



CUT-OUT-AND-GO GUIDE | FOODIE MARSEILLE



instant escapes

Foodie Marseille

This great, gritty port city is a stew of flavours from the Med and beyond

France's sunniest city is a sensory feast. Rhône wine and Camargue salt flow out, while diverse cultures from north Africa and Southeast Asia flow into this multi-lingual trading port. And when you're hungry, you'll find the restaurant scene works even harder than the city's fishing fleet. All just seven hours from London by Eurostar! **By Tristan Rutherford**



SEE & DO

It's everyone's first taste of Marseille: the morning Marché aux Poissons (Quai des Belges; ① on map), occupying the bustling eastern end of the Vieux-Port. Here ferries depart for the sun-kissed Frioul Islands, as fishing boats chug in the other way. **Join local restaurateurs for a photogenic haggle over local mullet, bream and baby squid.**

The opening of foodie emporium Epicerie L'Idéal (11 Rue d'Aubagne; epicerielideal.com; ②) by former food journalist Julia Sammut was one of the gastro highlights of 2016. Smell and savour her mini-warehouse for yourself — it hosts **piles of buy-me-try-me portions of Jura cheese, Corsican chestnut jam and confectionery from Parisian chocolatier Chapon.** (Staff dressed in industrial chic add to the atmos.) Call in for a picnic spread or a glass of pour-your-own organic Chardonnay.

Legendary restaurant Le Miramar (12 Quai du Port; 00 33 4 9191 4109; ③) has been an expert purveyor of *bouillabaisse* since 1965. It now lays on cooking lessons inside its hallowed kitchen, so **you can spend a whole morning learning how to sort rockfish and fillet John Dory** for the city's famously robust fish stew. Then scoff it back with wine, coffee and a starter for £102 per person. No time (or inclination) to cook? Le Miramar's signature dish plus starter costs £54.

STREET EATS

Can't make the tour? Seek out neighbourhood snacks such as South American *coxinha* chicken fritters and Turkish *lokum*.

PERFECT SOUVENIR

Navettes will hold their taste for up to a week, so these lightweight bites make perfect gifts.

The port's calling: cafe on leafy Pistolet Place in the Panier quartier; below, learn to cook at Le Miramar restaurant; fish market in the Vieux-Port

Actress and tour guide Bénédicte Sire's urban walks (Marché des Capucins; urbanwalks.eu; ④) include one that's focused on the foodie neighbourhood of Noailles. Three-hour English-language tours (£53pp) **meander through the quartier's kasbah-like shadows to sample flavours from Algeria, Lebanon, Vietnam and Djibouti.**

In business since 1827, Maison Empereur (4 Rue des Récolettes; empereur.fr; ⑤) was the first hardware store in France and **this kitchen depot is still the go-to for every chef in Provence.** Better still, it has now expanded across five neighbouring stores to sell — wait for it — oyster shuckers, Peugeot pepper mills, dumpling steamers, Laguiole knives, France-shaped cake moulds — and the kitchen sink.

Navettes are the near-sacred boat-shaped biscuits of Marseille. The aroma from the city's best biccie address, Les Navettes des Accoules (68 Rue Caisserie; les-navettes-des-accoules.com; ⑥) wafts down to the nearby Vieux-Port. **As he bakes, artisan boss José Orsoni will explain (in French) the history of his orange-blossom macarons** and Corsican *canistrelli* biscuits, which are shot through with aniseed.

When Pierre Ragot recently tired of baking for Parisian boulangerie Maison Galland, he opened the breadly temple that is Marseille's Maison Saint-Honoré (131 Rue d'Endoume; ⑦). **Tastes of the city are folded into every sourdough and bloomer** (think squid ink, orange blossom, even *bouillabaisse*). Little wonder the loaves end up in Marseille's Michelin-star spots such as Alexandre Mazzia's AM (see Eat) and Lionel Levy's Alcyone in Hotel Dieu (see Stay).

The Marché Saint-Victor (33 Rue d'Endoume; marchesaintvictor.fr; ⑧) is as big as it is clever. In 2014, five culinary retailers, including crustacean king Jean-Chri and Spanish chef Patricia, took over this 200sqm warehouse. **Grab bargain tapas platters of fiery red urchins and Corsican ham** from a covered market stall of your choosing, then gobble them on communal benches. >



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EAT

● Fishy food stop

LABOITE SARDINE (Mains about £10)

Because: It's half shop, half seafood restaurant (with communal tables).

Travel's tip: The staff are friendly, but don't speak English — just point and trust in cod. 2 Blvd de la Libération; 00 33 4 9150 9595, laboiteasardine.com; ⑨.

● Local lunch

LE POULPE (Mains about £18)

Because: Chef Michel Portos left behind two Michelin stars to return to his roots. His seafood locavore joint sources everything from within a 200km radius. **Travel's tip:** Dinner prices are steep — go for the three-course set lunch, including wine, for just £22. 84 Quai du Port; 00 33 4 9509 1591, lepoulpe-marseille.com; ⑩.

● Historic and spice

LE FEMINA (Mains about £20)

Because: Since 1912, this north African neighbourhood place has dished out the best couscous and merguez mutton sausages in town. **Travel's tip:** Don't bank on late lunch or early dinner — the hours are strictly 12pm to 2.30pm, then closed 'til 7pm for dinner 1 Rue du Musée; 00 33 4 9154 0356; ⑪.

● Foodie pioneer

AM (Five-course set lunches from £30, five-course set dinners from £75)

Because: Omnivore, the Parisian food festival, voted Alexandre Mazzia French Creator of the Year in 2015. Think smoked milk with trout caviar, and jelly cubes of orange and bacon. **Travel's tip:** All menus are non-negotiable — strap yourself in for the ride. 9 Rue François Rocca; 00 33 4 9124 8363, alexandremazzia.com; ⑫.

● Gourmet rooftop

LE MOLE PASSEDAT (Three-course set lunch from £47, three-course set dinner from £63)

Because: You don't have to pay three-Michelin-star prices to eat Gérald Passedat's food — he also runs the panoramic top floor of the MuCEM museum. **Travel's tip:** Tables get booked up far ahead, but it's worth checking for cancellations. MuCEM, Esplanade du J4; lemole-passedat.com; ⑬.

EAT LIKE A LOCAL

Don't over-season your Camargue oysters with lemon. Try them au naturel instead, as residents do

ON THE MENU

Sound like a pro by ordering barley-based semoule d'orge, the earthy couscous that hails from Algeria's Berber mountain communities

WRITER'S TOP TIP

Book online for masterchef Passedat's two-hour 'market cooking school'. At £72pp, including a meal, it's a steal compared to eating there

FANCY TEAROOMS

● Anti-Starbucks

EGO

Because: Tearooms are trendy here: a place of French, Arabian or Indian origin where you can munch cakes, crunch Moroccan fleur d'oranger patisserie, or sip cups of Assam. EGO also has serve-your-own organic wine and cooked-to-order waffles. **Travel's tip:** The real pull is the ice-cream selection, which includes organic, lactose- and gluten-free options. 73 Cours Julien; ⑭.

● Next generation

MINOOFI

Because: This calls itself a salon de thé nouveau genre and tempts with inventive takes on carrot cake and polenta pie. **Travel's tip:** Come for the 2pm-4pm Happy Hour, when tea and cakes cost £5. 104 Rue Paradis; ⑮.

● Completely crackers

MADMOISELLE CUPCAKE

Mademoiselle C pairs china teacups with outlandish confections such as Twix sponges and Nutella cheesecake. **Travel's tip:** No time? Pick up a lunch to go, which includes Kinder Bueno cupcakes. 25 Rue des Bergers; ⑯.

ASK THE LOCAL

Nicolas Decitre is the artisan-owner of boutique ice-cream shop Vanille Noire (vanillenoire.com)

I start with coffee and fresh pastries in La Samaritaine (2 Quai du Port; ⑰), a century-old cafe in the Vieux-Port. Then I walk by the boats to my shop (13 Rue Caisserie; ⑱). Our in-house lab uses only natural ingredients such as Alphonso mangos, mint leaves and black vanilla. For lunch, I visit a traiteur, say, Maison Geney (38 Rue Caisserie; ⑲), which offers food-to-go such as bouillon de poisson with Camargue rice, or tuna tart with Mascarpone — it's like a posh takeaway. For dinner, I'm a regular at Le Café des Epices (4 Rue du Lacydon; 00 33 4 9191 2269; ⑳). Try its aubergine caviar with giant capers, seabass and fennel, finished off with mirabelle tart.



STAY

● Foodie bargain

MAMA SHELTER (Doubles from £59, room only)

Because: Expect a superbly priced industrial chic hang-out, with a restaurant offering £5 starters and creative puds. **Travel's tip:** There's a fab garden Pastis bar where, for £3.50 a glass, you can sample a dozen local firewaters. 64 Rue de la Loubière; 00 33 4 8435 2000, mamashelter.com/marseille; ㉑.

● Designer digs

LE CORBUSIER HOTEL (Doubles from £67, room only)

Because: You know that multi-coloured tower block designed for the masses by architect Le Corbusier? It now has a gastronomic restaurant to accompany its 21 authentically retro rooms. **Travel's tip:** You'll want to Instagram chef Jérôme Caprin's Mediterranean creations, but it's the views over Marseille that truly astound. 280 Blvd Michelet; 00 33 4 2831 3922, hotellecorbusier.com; ㉒.

PHOTOGRAPHS: ALAMY; MAP: MAIDENHEAD CARTOGRAPHIC

● Vintage B&B

PENSION EDELWEISS (Doubles from £72, B&B)

Because: Come home to lounge on '50s Chesterfields in Edelweiss's five large guestrooms, just a five-minute stroll from Marseille's main Saint-Charles train station. **Travel's tip:** Owner Véronique Bieger will share her local restaurant recommendations (from Turkish to Tunisian) at her communal breakfast table. 6 Rue Lafayette; 00 33 9 5123 3511, pension-edelweiss.fr; ㉓.

● Eaten famille

VILLA MARIE JEANNE (Doubles from £72, B&B)

Because: Here's your chance to stay in the 18th-century home of the food-obsessed Montmirail family. And there's a pool. **Travel's tip:** You'll get an invitation to their Table d'Hôtes dinner. Say yes — you pay to join them for the likes of harbour-fresh octopus salad, barbecued mussels and the rest. Not to be missed. 4 Rue Chicot; 00 33 4 9185 5131, villa-marie-jeanne.com; ㉔.

● Contemporary refinement

HOTEL C2 (Doubles from £169, room only)

Because: It's a five-star designer dream set in a 19th-century mansion. Eat pain perdu, chocolate brownies, and crêpes for breakfast — all in a mirror-lined salon with a vast chandelier. **Travel's tip:** At £23, breakfast has to be a one-off. On other mornings, try the tapas stalls of nearby Marché Saint-Victor (from 10am). 48 Rue Roux de Brignoles; 00 33 4 9505 1313, c2-hotel.com; ㉕.

● Belly-busting showpiece

HOTEL DIEU (Doubles from £182, room only)

Because: To witness Ducasse-trained chef Lionel Levy serve a bouillabaisse milkshake at Michelin-starred house restaurant Alcyone is reason enough to check in. **Travel's tip:** Sea views in this Vieux-Port's landmark building command a premium, but the cheaper panoramas over the historic Panier district are just as interesting. 1 Place Daviel; 00 33 4 1342 4242, marseille.intercontinental.com; ㉖.

GET ME THERE GO INDEPENDENT

BA (ba.com) flies from Heathrow, from £90 return. French rail operator **SNCF** (0844 848 5848, voyages-sncf.com) sells the direct Eurostar service from London St Pancras to Marseille city centre from £99 return. The fastest journey time is six hours and 26 minutes.

GOPACKAGED

Lastminute.com (0800 083 6000, lastminute.com) has two nights in a four-star Vieux-Port hotel, with return Eurostar tickets, from £206pp, room only. **EasyJet Holidays** (020 3499 5232, easyjet.com) has seven nights in the Hotel Dieu, from £545pp, including flights from Gatwick.

FURTHER INFORMATION

The **Marseille Tourist Office's CityPass** (marseille-tourisme.com) gives 48 hours of access to museums, transport, boat trips, guided tours and sightseeing 'train' for £28. The city is often whipped by the mistral, so pack a windbreaker. ■

STAYING IN SUMMER?

C2 manages a private island with its own beach club for guests — complete with cocktail bar and sunloungers. Stay overnight or just for the day (c2-hotel.com)

Out of Africa: clockwise from top left, try the best couscous in town at the historic La Femina; creative flair at AM; designer dream Hotel C2; panoramic views with fine food at Le Môle Passedat; chic bargain stay Mama Shelter