than the film festival that bears its name

May 20, 2014 | 02:20 PM By Jess Novak, Special Contributor

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The view from the Musee de la Castré

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"Fried" Catfish with Potato Sticks

It's understandable to associate the city of Cannes exclusively with the film festival that bears its name, but whether you're in town for the premieres or are traveling down the Côte d'Azur for a little sunny relaxation, this city has much to offer.

A short walk up to the top of Le Suquet, the historic district, is a must-do (especially if you've been ignoring the hotel gym): the remains of a medieval castle atop the hill now house the Musee de la Castré, and offer a gorgeous, 360 degree view of the harbor, city, and surrounding countryside — as well as some quiet little gardens, perfect for a combined resting spot and photo opp.

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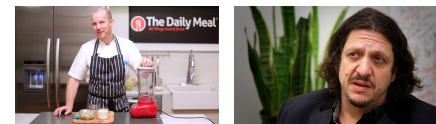
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Wandering through Le Suquet, you might feel that the picturesqueness seems almost staged, as though the town is not a real city with roots that date to the second century B.C., but a Disney interpretation of what such a town might look like: the paint peeling just so; a little pot of red flowers accenting a scraped blue windowsill; heavy, antique wooden doors that open with wrought iron handles gracing nearly every tiny alcove and backstreet. The city is also covered in beautiful film-related murals: wander up any winding staircase and you may find yourself in front of a trompe l'oeil of a film set or an enormous portrait of a great director from years past.

This is a perfect walking city and many great destinations are an easy stroll — but pack your heels in your bag. The city's beautiful old streets are not exactly designed for picking around in your sleekest pumps, so don't try to be a fashion martyr when you go exploring. And if you do find yourself in need of transportation, don't expect to be able to hail a taxi during any peak festival hours. **Cannes does have Uber**, although it's been experiencing a spot of **trouble** lately (in the form of taxi union protests, which seem to have been largely resolved), but not all the kinks have been worked out: the festival traffic is jam-packed with people utilizing the service, so make sure you order your car while you're still seated.

While there are wonderful restaurants up and down the coast, even the tiniest spots along the water will offer you impossibly fresh fish: You can order salmon tartare in a local pizza joint (not generally an advisable decision anywhere else in the world) and you'll find that it's well prepared, simultaneously rich and light, minced pristinely and barely dressed.

Cannes is home to world class high-end shopping, most of it along the Boulevard de la Croisette by the Rue Macé, where you can pop into Bulgari or Christian Dior. But there's great high street shopping as well, much of it on the Rue Antibes or off one of its connecting, winding side streets. It's a pleasure just to wander among the mix of recognizable chains and local boutiques (more of the charming boutiques tend to be located towards the boulevard's west end — including a few with some beautiful locally made perfumes — although they're scattered throughout). One especially charming small children's boutique is currently displaying a tiny, ballerina-style dress made of satin and crinoline, decorated with a sash of silvery Jordan almonds — an adorable visual treat.

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If you're looking for a little souvenir, there's a wonderful craft and flea market that pops up in the market-square at the corner of Promenade de la Pantiero and Rue Louis Blanc. Vendors sell everything and anything in this little curiosity cabinet in the center of town: antiques ranging from silver candlesticks and ivory jewelry to muskets, swords, flasks — and vintage postcards running just two euro a pop.

As you make your way around town, be sure to pop into one of the tiny pâtisseries that dot the city. The macarons are wonderful here, and make great gifts to return home with — if you can get them home without devouring them yourself.



Sunlight has a special quality here: warmer, clearer, and brighter than it is farther north; it's unsurprising that filmmakers take advantage of the space for shooting — don't be surprised if you run across a film crew or two as you're taking in the sites. Another difference from the north: the residents in Cannes are very tourist-friendly. Like its coastal neighbors in Spain and Italy, the south of France offers a considerably more relaxed atmosphere than Paris, so don't feel hesitant if your French is rusty or nonexistent — you won't garner any condescending glares for asking directions in English.

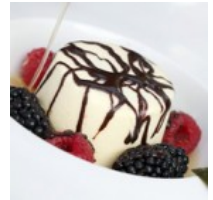
If you want to escape the festival entirely, there are many quick, easy, daytrips to be made: take a boat ride to Monaco or any of various islands in the neighborhood, including the [Ile Saint-Honorat](#), the second largest of the



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What's This?

Lérins Islands, about a 20 minute boat ride from the shore, where you can experience stunning views and beautiful wine made by monks, the sole inhabitants of the island. But if underwater adventure is more your game, snorkeling and scuba opportunities abound, with several shop fronts (and boat fronts) offering specials along the Quai Saint-Pierre.

Out late for the parties and in need of a late night snack? You can pop by Café Roma for plates of excellent late night *frites* (yes, the place will still be jumping at three in the morning), or if you want to grab a quick treat on your way home, try out the adorable, tiny green automat on the Rue Georges Clemenceau, open 24 hours. It's like Japan and France had a strange lovechild: vending machines dispense seven different brands of brie, three types of olives, and two varieties of ham so you can enjoy a strangely elegant, impromptu late-night picnic along the water.

*Jess Novak is the Drink Editor of The Daily Meal. Follow her on Twitter [@jessthenovak](#)*

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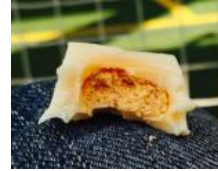
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