

# WELCOME TO CHRISTMAS

IN PROVENCE-ALPES-CÔTE D'AZUR

60 DAYS OF FESTIVITIES  
KNOW-HOW & TRADITIONS  
MY CHRISTMAS LIST

DÉCEMBER

4<sup>TH</sup>

SAINT BARBARA'S DAY

DÉCEMBER

24<sup>TH</sup>

13 DESSERTS

JANUARY

6<sup>TH</sup>

EPIPHANY

AWAITING  
CHRISTMAS

CRIB SCENE & SANTON FIGURINES

DÉCEMBER

24<sup>TH</sup>  
&  
25<sup>TH</sup>

CHRISTMAS MEALS

FEBRUARY

2<sup>ND</sup>

CANDLEMAS

60 DAYS OF  
INSPIRATION

# WELCOME TO 60 DAYS OF HAPPINESS!

*How about treating yourself to an authentic Christmas this year? A Christmas that soothes the senses and lets the mind marvel, a Christmas that invites you to slow down and renew ties with your loved ones...*

In Provence-Alpes-Côte d'Azur, the Christmas festivities last over two months. On December 4th, on Saint Barbara's Day, many people continue to set up the traditional crib scene, with its little clay figurines nestling amid moss and olive branches. They will continue to share everyday family life until Candlemas on February 2<sup>nd</sup>.

## **Welcome to a - moderate - feast for the senses.**

Christmas in Provence-Alpes-Côte d'Azur has a surprisingly salty and even iodine flavour! A taste of the Mediterranean... Of course, we love great food and drink and we have it all - the wines, the truffles, the shellfish and the wild game. To appreciate this fine fare even more, the eating traditionally begins with the humble-yet-delicious "Gros Souper" or big supper on December 24<sup>th</sup>. And although it's followed up with Thirteen Desserts (no less), they consist of dried fruit, melon, nougat and other simple pleasures of yesteryear we not be less!"

## **Welcome to the Three Kings**

Christmas is a wonderful opportunity to visit our local santon figurine makers - experts in moulding human figures from clay -, bakers who perfume their brioche with orange blossom water for the occasion, and the potters, ceramists, perfumers, weavers and craftsmen whose creations promise to bring a happy smile to every face. Push open the doors to the magical worlds of the region's artisans and roam our many Christmas markets and santon figurine fairs.

## **Welcome to newfound spirituality**

Christmas is a great time to celebrate serenity and reflect on the meaning of life. In addition to the traditional shepherd's offering in Les Baux-de-Provence, midnight mass, nativity plays, carols and processions add a spiritual dimension to our festivities. The local villages invite visitors to admire their treasures of religious art. It's a marvellous opportunity to discover the new "In the Footsteps of Mary Magdalene" pilgrim's route too, spanning 222 kilometres between the regional nature reserves of Camargue and Sainte-Baume. Legend tells that the Saint's rowing boat washed up on these shores in ancient times. The city of Marseille continues to commemorate the event with its delicious,

boat-shaped navette biscuits, blessed at Saint Victor's Abbey on February 2<sup>nd</sup> every year. Unique.

*"The Christmas experience in Provence-Alpes-Côte d'Azur is a genuine gift to oneself - a chance to renew ties with deeply-anchored traditions, celebrate the identity of Provence, the Alps and Côte d'Azur, meet artisans and professionals who work here throughout the year, enjoy time with friends and family, delve into time-honoured customs and appreciate the slow life... It is a time for both reunions and rejuvenation, for treating oneself to a precious piece of tranquillity, instilled with the peace, quiet and blue skies of an old village in the mountains or by the sea."*



**Renaud MUSELIER**  
President of the Provence-Alpes-Côte d'Azur Regional Council  
Deputy President Régions de France



**François de CANSON**  
Vice-President of the Provence-Alpes-Côte d'Azur Regional Council  
President of the Provence-Alpes-Côte d'Azur Regional Tourist Board  
Deputy President of ADN Tourisme



## INSPIRATION

Santon figurines, pottery, crockery, cosy throws, table linen, olive oil, tasty wines, and wooden toys and utensils... The people of Provence pull out all the stops at Christmas, adorning their tables with elaborate motifs, ceramics and candles, topped with tasty specialities courtesy of Provence, the Southern Alps and Côte d'Azur.

Of course, Christmas is also a time for giving gifts, with everyone hunting down that special little something that's sure to touch the heart. Rest assured, here in Provence-Alpes Côte d'Azur, love of the environment and a job well done are the hallmarks of our artisans and producers.



## KNOW-HOW

Don't miss a visit to our renowned local craft firms over the Christmas period. Provence-Alpes-Côte d'Azur is home to an unrivalled number and diversity of artisans open to the public, with around 200 santon figurine makers, ceramists, perfumers, confectioners, soap makers, winegrowers and olive growers ready and willing to share their creativity and expertise. Potter's wheels, oil mills, perfume organs and baking ovens are at full throttle at this time of year – what better opportunity to gift a loved one a gorgeous object born before your very eyes?



*Welcome to a world  
of renowned artisans*



DÉCEMBER 4<sup>TH</sup>

# ST BARBARA'S DAY

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*December 4th marks the start of the Christmas preparations:  
it's the day when the "Wheat of Hope" is sown.*

**W**heat seeds and lentils are placed in three small bowls, then carefully watered. In just a few days they become tender young shoots - a simple but poetic way of adding a fresh green touch to the Christmas table.

If the seeds sown on December 4<sup>th</sup> sprout well, prosperity is in the pipeline! As the saying goes: "When lou blad vèn bèn, tout vèn bèn!" ("When the wheat is well, all is well!").

This custom has another vocation too - it is used to predict good fortune in the coming year and wish guests health and prosperity.

LA SAINTE-BARBE, OR SAINT BARBARA'S DAY, IS CELEBRATED ON **DECEMBER 4TH**. MANY PROFESSIONS ASSOCIATED WITH FIRE OR LIGHTNING, SUCH AS FIREFIGHTERS AND MINERS, ARE BELIEVED TO BE UNDER THE WING OF THE "PATRON SAINT OF FIRE".



### INSPIRATION

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Saint Barbara's wheat is a great way to add a touch of greenery to your Christmas table! Simply place some damp cotton wool in a cup, or rather three cups if you want to honour the Christian symbol of the Trinity. Sprinkle with a few grains of wheat and lentils.

If you dampen them every day, they'll soon sprout into pretty green plants. N.B. as temperatures have risen, it might be better to put them on a windowsill rather than inside.

If the seeds grow into sturdy shoots, you can be sure the harvest and coming year will be good. On December 24th, the young shoots are wrapped in yellow and red ribbons, and the finest crop is placed on the Christmas table. The following day, it is used to decorate the crib scene, where it thrives until Epiphany in January.



### KNOW-HOW

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How about making your own terracotta dish for Saint Barbara's wheat? Our potters, earthenware makers and ceramists will be delighted to welcome you for a course or introductory class. After all, the Provence-Alpes-Côte d'Azur region is a genuine capital of clay. And as the Provençal proverb goes: "A pot for the kitchen, a pitcher for water and a basket for the garden are all you need to eat"! Aubagne and the Pays de l'Etoile area, Salernes (Terra Rossa museum) and Vallauris (Ceramics museum) are local hubs of clay working. What's more, Moustiers-Sainte-Marie has been an ambassador of earthenware since the 17th century. Numerous workshops invite you to admire our potters and ceramists hard at work turning, shaping, moulding, baking, varnishing, enamelling and decorating... Another fabulous gift idea!

# My Christmas list

The first cold spells are an invitation to surround ourselves with cosy comforts: hand-crafted terracotta, snuggly fabrics, scented candles and plenty of self-pampering. Long live winter!

## BARBOTINE

Located in Aubagne, Barbotine hand-made pottery is inspired by traditions dating back thousands of years, paying tribute to the colourful swirls of Huveaune valley's rare jasper stones. *Living Heritage Firm.*

## POTERIE RAVEL

Situated in Aubagne town centre, this beautiful building harbours the workshops, warehouses and boutique of one of France's oldest ceramic factories. Founded in 1837, it has remained the property of the same family for five generations.

## ÔKHRA

Nestling in the Luberon, the "Conservatoire des Ogres" is dedicated to ochre, a mineral pigment widely used since Antiquity. Opt for a guided tour of the former Roussillon ochre factory for a deep dive in the extraction process, from washing to grinding.

## BRUN DE VIAN TIRAN

Shawls, throws, scarves and blankets: this brand has been flying the flag of all things soft and snuggly - including Arles merino wool - since 1808. What's not to love about winter?! You'll find a fabulous choice of items on site, plus a museum tour. *Living Heritage Firm.*

## L'OCCITANE EN PROVENCE

A temple of authentic beauty, unbeatable wellness and unique know-how, founded in 1976. Combining efficiency, pleasure and durability, the L'Occitane products are rich in hand-picked natural ingredients. Don't miss a visit to the beautiful production site in Manosque.

## CIERGERIE DES PRÉMONTRÉS

A candle magicked into existence before your very eyes! Born in the 15<sup>th</sup> century, this particular candle making technique, using a ladle to fill the mould or plunging it directly into a vat of liquid wax, was used by Premonstratensian monks from Saint-Michel-de-Frigolet Abbey in days gone by. *Living Heritage Firm.*





AWAITING CHRISTMAS

# CRIB SCENES & SANTON FIGURINES

*In Provence-Alpes-Côte d'Azur, many homes welcome a miniature family at Christmas – aka the crib scene!*

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The cradle is surrounded by Joseph, Mary, the donkey, ox, sheep, shepherds and the Archangel Gabriel... Crib scenes used to be exclusively reserved for churches, but the French Revolution unwittingly sparked popular fervour for santon figurines (originating from the Provençal word *santoun*, meaning "little saint") by closing places of worship. A Marseille-based statue maker, Lagnel, came up with the smart idea of mass-producing them so that every fa-

mily could have their own. Many regional churches continue to show these little masterpieces of folk art at Christmas, sometimes accompanied by live crib scenes and nativity plays. A crib scene tour is also a great way to visit the cities of Marseille and Nice. For example, the village of Lucéram near Nice, home to the "Musée de la Crèche" nativity museum, showcases around 450 crib scenes in its narrow streets bedecked with red and gold.

LITTLE SANTONS (CLAY FIGURINES) ARE USED TO DEPICT THE BIRTH OF JESUS IN THE STABLE ON CHRISTMAS EVE.





### INSPIRATION

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Here in Provence-Alpes-Côte d'Azur, crib scenes and santon figurines are part of every family's legacy. Jesus, Mary, Joseph and (to a lesser extent) the ox and donkey, are the essential characters of the somewhat-minimalist presèpi crib scene, originating from Nice. Then again, some scenes feature dozens of characters, scattered throughout a Provencal village complete with a mill, church, well and bridges... Nothing is set in stone. Sometimes, you'll even find current-day public figures slipped in among

the traditional shepherd, blind man and his son, priest, monk, valet, drummer and mayor. What does matter is that the santons are made of clay and by hand. A moss floor, some olive branches, lights dotted here and there and a few candles - preferably electric - and an entire little world springs to life under the dazzled and amused gaze of children and parents alike.

### KNOW-HOW

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Calling all amateur artists! At the local santon fairs, you'll find ready-to-paint figurines made with natural terracotta. Marseille's Vieux-Port (Old Port) has hosted one every winter for the last 220 years! Numerous other towns have now followed suit: Aubagne, Fontvieille, Aix-en-Provence, Arles, Caderousse, Carpentras, Forcalquier Montagne de Lure, Antibes, Cagnes, Carqueiranne, Grimaud, Théoule-sur-Mer, Ollioules, Signes and Mouans-Sartoux, to name but a few. And our crib scenes get bigger every year! We hunt down new santons at the local Christmas markets and workshops, where visitors are sometimes invited to watch the figurines being made, from modelling the plaster mould to the final brushstrokes. The variety of models on offer is impressive, with new characters created every year.



# My Christmas list

Welcome to the miniature world of the crib scene and its figurines, fabrics to dress or pose them, wooden toys – now very in vogue – and the fresh smell of lavender and old-fashioned soap...

## MARCEL CARBONEL STUDIO

The region's largest collection of santon figurines awaits you in Marseille, between the Old Port and Notre-Dame-de-la-Garde basilica, with no less than 700 models, including the coveted "Santon of the Year"! *Living Heritage Firm.*

## LA MAISON FOUQUE

Paul Fouque created the "Santon Berger, Coup de Mistral" figurine (a shepherd battling against a gusting mistral wind) in 1952. Its heirs still watch over this Aix-based firm, where around 1,800 different models rub shoulders! *Living Heritage Firm.*

## SANTONS PASSION PATRICK VOLPES

In Champtercier, on the heights of the Digne region, Patrick Volpes invites visitors on a deep dive into the world of a master santon maker, with treats including a Provençal crib scene and museum.

## LES OLIVADES

At the Olivades workshop in Saint-Etienne-du-Grès in the Alpilles, ten different processes are required to transform raw fabric into traditional indienne printed cotton, decorated by hand using a stencil or large copper rollers. *Living Heritage Firm.*

## AROMA PLANTES

No Christmas would be complete without the perfumes of Provence! Set at the foot of Mont Ventoux, in the world's lavender capital, this distillery honours local plants with a lavandoscope, an educational trail, workshops, a time gallery, an aromatic bar and shop.

## LES JOUETS DU QUEYRAS L'ALPIN CHEZ LUI

Their wooden toys, animal figurines and characters make growing up fun! Firmly rooted in sustainable development, this craftsmen's cooperative is celebrating its 100th anniversary this year.



DECEMBER 24<sup>TH</sup> AND 25<sup>TH</sup>

# CHRISTMAS MEALS

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*One of the highlights of the Christmas festivities, the "big supper" (gros souper, or gros soupa in Provençal dialect), also known as the "lean meal" (repas maigre), is enjoyed with family or friends on December 24th.*

Luxury doesn't feature on the menu, but quality takes pride of place. The gros souper honours numerous rituals: the table must be laid with three tablecloths and supper is served on the top one; the second forms the backdrop to Christmas Day lunch, served with meat this time, while the third is used for leftovers eaten on the evening of the 25th.

This festive supper can comprise a whopping seven courses and thirteen different breads. It is washed down with wines from the finest terroirs between Provence, the Rhône Valley and Alps, together with mountain spring water. It winds up with the thirteen desserts - the number refers to the twelve apostles and Jesus -, comprising 13 sweet delicacies and fresh fruit, savoured after Midnight Mass.

DESPITE THE NAME, THE BIG SUPPER DOES NOT INCLUDE MEAT AND IS A GENUINE **FEAST FOR THE SENSES.**



### INSPIRATION

Served on a table adorned with holly, and the wheat and lentils sown on Saint Barbara's Day, the gros souper on Christmas Eve traditionally kicks off with an aïgo boulido - a fragrant broth made with garlic, sage and thyme -, followed by seven meat-free dishes (although turkey is increasingly found on today's menu), such as cod with leeks, squash gratin and truffle omelette. The tasty treats also include local specialities such as poutargue (bottarga) from Martigues, Rove cottage cheese or cheeses from the Alps. And no Provençal Christmas feast would be complete without an array of aperitifs and liqueurs made with regional plants and fruit. Almonds, hazelnuts, nougats and countless variations on the thirteen desserts await hungry church-goers on their return from Midnight Mass.



### KNOW-HOW

Let's head to the local markets! Even in winter, their rainbow colours are the stuff dreams are made of. Carrots, fennel, chard and squash are delicious served with an anchoïade or fragrant olive oil fresh from the producer. Lemons and kumquats from Menton also have pride of place on the Christmas table. Christmas dinner is a time to savour exceptional produce - with sustainability in mind, of course -, with a spotlight on the treasures of the Med: sea urchins, oysters from La Seyne-sur-Mer, poutargue (bottarga) from Martigues, sea bass and other seafood. It is also an opportunity to show off your finest crockery and prettiest tablecloths. As far as floral decorations go, intense blue and purple anemones mixed with starry yellow mimosa promise to add extra magic to your table.





# Exceptional *olive oils*

Olives are harvested when the first frosts arrive, then cold pressed. The resulting olive oil is more or less intense or delicate according to the ripeness of the fruit.

The Provence-Alpes-Côte d'Azur region is home to nearly two-thirds of France's olive growing areas, together with five AOC olive oils out of the existing eight: Vallée des Baux-de-Provence, Aix-en-Provence, Haute-Provence, Nice and Provence. Our olive oils boast a vast palette of flavours, from fruity green to ripe. Christmas comes bang in the middle of the olive oil making season extending from November to February, so it's the perfect time to visit the local olive estates.

You might even get a rare taste of the year's new primeur oil! And how about slipping a bottle of AOC olive oil among the gifts at the foot of the tree? A guaranteed original - and useful - gift!

Around a dozen local oil mills welcome visitors: **La Balméenne**, **La Bastide du Laval**, Moulin **La Cravenco**, **Château Virant** (*Entreprise du Patrimoine Vivant*), **Château de Berne**, **Castelas**, Moulin **du Partegal**, Moulin **d'Opio**, Moulin **du Calanquet**, Moulin **des Pénitents**, Moulin **du Clos des Jeannons**, Moulin **Fortuné Arizzi**. Located in Volx, in the Luberon Regional Nature Reserve, the Olive Eco-museum exhibits a fascinating collection from throughout the Mediterranean.

ON CHRISTMAS AND NEW YEAR'S EVE, HOSTS PARADE THEIR LOVELIEST TABLEWARE, **PREMIUM OLIVE OIL**, FINEST LOCAL WINES AND RICHEST DAIRY SPECIALITIES FROM THE REGION'S PASTURES.



# Fine *Wines & Liqueurs*

Our region produces such a vast array of wines it's hard to take your pick! Of course, Provence-Alpes-Côte d'Azur boasts exceptional terroirs as Châteauneuf-du-Pape, but our white wines from Bandol and Cassis, and rosés from the Saint-Tropez peninsula, are absolute musts too. N.B. you can now find a great choice of sparkling rosés – ideal for getting your party off to a flying start!

Here are just some of the local wine estates open to visitors: **Château Bas**, **Château Pesquié**, **Domaine de la Citadelle**, **Domaine Villa Baulieu**, **Château de Calavon**, **Château Sainte-Roseline**, **Le Clos des Roses** and **Terre de Mistral**.

Filled with hills and orchards exhaling sweet scents of thyme, mint and rosemary, the region is naturally home to lots of distilleries. "Liqueur Frigolet" has been producing the Elixir du Père Gaucher for the last 150 years. *Living Heritage Firm*.

The **Distillerie Manguin** is a master of the art of pear liqueur. **Maison Ferroni** breathes new life into the liqueurs of yesteryear. The family-owned **Cristal Limiñana** factory in Marseille city centre produces pastis, together with an exquisite, much acclaimed sugar and alcohol-free anisette.

# *My Christmas* list

## LA VERRERIE DE BIOT

The air bubbles trapped in its blown glass are the hallmark of France's most-visited firm. Their glasses, jugs and pitchers are the heroes of aperitifs with friends and Michelin-starred meals alike. *Living Heritage Firm.*

## AU BEC FIN

Located in Cogolin, this cannery has been working with artisan fishermen from the Gulf of Saint-Tropez, in pace with the seasons, for over 30 years.

## MARIUS BERNARD

Situated near Etang de Berre sea lake, Marius Bernard concocts an array of sunny recipes savoured at a converted oil mill near Pont Flavien, the Roman bridge at the entrance to Saint-Chamas.

## FROMAGERIE DE LA DURANCE

Nestling in Guillestre, at the gateway to Queyras National Park, this cheese dairy offers delicious cow, goat and sheep cheeses made with raw milk from the valleys of Queyras, Champsaur and Embrun. You'll find a cheese-making workshop there too.



DÉCEMBER 24<sup>TH</sup>

# 13 DESSERTS

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*Winding up Christmas Eve with thirteen shades of sweetness after midnight mass is an age-old tradition in Provence-Alpes-Côte d'Azur. It originates from the - still popular - custom of Midnight Mass.*

The service often comes complete with a pastiche nativity play, starring a procession of shepherds come to honour the birth of Baby Jesus, plus songs, hymns and the symbolic offering of a lamb... It's quite lengthy, so you're bound to work up an appetite! Pop Baby Jesus in your homemade crib scene when you get home, then it's time to dig in to a feast of black and white nougat, dried fruit nicknamed the "four beggars", pompe à l'huile olive oil brioche scented

with orange flower water, and fresh fruit such as apples, pears, green melon and grapes. Dates are served as a reminder of the flight of Joseph, Mary and Baby Jesus to Egypt. You'll find tangerines or oranges too, together with various confectionery including fruit jellies and chocolates.

Last but not least, the Christmas log pays tribute to the cacho fio - the log that was burned in days gone by to celebrate the New Year.

**THE NUMBER 13** REFERS TO JESUS AND THE 12 APOSTLES, WHILE THE FOUR TRADITIONAL DRIED FRUITS REPRESENT DIFFERENT RELIGIOUS ORDERS







### INSPIRATION

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It doesn't matter if there are more than thirteen desserts on the Christmas table - the main thing is there mustn't be less! The pride of the parade is nougat, especially black nougat, made with honey and almonds. The four dried fruits represent different religious orders: walnuts or hazelnuts for the Augustinians, dried figs for the Franciscans, almonds for the Carmelites and raisins for the Dominicans. The grapes, winter melons, apples and pears adorning

the table were once preserved in cellars or attics, while oranges and dates were rare treats. A drop of sweet wine - Beauges-de-Venise muscatel or Rasteau - accompanies the tasting session. Meanwhile, children eagerly await the arrival of Santa Claus so they can open their presents!



### KNOW-HOW

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The shop windows of our confectioners, nougat makers and chocolate makers are simply irresistible! And they're more enticing than ever at Christmas time... Original creations and absolute classics rub shoulders in a flood of twinkling garlands, shiny baubles and sparkling trees.

Bakers and pastry chefs show off their plump pompe à l'huile brioche and slightly drier gibassier. The region's market stalls overflow with apples, pears and grapes, while lemons and kumquats from Menton adorn the upper echelons of every basket. Wine merchants unveil their precious elixirs and the streets exhale scents of orange peel, honey and cinnamon. Shopping at Christmas is a genuine joy!



# My Christmas list

Nougats, calisson candies, chocolates, fresh or candied fruit and biscuits are sometimes served with a drop of liqueur bursting with tastes of yesteryear. You can also find them in alcohol-free versions.

## LA MAISON ANDRÉ BOYER

Based in Sault since 1887, this Master Nougat Maker curates black and white nougat, macarons, spelt biscuits, marshmallow and calisson candies using original recipes... *Living Heritage Firm.*

## SILVAIN FRÈRES

Their nougat is made with honey from their hives and almonds from their orchard... You'll find Pierre and Philippe, part of the sixth generation of a family of farmers, between Pernes and Venasque. There's a tearoom there too! *Living Heritage Firm.*

## NOUGATERIE JONQUIER

Located in the centre of Ollioules, near Toulon, Nougaterie Jonquier makes nougat and a whole array of sweet delicacies in copper cauldrons dating back to 1885...

## CHOCOLATERIE DE PUYRICARD

Chocolate reigns here, courted by a tempting show of calisson candies and macarons. The manufacturing workshop unveils the secrets of chocolate moulding, coating and confectionery. *Living Heritage Firm.*

## CHOCOLATERIE CASTELAIN

Tucked away in the heart of the Châteauneuf-du-Pape vines, Bernard Castelain cleverly pairs chocolate with regional wines and liqueurs. Don't miss his chocolate discs filled with Vieux Marc from Châteauneuf-du-Pape...

## MAISON HERBIN

This family-run firm has been producing an extraordinary selection of award-winning jams simmered the old-fashioned way for almost 50 years. Two must-haves: the Christmas jam, paying homage to the Thirteen Desserts, and Menton lemon jam made with fruit grown in their orchard. *Living Heritage Firm.*



JANUARY 6<sup>TH</sup>

# EPIPHANY

*In Greek, the word epiphany means "unveiling" or "appearance".*

**B**althasar, Melchior and Gaspar... The Three Kings who came from the East and were guided to Jesus' stable in Bethlehem by a star, bearing gifts of gold, myrrh and frankincense. In Provence-Alpes-Côte d'Azur, people traditionally celebrate Epiphany with the Gâteau des Rois (Kings' Cake): a crown-shaped brioche decorated with crystallized cherries, angelica and melon. You'll also find it in pie form, known as the Galette des Rois, made with puff pastry and filled with marzipan - its round shape and golden colour symbolize the sun.

A broad bean or earthenware figurine - or both - are hidden inside: the person who finds them wins the crown and is in charge of offering next year's cake... The brioche is also served with calisson candies from Aix, candied chestnuts from Collobrières, candied lemons from Menton, berlingot boiled sweets from Carpentras and other sweet treats.

FROM **JANUARY 6<sup>TH</sup>**, THE DAYS START GETTING LONGER AND THE SAP SLOWLY BEGINS TO RISE...



### INSPIRATION

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The Gateau des Rois (Kings' Cake) is cut into slices, one for each guest plus the "good Lord's share", traditionally put aside should a poor person come to the house asking for food. The youngest child hides under the table and indicates which guest should be given which slice of cake. The person who gets the broad bean or little earthenware figurine in their slice is named "King" or "Queen" - and is in charge of offering next year's cake!

On January 6th, it's traditional to place santon figurines representing the three kings in the crib scene. They are often depicted riding camels, laden with chests, glittering jewels and precious fabrics.



### KNOW-HOW

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Candied fruit and especially the bright red crystallized cherries used to adorn the Gateau des Rois (Kings' Cake), often originate from Apt. An official "Remarkable Site for Taste", the capital of the Luberon is also that of candied fruit. Madame de Sé-vigné even described the region as a "jam cauldron". Candying methods imported from the East were perfected there in the 14<sup>th</sup> century, to satisfy the gourmet popes.

Every January 6<sup>th</sup>, the arrival of the Three Kings serves as a reminder of the long history of trade throughout the Mediterranean. Savon de Marseille soap made with olive oil, indienne fabrics - beautiful printed cottons worn by the women of Provence in days gone by - and many of the rare essences distilled by Grasse's perfumeries, still stand witness to this rich legacy.



# *The art of* perfume

Grasse is an ode to fragrance! The world's top perfumeries all have their head offices in this little hilltop town, set gazing out over the Mediterranean Sea. **Fragonard**, **Galimard** and **Molinard** even invite you to make your own fragrance. The perfect gift idea!

You'll also find out all about the ancient sacred ritual of per fumum during your tour: in ancient times, the rising smoke produced by burning frankincense and myrrh was thought to connect men with the gods. Perfume later became popularized with the invention of the still.



# My Christmas list

A genuine tribute to the Three Kings, the town of Grasse – the world's perfume capital – and colourful stalls of candied fruit on the local markets, exhale exotic fragrances of A Thousand and One Nights...

## SAVON DE MARSEILLE

Handy for absolutely everything, Savon de Marseille has now conquered the world. The word "Marseille" stamped on this (traditionally square) soap bar, made with at least 72% vegetable oil, refers to the manufacturing process used by master soap makers in days gone by. Today, the largest soap factories are still located in and around the ancient Greek city, and are holders of the Living Heritage Firm label: **Marius Fabre** (since 1900), **Rampal-Latour**, **Le Fer à Cheval**, **Le Sérail**, **La Savonnerie du Midi** in Marseille. **Maître Savonitto studio** is located in the Haut-Var.

## LA MAISON DU FRUIT CONFIT - APTUNION

The world's largest candied fruit factory and a flagship stop-off in the Luberon, "Aptunion" has been producing candied plums, clementines and cherries using traditional techniques since 1964... Museum and tea room.

## CONFISERIE FLORIAN DES GORGES DU LOUP

Nestling in the beautiful Vallée du Loup, this confectioner has been creating delicious products using fresh fruit and flowers, including delicate violets from February onwards, since 1949. Among other treats, you'll find jasmine and violet jellies there, plus a citrus orchard panning out on the terraced slopes.

## CONFISERIE LEBLANC

Set the foot of the village of Banon, between Lure and Ventoux mountains, the Confiserie Leblanc curates organic spreads, chocolate-coated fruit and salted almond nibbles with Banon goat cheese...

## CONFISERIE DU MONT-VENTOUX

Clement V – the first Pope of Avignon – created the Carpentras berlingot boiled sweet in 1310. Today's only remaining artisan berlingot maker continues to produce the official peppermint version, together with a host of other flavours.



FEBRUARY 2<sup>ND</sup>

# CANDLEMAS

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*On February 2nd, 40 days after Christmas, the Fête des Chandelles commemorates the presentation of Baby Jesus at the Temple of Jerusalem.*

**B**elievers lit candles in their homes to usher in an abundant harvest. In Marseille and Provence - and nowhere else in France -navettes are tra-ditionally savoured on Candlemas. These little boat-shaped biscuits flavoured with orange flower water symbolize the boat in which the three Saints - Mary Magdalene, Mary Jacobe and Mary Salome - ran aground on the shores of Provence. And of course, we also love pancakes or crepes as we like to call them: as round and golden as our beloved sunshine!

Where does the tradition come from? It is said that Pope Gelasius I offered the first pancakes to pilgrims. Another legend tells that in the Middle Ages, people ate wheat to spur the early arrival of spring. In lean years, people made do with a thin, lacy piece of dough, the ancestor of to-day's crepe.

"At Candlemas, winter either takes flight or takes hold" - traditional Provencal saying.

THE WORD "CANDLEMAS"  
**COMES FROM THE LATIN CANDELA**  
MEANING "CANDLE".



### INSPIRATION

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The people of Marseille get up extra-early on February 2<sup>nd</sup> for the procession of the Black Virgin, starting out from the Old Port at 5 am. This rare walnut statue of Notre-Dame-de-la-Confession is housed in the crypt of Saint-Victor Abbey, founded in the 5<sup>th</sup> century, where the procession ends. Another highlight of Candlemas is the blessing of the city's typical navette biscuits by a priest. Made at a bakery adjacent

to the abbey, these boat-shaped biscuits pay homage to the arrival of the three Saints, including **Mary Magdalene**, on our shores. Put one aside along with a traditional green candle to bring luck to all the family next year. Next, it's time to carefully stow the crib scene and santon figurines in their boxes, before winding up the Christmas celebrations with a pancake feast!



### KNOW-HOW

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If you want to ensure your Candlemas crepes are unforgettable, simply top them with lavender honey, homemade fig or apricot jam, or Collobrières chestnut cream, and wash them down with fruit juice fresh from the orchards of the Southern Alps... Or a drop of Muscatel wine for grown-ups! The people of Marseille also traditionally stock up on navette biscuits on Candlemas: it's said that the biscuits made at "Le Four des Navettes" bakery, next to Saint-Victor abbey, keep for a whole year! But of course you won't be able to resist them that long... Every biscuit maker offers their own version of this delicious biscuit flavoured with orange flower water. We always celebrate the end of the Christmas festivities with a calisson candy too. Do you know where the name comes from? It is said that when Queen Jeanne was asked what her cook's marzipan and melon delicacies were, she replied "Di cali soun", meaning "they are like cuddles". History or legend? Who knows!



You'll definitely want to toss your pancakes, but make sure they land in our exceptional honeys, jams or spreads... Navette biscuits, almond crunches and calisson candies are also essentials if you want to sweeten up the year to come.

**APILAND**

Life in the hive, giant sculptures and honey making... Set at the foot of Serre-Ponçon dam, "Apiland" also offers a magnificent museum space dedicated to bees. Must-have: their extraordinary lavender honey.

**COMTES DE PROVENCE- AGRO'NOVAE**

100% natural, inventive and tasty recipes are simmered in this tasty workshop, flying the flag of our artisan jam makers. *Living Heritage Firm.*

**CONFISERIE LÉONARD PARLI**

This very-famous confectioner - a delicious candy box on Cours Mirabeau in Aix-en-Provence - is well worth going out of your way for. Their calisson candy-making expertise has remained unchanged since the shop opened in 1874.

*Living Heritage Firm.*



**CONFISERIE DU ROY RENÉ**

Located 10 minutes from Aix-en-Provence town centre, amid almond trees, the "Fabrique de la Confiserie du Roy René" is home to a fascinating calisson museum showcasing a wealth of old tools and documents.

*Living Heritage Firm.*

**LES PÉCHÉS GOURMANDS**

This biscuit maker in Six-Fours-les-Plages magicks up navette biscuits, shortbread and calisson candies before your very eyes... Don't miss their croquant crunches too, concocted with a recipe dated 1848.

**BISCUITERIE DE FORCALQUIER**

Set inside an old forge, this biscuit maker offers a wide range of Provençal biscuits made on site with heritage organic flour. The biscuit workshop is part of an ecotourism route linking six sites, six areas and six products.

*My Christmas list*

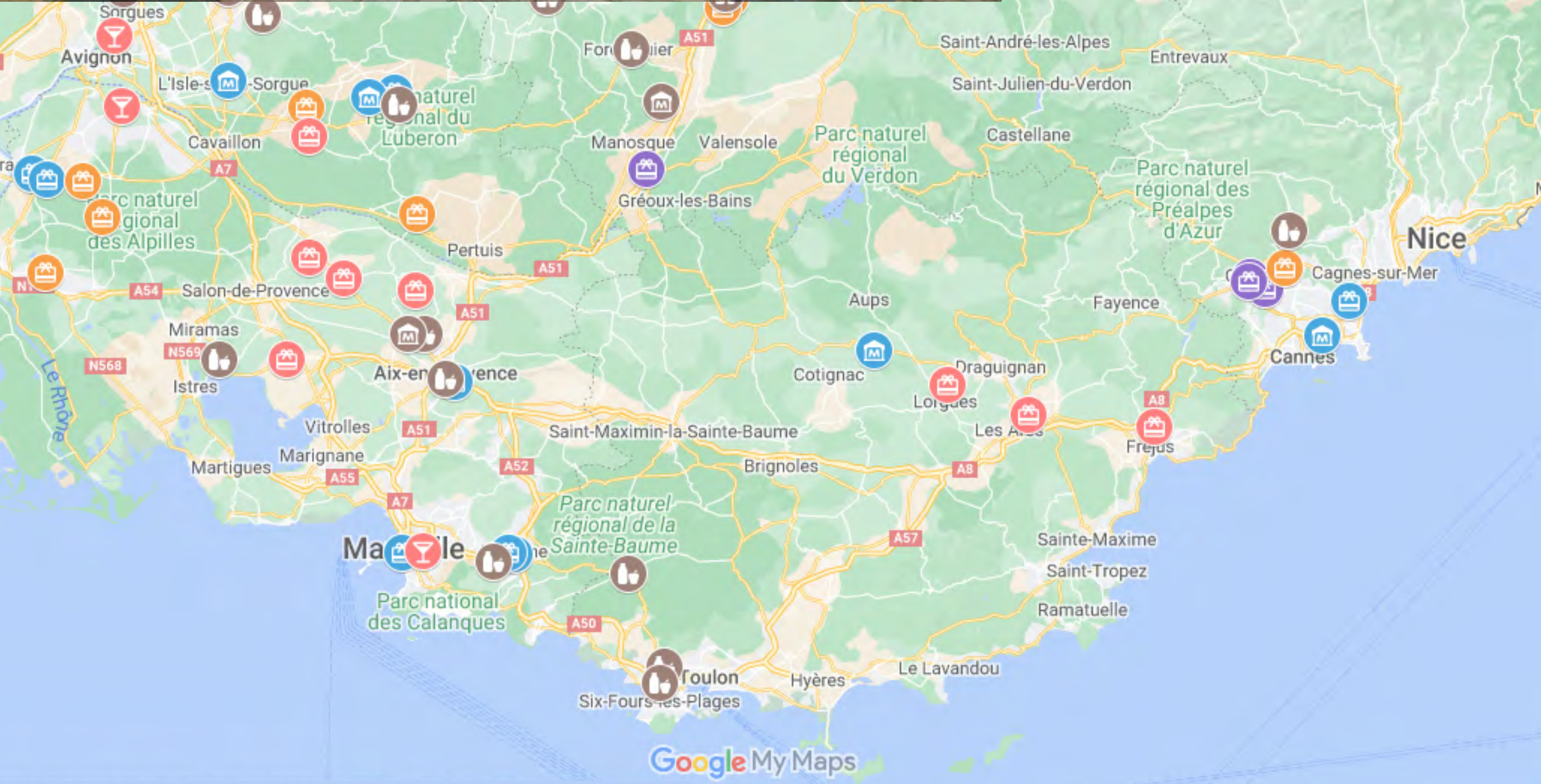


## Christmas Events Calendar



## Photo-press pack

View and download our Christmas and our hand-picked selection of workshops and manufacturers photos.



## Regional craft know-how

The Provence-Alpes-Côte d'Azur Business Card is a compilation of 184 firms located throughout the region and open to the public. Some even invite visitors to roll up their sleeves and create their own decorative objects, pottery or perfumes...



**VOYAGE  
AU CŒUR DES  
ENTREPRISES**

*Guides company tours*

**PROVENCE - ALPES - CÔTE D'AZUR**

## Interactive map

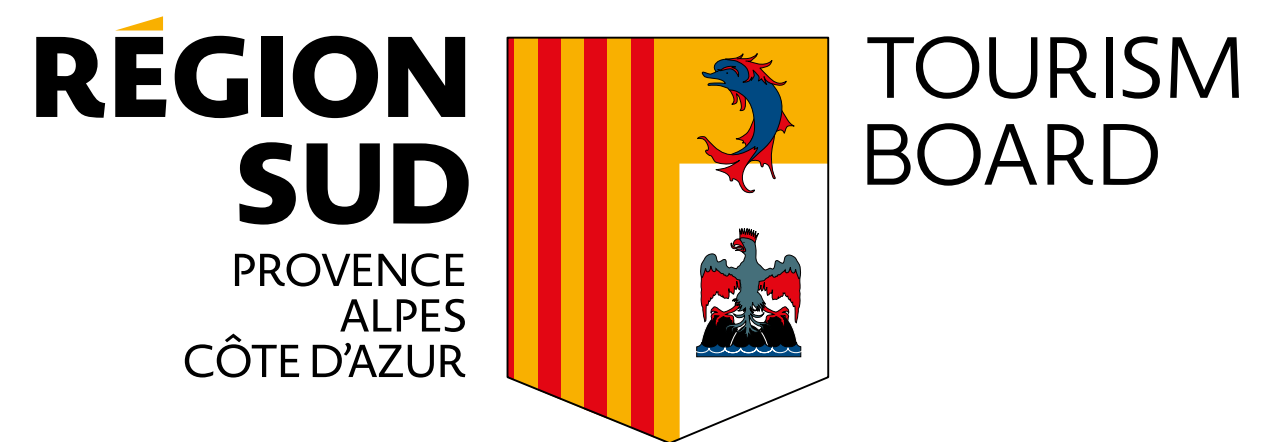
Push open the door to our hand-picked selection of workshops and manufacturers.

**ed**  
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