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CULTURAL INSPIRATION

Explore our history

The history of the Nord Pas-de-Calais is closely linked to the region's geographical position at the cross roads of Europe. Situated just 26 miles from Dover, the 'Côte d'Opale' coastline from Dunkerque to Calais and Boulogne has played a strategic role in numerous attempts to invade England. Julius Caesar chose the now seaside resort of Ambleteuse to hold his Armada whilst preparing the conquest of England and centuries later Napoleon set up camp between Blériot and Boulogne harbouring the same intentions. Charles Vth of Spain made towns such as Arras and Hesdin Spanish for a spell whilst St Omer and parts of the Nord were Flemish during the 17th century reign of the Sun King Louis XIV.

The British did their share of invading the Nord Pas-de-Calais too. Calais was English for one hundred years. The battle of Agincourt, celebrated by Shakespeare's 'Henry the Vth' took place in the village of Azincourt near Hesdin and the sumptuous feasts and displays of force between Henry VIII and François 1er took place at the Field of the Cloth of Gold just outside of Calais between Guines and Ardres.

The more recent history of World Wars One and two placed the Nord Pas-de-Calais at the heart of the conflicts as the Germans built a wall of bunkers along the coast and began to introduce the terrifying flying bombs V1 and V2. The local paper 'La Voix du Nord' (the voice of the north) was initially published by the French résistance which was particularly strong here.

It is no surprise that local architecture reflects a mixture of styles from Anglo Norman in the coastal resorts to Art Deco and Flemish-style architecture in the cities as well as some exciting post WWII constructions.

A wealth of museums, visitor centres and guided tours reveal our heritage to the visitors in search of cultural inspiration...

The fantastic city of Lille, European City of Culture 2004, is home to a Fine Arts Museum, where you can rub shoulders with Goya, Rubens and Donatello. The towns of Douai and Cambrai are packed with art and history, while vibrant Valenciennes is the birthplace of a number of famous artists such as Carpeaux and Watteau. Henri Matisse, one of the most influential artists of the 20th century, was born just 30km away in Le Cateau-Cambrésis where some of his brilliantly coloured paintings may be viewed in the Museum which bears his name.

Relive the Hundred Years War at the Centre of Medieval History at Azincourt and 'Musée du Tour de l'Horloge' in Guines or evoke the spirit of WWI in Arras, whose 10th century underground galleries were headquarters to 10,000 British soldiers. Gaze in awe at Saint Omer's "Notre Dame" cathedral or marvel at the extraordinary baroque architecture of Béthune. Discover Boulogne-sur-Mer is not only a popular shopping destination but also big favourite with art and history lovers.

Fact File

Palais des Beaux-Arts - Lille

The Palais des Beaux Arts in Lille houses almost 550 paintings, from the middle of XVIth century to the XXth.

Alongside these magnificently presented paintings you will find drawings, sculptures, a department devoted to street-models and a host of 'objets d'art'.

The international renown of this, the second most important museum in France after the Louvre, is due in no small part to the wealth of the collections displayed, these include paintings by Rubens, Goya and Delacroix as well as drawings and sculptures by Carpeaux, Bourdelle, Rodin

www.lilletourism.com

La Piscine - Musée d'Art et d'Industrie in Roubaix

Located on the unique site of the former art deco swimming pool, the museum includes collections of paintings, sculptures, drawings, textiles, fashion, design and ceramics. Le Combat de Coqs by Rémy Cogghe, La Petite Châtelaine by Camille Claudel and l'Ours by François Pompon are just a few of the delightful pieces exhibited.

E-Mail : lapiscine.musee@mairie-roubaix.fr

Musée Matisse - Le Cateau Cambrésis

Matisse in his native village.

Come and explore the Matisse Museum in the Palais Fénelon, former residence of the archbishops of Cambrai. The Museum was established by Matisse in 1952 and constitutes a magnificent and moving look at the artist's work. Re opened in november 2002, this beautiful museum presents more than 170 works of Matisse covering the whole career of Matisse : paintings, drawings and sculptures.

Internet : <http://www.cg59.fr/matisse/>

Musée Portuaire - Dunkerque

Piloting, servicing and repairing of naval vessels, inshore or Icelandic fishing, handling and storing of produce.... The Dunkerque Harbour Museum retraces the history of the town and all the activities connected with fishing and commerce.

Maps and models and pictures also help to tell the story of the life of the port, and in the basin opposite the museum you can see the Duchesse Anne, a majestic three-master which served as a training ship at the beginning of the century. You can conclude your visit to the museum with a boat-trip around the harbour.

www.museeportuaire.com

Centre Historique Minier, Lewarde near Douai

Located on a former pit head, the biggest mining museum in France retraces 3 centuries of mining history. Your guides, former miners, will take you on a simulated tour of the former coal face and around the 450 metres of underground tunnels.

Fosse Delloye, Lewarde

Tel : 00 33 327 958 282

www.chm-lewarde.com

Arras

The giants Colas, Jacqueline and their son Dédé welcome visitors to Arras in the entrance to the Town hall and tourist office.

Arras Tourist office organises guided tours of the town and underground passages beneath the town hall. A lift ride and 43 steps above the town hall, the belfry offers a superb

panorama of Arras and the surrounding area. A film recounting 2000 years of the history of Arras takes 20 minutes.

www.ot-arras.fr

The Fine Art and Lace Museum - Calais

The art collection includes sculptures and paintings by Rodin as well as works by other artists from the same period including Picasso. Until October 31st the museum welcomes a stunning Lille 2004 exhibition of haute couture dresses from 1980 to the present day. Some were designed especially for the exhibition using Calais lace. Big names include Jeanne Paquin, Dior, Christian Lacroix and Yves Saint-Laurent

www.mairie-calais.fr

La Coupole, Helfaut near St Omer

5 kms from Saint Omer, La Coupole is a former V2 rocket base built by the Nazis in 1943 and now a museum. The centre develops three themes: German Secret Weapons (V1+V2), The Conquest of Space from 1945 to 1969 and the Occupation of Northern France from 1940 to 1944.

www.lacoupole.com

Musée Sandelin – St Omer

This museum has recently re-opened to the public after several years of refurbishment work to double the exhibition space. The museum is about archeology, fine art and the decorative arts. It is situated in an elegant XVIIIth century town house, with courtyard and garden which was the winter residence of the Countess of Fruges. Exhibits include re-constructions of a dining room and 2 lounges. This is one of the region's wealthiest collections.

www.tourisme-saintomer.com

The Azincourt Medieval History center

Medieval history comes to life using the most recent museum science techniques.

www.azincourt-medieval.com

Don't worry, shop happy !

The Nord Pas-de-Calais has always enjoyed a powerful reputation as a market region with hypermarkets, shopping centres, great town centres and the presence of numerous big names in the textile industry.

Calais, Boulogne and Dunkirk are some of the most famous shopping towns, but Lille, Arras and many more lively towns also have plenty to offer the keen shopper in search of that relaxing French town atmosphere with specialist shops, markets, flea markets, cafés and bistros.

When time is short, you'll find everything under one roof in some of our numerous hypermarkets or shopping centres such as Cité Europe or Marques Avenue in Coquelles or the clothing factory outlets in Roubaix, 'McArthur Glen' and 'A L'usine'.

Good Buys

Household goods

Wines, beers and alcohol in general but also mustards, oils, vinegars, fresh olives, washing powder, corn pads, yoghurts and car fuel... the variety of produce which is cheaper than in England forms an ever changing list ! Check out the Eurotunnel web site for detailed price comparisons : www.eurotunnel.com

Kitchenware

Le Creuset is a notable good buy but pots and pans of all sorts abound as well as interesting tableware and kitchen utensils. The famous crystal and glass tableware made in Arques near St Omer has a factory shop and Arras blue china or Desvres ceramics are good traditional items to buy as gifts.

Home furnishings

Auction rooms can be entertaining and there are lots of fun things to buy but a minimum of French is necessary to strike a good deal. Antiques shops and interior decoration are fashionable in France so there are plenty of shops to choose from.

Clothes

Casual, smart, snazzy, or fashionable, clothes for adults and children are different in France although not necessarily cheaper, it just depends where you shop. Be advised that sizes are not expressed in the same way. The Eurotunnel Discover Guides (available from Nicole on 00 33 3 21 10 34 60 or in the Folkestone and Coquelles terminals) give comprehensive size charts to help you prepare !

Braderie-Brocante

The Nord Pas-de-Calais has a tradition of flea / antiques markets. The region's most famous one is in Lille on the first week-end of September. Shop keepers empty their cupboards, market salesmen line the streets and everyone in Lille who has something to sell puts it on the pavement and waits to barter with passers by ! Mussels are the top of the menu and restaurants compete for the largest pile of empty shells.

Other good antiques fairs include: Béthune, Maroilles and Cassel in September, Ardres in October, Montreuil in July and Le Touquet at the end of October.

Complete information on cultural inspiration, events, where to eat and sleep may be obtained from our web site : www.relaxfrance.net

Gastronomy

The old saying 'you are what you eat' certainly applies to the Nord-Pas de Calais region which has developed a warm and welcoming, comforting style of food, doubtlessly influenced by our Flemish, British and Picard neighbours.

Endive and shallots, ratte du Touquet potatoes, fresh or smoked garlic, Avesnois apples, cauliflower from the Saint Omer marshes and juicy red strawberries from the village of Samer are just a few of the products which grow in the region's northern climate along with hops used to make real ales !

Take a visit to the chicory museum in Orgies and discover why this region is the world's number one chicory producer. Visit Maréis in Etaples-sur-mer and you will see that fish is much more than a hobby in the Nord-Pas de Calais.

Meats for which the region is famed are the Boulonnais lamb and Licques turkey as well as cooked dishes such as Andouille and Andouillette, sausages made with chitterlings. Coq à la bière, hochepot, potjvlesch, waterzoï or rabbit and prune stew are local flemish specialities. Whilst the herring is king on the Opal coast where it is salted, smoked and preserved according to age-old tradition and new European standards combined!

Michelin starred restaurants abound in the Nord-Pas de Calais with the two star Meurin in Béthune, Huitrière in Lille, Château de Montreuil and Grenouillère in Montreuil, Faisanderie in Arras, Matelote and Atlantic in Boulogne and Wimereux.

Highlights

Say cheese!

The Nord-Pas de Calais counts over 60 different cheeses from the mild heart in Arras or rollot from Créquy to the powerful Vieux Lille and Maroilles or Boulette d'Avesnes that would bring tears to the eyes of even the strongest man!

Cheers!

There are more traditional real ale breweries in the Nord-Pas de Calais than in any other region of France. 15 'brasseurs' produce dark and light ales each with their own distinctive flavour. La Bière du Cht'i is arguably the best known, it is brewed in Bénifontaine near Béthune.

L'Assiette du Pays

In the Avesnois and Hesdin regions, restaurants offer 'l'assiette du pays', a dish of local delights for you to taste. The platter can be sweet or savory but it is always made purely with local produce and served with a local drink.

Estaminets

According to Flemish tradition, Estaminets are much more than just cafés. These are little pubs where people meet, drink beer and play traditional bar games like 'Frog' or 'Hammer'... the ancestors of pinball and table football. In Cassek, Saint Sylvestre-Cappel, Hondeghem, Boeschepe and Goderswaersvelde estaminets have made a big come back in recent years. Decor has all of the old ingredients: pots and pans suspended from the ceiling, gadgets and ornaments and plain wooden tables and chairs. Traditional story telling and music are part of the party too. Bar meals include 'tartines' (a kind of open sandwich), cheeses and tarts served with local beers. You'll find all of the Flemish specialities in Estaminets.

ACTIVITY COAST

Expand your horizons

La Côte d'Opale is a breathtaking 120km stretch of fine sandy beaches, sparkling waters and imposing cliffs that runs all the way from Dunkerque to Berck-sur-Mer.

Watersports of every kind are well catered for, from surfing and sailing to sand-yachting and speed sailing.

The region offers plenty of opportunities to hike, horse ride along the beach or take a bicycle along one of the many popular trails. Cap Blanc Nez and Cap Gris Nez are protected areas of outstanding natural beauty, where walkers can enjoy breathtaking views across the Channel. On a clear day, you can see all the way to England !

Fact File

Golf en Côte d'Opale

La Côte d'Opale is also a golfer's paradise, with no less than eight top notch 18-hole golf courses to choose from. Each enjoys a different setting but all of the nine 18 hole courses are within in the same area offering a wide variety of challenges and landscapes. Nampont-Saint-Martin, Le Touquet, Hardelot, Wimereux, Dunkerque and St Omer. Several other **gre** all members of the Golf en Côte d'Opale association but several other golf courses are situated further inland around Arras and Lille.

For further details and information on the golf pass take a look at the comprehensive dedicated web site on www.golfencotedopale.com

Sand-Yachting

Historically it would appear that the first recorded use of a sand-yacht was in ancient Egypt , however, the very first sand-yacht in France was known as an 'aéroplage' and was the invention of Louis Blériot the famous WWI pilot and daredevil who was also the first man to fly the Channel from Calais (Blériot village) to Dover. The world speed record of over 150km per hour is held by Bertrand Lambert who is from Berck-sur-Mer.

Since the days when Blériot ruled the sands alone, sand-yachting has become a widely practised local sport on the long sandy beaches for which the area is famous. At low tide the sea retreats so far that the vast stretches of beach that are left exposed offer an ideal playground for speed-sailing (standing) and sand-yachting (in an horizontal position).

Whatever your age or your level of expertise the Opal coast offers a safe environment with numerous schools in many of the resorts.

Beginners courses and private lessons are available in 7 different clubs from Dunkerque to Berck-sur-Mer, waterproof clothing and helmets are provided by most clubs, it is advised to wear training shoes and have a change of clothes nevertheless.

So why not give in to the exhilaration of speed and wind !

Fly-Surfing

Fly-surfing is the latest thrilling water-sport, halfway between kite-flying and windsurfing and combining the attractions of waterskiing and aerial acrobatics. Already, this new sport is attracting large numbers of devotees of funboarding, kite-flying and surfing. For newcomers to this white-knuckle sport, it is necessary to have lessons with an instructor organised from the local tourist office. This gives the opportunity of practising first of all on sand before taking

to the skies. More experienced surfers can just hire the board and kite-flying equipment. Schools exist at present in Dunkerque, Berck-sur-Mer and Hardelot.

Sea fishing

From Dunkerque and Gravelines, you can try your hand at sea-fishing on board a former trawler. 'La ville d'Etaples' in Etaples-sur-Mer also offers sea fishing.

The sea has landed !

France's National Sea Discovery Centre, **Nausicaa**, in Boulogne-sur-Mer is an international landmark which enables visitors to dive into the different oceans of the world without getting wet ! Come nose to nose with sharks, watch the sea lions' ballet, marvel at the colours of the coral reef. An exciting temporary exhibition 'Stormy Weather on our Planet' reveals the inside of icebergs, the eating habits of locusts and takes visitors on an amazing trip through an Amazonian rain forest complete with its inhabitants ! www.nausicaa.fr

If you would like to know how the professionals fish, why not pop in to **Maréis** in Etaples-sur-Mer where the mysteries of life on the ocean wave revealed in a fun hands on display with aquariums and replicas of a dock-side, a trawler and much much more. www.mareis.fr

The Dunkerque Harbour Museum - **Musée Portuaire de Dunkerque** - shows the history of the town, fishing and commerce. Maps, models and pictures retrace the history of the port and opposite the museum reigns the majestic 'Duchesse Anne' a three-master that served as a training ship at the beginning of the century. Why not round off your visit with a boat trip to the harbour ?

www.museeportuaire.com

<p>Complete information on coastal activities, events, where to eat and sleep may be obtained from our web site : www.relaxfrance.net</p>

Rural Pursuits

Outstanding natural beauty

The Flanders fields and hills, the marshlands of St Omer and agricultural plains of the Artois region, the undulating countryside of the Boulogne area, the sand dunes and cliffs of La Côte d'Opale, the outstanding natural beauty of Cap Blanc Nez and Cap Gris together with the Regional Nature Park of the Avesnois – Nord Pas-de-Calais is rural France at its very best.

The Nord Pas-de-Calais offers over 8000kms of signposted walking paths through the Saint-Omer and Boulogne nature parks and Arras hills (Bilingual guides available from the Nord and Pas-de-Calais Tourist Boards). Dunes de Flandre of the Nord region is a nature reserve containing over 400 plant species. Further south in the Hainaut, combine a walking tour with a trip along one of the many rivers and canals or take a trip to the Avesnois national park.

Boulonnais nature park

Woodland, wide open fields and an undulating landscape characterise the Boulonnais nature park, tucked neatly behind the Opal Coast. From the great white cliffs of Cap Blanc Nez and rugged grey rocks of Cap Gris Nez the area is one of outstanding natural beauty.

Hesdin – La Forêt Domaniale

Hesdin forest covers over 100 hectares and contains oak trees, maple, sycamore, ash and wild cherry trees. Themed guided tours such as 'mushroom picking' are available – most are in French, so bring a pocket dictionary!

St Pol-sur-Ternoise

The agricultural region of 'Le Ternois' is one of the least visited in the Pas-de-Calais. A good way to explore is by bicycle – there are over 12 signposted routes for you to follow. There are also a number of spectacular chateaux dotted around.

Monts de Flandre

The three hills of Mont Noir, Mont Des Cats and Mont Cassel give the lie to the idea that Flanders is flat! Picturesque lanes wind their way up to the top of Mont Cassel (196 metres) where you can enjoy panoramic views. Peek into the chapels, abbeys, thatched cottages, windmills and belfries dotted around the area.

St Omer a Market Garden and Nature reserve

The St Omer marshes cover 9 000 acres and were dug by monks in the 7th century. Then, as now, they are accessible by boat, hire one and row yourself or join a guided tour with Isnor. The marshes are partially accessible on foot, along signposted trails. Beautiful wild water lilies and iris grow and wild birds such as heron, waterfowl and ducks are in abundance. This is the only remaining inhabited, farmed marshland in France.

Fact File

Cycle routes

The French are mad about cycling and France, with its wide open spaces, is the ideal place to enjoy the sport. Look no further than Pas-de-Calais where 60 signposted cycle routes wend their way through pretty towns and villages on peaceful roads. Or try the marshlands of the St Omer region, the wooded hills of the Arras region or the rolling fields around Saint-Pol-sur-Ternoise.

Mountain biking

Both Nord and Pas-de-Calais Tourist Boards offer comprehensive information on the signposted mountain biking routes through their respective areas. Details of mountain biking centres are included in the practical guide that follows this chapter but the tourist boards can offer more detailed information for enthusiasts. Routes are designed for occasional, family or sporty bikers. Why not test your skills on the famous cobbles of the Paris to Roubaix cycle race ?

Horse riding

A total of fifteen horse-riding trails are available in the Flanders area of Westhoek (which includes the Plain of Flanders between Dunkerque and the Flanders hill) and around the Mormal and 1000-hectare Avesnois Regional Nature Park forests.

Details are available from the Nord tourist board on

Race against the wind on the wide open beaches of the Opal Coast or trot gently through the villages, hills and woodland around Arras, St Pol or Hesdin.

Donkey trekking

An unusual way of exploring the countryside, the Nord Pas-de-Calais has a number of donkey hire centres. A Petits Pas in Ruisseauville near Azincourt and 'Sur les pas de l'âne' in Bergues are just two. Let the donkey carry your picnic while you enjoy the scenery.

Estaminets de randonnées

In the Parc Naturel Régional of Pas-de-Calais 'Estaminets de Randonnées', or village cafés, offer gourmet dishes and light meals. Try your hand at a traditional bar game such as 'La Grenouille' (frog) or 'La Toupie' (spinning top). It's a good idea to book your meal ahead to avoid disappointment.

<p>Complete information on rural pursuits, events, where to eat and sleep may be obtained from our web site : www.relaxfrance.net</p>

Look after yourself !

Take care of your body the relaxing way in one of the Nord Pas-de-Calais water based health centres.

Try Thalassotherapy rich in regenerating iodine, relax and be pampered in Balneotherapy or take a thermal break and treat your body with water inside and out. This is not just for the girls ! Increasing numbers of men take time out to look after themselves too. From aquafitness to the beauty parlour, this is a 'sport' to play alone, with friends or in pairs and that everyone will be good at !

Thalassa Le Touquet

Thalassotherapy is both a preventive and curative therapeutic concept which stems from the discovery of the biological wealth of seawater and seaweed. Definitely miles from the cold showers and seaweed slapping image of yesterday, Thalassa uses warm sea waters, creams and tonics to sooth your body and soul back to a natural balance.

Whether to chase those aches and pains, slim down or balance your diet or simply unwind and recharge your batteries, Thalassotherapy could be ideal for you. Devised and controlled by specialized medical and paramedical teams, the therapy provided by Thalassa Le Touquet is your passport to a new way of living.

The centre offers stunning views of Le Touquet's beach and the sea and is connected to two hotels with specialised health food restaurant and warm seawater pool so that you can spend all day in a freshly laundered dressing gown !

www.thalassa.com

Thalassa beauty spa

Thalassa beauty spa is the ideal place to relax and let someone else look after you. This relaxing, soothing and beautifying treatment is for men and women and takes place in the superbly relaxing environment of the Mercure Grand Hotel **** facing the Canche bay in Le Touquet.

The hotel also offers a large heated pool, sauna and Jacuzzi and superb views of the Canche bay.

www.thalassa.com

Les thermes de Saint Amand les Eaux

Discover the benefits of hot springs in this traditional establishment with a modern approach. You will draw strength and energy from fitness programs which include : Aquagym, Massage pool at 35°, fountain and penetrating shower, Aerobath and hydromassage bath. And when its over walk out into the landscapes of the regional nature park.

www.home-gastronomie.com

La Grange au Corps

This fitness complex in the Hogueau valley has a recreational area with sauna, jacuzzi, Turkish bath and whirlpool spa for your relaxation and well-being. Short breaks available, with B+B accommodation.

M. Platteau

7 Place de Gussignies

Tel : (0)3 27 66 99 59

Cap Vitalité

An oasis of well-being in the relaxing surroundings of the Saint Omer nature park.

Balneotherapy, slimming and massage using 100% natural products. Hotel accommodation in nearby St Omer.

www.capvitalite.com

FAMILY DAYS OUT

The Nord-Pas-de-Calais is the ideal place to bring the children for their first taste of France. Hop in the car, cruise across the Channel and you're here. Children are warmly welcomed to restaurants and hotels where extra special care is taken to ensure their well-being. There are many child and parent friendly attractions in the region from Nauciaa the national sea discovery centre to Bagatelle amusement park and the science museum in Villeneuve d'Asq.

Seaside resorts especially for the kids !

No fewer than 10 seaside resorts in the Nord Pas-de-Calais have been awarded the child friendly status of 'Stations Kid'. Calais, Hardelot, Wimereux, Le Portel, Wissant, Boulogne-sur-Mer, Le Touquet, Berck-sur-Mer, Gravelines and Dunkirk-Dunes de Flandre all organise special activities such as swimming lessons, summer camps, entertainment, art and craft lessons, kite-making workshops, sports and outings.

Highlights

Many restaurants offer special regional produce menus for children or work on a 'half portion, half price' basis so that children can choose from the same menu as adults, avoiding the eternal diet of fish fingers and chips !

For child friendly accomodation Logis de France are great traditional family run hotels whilst the Suite hotel chain offer a brand new style of family room.

For self-catering holidays Gîtes de France and Clévacances are the national references.

www.logisdefrance.fr www.suite-hotel.com www.gites-de-france.fr www.clevacances.com

<p>Complete information on family activities, events, where to eat and sleep may be obtained from our web site : www.relaxfrance.net</p>
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YEARLY EVENTS IN THE NORD-PAS DE CALAIS

The following is a list of selected events that take place in the Pas-de-Calais each year. There are of course many more.

For up-to-date and more detailed information concerning these events and numerous others, we suggest you consult the Pas-de-Calais Tourist Board's web site on www.pas-de-calais.com.

The Pas-de-Calais Tourist Board and Eurotunnel cannot be held responsible for changes made to this programme, all information was correct at the time of going to print.

February

L'Enduro – Le Touquet

Usually around Valentines day, this legendary motor bike endurance race on Le Touquet's massive beach attracts around 800 motorcyclists. 300 000 spectators flock into the resort by foot, bicycle, motor bike, car or private jet for the famous bottleneck which separates winners from losers the moment the starter fires his gun !

Dunkerque carnival

The 3rd carnival in the world ! Huge crowds take to the street wearing fancy dress costumes and singing traditional carnival songs, while a ball is held every Saturday night from February to the end of March.

March

International orchids show – Les Rues des Vignes

In the beautiful setting of the 12th century Vaucelles abbey, a surprising exhibition of orchids is taking place every year.

April

International Kite Festival – Berck-sur-Mer ☺

A major meeting for Kite enthusiasts from all over the world ! Inventor kites, Giant kites, kiddie kites, fighting kites, kites pulling sand carts, kites dancing to music, Kites to make, kites for sale. Just in case you haven't got the message, the windy pale sand beach in Berck-sur-Mer is the ideal place to fly a kite and over 10 days in April each year you can learn to fly a sports kite with a professional or join the workshop to make your own to fly at home !

Easter Monday – Summer carnival – Cassel ☺

A carnival procession of the traditional Cassel giants "Reuze papa" and "Reuze maman" , a good day of fun for children and parents alike.

Paris Roubaix cycling race - Roubaix

This legendary race really runs puts its participants through their paces, taking in Aremberg to the famous cobbled streets near the Carrefour de l'Arbre along the way.

May

Calais Round Britain Race

Single hull yacht race over 1850 miles in a double loup around the British Isles.

www.calais.cci.fr

La louche d'Or – Lille ☺

An entertaining soup festival in Lille's Wazemmes district famous for its Sunday market.

June

Parks and Gardens Festival

Each year in June, a week-end long programme of events takes place in Parks and Gardens throughout France.

Bandstand festival in the Avesnois region

Town bands and orchestras play in the bandstands, while walks and cycle tours give visitors the opportunity to learn funny stories about these bandstands.

Antiques fair – Maroilles

Welcome to the village famous for its strong cheese where on the third Sunday in June, 500 antique dealers and thousands of bargain hunters invades the streets.

July

Ceramics festival – Desvres

The town of Desvres has been famous for its ceramics since the 11th Century. Whilst works of art created here are exported to Japan and the USA, the greatest fans are the people of Desvres themselves. Demonstration of decoration and modelling are on the menu for visitors to this great market of antique and second-hand ceramic objects.

The Giant maze of the Seven Valleys ☺

Each year the giant maze grows into a different pattern and portrays a different theme.

It is to be found in a field at Buire-le-Sec, finding it is not hard, finding your way out of it is another story !

Fête de Gayant – Douai ☺

Douai celebrates its liberation from the Normans by the legendary 16th century giant Jehan Gelon. Gayant is the most famous and popular giant in the region.

July-August

Les Misérables – sound and light show in Montreuil-sur-Mer ☺

Victor Hugo was inspired to write Les Misérables whilst staying in Montreuil and indeed based many of his characters on local people.

Dominique Maertens directs around 250 volunteers in an impressive and moving show. Don't forget your blanket, the show begins at nightfall.

August

Les Malins Plaisirs – Montreuil-sur-Mer

A festival of clever little delights including operetta and plays as well as a touch of street entertainment. Great fun for French speakers although translators are on hand offering a personalised service for those who ask. The pretty little town of Montreuil-sur-Mer is candle lit by her inhabitants on the last night of the festival and street entertainment continues until late into the night !

The 'Flobart' Festival – Wissant ☺

The people of Wissant celebrate the 'flobart' a traditional fishing boat which was put to sea by a cart horse and captained by one man, sometimes two. Parades, fish market and an opportunity to set to sea in one of these chubby little boats ...

Pyrosymphonic shows – Arras and Le Touquet ☺

Breath-taking Firework displays to music.

Maroilles festival

Festival of Flamiches (regional savoury tart) made with Maroilles cheese, while the village square hosts traditional pastimes such as skittles and tables pétanque.

Patate Feest – Esquelbecq ☺

Potato tasting in this charming village with food, traditional music, pavement artists a craft market and dancing.

September

French Funboard Championships – Wimereux

Windsurfers flying upside down over the waves and landing on their feet ! A colourful, fast moving and exciting event with suntanned French Beach boys at every turn !!!

La Route du Poisson

Every other year fish wholesalers hitch up their wagons to the best Boulonnais draught horses to follow the mythical route which took their ancestors from Boulogne-sur-Mer to Les Halles in Paris. Next edition 2005.

Chaussée Brunehaut Act III – Anzin Saint Aubin (near Arras) ☺

Dominique Maertens once again directs local enthusiasts in a spectacular sound and light show. 39 sets, 450 actors, over 1000 costumes for six performances. This is a celebration of the history of an epic that rushes from era to era in a delicious tangle !

Don't forget your blanket, the show begins at 9pm and continues well after nightfall.

La braderie – Lille

Europe's biggest boot sale and flea market dating back to the middle ages covers 200 kms of pavement and draws more than a million visitors a year.

The garlic festival – Arleux

Cloves of garlic are hung out on houses and farmhouses, garlic soup is served and numerous activities and entertainment bring the streets to life.

Karyole feest – Hondschoote ☺

A traditional draught horse festival with regional produce and Flemish folk concerts.

October

The Field of the Cloth of Gold feasts in Guines

Dine medieval style in the court of François 1er and Henry the VIIIth with the villagers of Guines who are dressed for the occasion. Jesters, minstrels, dancers and peasants will present an entertaining account of the historical encounter of the kings of England and France.

Underground weekend – Cambrai

Annual opening of the town's underground passages used as a refuge during the ww1.

Fête de la St Hubert- Mont des Cats

This festival will appeal to lovers of the countryside, horses and hunting meet. Mass at 11.00 is followed by a blessing of dogs and horses.

November

The Herring Festivals

In Boulogne-sur-Mer and Etaples, once a year on a Sunday in November, the fishermen celebrate our traditional fish – the herring. Marinated in white wine with onions and juniper berries, grilled, smoked or fried this was the fish that kept our coast alive for many generations. From morn till dusk the quaysides bustle with fishermen and their wives in traditional dress who grill herring and serve it to passers by with a warming glass of Beaujolais. This is always a merry event with traditional songs and dances.

December

The Turkey Festival – Licques

Each year on the last weekend before Christmas, Licques, a small country town in the heart of the Boulogne, Calais, St Omer triangle, is invaded by Turkeys. Knights of the order of the Turkey don their regalia to parade the Turkeys they produce through the streets, egged on by the crowds of enthusiastic visitors. The Licques production are no ordinary Turkeys, Capons, Guinea Fowl, Geese and Chicken, they are 'red label', corn bred, free range and delicious served with stuffing and

Christmas fare. Regional produce market, Turkey and Capon competition, dinner dance on the Saturday evening...

Art Braderie – Roubaix

For 24 hours non stop, 100 artists, stylists, designers and painters from European countries work on objects, recycle them and sell them to the public.

Christmas Markets

Lille, Bethune, Arras and Calais are some of the best the Nord Pas-de-Calais has to offer but there are many more. Check out the tourist board's web sites for up-to-date details www.relaxfrance.net

April-May and summer time 'Brocantes'

Throughout the spring and summer months, flea markets take place in many of the towns and villages in the Pas-de-Calais. Montreuil-sur-Mer, Desvres, May bank holidays are a particularly popular time.

Antiques fairs

Béthune, Le Touquet, Arras, Saint-Omer

For complete lists of events take a look on our web site www.relaxfrance.net