

DESTINATION GUIDE

Lyon, France



INTRODUCTION

Lyon as a travel destination in France is still relatively undiscovered—the stunning city center remains a hidden treasure. Although Lyon's vitality is perceptible in ancient streets with restored buildings, there are still many pockets where renewal has yet to penetrate. These backstreets and courtyards may seem daunting to visitors, but the history embodied in so many of them makes even the most crooked staircases fascinating.

Lyon is France's culinary capital, but the city is also known for its luminosity. Buildings and fountains are beautifully lit at night, giving Lyon a magical atmosphere. Cross the River Saone by one of its *passerelle* bridges on a summer evening at sunset, and you'll see the city of Lyon glow with a hazy, burnt-orange light.

MUST SEE OR DO

Sights—Vieux Lyon; the Roman amphitheaters, Theatres Romains de Fourviere and Amphitheatre des Trois Gauls; Lyon's famous City Murals; the Basilique Notre Dame de Fourviere and the view from La Tour de l'Observatoire.

Museums—Roman artifacts at the Musee de la Civilisation Gallo-Romaine Lyon-Fourviere; history of the area's silk-weaving at the Musee des Tissus et des Arts Decoratifs or the Maison des Canuts; the Centre d'Histoire de la Resistance et de la Deportation.

Memorable Meals—The area's most famous dining at Paul Bocuse; Lyonnaise cuisine and the views at Restaurant de Fourviere; coffee and chocolates at Rolancy.

Late Night—Dancing at La Chapelle; strolling through the Presqu'ile to see the city lights; enjoying drinks (and the city lights) onboard the deck of La Marquise.

Walks—Exploring the *traboules* (covered passageways) of Vieux Lyon or Croix Rouse; visiting the Jardin Saint Pierre.

Especially for Kids—Parc de la Tete d'Or, with its go-karts and water bumper cars; the displays at the Musee International de la Miniature.

GEOGRAPHY

Lyon is located in southeastern France, about a three-hour drive from the southern coast and less than 90 minutes from the borders with Switzerland and Italy, with the Alps to the east. It's a hilly city with two rivers: The Saone and the Rhone wind their way from north to south, joining just south of the city center. Between the two rivers lies the city center, which is almost surrounded by water and hence is known as the Presqu'ile, or peninsula.

At the northern end of the Presqu'ile, the broad shopping streets narrow into little passages that rise sharply uphill toward Lyon's northernmost district, the Croix Rouse. (The slopes rising up to Croix Rouse are known as the Croix Rouse Pentes.) To the west of the Presqu'ile is Lyon's old town, Vieux Lyon. This cluster of medieval streets and squares sits at the foot of Fourviere Hill, which is easily recognized by the white basilica and Lyon's equivalent of the Eiffel Tower, La Tour Metallique, perched side by side on the hilltop.

HISTORY

Around 500 BC, some of the Rhone Valley's earliest Celtic settlers made their home on a hill overlooking modern-day Lyon. But the city didn't take shape until about 43 BC, when the Romans turned the hilltop site into the city of Lugdunum. This settlement on Fourviere Hill developed into one of the most important centers of trade within the Roman Empire, but by the beginning of the fourth century AD, the inhabitants of Lugdunum had moved downhill to the banks of the Saone.

Between the fifth and 12th centuries, Lyon was a powerful Catholic bishopric. A succession of ambitious bishops and rulers brought prosperity to the city, ordering the construction of churches, hospitals and bridges, as well as contributing to a strong economy governed by the church. In 1240, locals set up the first town council, and less than 100 years later, Lyon had become part of the Kingdom of France.

Italian silk producers, fleeing civil war, brought the silk trade to Lyon in the early 1400s. Along with the silk trade, the intellectual and artistic movements of the Renaissance flourished in Lyon. By the turn of the 16th century, Lyon was one of the most prosperous towns in the French kingdom. In 1804, Joseph Marie Jacquard constructed his first mechanical silk-weaving looms, and the district of Croix Rousse was established as the new center of Lyon's silk-weaving trade. The industry continued to flourish through the mid-1800s. However, an outbreak of silkworm disease and increased demand for imported silk eventually led to the decline of this centuries-old manufacturing tradition.

Lyon was the capital of the French Resistance movement and played a central role in France's struggle against the Nazis during World War II. The postwar period was a time of massive expansion in the city, with the construction of many commercial centers, the extension of highways and the high-speed railway, the development of industrial plants and scientific institutes, and the construction of the metro system. In the late 1990s, the majority of Lyon's downtown area was recognized as a UNESCO World Heritage site, thanks to the rare juxtaposition of several neighborhoods covering a 2,000-year period of history.

Over the past decade, the city has embarked on several urban redevelopment projects in former industrial or working-class neighborhoods such as Vaise and Gerland. Cleansed of industrial grime, the areas are now home to universities and corporate headquarters. The next neighborhood slated for redevelopment is the lower half of the downtown peninsula known as the Confluence. It will be one of the most ambitious urban-development projects in the country. The cornerstone of the development will be the Musee des Confluences, a Frank Gehry-style science and civilization museum that will loom above the symbolic meeting point of the town's two rivers. A leisure center will entertain visitors around a newly dug marina, and there will also be a walkway along the banks of the Saone—from Perrache Station to the peninsula's tip. The entire Confluence development project is slated for completion in 2020.

POTPOURRI

French composer Maurice Jarre, who wrote the music for movies including *Lawrence of Arabia*, *Ryan's Daughter*, *A Passage to India*, *Dead Poets' Society* and *Dr. Zhivago*, was born in Lyon. So was his son, Jean-Michel Jarre.

In the late 15th century, Lyon was one of the most important printing centers in Europe. The first book printed in Lyon dates from 1473.

Beautiful Louise Labe (1520-1566), one of France's major female poets and famous for her bold love sonnets, was born in Lyon.

In 1784, opera singer Elizabeth Tible became the first female aeronaut when she sailed over Lyon in a hot-air balloon while singing.

Lyon hosts some of the quaintest associations and "academies" in France, many of them of the culinary variety. Very serious people of the Ordre de la Quenelle devote their lives to the study of the dumpling; the Ordre of the Raie knows everything about the skate (a fish); and the Academie du Lapin studies the rabbit in all details (before eating it). And several associations protect the *bouchons* of Lyon from the invasion of the Golden Arches.

The famous French writer and aviator, Antoine de Saint-Exupery (1900-1944), was born in Lyon. His endearing novella *The Little Prince* is still read by millions of children and adults all over the world.

France's high-speed passenger train, the TGV, which was also the first high-speed train in Europe, began operations from Lyon in 1981.

LOCATION

Historic Lyon is situated by the confluence of the rivers Saone and Rhone, making it ideal for river cruise day-trippers to enjoy the riches of the city. Although there is no cruise terminal, ships dock at Quai Claude Bernard on the east bank of the Rhone near the University of Lyon. The Quai itself is located near popular landmarks. You can walk, take public transit and some cruise companies provide complimentary bicycles. Lyon also has a bike-sharing program called the Velo'v.

SHORE EXCURSIONS

Excursions are typically included in a river cruise. For first-time cruisers who are strapped for time but want to see as much as possible, hop on one of the double-decker city bus tours. Walking tours are another option. Prepare for a couple of hours ascending the narrow cobbled stone laneways of Old (Vieux) Lyon to see the historic silk weaving district and the other main sights, such as the Basilica of Notre Dame de Fourviere, Lyon Cathedral, Roman ruins and examples of Renaissance-era architecture.

Independent travelers should try the efficient public transit. Catch the funicular from Vieux Lyon Metro station up the steep hill to Fourviere. You get a fabulous view of the city from this perch, not to mention seeing other notable landmarks such as Lyon's own mini Eiffel Tower. Shoppers congregate at the car-free Rue St. Jean, and be sure to veer off for lunch in one of the many quaint brasseries.

SIGHTSEEING

To start your exploration of Lyon, get your bearings in the breezy expanse of Place Bellecour, at the center of the Presqu'île. Locate the statue of Louis XIV on horseback, stand and face the direction he's heading and you'll be looking north. The Saone is on your left, and on its opposite bank is the historic old town, Vieux Lyon, a maze of cobblestoned Renaissance streets and interconnecting alleyways. The Rhone lies to the right. Off to the north—and uphill—lies the district of Croix Rousse.

Once you're oriented, seeing the city and its sights is easy. Head to Croix Rousse and explore the district's *traboules* (covered passageways) and stop in at the Maison des Canuts. Then amble back downhill, toward the Rhone. Winding paths with seemingly random flights of steps pass along the remains of Lyon's ancient city walls and offer tantalizing glimpses of the river. If you cross the Winston Churchill Bridge, you'll arrive at the gates of the Parc de la Tete d'Or. We like renting a rowboat on the lake there, but the park's zoo and rose garden are enjoyable, too.

On the western bank of the Saone, Vieux Lyon has more *traboules* leading to magnificent, secluded Renaissance courtyards and multistoried galleries that most tourists miss. Be sure to take the funicular train to the top of Fourviere Hill. As well as spectacular views, you'll find the Basilica of Notre Dame and its neo-Byzantine art, ancient Roman amphitheatres and the must-see Musee de la Civilisation Gallo-Romaine. When you've had enough of the Romans, stroll through Vieux Lyon.

The Presqu'île is home to many of the city's museums, including the Musee des Tissus et des Arts Decoratifs and the Musee des Beaux Arts, with its collection of French masters and its lovely interior garden. But the best time to see the Presqu'île is at night, when its buildings and fountains are all lit up.

Before you start experiencing Lyon, stop at the main tourist office on Place Bellecour (on the southeast side of the square), where you can buy the Lyon City Card. The cost is 18.90 euros for a one-day card, 28 euros for two days or 37 euros for three days. You'll get unlimited use of public transport within the city, entry into 21 major museums and galleries, a variety of guided tours and a river cruise.

HISTORIC SITES

Amphitheatre des Trois Gauls

Built at the beginning of the first millennium, this ancient Roman theater wasn't unearthed until the 20th century. It's famous as the site where early Christians were martyred in AD 177 under Marcus Aurelius. Among them was St. Blandine (a pillar marks the spot where this took place). The amphitheater can only be viewed from the outside. Rue Lucien Sportisse (on the slopes of the Croix Rousse hill; Metro: Hotel de Ville), Lyon. Phone 04-7277-6969.

Bartholdi Fountain

Designed by Frederic Auguste Bartholdi (most famous for designing the Statue of Liberty), this magnificent fountain represents the Garonne River flowing into the ocean. The fountain, which is also called the Fountain of Light and Water, was originally intended for the city of Bordeaux (hence the rather inappropriate geographical theme) and is most impressive when illuminated at night. Place des Terreaux (Metro: Hotel de Ville), Lyon.

Basilique Notre Dame de Fourviere

This is the conspicuous, huge white church on Fourviere Hill, above Lyon's old town. Built in 1896 as a thank-you to the Virgin Mary that the Prussians didn't invade Lyon in 1871, it contains impressively detailed neo-Byzantine mosaics. Climb to the top of the hill or take the funicular train from Vieux Lyon station. The church museum houses unique religious artifacts, including liturgical vestments, and gold and silver vessels and objects. The museum also tells the history of the basilica.

The northeast tower of the basilica (La Tour de l'Observatoire) is the best vantage point for enjoying a panoramic view of Lyon and the Alps beyond. The adjoining esplanade offers a magnificent view, as well. Basilica open daily 8 am-7 pm. Museum open daily 10 am-12:30 pm and 2-5:30 pm (closed mid-December to mid-April). Esplanade

open daily 6 am-9:30 pm, extended hours May-September. Free entry to the basilica. Museum admission 2.50 euros adults. Place de Fourviere (Metro: Fourviere), Lyon. Phone 4-7825-8619. <http://www.fourviere.org>.

Cathedrale Saint Jean

This 12th-century Gothic cathedral at the foot of Fourviere Hill is the oldest seat of the Catholic Church in France. It contains some original stones recycled from Roman buildings. Inside is a 15th-century astronomical clock, which chimes the "Hymn to Saint Jean" while automated figures play out the Annunciation (daily at noon, 2, 3 and 4 pm). Monday-Friday 8:15 am-7:45 pm; Saturday, Sunday and holidays 8 am-7 pm. Free. Place Saint Jean (Metro: Vieux Lyon), Lyon. Phone 04-7842-2825. <http://www.cathedrale-lyon.ccf.fr/visite/index.html>.

Theatres Romains de Fourviere

The two ancient Gallo-Roman theaters (an amphitheater and an odeum) on Fourviere Hill bear witness to Lyon's importance as a city of the Roman Empire from the first century BC. The views are great, too. Concerts and plays are held each summer in the theaters, weather permitting. Mid-April to mid-September daily 7 am-9 pm; mid-September to mid-April daily 7 am-7 pm. Free. 6 Rue de L'Antiquaille (Metro: Minimes), Lyon. Phone 04-7238-8190.

MUSEUMS

Details concerning Lyon's many museums can be found on the city's official website, <http://www.lyon.fr>, and on the official tourism website, <http://www.en.lyon-france.com>.

Centre d'Histoire de la Resistance et de la Deportation

At this museum, visitors will find a fascinating and shocking memorial to the role France played in World War II. This museum sheds light on the heroic role of the French Resistance and the horrors of deportation. The building housed the Gestapo headquarters in Lyon between 1942 and 1944. Videotaped interviews, photographs and sound effects immerse visitors in this dark period of European history. Take advantage of the audio guide. Records and documents relating to the deportation of Jews can be studied there as well. Open Wednesday-Friday 9 am-5:30 pm, Saturday and Sunday 9:30 am-6 pm. 4 euros adults. 14 Ave. Berthelot (Tram: T2 Centre Berthelot), Lyon. Phone 04-7872-2311. http://www.chrd.lyon.fr/chrd/sections/fr/pied/english_1.

Institut Lumiere

This beautiful art-nouveau castle is the former home of the Lumiere Brothers, the inventors of cinema. The grounds contain a film museum, former studio and a cinema celebrating Auguste and Louis Lumiere (appropriately nicknamed the "Light Brothers"). See footage of the world's first films and the shed where they were first projected in 1895. Open daily except Monday 10 am-6:30 pm. 6 euros adults. 25 Rue du Premier Film (Metro: Montplaisir Lumiere), Lyon. Phone 4-7878-1895. <http://www.institut-lumiere.org>.

Maison des Canuts

This small, industrious shop and museum demonstrates the art of silk weaving up to the present day. It highlights the jacquard loom, which was first used in the district of Lyon. It also displays a collection of silk fabrics and accessories, with many wonderful items on sale. The tours are in French, though most guides also speak English. Open Tuesday-Saturday 10 am-6:30 pm. Guided tours at 11 am and 3:30 pm. Free admission. Tours cost 6.50 euros adults, 3.50 euros children age 12 and older, free for children younger than 12. 10-12 Rue d'Ivry (Metro: Croix Rousse), Lyon. Phone 04-7828-6204. <http://www.maisondescanuts.com>.

Musee d'Art Contemporain

This museum in the Cite Internationale complex hosts changing exhibits of works by contemporary artists. Check newspaper listings to see if the exhibits pique your interest. The tree-shaded outdoor cafe facing Parc de la Tete d'Or is a great spot for a relaxing light lunch. Open Monday-Friday 11 am-6 pm, Saturday and Sunday 11 am-7 pm. The museum closes for a few days between temporary expositions. 13 euros adults. 81 Quai Charles de Gaulle (Cite Internationale; Metro: Foch), Lyon. Phone 4-7269-1717. <http://www.mac-lyon.com/mac>.

Musee de la Civilisation Gallo-Romaine Lyon-Fourviere

This must-see museum houses stunning pieces dating from prehistory up through the Roman founding of Lugdunum (Lyon) in 43 BC. The collection includes bronze inscriptions, funeral masks and intricate mosaics. The focus is the Gallo-Roman settlement that existed on the site. Tuesday-Sunday 10 am-6 pm. 4 euros adults. Free admission on Thursday. 17 Rue Cleberg (Metro: Fourviere), Lyon. Phone 04-7238-4930. <http://www.musees-gallo-romains.com>.

Musee de l'Imprimerie

Lyon was one of Europe's oldest and most important printing centers. This museum, located in the beautiful, late 15th-century Hotel de Couronne, demonstrates the history of the "black art" and has extremely rare incunables (books printed before 1500) on display. Don't miss the 600 woodcuts used to illustrate early Bibles. Wednesday-Sunday 10:30 am-6 pm. 5 euros adults. 13 Rue de la Poulallerie (Metro: Cordeliers), Lyon. Phone 04-7837-6598. <http://www.imprimerie.lyon.fr/imprimerie>.

Musee des Beaux Arts

This is one of France's most impressive art collections, housed in perhaps the grandest building in the Presqu'ile: a 17th-century abbey. The collection includes works by such famous artists as Monet, Degas, Bacon and Picasso. Check out the ornate ceilings and the tranquil interior garden. The section of old Egyptian art is also impressive. Open daily except Tuesday 10 am-6 pm (Friday 10:30 am-6 pm). Some galleries close at lunchtime. Garden open 8:30 am-6:30 pm. 7 euros adults for regular collection, 9 euros for exhibitions, 12 euros for a combined ticket. Palais Saint Pierre, 20 Place des Terreaux (Metro: Hotel de Ville), Lyon. Phone 04-7210-1740. <http://www.mba-lyon.fr>.

Musee des Confluences

This new futuristic museum of science and civilizations also houses the restored natural history collection of the old Le Museum, which first opened in 1772 and closed in July 2007. 86 Quai Perrache, Lyon. Phone 04-7837-3000. <http://www.museedesconfluences.fr>.

Musee des Tissus et des Arts Decoratifs

Dedicated to Lyon's silk-production heritage, this museum takes a broader look at the world of textiles than the Maison des Canuts does. Beautiful fabrics and costumes are displayed in the galleries, which chart the history of fabric production around the world. Admission ticket is also valid for the adjoining Museum of Decorative Arts, which boasts an outstanding collection of ceramics, especially Renaissance majolica. Tuesday-Sunday 10 am-5:30 pm. 10 euros adults, 8 euros after 4 pm. 34 Rue de la Charite (Metro: Ampere), Lyon. Phone 04-7838-4200. <http://www.musee-des-tissus.com>.

Musee International de la Miniature

This fascinating collection of miniature furniture and shadowboxes is housed in one of the landmarks of the old city, an 18th-century apartment building known as the Maison des Avocats. Several of Lyon's landmarks are reproduced in miniature, often from unusual vantage points. The permanent collection is complemented by temporary exhibits, such as sci-fi and fantasy film props and miniature sets. Monday-Friday 10 am-6:30 pm, Saturday and Sunday 10 am-7 pm. 9 euros adults. 60 Rue Saint Jean (Metro: Vieux Lyon), Lyon. Phone 4-7200-2477. <http://www.mimlyon.com>.

NEIGHBORHOODS & DISTRICTS

Croix Rousse

The whole district is a memorial to one of Lyon's most prolific industries—silk weaving—which was so instrumental in the city's prosperity. A guided walking tour of the area, taking in some of the *traboules*, reveals just how much history lies in these seemingly ordinary residential streets. The walks are organized through the tourist office. Phone 04-7277-6969.

Presqu'ile

For an enchanting view of the city, take to the streets of the Presqu'ile after dark—from Place Bellecour to the Opera House and beyond—to see the beautifully designed city lights, which adorn many buildings and sparkle in the district's numerous fountains. The area also offers plenty of opportunities for shopping and dining.

Vieux Lyon

Stroll through the narrow, cobblestoned streets of this old Renaissance town and you'll get a sense of the area's history. Many of the buildings have ornate facades, and plaques on buildings and doorways describe (in French and English) the district's most important events and past inhabitants. Small *traboules* link the two main streets (Rue du Boeuf and Rue Saint Jean). Feel free to push open the doors to any of the buildings that have signs by them indicating a *traboule* to discover the magnificent medieval and Renaissance courtyards, artisan galleries and staircases hidden behind them. The city has arranged with owners to keep these historic passageways open daily, usually until 5 pm. Pick up a map of the *traboules* at the tourist office, or take a guided tour. It's best to go on Monday-Friday mornings to avoid the crowds.

PARKS & GARDENS

Jardin Saint Pierre

A true gem in the bustling city. This small, manicured garden occupies the cloister of a former convent that now houses the Musee des Beaux Arts. Although not apparent until you step through the main entrance to the museum, it's a peaceful place to relax after shopping in the Presqu'ile or visiting the museum. The sculptures include several pieces by Rodin. Daily 7:30 am-6 pm October-April; daily 8 am-7 pm May-September. Free. 20 Place des Terreaux (Metro: Hotel de Ville), Lyon. Phone 04-7210-1756.

Parc de la Tete d'Or

This is Lyon's most prominent park and also one of the largest in France. It dates from 1856. Beyond the stylish landscaping are less-cultivated areas, where you can enjoy a taste of the countryside within the city. Among its attractions are a scenic lake, botanical gardens and a small zoo with giraffes, elephants and tigers. October-March daily 6 am-9 pm, April-September daily 6 am-11 pm. Free admission. Main entrance on Boulevard des Belges (about a 10-minute walk from Foch metro station), Lyon. Phone 04-7889-0203. <http://www.loisirs-parcdelatetedor.com>.

ZOOS & WILDLIFE

Jardin Zoologique

A small yet notable zoo, located in the Parc de la Tete d'Or. It's one of the oldest city zoos in Europe. Daily 6:30 am-10:30 pm April-October; daily 6:30 am-8:30 pm November-March. Free. Entrances on Porte de la Voute and Boulevard Stalingrad, Lyon. Phone 04-7282-3500. <http://www.zoo.lyon.fr>.

OTHER OPTIONS

City Murals

More than 150 giant wall paintings are found all over the city. Each one commemorates historical events and celebrities or simply creates a trompe l'oeil effect. One of the most popular is *La Fresque des Lyonnais*—on the corner of Quai Saint Vincent and Rue de la Martiniere. It depicts 24 of Lyon's most famous historical figures throughout the centuries. Some of the murals are illuminated at night. Guided tours are available through the tourist office, which also sells a book detailing the murals. Phone 04-7277-6969. <http://www.lyon-france.com>.

Traboules

These covered passageways, an impressive feature of the architecture of Vieux Lyon and Croix Rouse, were originally used by silk weavers to transport rolls of precious fabric around the districts without exposing them to wind and rain. During World War II, the *traboules* were used as a means of escape and communication for members of the French Resistance. Tours of the *traboules*—in both English and French—run regularly throughout the year, but you can explore them yourself with the aid of a map and booklet available from the tourist office.

See & Do: Sightseeing

RECREATION

The Parc de la Tete d'Or, which lies within walking distance of the city center (enter by the main gates on Boulevard des Belges), offers a choice of recreational activities. Take a bike down to the park and test the specially designed velodrome or rent a covered cycle carriage for a more graceful pedal-powered tour of the gardens. (Note that bike riding in the park is only allowed until 1 pm.) You'll find throngs of in-line skaters and joggers around its fitness circuit. The boathouse by the lake offers boating and fishing.

The city's expanded Gerland Stadium is dedicated to football—the Olympique Lyonnais football team trains and plays there—but at Gerland Park you can rent courts for racquet sports or use the open space for cycling, jogging or walking.

Parc de Miribel-Jonage, which lies about 6 mi/10 km northeast of central Lyon, is another good option. Besides being a great place to walk and hike, this park and its artificial lake are favored by locals for bird-watching, watersports, fishing, horseback riding and swimming. There are golf and tennis facilities there, too.

BEACHES

The center of a large city is a surprising location for a beach, but Lyon does have a small sunbathing area on the left bank, near the Parc de la Tete d'Or. Rhone beach is popular with families who haven't had a chance to escape from the city during the heat of the summer. It is located just north of the Winston Churchill Bridge. You approach from Quai Charles de Gaulle.

BICYCLING

Velo'v

This bike service allows you to use and drop off bicycles at any one of their more than 300 locations across Lyon for a flat fee, making it one of the healthiest and most convenient ways to explore the city. A one-day ticket is only 1.50 euro; a seven-day ticket is 5 euros. Phone 04-0800-083568. <http://www.velov.grandlyon.com>.

GOLF

Golf de Lyon

This golf course is located several miles/kilometers out of town toward the airport. It has two 18-hole courses and a driving range. March-October daily 8 am-6 pm (till 7 pm Saturday and Sunday); November-February daily 8 am-5 pm. Villette d'Anthon, Lyon. Phone 4-7831-1133. <http://www.golfclubdelyon.com>.

SPAS AND HEALTH CLUBS

I-Way Spa

This full-service spa is located in the center of Lyon and offers a full range of facials, massages and treatments. You can also indulge in a relaxing sauna or Hammam session. Open Tuesday-Friday noon-8 pm, Saturday 10 am-8 pm. 4 Rue Jean Marcuit, Lyon. Phone 04-3750-2859. <http://www.i-way-world.com>.

OTHER OPTIONS

Fourviere Aventures

This theme park, located in Lyon's lush Fourviere district, offers a different kind of thrill than your standard rides and roller coasters. It is centered around environmental education and guests get in touch with nature through outdoor acrobatic courses and more than 80 workshops, complete with quizzes. There is a challenge for every skill level ranging from beginner to expert. Night courses are also available. 23 euros adults, 21 euros students and children ages 12-17, 14 euros children younger than 12. 3 Place du 158e Regiment d'Infanterie, Lyon. Phone 04-7836-3175. <http://www.france-aventures.com>.

NIGHTLIFE

Lyon is full of bars and restaurants that have tables set outside on terraces. On balmy nights during July and August, people-watching over a late meal or drinks may be all the entertainment you need after a hot day exploring the city. But there is no shortage of stimulating nightlife throughout the year if you're in the mood. Clubs, jazz cafes and piano bars can be found in every quarter of the city, with new hot spots constantly springing up. Door policies can be strict, though, so if you haven't got a Ferrari to park in front of the bouncer, dress up.

At night, the city center hums with a vibrant variety of inviting bars and late-night cafes. Try the narrow streets of the Croix Rousse Pentes district for some alternative, unconventional all-night bars. There are lots of nightclubs along the banks of the Saone, skirting the old town and inviting night owls into their booming basements. Rue Lanterne, known for its adult bookshops, is also home to the famous jazz cellar Hot Club de Lyon (innocuous despite its name and location). Across the Presqu'île, moored on the opposite bank of the Rhone, you'll find the floating dance club La Marquise.

Bars generally start humming with an after-work drinks crowd that thins out around 8 pm. The action builds back up 10:30 pm-midnight as revelers head to the local clubs, but don't count on places reaching critical mass for dancing before 1 am. Most clubs are open until 4 or 5 am.

BARS, TAVERNS & PUBS

A KGB Cercle Souping

A bar-restaurant full of Soviet nostalgia, KGB serves 40 different vodkas as well as Russian-themed snacks and cocktails. (The concept was invented in the U.S.) Open Tuesday-Saturday from 7 pm. 2 Rue des Bons Enfants (at the corner of Rue des Bons Enfants; Metro: Jean Mace), Lyon. Phone 4-3728-6330. <http://www.akgb.fr>.

Bus Cafe

This converted bus-operator's office is truly comfortable. Located on the left bank of the Rhone, it's where Lyon's jet set flocks after work to see and be seen. DJs on some nights. Monday-Saturday 5 pm-4 am. 18 Quai Sarrail (Metro: Cordeliers), Lyon. Phone 06-1210-5930. <http://bus-cafe.fr>.

Comptoir de la Bourse

This expanded lounge bar has a decidedly avant-garde atmosphere. It is one of the top watering holes for Lyon's beautiful people. Be sure to ask barman Olivier for an "Orangie," the house cocktail named after a U.S. consul to Lyon. Open Monday-Saturday from 7 pm. 33 Rue de la Bourse, Lyon. Phone 4-7241-7152. <http://www.comptoirdelabourse.fr>.

Le Voxx

A buzzing bar in a busy corner of town, this hive of social activity attracts locals of all nationalities. A different DJ each night keeps the musical styles revolving, with occasional theme nights. Open Monday-Friday from 8 am, Saturday and Sunday from 9 am. 1 Rue d'Algerie (Metro: Hotel de Ville), Lyon. Phone 04-7828-3387.

The Smoking Dog

This cozy British pub in the heart of Vieux Lyon offers English beers and a bilingual pub quiz every Tuesday night. Monday-Friday 5 pm-1 am, Saturday and Sunday 2 pm-1 am. Happy hour Monday-Friday 6-8 pm. 16 Rue Lainerie (Metro: Vieux Lyon), Lyon. Phone 04-7828-3827. <http://www.smoking-dog.com>.

COMEDY CLUBS

Espace Gerson

If you understand French, try this convivial, cozy entertainment spot. The comedy cafe showcases new talent on Monday and Tuesday, and better-known French comics perform Wednesday-Saturday. Open Monday-Saturday from 8:30 pm. 15 euros cover, 17.50 euros with a drink. 1 Place Gerson (Metro: Hotel de Ville), Lyon. Phone 4-7827-9699. <http://www.espacegerson.com>.

DANCE & NIGHTCLUBS

La Chapelle

One of the hottest clubs in Lyon, this former chapel of a small 16th-century chateau rocks to house and techno all night long. You have to hike up the hill from the Perrache station to get there, but this overtly straight-friendly gay club has an ambience that pulls in many of Lyon's VIPs and their entourages. Stop by for drinks before dinner on the spacious terrace in the English garden. The dance floor gets moving around 1 am. Open October-April Thursday-Saturday 7 pm-6 am, May-September daily 6 pm-6 am. Cover charge on Friday and Saturday (starting at midnight) includes one drink. 60 Montee de Choulans (Metro: Perrache), Lyon. Phone 04-7837-2395.

La Marquise

Docked on the banks of the Rhone, La Marquise is moving up in the Lyon music scene. You'll hear the latest indie tunes, house, soul and hip-hop. Open Wednesday-Saturday from 11 pm. Usually 5 euros cover, depending on the program. Located across from 20 Quai Augagneur (Metro: Cordeliers), Lyon. Phone 4-7261-9292. <http://www.marquise.net>.

Le Black & White

Hot "black" club that welcomes white guests as long as they don't wear tennis shoes. Great French-Caribbean Zouk and Afro-Cuban music, but also R&B, hip-hop and groove. Wednesday-Sunday from 11 pm. 15 euros cover on Friday and Saturday. 18 Quai Romain-Rollan (Metro: Vieux-Lyon), Lyon. Phone 06-9816-5697.

Le Marais Discotheque

Gay and lesbian dance club that also features a karaoke bar and popular resident DJs. Wednesday-Saturday from 9 pm. No cover Thursday, 8 euros Wednesday and Friday, 10 euros Saturday. 3 Rue de Therme (Metro: Croix-Paquet), Lyon. Phone 04-7830-6230. <http://www.lemaraislyon.fr>.

UC (United Cafe)

The mainstay of Lyon's gay scene since the 1990s, this place is hidden away at the end of a small alley. The crowd, heavy on the twentysomethings, parties into the night in a stone-vaulted bar area and intimate dance floor. Everyone welcome. Karaoke on Tuesday. Open daily 11 pm-5 am. No cover. Impasse de la Pecherie (Metro: Hotel de Ville), Lyon. Phone 04-7829-9318. <http://www.united-cafe.com>.

LIVE MUSIC

Hot Club de Lyon

Down under the streets of the Presqu'ile is this cozy live-music joint, which happens to be Lyon's best-known jazz venue. A varied program of performers, from local to international. Refreshingly unsmoky atmosphere; there's a separate smokers' bar next to the entrance. Open Tuesday-Thursday from 9:30 pm, Friday and Saturday from 10 pm. Cover 7 euros-10 euros. 26 Rue Lanterne (Metro: Hotel de Ville), Lyon. Phone 04-7839-5474. <http://www.hotclubdelyon.org>.

Le Bec de Jazz

This rather hard-to-find piano bar is famous for the cool music played by Tchango Dei, who hails from Benin. Open Wednesday-Saturday 11 pm-5 am. Cover 3 euros. 19 Rue Burdeau (Metro: Croix-Paquet), Lyon. Phone 04-8124-3783. <http://le-bec-de-jazz.advertory.fr>.

Le Cintra

A sophisticated piano bar-restaurant, Le Cintra is in a former port shop on a stylish square next to the stock-exchange building. It has retained the cozy, dark-wood decor and oak casks. Live music every night. Discreet, clean-cut service. Open Monday-Saturday 9 pm-3 am, Sunday noon-midnight. No cover. 43 Rue de la Bourse (Metro: Cordeliers), Lyon. Phone 04-7842-5408. <http://www.restaurant-cintra.com>.

Ninkasi

Lyon's best-known microbrewery and most happening space for upcoming music groups. This cult, live-music venue has two stages and a restaurant. Hear hip new bands Thursday-Saturday. Open Monday-Thursday 10 am-1 am, Friday and Saturday 10 am-4 am, Sunday 10 am-midnight. Cover charge depends on who's playing; average is 15 euros, but there's often no charge. 267 Rue Marcel Merieux (Metro: Stade de Gerland), Lyon. Phone 04-7276-8900. <http://www.ninkasi.fr>.

OTHER OPTIONS

Academie de Billard

A giant billiard hall with 16 tables, a choice of either French or American games, and a full bar. Open Monday-Wednesday and Sunday 2:30-8 pm; Thursday-Saturday 2 pm-2 am. 31 Rue de la Martiniere (Metro: Hotel de Ville), Lyon. Phone 04-7827-0159.

Billard Charlemagne

This billiard hall houses 25 pool tables and broadcasts all major sporting events, making it a popular spot for locals and tourists looking to unwind. Monday-Thursday 11:30 pm-1 am, Friday and Saturday 3 pm-2 am, Sunday 3 pm-midnight. 84 cours Charlemagne (Metro: Perrache), Lyon. Phone 04-7837-2073. <http://billardcharlemagne.com>.

PERFORMING ARTS

From opera, theater and classical music to modern dance, rock concerts and experimental performance art, Lyon has a great arts scene. In summer, the streets and open-air stages come alive with outdoor performances. Its most famous outdoor music festival is Nuits de Fourviere in the atmospheric Roman amphitheater on Fourviere Hill (<http://www.nuits-de-fourviere.com>). You'll find all kinds of free performances in the public parks on the slopes of Croix Rousse. Lyon also hosts the Biennale de la Danse, a modern-dance extravaganza that draws thousands of visitors to the city in September of even-numbered years.

DANCE

Compagnie Maguy Marin

Dance aficionados will want to see this troupe led by famous contemporary choreographer Maguy Marin. The troupe is based at her national dance center, Centre Choreographique Nationale, which is located just outside Lyon. 30 Ave. General Leclerc, Rillieux-La-Pape. Phone 04-7201-1230. <http://www.compagnie-maguy-marin.fr>.

Le Ballet de l'Opera

Le Ballet de l'Opera mounts monthly productions September through May at the Opera House. Place de la Comedie, Lyon. Phone 0826-305-325. <http://www.opera-lyon.com>.

Maison de la Danse

Maison de la Danse presents a season of diverse dance productions early September through late June. 8 Ave. Jean Mermoz, Lyon. Phone 04-7278-1818. <http://www.maisondeladanse.com>.

MUSIC

Orchestre National de Lyon

Orchestre National de Lyon performs frequently October through June at Auditorium de Lyon. 149 Rue Garibaldi, Lyon. Phone 04-7895-9595. <http://www.auditorium-lyon.com>.

OPERA

Opera National de Lyon

Opera National de Lyon presents its regular-season performances at Opera House mid-October through early June. Place de la Comedie, Lyon. Phone 0826-305-325. <http://www.opera-lyon.com>.

TICKET BROKERS

Tickets for all cultural events in Lyon may be purchased at FNAC. Phone 08-2502-00204. <http://www.fnac.com>.

VENUES

La Maison de la Danse

This venue is internationally renowned for producing a plethora of French and foreign dance performances. 8 Ave. Jean Mermoz (Metro: Bachut), Lyon. Phone 4-7278-1800. <http://www.maisondeladanse.com>.

Opera de Lyon

This building is worth a visit, even when no performances are running. Guided tours are available. 1 Place de la Comedie (Metro: Hotel de Ville), Lyon. Phone 04-6985-5454. <http://www.opera-lyon.com>.

Theatre des Celestins

Among Lyon's 30 theaters, this has been the city's main theatrical venue since 1838. It is *the* place in Lyon to experience French avant-garde theater. Performances Tuesday-Saturday at 8 pm. 4 Rue Charles Dullin (Metro: Bellecour), Lyon. Phone 4-7277-4000. <http://www.celestins-lyon.org>.

Theatre Le Guignol

This puppet theater was created by Laurent Mourguet in 1810. Today it is the home of the Compagnie des Zonzons. The productions (in French) appeal to young and old alike. 2 Rue Louis Carrand (Metro: Hotel de Ville), Lyon. Phone 04-7828-9257. <http://www.theatre-guignol.com>.

SPECTATOR SPORTS

Lyon is home to some of France's best football (soccer), ice-hockey and basketball teams.

A lower-profile sport—nonetheless popular with all ages—is *boules*. A particular version of the game is played in Lyon, using a heavier ball and a longer playing field than in the French classic *petanque*. You can watch games on any sunny Sunday afternoon in countless squares and parks around Lyon, such as Place Sathonay. A national *boules* tournament also takes place each year in June in the Place Bellecour.

HOCKEY

Lyon Lions

The Lyon Hockey Elite (Lyon Lions) play in the Division Elite of the French League. Home games are at Patinoire Charlemagne. Season runs November through April. 100 Cours Charlemagne, Lyon.
<http://www.lhcleslions.com/index.php>.

SOCCER

Olympique Lyonnais

This soccer team frequently wins national championships. Games are currently played at Gerland Stadium (at 353 Avenue Jean-Jaures, Lyon; Metro: Stade Gerland), but the club plans to move sometime in 2015 to the OL Land Stadium, which is currently under construction in the suburb of Decinen (<http://www.grandstadeol.com>). Season runs mid-July through late May. You may purchase promotional items and tickets to games at the OL shop. Boutique Planete OL, 60 Ave. Tony Garnier, Lyon. Phone 04-2929-6700. <http://olweb.fr>.

OTHER OPTIONS

Boulodrome des Canuts

This club, home of the Cro-Lyon *boules* team, is for serious players, but is fun for spectators, too. Hours of games are irregular, but there is usually action on Saturday and Sunday when the weather is good. 5 Ter Impasse Gord, Lyon. Phone 04-7827-8301. <http://www.crolyon-boules.com>.

SHOPPING

Open-air markets specializing in food, antiques, books, clothing and crafts operate in various locations around the city daily except Monday. Street markets are a natural habitat for the native Lyonnaise, and the lighthearted squabbling and chatter are all part of the entertainment.

You can shop for traditional Lyonnaise pots (wine carafes), pottery, Guignol puppets and other crafts in the little shops along Rue Saint Jean and Rue du Boeuf. Silk fabric, scarves, ties and clothing can be found near the silk workshop in the Croix Rousse Pentes district or in the shop at the Maison des Canuts in Croix Rousse. The city also offers some great opportunities for buying antiques.

Lyon is home to one of Europe's largest shopping malls, the Centre Commercial in the Part-Dieu district. The baffling maze of escalators, fountains and staircases is brimming with such leading French chains as the music and audio superstore FNAC, the Galeries Lafayette department store and a host of smaller boutiques. The remarkable glass-domed building offers three floors of shops and cafes and is a good place for shopping on a rainy day.

But the diamonds in Lyon's shopping crown are the designer boutiques in the Presqu'île, along Rue Edouard Herriot and the streets surrounding Place Bellecour. Even if you can only afford to window-shop at Gucci, the specialty food stores around Place Bellecour and throughout the city center offer affordable indulgences—treat yourself to some of France's finest chocolates or *foie gras*. For a fabulous range of mainstream shops and the modest Printemps department store, amble down the pedestrian-only Rue de la République, adorned with another of Lyon's designer fountains and an old-fashioned merry-go-round about halfway down.

Shopping Hours: Most shops are open Monday-Saturday 9 am-7:30 pm. Smaller shops and those outside the city center often close for a one- to three-hour lunch break between noon and 3 pm. Very few are open on Sunday.

ANTIQUÉ STORES

La Cite des Antiquaires

Famous throughout France, this giant antiques mall houses more than 150 stores. Everything from furniture and music boxes to jewelry and carpets. It's a treasure trove. Thursday, Saturday and Sunday 10 am-7 pm, Friday by appointment only. 117 Blvd. de Stalingrad (Metro: Charpennes), Lyon. Phone 04-7269-0000. <http://www.cite-antiquaires.fr>.

BOOKSTORES

Decitre

Specializing in foreign-language books, this centrally located bookstore stocks a good selection of literature, maps and guidebooks in English. Open Monday-Saturday 9:30 am-7:30 pm. 29 Place Bellecour (Metro: Bellecour), Lyon. Phone 04-2668-0001. <http://www.decitre.fr>.

Marche aux Bouquinistes

A great place to browse through stands of secondhand and antique books. There's something to interest everyone. Open Saturday and Sunday 10 am-6 pm. No phone. Quai Pecherie and Quai Saint Antoine (on the banks of the Saone River; Metro: Hotel de Ville), Lyon.

Privat Flammarion

Probably Lyon's largest bookstore. It also has a large multimedia section. Monday-Saturday 10 am-7 pm. 19 Place Bellecour (Metro: Bellecour), Lyon. Phone 04-7256-2121. <http://www.chapitre.com>.

DEPARTMENT STORES
