

News & events

From flower festivals to outdoor theatre festivities, there are so many ways to make sure you have fun in the sun in France this July. **Catriona Burns** highlights the best events plus the latest travel news and reviews



FLOWER POWER



Purple fields

1 People come from all over to see the lavender fields of Provence and during the month of July, festivals celebrating the flower take place all over the region, including in the little town of Valensole, for the **Fête de la Lavande** on **17 July**. Take advantage of the free shuttle buses and visit the area's best lavender fields and distilleries, before enjoying the folk music and orchestra performances back in town. Snack on lavender-infused dishes at local restaurants and street stalls or take home a bottle of some lavender-laced liqueur as a reminder of the day.

fetesdelavande.fr

Just rosy

2 If you need to wake up and smell the roses (quite literally) this month, pay a visit to Doué-la-Fontaine in the Loire for **Journées de la Rose** from **14-18 July** for a celebration of France's favourite flower. Around seven million rose bushes are cultivated in the small *commune* known as the 'town of roses' and since 1959, flower growers in the area have hosted a rose exhibition showcasing 100,000 freshly cut roses in displays featuring flower-encrusted gowns, artistic floral displays and flower-strewn pathways under the setting of craggy cave ceilings.

ot-douelafontaine.fr/sorties/journee-rose

Flax and needle festival

3 Every year in July, nine *communes* in the Pays de Caux in Normandy team up for the **Festival du Lin et de l'Aiguille**. From **1-3 July**, thousands of visitors all making their way to the area to see over 20 exhibitions of contemporary and traditional textile art. Linen fabric fairs, fashion shows and tours of the Terre de Lin factory are among the many highlights of the three-day festivities. Alternatively, you could take a trip to see the flower in its original form, with violet blues blossoming in the sprawling fields across the Pays de Caux.

festivaldulin.org

SEINE-SIDE

During the summer months, many Parisians flee the city heat in favour of the countryside, but those that stay flock to the banks of the Seine where stretches of sand are lined with palm trees, parasols and beach bars for the annual **Paris Plages**. Running from **18 July to 21 August**, the city's urban beaches offer all sorts of shoreside activity from rowing and pedal boating to ballroom dancing and zumba every day from 9am to midnight. Or if you'd prefer, just lounge on one of the many deckchairs with a good book and something chilled from the beach bar and enjoy Paris when it sizzles.

parisinfo.com





SUMMER CINEMA

Watching late-night movies is a staple of the summertime routine but no film fix has perhaps been quite as enchanting as **Cinéma en Plein Air**, the open-air movie theatre set up each year at Parc de la Villette in the 19th arrondissement of north-east

Paris. The park's big screen will roll from **13 July to 21 August** showing a mix of modern-day action flicks plus Hollywood and French cult classics. This year the theme is Dress Code with the Coen brothers' *Fargo* and space fantasy *Gravity* sitting alongside classics

including French favourite *Les Demoiselles de Rochefort*. All screenings are free so just bring a bottle of wine, some nibbles and settle down on your rug to watch the stars of the screen under a summer Paris sky.
lavillette.com

Child's play

Every July since 1990, the small *commune* of Moirans-en-Montagne in Jura is taken over by fairy-tale gardens, music, dance, street theatres and parades for the international children's festival, **Idékllic**. From **10-13 July** the artistic playground will provide the perfect place for little ones to let their artistic streak run wild with over 50 workshops offering them the chance to create art, discover new things and express themselves in a creative way. Perfect for inquisitive little ones and accompanying adults who want to act the big kid!
ideklic.fr



The name's Bond

To celebrate 50 years of James Bond, Grande Halle de la Villette in Paris is showcasing more than 500 original objects from the movie franchise. **Running until 4 September, James Bond 007 L'Exposition** gives a unique insight into the world's most famous spy with a glamorous display of Aston Martins, suits, gadgets and sketches from the film series that spans half a decade. An adult ticket costs €21.99 and admissions for children under 12 years cost €16.99. After you've lusted over the movie-made treasures, explore the buzzing area of the 19th arrondissement and finish things off in true Bond style with an olive martini. Shaken not stirred, naturally.
jamesbond007-exposition-paris.fr

ALL THAT JAZZ



LATINO JAZZ

Jazz in Marciac is a highlight of the summer in the little village of Marciac in south-west France, with its Latino flavour distinguishing it from other events of its kind. Running from **29 July to 15 August**, the 2016 programme includes names such as Jamie Cullum and Dianne Reeves.
jazzinmarciac.com



NICE JAZZ FESTIVAL

Nice is the setting of the world's first jazz festival and from **16-20 July** the seaside town will host the 68th year of the **Nice Jazz Festival**. With the concert stage set up along the town's seafront Promenade du Paillon, you couldn't find a more scenic setting to enjoy the sound of music.
nicejazzfestival.fr



JAZZ À JUAN

Jazz à Juan is Europe's oldest jazz festival and it's where musical legends such as Ray Charles made his debut, and Ella Fitzgerald was a regular. From **14-24 July** the festival returns to the town and you can catch old favourites of the blues like Buddy Guy (pictured) plus up-and-coming acts. Catch the Jazz Off music sessions around the streets of Antibes and 'Jazz after midnight' for music after hours.
jazzajuan.com



Performing arts

Now in its 70th year, **Festival d'Avignon** is one of the oldest and most famous performing arts festivals in the world. From **6-24 July** more than 40 different dance, music and artistic projects will be performed

in 20 historic settings throughout the city including the 2,000-seat arena Cour d'honneur du Palais des Papes. Encouraging a dialogue between art and social politics, festival-goers are encouraged to discuss

the works they have seen with follow-up workshops, discussions and debates. Under the artistic direction of Oliver Py, this year's celebration focuses on the mind and spirit. festival-avignon.com



ANCIENT FESTIVAL

Dating back to 1869, the internationally renowned **Chorégies d'Oranges** operatic event is the oldest festival in France and continues to delight crowds of visitors every summer. The series of mesmeric concerts takes place from **9 July to 6 August** in the impressive Théâtre Antique d'Orange in the town of Orange in Vaucluse. The experience is magnified by the beautifully preserved setting, which retains many of its original features such as its 37-metre-high wall that benefits from exceptional acoustics.

choregies.fr



BEST OF BRITTANY

Showcasing the best of Breton culture, the **Festival de Cornouaille** takes place in the heart of Brittany's regional capital of Quimper from **19-24 July**. Musicians, dancers, singers and traditional street artists take to the town's cobbled streets throughout this six-day festival in celebration of France's Celtic corner. Drawing more than 250,000 visitors each year, the event hosts over 200 shows, many of which are free.

festival-cornouaille.bzh

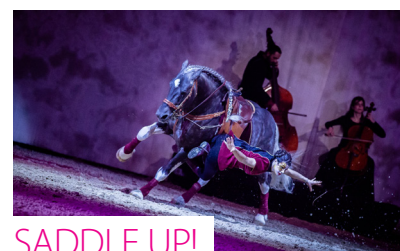


Nationwide celebrations

On **14 July**, a 'Vive la France' spirit sweeps the country for the annual **Fête Nationale** celebrations. Better known to the British as Bastille Day, the jubiliations, also

known simply as *le 14 juillet*, mark the storming of Paris's Bastille prison in 1789 with spectacular firework displays and an impressive military parade along the Avenue des

Champs-Élysées. Whether you stay up late for a fireworks extravaganza or celebrate with a traditional meal, there's no better day to indulge your inner Francophile.



SADDLE UP!

The town of Tarbes has a long equestrian tradition and every summer it hosts an equestrian show at the National Stud Farm. Featuring over 300 horses, the 22nd edition of **Equestria** takes place from **19-24 July**, and showcases equestrian art with the 'Night of Creations' gala, a highlight of the five-day event.

festivalequestria.com

CHANNEL THRILLER

The second series of award-winning thriller, *The Tunnel Sabotage*, sees Clémence Poésy and Stephen Dillane continue to investigate an abduction case from the Eurotunnel. A plane crash over the Channel causes more complications and, as they attempt to solve the unfortunate mystery,

they realise a sinister force is at play.

We have three copies of *The Tunnel Sabotage* to give away. For a chance to win, visit completefrance.com/community-forum/competitions-and-offers *The Tunnel Sabotage, Series Two, £24.99, RLJ Entertainment Ltd*

WIN!

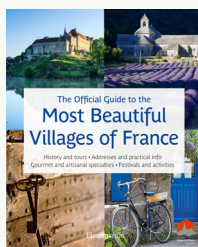


VILLAGE LIFE

It's hard to pinpoint which villages in France would fit with our vision of how dreamily peaceful small-town French life could be. Thankfully, *The Official Guide to the Most Beautiful Villages of France* showcases the 153 designated *Plus Beaux Villages de France*. This beautifully illustrated guide, unveiling the beauty of rural France from the half-timbered

Alsatian houses of Eguisheim to the vines and lavender fields of Montclus in Languedoc-Roussillon, compiles a perfect must-visit guide of France's most picturesque villages.

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completefrance.com/community-forum/competitions-and-offers *The Official Guide to the Most Beautiful Villages of France* Flammarion, £16.95
The closing date for both giveaways is 15 July 2016.

DID YOU KNOW?

There are over
400

kinds of cheese
made in France

SWEET SYMPHONY

British expats John and Bernadette Grimmer founded their *Opéra de Baugé* festival in 2002 and the annual event held in the grounds of their fairy-tale château in the Loire Valley now draws crowds of over 3,000. The programme for the 2016 edition, which runs from **23 July until 3 August**, includes performances of *Albert Herring*, *Le Couronnement de Poppée* and *La Pêrichole*.

Enjoy the refined nature of the opera and arrive early for a glass of champagne before a 6pm start (7pm on weekdays). A 90-minute interval provides plenty of time



to enjoy a picnic on the lawn or dine at the onsite restaurant, where specially tailored menus are prepared by chef Dominique Dupré of the restaurant Le Pélican at the nearby town of Vernantes.

operadebauge.fr

Travel news



FINAL DEPARTURE

If you were planning to catch forty winks on your journey through France, you may have to rethink your travel plans after SNCF announced plans to withdraw overnight train routes from Paris. The French government, which owns SNCF, said the *couchette* sleeper trains are too expensive to run and has invited bids to continue the service following its withdrawal of financial support. The date of 1 July has been given as deadline day, after which all but three of the trains could be axed.



DRY TRAIN

If you're planning on popping open a bottle on your way to a Euro 2016 football match, your pre-drinking plans may be scuppered thanks to Eurostar's alcohol ban on trains between London and French cities during the football tournament that runs from 10 June to 10 July. Alcohol restrictions will be applied during specific days and time periods; passengers on affected trains will be notified of the details of their journey via pre-travel emails.



ART ON THE GO

A collaboration between SNCF and an American manufacturing company has cheered up the train commute by brightening train carriages with an artistic interior. Travellers can now gaze at replicas of Impressionist artwork from the Musée d'Orsay, architecture of Versailles and images from Cinéma Gaumont that embellish previously bare walls and stair railings.



SAIL AWAY

This summer, Brittany Ferries will celebrate the 30th anniversary of its Portsmouth to Caen service, the company's most popular route. To mark the occasion, we've teamed up with Portsmouth International Port and Brittany Ferries to give one *Living France* reader a chance to win a free crossing. Turn to page 17 to find out how you could win a return crossing for a car and up to four people worth £500.