

The south of France is a magnet to the rich and famous and it is easy to see why. With incredible beaches, fantastic nightlife, endless shopping and luxurious hotels, it is a great place to go to get pampered. And there are plenty of destination options too, with expensive yachts dropping their anchors all along the coastline and private jets landing at the multiple airports inland.

But we think Cannes might be the most special city along the Cote d'Azur. While it really comes alive for two weeks in May, when the Cannes Film Festival brings all the stars and paparazzi with it (more on that later), it is an irresistible location at any time of year. Boasting 300 days of sunshine, it is the perfect base if you want to explore the whole region, but with so much to see and do in Cannes, why would you go anywhere else?

THE HOLLYWOOD GLAMOUR OF

Cannes



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EXPERIENCE THE BEST FOOD IN FRANCE

When it comes to fine dining, the French know how to do it right, but Cannes features la crème de la crème of eateries. There's Le Roof on top of the Five Seas Hotel, which combines incredible food with breathtaking views. BFire by Mauro Colagreco, a fusion restaurant, serves up local and international cuisine with an innovative twist, and it is easy to see why La Villa Archange has earned two Michelin stars – the food is just exquisite. In fact, it is difficult to find a bad meal in Cannes, which is why it is such a mecca for foodies.

STAY IN THE LAP OF LUXURY

Of course, when it comes to choosing a luxury hotel, you are spoilt for choice. With so many high-profile guests regularly visiting the city, the hotels are always competing to host them. That means that anyone who enjoys the finer things in life can pick a hotel and assume the very best service will be available.

The aforementioned Five Seas Hotel is a five-star hotel just 100m from La Croisette and its white sandy beaches. There's a rooftop terrace, a 13m pool and a gorgeous spa, with everything set up to aid in your comfort. There's even a yacht to rent, should you wish to explore a little more of the Mediterranean Sea.

Down the road a little, you'll find the Grand Hyatt Cannes Hotel Martinez, which has hosted many Hollywood stars in the past. It has its own private beach and one of the largest Penthouse suites in Europe. Meanwhile, the InterContinental Carlton has long been a celebrity favourite, with a selection of bars and restaurants available and incredible views of the sea. It also has its own private beach.

You know to expect the very best from Cannes, at any time of the year.

SLOW DOWN TIME

With the exception of the two weeks in May where the whole world descends on Cannes for the Film festival, this is a quiet city where you can really unwind. When compared to nearby Nice, there is far less hustle and bustle, and life can move at a slower pace.

Probably because there are so many hotels with private beaches, the public ones never feel too overcrowded, so you can happily lay out a towel and watch the sea without having to fight for your spot. You could even hop on a ferry and visit the Lérins Islands, with postcard-perfect beaches that will leave you in awe. And of course, the water is crystal clear, making for some unforgettable swimming and snorkelling experiences.

If you do want to pick up the pace a little, there are several companies along the coast that offer activities like wakeboarding, parasailing and jetskis. If your idea of fun takes you away from the water, Cannes is the perfect place for hiking, biking, go-karting or golf. And because the weather is so reliable, you can book activities with confidence – things are rarely rained off!

BRING AN EXTRA SUITCASE

One of the best activities to enjoy in Cannes is a spot of shopping, thanks to a multitude of boutiques with something to appeal to everyone. If you're looking for designer stores, you'll be spoilt for choice – just head to La Croisette and Rue Meynadier. But the weekly markets are worth a trip too, as you'll find all kinds of unique crafts and local produce which make great souvenirs.

Or, if you want to soak up some culture, the medieval Old Town offers cobbled streets, ancient churches and some of the most breathtaking views of the city. It's the best place to experience Cannes on a less commercial level.

PAINT THE TOWN RED

If you're looking for a destination that will keep you entertained at night, there are few places better equipped than Cannes. Your first stop should be the City Centre, which is filled with rooftop bars. Or you could head to Le Suquet, which is a-buzz with bustling bars, including the famous Charly's Bar or even Harry's Bar at Port Canto. There are also bars on many of the beaches.

There are one or two bars that stay open until 5am for the real party animals. If that's your aim, head to Chrystie or The Luiggi. And when

it comes to getting home after your night out, there are plenty of taxi firms to call upon.

IS IT WORTH VISITING DURING THE CANNES FILM FESTIVAL?

All of the above is on offer all year round, so if you want a more relaxed vibe, with space to move, then you might prefer to visit any other time of the year. December to February is the coldest period, but it is still usually mild, while Summer is perfect for sunworshippers. But April to June offers the best all-round weather.

If, however, you are keen to experience the excitement and merriment of the Film Festival, then it can be a wonderful time to visit.

ABOUT THE CANNES FILM FESTIVAL

Sine 1946, the Cannes Film Festival has been the event of the year for filmmakers, actors, directors, journalists and film fans. Although all the main activities are invite-only for those in the industry, it is still a popular attraction for anyone hoping to catch a glimpse of their favourite film star between events.

And the atmosphere is addictive. There is a general buzz of excitement in the air everywhere you go, with whispers of the latest celeb sighting and news of what they're wearing. But the Cannes Film Festival was actually a political event first and foremost. The first festival may have been held in 1946, but the plans for it started in 1938. At the Venice Film Festival that year, Hitler rigged the event so that only Axis propaganda films would be eligible to win awards. This angered French diplomat Philippe Erlanger, and so, in the aftermath of the war, he held the first Cannes Film Festival.

The festival grew in popularity, and so in 1947, the team behind it built the Palais des Festival, specifically to host the event.



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THE FESTIVAL TODAY

Every year, around 2,000 films are submitted to the festival for consideration – this is not just about big Blockbuster movies, there are a huge number of independent films too, and the festival is a great opportunity for them to be discovered and gain publicity. A small committee reviews every submission and then narrows them down to 50 feature films and 10 short films for closer scrutiny.

They then select the winners. The awards include:

- Palme d'Or (Golden Palm): The best feature film.
- Grand Prix: The best original feature film that demonstrates the spirit of enquiry.
- Jury Prize: The jury chose their favourite feature film or performance.
- Best Actor
- Best Actress
- Best Director
- Best Screenplay
- Caméra d'Or: Best first film by a new director.
- Palme d'Or du Court Métrage: Best short film.
- Prix Un Certain Regard: Best films that emphasize non-traditional stories.

There are also lots of sidebar awards that are handed out over the 12-day festival.

HOW TO ENJOY THE CANNES FILM FESTIVAL WITHOUT AN INVITATION

Did your invite get lost in the post too? Don't worry, the city is well-prepared for the hundreds of people that flock there each year. Get yourself a deckchair and head to the Cinéma de la Plage which has regular free screenings for film fans. You may also be able to get into some of the sidebar events that happen in tandem with the festival, such as Directors' Fortnight and International Critics' Week – worth looking into!

The 78th Cannes Film Festival will be held from 13th – 24th May. If you are hoping to catch some of the action, you might want to book your hotel now – it gets rather busy around festival season!