



SAINT-HONORAT ISLAND

***A world apart, waves away from Cannes
A hidden treasury to uncover so long as you are willing to jump in a boat!***

A nature haven, only seagulls, rocks and lavender; a centuries old abbey with silent “frères”, and all that just a few miles from the glitzy Cote d’Azur. This is Saint-Honorat, the island with the name of a saint, and promise of peace.

Together with Sainte-Marguerite, its sister island, Saint-Honorat has its own heartbeat, slow and peacefully in contrast to the vibrant Cannes. Leaving behind Cannes “Vieux Port” with its luxury yachts and sportive cars, you soon reach the miniature “Port des Moines”, the monks’ harbor. It is now time to swap your stilettos for flip-flops

400 meters wide and 1,5 km long, the tiny island is the abode of an ancient monks community and a unique national park. Daily visitors arrive at 8 am and leave at the latest at 6 pm, with the regular ferry from Cannes. Its only inhabitants are monks. It’s one of the oldest friars communities in France, dating back to the 5th century, when Honorat, the Archbishop of Arles, founded the Abbey, around 410. Since then it has always been a Benedictine - Cistercian monastery. Even if you are not Christian, try attending one of the daily masses with monks

praying and singing. A true spiritual experience. The monk community has its contrasts too. A life is dedicated to prayers, but not only. They have also an enterprising spirit. Frère Marie-Pâques, who is taking care of the wine promotion, wants to make the Abbey’s bottles as famous as “Petrus” from Bordeaux or “La Romanée-Conti” from Burgundy. When I met him, he was just back from Moscow, where he went to promote the “Abbaye de Lérins” wines to affluent Russian decision makers.

Height hectares produce both white and red wine, with a maritime twist which makes it exceptional, and in harmony with the Abbey’s values: sustainability as well.



“Not movie stars, but....shooting stars”

Red, green, deep purple, psychedelic blue: all along the summer, the sky in this part of the world is technicolor. Breathless fireworks shows can be admired from “la Croisette” at Cannes, or at sea on a sailing yacht. Every year, there is a fierce competition between the “black powder” experts from China, Italy, Greece, or Portugal.



And then, of course, the stars. We all know that Cannes is packed with movie stars in May, when Hollywood celebs flock to La Croisette. But don’t miss out the stars of Saint-Honorat! The island is a nature haven: no pollution and no lights. You only need a bit of luck during a clear summer night, and shooting stars will be out for you. And for sure, you will not need a night sky map or “app” to recognize the Larger Bear, or – let’s call it in Latin, we are close to an Abbey! – the Ursa Major



The monks have had to protect their bounty. The fortified monastery on the south coast is a true reminder of the harsh time when foreign invaders were as frequent as the seasons. As well, the two islands, with their prime location, have regularly been subject to property development projects coming from the "continent"...they were just about to be converted into a property condo with horse race tracks...in 1882.



Frère Marie-Pâques

Kids love the Saint-Honorat island

Kids love the Saint-Honorat island: the crystal clear sea, as beautiful as in the Pacific, is perfect for swimming and snorkeling. The water is fresh and warm. No wonder fish like it too! Another good option is to reach the little rocky coves and sandy beaches with a kayak. Just you and the sound of the paddle.

If you are sailing around the island at dusk or at dawn, you might even spot dolphins. The area is a protected sanctuary.

But let's not forget we are on the "Côte d'Azur" and lunch break is on the cards! The restaurant "La Tonnelle" is there for you to enjoy a chilly rosé wine with tasty Mediterranean recipes, cooked by the local chef; relax and enjoy not only the food, but also the amazing panoramic view on the bay of Cannes.

While on Saint Honorat island, watch out the **Classic Yachts** sailing when you visit the island in June or September :

The Classic Yachts Côte d'Azur circuit is opening with **Les Voiles d'Antibes** in June: sailing crews are debating about their last winter yachts renovations. Match races and coastal courses along the Cap d'Antibes up to the Lérins islands can be watched from Saint-Honorat. In 2014, the legendary **Moonbeam IV** Classic Sailing Yacht - she hosted the young **Prince Rainier and Grace Kelly for their honeymoon** - will be the guest star of Les Voiles d'Antibes: she will be celebrating **her 100 year anniversary!**

And then « **Les Régates Royales de Cannes** » in September: it all started in 1929 when the Yacht Club de Cannes organized a racing week which has been called Les Régates Royales in honor to the **King Christian X of Denmark**. As a matter of fact, he won 2 out of the 6 races makers onboard of Dana. Nowadays, the Regattas are attracting 150 crews sailing on boats from 10 to 50-meter-long Classic Yachts.

As well, you might spot a "Dragon". This sailing yacht class, drawn in 1929 by **Johan ANKER from Norway**, is racing every year in Les Régates Royales, their major international regatta.





Back to Nature

As soon as you put feet down on the island, you notice it is car free. The perfect place to wander around. Maritime pines, fragrant Mediterranean bushes; and, walking around, you will discover magnificent eucalyptus trees. You will also get a glimpse of the monks' vineyards and their olive trees plantation. That's their private domain. At the end of your walk, the Abbey has a surprise for you: a perfumed lavender parterre, as well as an exotic cactus garden. Stop and smell the Mediterranean.

Treat Yourself with a Retreat

Never thought about leaving behind mobile phone, wifi, the hustle and bustle of city life? The Abbey has thirty five "cells" – simple rooms- to welcome visitors longing for peace. You are welcome to join the silent, quiet daily routine of the monks; the only delightful sounds you will hear will be the sea, and birdsongs. A perfect place to meditate and reconnect with yourself.



GETTING TO SAINT HONORAT ISLAND

I have been discovering the island from a sailing yacht chartered at nauticaescapes.com based next to Nice International Airport. The charter base has an ideal location for anyone flying. A few minutes after landing, one may be sailing towards Saint-Honorat or Monaco, Italy, even Corsica.

To get to Saint-Honorat:

- **Ferry boats from Cannes Vieux Port: twenty minutes** cruising trip to Saint-Honorat island with departure every hour from 08:00. Last return to Cannes at 18:00.
- **or via sailing yacht charter:** www.nauticaescapes.com: around **ninety minutes sailing** to reach Saint-Honorat island off the Cap d'Antibes peninsula.

THE FRENCH RIVIERA AGENDA

Saint-Honorat island is one of the many beautiful sightseeings and stunning cultural heritage to be discovered in the region, within a short distance from Nice International Airport. Some events to taking place in 2014:

- *Film Festival - Cannes: May*
- *Formula One Grand Prix - Monaco: May*
- *Classics Yacht Regatta - Antibes: May/June*
- *Jazz Festival at Juan - Antibes: July*
- *Rock concerts at the Sporting - Monaco: July / August*
- *Fireworks festival - Cannes & Monaco: July / August*
- *Classic Yachts Regatta - Cannes & Saint-Tropez: September*
- *Extreme 40 Sailing Regatta - Nice: October*

SAS flies to Nice International Airport from Oslo, Copenhagen, and Stockholm. Book at www.flysas.com