

# Marseille<sup>★</sup>

For decades, Marseille trailed an unsavory reputation as a dirty, chaotic city practically synonymous with the French Connection. But this 2,600-year-old metropolis has been cleaning up its act and is suddenly stylish—yet has lost none of its soul.

By Amy Serafin

Terraces at the newly renovated Sofitel Hotel offer sparkling views of the Vieux Port.



# Barely three hours after leaving Paris.

the TGV hurtles past white rock and scrubby greenery beneath an impossibly blue sky, enters a tunnel under the mountains and rockets out the other end to a vision of the sparkling blue Mediterranean and the crazy patchwork of rooftops that is Marseille.

Massalia, as the Greeks called it, has all the gritty charm of a port city, and a Latin one to boot. Cradled between the mountains and the Med, it's the country's second-largest metropolis, a sprawling beast with a surface area two and a half

times that of Paris but a population of fewer than a million. Throughout the 19th and early 20th centuries, it was the gateway to the French colonial empire, booming with maritime trade and industrial growth.

But the loss of France's colonies and the activity they generated ushered in decades of economic decline. Absorbing massive immigration from the former North African colonies put an enormous strain on the city, which was then hit by the 1970s oil shocks and ensuing recession. Marseille became plagued by corruption and mismanagement, and by the 1980s, unemployment was a dizzying 25 percent.

That figure now stands at 12 percent, a reversal emblematic of the dramatic changes that have swept over this city in recent years. Many observers attribute the turnabout to sheer political will, a decision by the powers that be that enough was enough.

"Marseille used to have a very insular mentality, cut off from the

Cosmopolitan Marseille feels more like a collection of villages than a major metropolis. Clockwise from top left: The ethnically diverse Cours Julien neighborhood; a fisherman reeling in his nets; an aerial view of the picturesque Panier; a North African restaurant in Cours Julien; the Capucins market, known for its Mediterranean specialties.

rest of France," explains François Tonneau, journalist at the local newspaper La Provence. That attitude started to change following the 1995 election of the current mayor, Jean-Claude Gaudin. Born and bred in Marseille, Gaudin is also a member of the Senate and close to the movers and shakers in Paris. He has used his office to garner state and regional support for local projects and to attract private investment, convincing companies to stay while encouraging new ones to move in, notably hi-tech industries such as telecommunications.

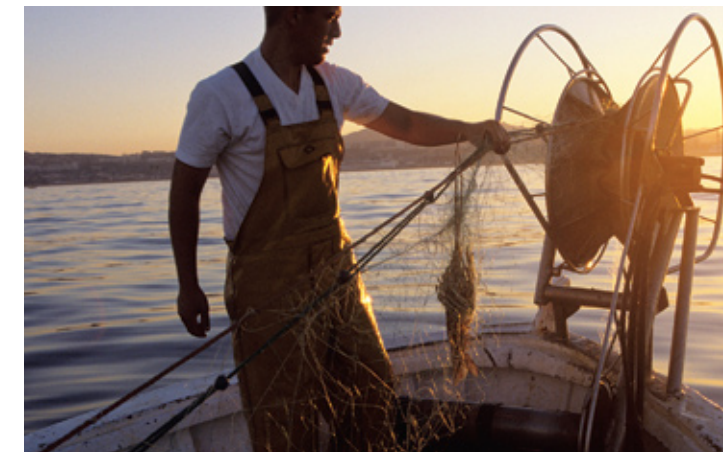
**Visitors get a sense** of this new Marseille the moment they arrive at the Saint Charles train station. Dating from the 19th century, it has been renovated and expanded, becoming a sleek and airy terminus for the TGV Med that links Paris to this sun-kissed city just in time for lunch. When the line was inaugurated in 2001, the impact was immediate: The distance between the two cities felt like a day trip, and residents of both started jumping on the train without a second thought.

At the same time, low-cost airlines profiting from Europe's Open Skies treaty linked Marseille to northern Europe for the price of a bowl of bouillabaisse, and a new terminal for those flights, MP2, opened at the end of 2006. Simultaneously, city tourism officials started courting the cruise ship business, increasing passenger traffic from 19,000 in the mid 1990s to 440,000 today.

All of these factors have helped boost the number of visitors from 2.7 million to 4 million during the past decade. Construction is under way to add 1,600 hotel rooms to a city that was unprepared for such sudden popularity. In a sign of the times, the number of four-star rooms will double, the Sofitel has just spent €7 million on a luxurious makeover, and in 2011, the city is slated to get its first palace hotel, set in the historic Hôtel Dieu overlooking the Vieux Port.

Never known as a gastronomic capital, Marseille now boasts a burgeoning restaurant scene, attracting visitors with young, creative chefs such as Arnaud de Grammont at Le Café des Epices as well as established names such as Gérard Passédar, who inherited Le Petit Nice from his father and grandfather. This year, Passédar unveiled a stunning renovation of his seaside restaurant—and became the only Michelin three-star in Provence.

All of this has taken place against the backdrop of Euroméditerranée, the largest urban renovation project in Europe. Launched in 1995, it has involved clearing out decrepit and abandoned areas to make way for new offices, residences and other buildings while renovating structures such as the Saint Charles station. The current phase, by far the most exciting, is revolutionizing the waterfront, creating a whole new skyline for a city that never really had one.







Miles of dramatic coastline and a Mediterranean climate combine to give Marseille an enviable quality of life. **Top:** Cap Croisette in the *calanques*. **Bottom:** Chez Jeannot restaurant in the Vallon des Auffes neighborhood.

Rich or poor, it is striking how many people from all walks of life claim they would leave Marseille for nothing in the world.

In the industrial neighborhood called La Joliette, a 33-story office tower by architecture star Zaha Hadid is rising up in ultracontemporary glory around concrete pillars that swoon inward to create a structure resembling a glass-and-steel corset. When it is completed next year, it will be home to the shipping company CMA CGM. In architectural circles, Marseille has become a coveted client, as evidenced by the major names that have signed on to rebuild it—Jean Nouvel, Rudy Ricciotti, Kengo Kuma and Massimiliano Fuksas. International companies—the Compass Group, IBM, DHL, Expedia—are already poised to move into these trophy addresses.

Touring the site, Anthony Abihssira from Euroméditerranée’s communications department makes a sweeping gesture toward an enormous vacant lot with a few parked cars and a highway behind it and proclaims, “This will be the Terraces du Port.” Within a year or two the wasteland will be a glittering shopping mall complex with a promenade for bikes and pedestrians, the highway partially buried underground. Nearby, an old grain silo will be reborn as a concert hall. A cinema multiplex with a flexible Gore-Tex roof will also rise up, designed by Massimiliano Fuksas to resemble the silhouette of dolphins leaping at the water’s surface. And local-boy-done-good Rudy Ricciotti has designed the new national museum for European and Mediterranean civilizations, a modern cube with a lacy concrete façade that will be linked to the centuries-old Fort Saint-Jean.

François Jalinot, managing director of Euroméditerranée, explains that there is a “virtuous” aspect to these projects, given that the waterfront was long covered with derelict warehouses. “We’re rebuilding the city rather than expanding into undeveloped areas. We’re cleaning up pollution, creating more jobs and services from daycare to schools, and setting up a good transportation network to reduce the need for cars.”

Indeed, the brand-spanking-new tramway glides by here looking as proud as the Little Engine That Could. An environmentally friendly high school boasts an industrial-chic façade made of shipping containers. Next to it, a residential development includes high-end lofts in stone warehouses interspersed with attractive public housing units. Jalinot points out that one-third of Euroméditerranée’s new and renovated residences will be subsidized housing.

“To date, this project has received €531 million in public funding,” says Jalinot. “That in turn has generated private investment of €2.9 billion. Euroméditerranée is going to propel Marseille to the level of a great European metropolis. We are going to be a world player.”

**A motion was recently signed** to extend the project even farther north, with a second stage that would continue construction through 2020. At the same time, the city has been attempting to rehabilitate other neighborhoods such as Le Panier, Belsunce and Noailles. But not everyone in Marseille is excited about these changes. Julie Demuer is director of Radio Grenouille, a local station that plays a mix of world music and politico-social commentary from a slipshod trailer. Demuer speaks for many artists and low-income residents when she asserts, “Marseille’s richness is its diversity as a working-class city. The developers are swooping in to buy up every square meter they can find and turn them into dwellings for bobos.”

A citizens’ association called “Un Centre ville pour tous” (“Downtown

for Everybody”) was formed in 2000 to protect the most vulnerable residents from the collateral damage of gentrification. One of their challenges has been the rue de la République, a Second Empire avenue whose Haussmann-style buildings had turned black from neglect. Now, a new tramline runs down the street, passing by freshly cleaned façades and trendy shops such as Sephora and H&M. When this rehabilitation started a few years ago, developers (including the French subsidiary of an American investment fund) pressured impoverished tenants to move out.

But the association fought back, and hundreds of residents were eventually relocated elsewhere. “We have nothing against cleaning up the city,” says Michel Guillon, one of the association’s founding

members, “but that’s no reason to chase away the poor.” He claims that due to their efforts, expulsions have stopped and the city is starting to include public housing as part of redevelopment efforts. But, he says, citizens must remain vigilant.

Rich or poor, it is striking how many people from all walks of life claim they would leave Marseille for nothing in the world. With its fractured geography, it takes a while for visitors to grasp this immense hodgepodge of 111 villages. At the northernmost reaches of its 35 miles of coastline is picturesque L’Estaque, where Cézanne lived and painted and the homegrown director Robert Guédiguian set the charming movie *Marius et Jeannette*. At the southernmost end are the *calanques*, wild rocky inlets where the mountains plunge into the sea, dotted with hiking paths and waterside cafés. In the heart of the city is the Vieux Port, a breathtakingly beautiful postcard scene still dotted with fishing and pleasure boats, ringed with restaurants and a hilly landscape covered with apartments, the whole guarded by two ancient forts made of massive pink-hued stone. Docked in the background, ferries bound for Algeria and Corsica loom enormous and white.

Marseille’s center extends inland from the Vieux Port, adjacent to La Canebière, the street that divides the prosperous districts to the south from the poor ones to the north. The city’s best-known landmark is the newly refurbished striped-marble Notre Dame de la Garde basilica, looking down benevolently from its hilltop perch. Its interior is filled with ex-votos in the form of model boats left by sailors giving thanks after surviving storms at sea. Every August 15, thousands of locals hike up to the summit in a pilgrimage to La Bonne Mère.

“Marseille is an incredible place,” says Radio Grenouille’s Julie Demuer. “We have the sea, the islands. You walk out of a neighborhood where you feel like you’re in Africa and suddenly you’re in a Peloponnesian port.” Others point out their favorite seaside rock for sunbathing, the restaurants where they eat with their toes in the sand, the *calanques* they head to for a solitary hike when they need to get away from the hustle and bustle.

For many, Marseille’s chaos, its laissez-faire attitude, is part of its charm. Services might be lacking, from adequate daycare to a decent mass-transit system, but the city has given rise to an incredibly strong network of neighborhood associations, and its residents all devise their own ways to get by.





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# **EUROMÉDITERRANÉE**

Launched in 1996, this 20-year project is slowly transforming Marseille into the economic and cultural capital of the Mediterranean. Here is a preview of what's still to come:

**1.** The expansive Terrasses du Port project is adjacent to Marseille's busy port area; developers hope that its 150 shops, including luxury boutiques, will lure many of the more than two million ferryboat and cruise-ship passengers who transit nearby. The vast ensemble will also include sports facilities as well as high-end restaurants and cafés.

**2.** The Arenc grain silo was considered so avant garde when it opened in 1926 that it is said to have inspired Le Corbusier's design for his Cité Radieuse. Architect Eric Castaldi is now transforming it into offices, apartments, a 2,000-seat performance hall and a restaurant that will take full advantage of its waterfront location.

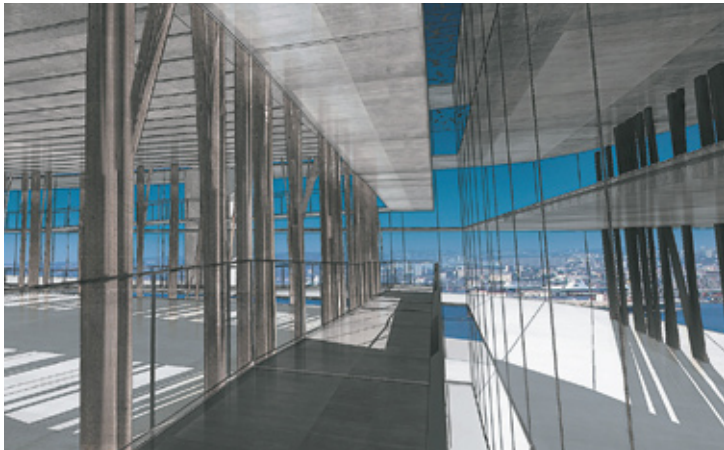
**3.** In planning the corporate headquarters for shipping firm CMA CGM, Pritzker Prize-winner Zaha Hadid opted to add an iconic vertical landmark to this port city's low skyline. Sculptural and fluid, its lines appear in perpetual movement, accelerating as they head skyward. Plans call for a panoramic restaurant open to the public.



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**4.** Massimiliano Fuksas's design for Marseille's new Euromed Center includes a multiplex cinema with a Gore-Tex "skin" that evokes dolphins and other marine animals; its white palette echoes the surrounding limestone landscape. Expected to open in 2011, the project will also include offices, shops, a four-star hotel and a garden.

**5.** The new Musée national des Civilisations de l'Europe et de la Méditerranée (MUCEM) will be a sort of square within a square, its outside walls forming a lacy concrete veil made using the latest technologies. The building's horizontal shape contrasts with the vertical Fort Saint-Jean; an elevated walkway will connect the two buildings.

**6.** Architect Rudy Ricciotti calls his design for MUCEM a "vertical casbah," its five floors surrounded by walkways allowing visitors to take in views of the sea and the city. The concrete veil—not visible on this drawing—will play with the notion of "seeing without being seen." The building is slated to open in 2011.



# Local Talent

Not that long ago, gifted young Marseillais invariably headed to Paris. Now they are staying home—joined by Parisians who sense new opportunities and welcome the fabulous quality of life. Here are a few of the creative talents taking root in the new Massalia.



## WATCHA CLAN

Promoting tolerance through music

Sitting in a café in Marseille wearing an Adidas sweatshirt instead of the djellaba he sports onstage, Clément Queysanne—aka Suprem Clem—does his best to categorize the musical style of Watcha Clan. He throws out “world and bass” and “live electro world” before admitting, “It’s hard to define.”

A native of the southern Alps, he plays keyboards for the group, which also includes Corsican drummer Matt Labesse and the striking female singer Sista K, who was born in Marseille and is of Jewish and Berber heritage. (Another sometime member, Nassim Kouti, is an Algerian Muslim.)

Influenced by groups such as Trans-Global Underground and Asian Dub Foundation, Watcha Clan sees itself as a Marseillais version of London’s electronic Indian scene, bringing contemporary urban sounds to a mix of musical traditions. Their fifth album, called *Diaspora Hi-Fi*, was conceived while they traveled through Spain, Morocco and Algeria, and even includes Balkan music inspired by lullabies that Sista K heard growing up. She sings the lyrics in French, Arabic, Hebrew, Yiddish, Spanish and English. “We carry a message of tolerance through our music,” says Suprem Clem. “In 2003, we performed in Hebrew in Algeria. Everyone said we were crazy, but it went really well.” [watchaclan.com](#)

A typical example could be seen one recent day as the number 49 bus rumbled toward the gritty Belle de Mai neighborhood. A small woman of indeterminate age wearing a headscarf and pushing a battered baby carriage got on and took a seat without paying. The driver sarcastically muttered something about the bus being free, and a moment later she approached him with a 10-euro note in her hand. “I don’t have change,” he said. “But the fact that you’re ready to pay is enough.”

**The Marseillais often express pride** that their city was the least affected by the suburban riots that shook France two and a half years ago. They explain that it’s because this is a true melting pot without ethnic ghettos or a history of pushing its poor to the periphery. François Jalinot calls it “the most American city in France.” Thirty nationalities live side by side here, including 200,000 North Africans and Africans, 80,000 Armenians and 70,000 Comorians, in addition to large communities of Greeks, Italians, Corsicans and Asians. Unfailingly, the people describe themselves as Marseillais first. But this mix of populations is a delicate balance, and nobody takes it for granted.

One thing they all share, from the bourgeoisie living in the glorious mansions of the Roucas district high above the water to the kids



## CLIVIA NOBILI

Fashions for working-class heroes

Born in Paris 34 years ago, Clivia Nobili always knew she wanted to work in fashion. Largely self-taught (she briefly studied at FIT in New York), she moved to Marseille in 1999 and found creative inspiration in this working-class city. She immersed herself in Jack London’s tales of the proletariat and memories of her grandfather, a Renault factory-worker, before creating modern reinterpretations of laborers’ clothes from another era. All are made from cotton denim from the Vosges, dyed locally in neutral shades; they soften with wear, adapting to the body’s contours.

The Fall/Winter 2008 collection, her second, is titled “Working Class Hero.” It includes square-necked tunics reminiscent of fruit-pickers’ outfits and a men’s heavy cotton blazer with a removable wool lining hand-knitted by an artisan in the Cévennes region. A highlight is the long woman’s coat with diagonal pockets and a gap in the front, modeled on the clothing inmates wore to break rocks in 19th-century prisons called *bagnes*. It’s something you wouldn’t mind wearing 20 years to life. [clivianobili.com](#)

in the northern *cités*, is a staunch allegiance to the Olympique de Marseille soccer team. The stadium holds 60,000 spectators, and the average number of ticket-holders per game is 57,000. Didier Mattera, who co-founded an association of OM fans more than two decades ago, says the city has an undying passion for the sport because “we didn’t have a lot to be proud of here. Our pride developed around the soccer team.” For him, a person anywhere in France who wears an OM jersey is expressing an entire set of values, notably: “I am tolerant, and I belong to a community.” (The team sells about 300,000 jerseys per year.) One of the association’s main undertakings is to ensure that tickets remain affordable, so that anyone can go to the games.

Surprisingly, the Marseillais are nearly as enthusiastic about culture as soccer. The mayor makes a point of stating that more season tickets are sold for theater productions than for OM games. The city’s affordability has made it a favorite destination for artists, and the underground scene is abuzz. But like so much here, the cultural scene is scattered into many small pieces, without a major museum or similar venue as an obvious attraction. Marseille’s director of museums, Marie-Paule Vial, says, “We don’t have an obvious cultural showcase, no equivalent of MoMA, even though the collections are good.” Thus,



## LN BOUL

Form, function and fun

With her easy smile and blonde pixie cut, LN Boul (a play on her real name, Héléne Boularan, as well as the famous Ecole Boule) is already turning heads in the design world, though she finished her studies just last year.

In her second year at Marseille’s Beaux-Arts academy, she created a lacquered fiberglass chair consisting of a seat curved like an oversized contact lens that can be adjusted on a round base. Called “O,” it was picked up by an agency and shown at the Milan furniture fair that year. “At first, such early success felt a little illegitimate,” the designer recalls. “And there was a lot of pressure, everyone saying ‘what will she do next?’”

She answered the question with “Swell,” a folding screen made of undulating wood slats in different thicknesses and exhibited at Paris’s Maison & Objet trade show last January. Travels to Africa inspired her to create a coffee table with a recessed section for holding fruit or serving communal meals, while a trip to Brazil led to a doorway curtain of colored zippers. Many of her designs are still prototypes, but LN appears poised to become a household name. [lnboul.com](#)

over the next few years, a dozen museums will be consolidated into three major sites: the Palais de Longchamp (fine arts), the Château Borély (decorative arts and fashion) and the stunning 18th-century Centre de la Vieille Charité (archaeology and history).

From September 16 to January 11, the Vieille Charité will host an exhibit comparing 17 works by Vincent Van Gogh with paintings by the Marseille-born artist Adolphe Monticelli, whom the Dutchman deeply admired though the two never met. “Van Gogh saw the avant-garde in his paintings,” explains Vial. “It was there that he found what he sought to express.” Van Gogh’s legacy overshadows that of the humble Monticelli, who spent his last years in Marseille, painting landscapes and bouquets. “He’s an artist who didn’t build his career in Paris but preferred to return to his native city, where he lived modestly but well,” says Vial.

Also in September, a European jury will descend on Marseille to study its application to be European Capital of Culture in 2013, a designation that will be given to both a French and a Slovakian city that year. Bernard Latarjet is general director of the association that’s organizing the bid. He says one of the major reasons Marseille should be chosen is that it needs a helping hand, unlike



## COOKED IN MARSEILLE

Color-drenched designs

The decrepit staircase that leads to Marine Peyre’s studio near the Old Port of Marseille wouldn’t be out of place in a Coen brothers’ film. But open the door, and you discover high ceilings, fuchsia walls, groovy corrugated foam floor seating and the designer herself, tall and lovely with a vague resemblance to Sigourney Weaver.


Peyre is pure Marseillais, born and bred here and a graduate of the city’s Beaux-Arts academy. Thirty-five years under the Mediterranean sun have produced a woman who loves color, applied gaily and liberally to objects in man-made substances such as silicone, PVC and resin. “I like innovative materials that are surprising to the touch,” she explains. She received international acclaim in 2001 for her “Lamp’oule,” an ingenious silicone cube that pops directly onto a light bulb. This was followed by such amusing pieces as heat-resistant silicone espresso cups (totally unsmashable—she takes a hammer to one to prove it) and placemats textured like animal skin but made from the same material as flip-flops.

Recently she has turned her attention toward installations and interior architecture, including uncharacteristically black pieces for the Pavillon Noir dance center in Aix-en-Provence. But the sunshine came back with the brightly colored containers she designed for the Flowerbox gallery; simply add soil and your favorite plants, then hang or lean against a wall. [cookedinmarseille.net](#)

its more developed competitors Bordeaux, Toulouse and Lyon.

That’s not to say it’s a cultural charity case. In addition to museums, theaters and dance companies, there are annual events such as the Festival de Marseille, largely devoted to contemporary dance (June 20-July 17), the 5 Continents Jazz Festival (July 23-26) and the world music Fiesta des Suds (two weeks in October). If the city wins its bid, there are plans to create a festival of contemporary Mediterranean arts and an annual event staging cultural happenings in public spaces.

Latarjet says there’s another key factor that makes his city the best candidate for cultural capital: “Marseille is on the front line of the important issues of the upcoming decades—immigration, integration, the relation between cultures and religions. It is the most cosmopolitan city in Europe. And it’s a laboratory of sorts, searching for answers to such fundamental questions as ‘How do you welcome the world?’”

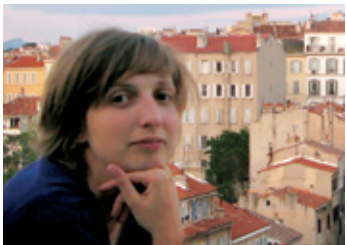
What’s certain is that the world is knocking at Marseille’s door. 

*For more information on Marseille and for help in planning a visit, contact the city’s Office du Tourisme et des Congrès, 4 La Canebière, 13001 Marseille. Tel. 33/4-91-13-89-00; [marseille-tourisme.com](#). For information on rail travel to Marseille, go to [raileurope.com](#).*



# Marseille According to Julia

From the freshest *navettes* to the tastiest *figatelli*, Julia Sammut dishes on the best of Marseille.



Although born and bred in Provence, food writer Julia Sammut didn't really get to know Marseille until she moved there four years ago. "I had this idea of living near the sea, so I thought I'd give Marseille a try," she recalls. "The first day there, I visited what would turn out to be my apartment. It was 6 P.M., that magical hour in Marseille when a beautiful pink glow washes over the city. I stood on the terrace looking out at Notre Dame de la Garde and the clusters of rooftops. It was breathtaking—I fell in love right then and there."

It seemed obvious to friends that Julia, daughter of renowned Provençal chef Reine Sammut, would have a food-related career, but she herself didn't immediately come to that conclusion. After a year studying hotel management ("a disaster"), she switched to law then to journalism. "I hadn't planned on becoming a food writer, but somehow I just fell into it. I guess it was inevitable," she laughs.

Seven years ago, she joined Le Fooding (derived from "food" plus "feeling"), a movement launched

by fellow journalists who wanted to bring stuffy French cuisine down off its pedestal and "give it a kick in the butt." Julia now covers southern France for Le Fooding's popular restaurant guide (they also have a magazine and stage events in cities throughout Europe) while contributing to various other publications.

In addition, she has teamed up with her sister, Nadia, to launch Travel Food, which plots out custom itineraries for clients who love to travel and to eat. "People were always asking our parents where they should go when they traveled to this or that place," says Julia. "So Nadia started putting together little booklets with the favorite addresses of our family and close friends. A couple of years ago, we realized this could be a business." Building on her journalism contacts, Julia has also established a network of trusted sources in cities throughout the world, making it possible for Travel Food to give clients the latest scoop on where to go, what to do and, of course, what to eat.

On the following pages, Julia shares her favorite addresses in Marseille. "These are places that reflect what I think is the real Marseille—a city where strangers don't hesitate to talk to one another, where you always feel like you are in a village and where there is an incredible quality of life. I travel all the time for my work, but I can't imagine living anywhere else."



## LUNCH & DINNER

These are typical of France's new-generation restaurants—places where you eat well, meet interesting people yet don't spend a fortune.

**L'Eau à la bouche** Chef Rodolphe Bodikian, who previously worked at La Tour d'Argent and Guy Savoy, takes his pizza very seriously. His white pizza—garnished with mesclun, cured ham, parmesan shavings, olive oil, lemon and artichokes—is simply out of this world. Savor it while enjoying the Mediterranean views. *Pies from €8.80 to €13. 120 Corniche Kennedy, 7<sup>e</sup>; Tel. 33/4-91-52-16-16.*

**La Cantinetta** This friendly bistro is known for its great atmosphere and authentic Italian food. Chef/owner Pierre-Antoine Denis goes from table to table with his chalkboard of daily specials, explaining how he cuts sardines or prepares his risotto. Passionate about food, he'll go on at length about why it's best to chop parsley with a ceramic knife. *A la carte around €30. 24 cours Julien, 6<sup>e</sup>; Tel. 33/4-91-48-10-48.*

**Ca Blanca** Chef Edouard Giribone loves Spain—he collects cookbooks by great Spanish chefs—and always brings something back from his trips to Barcelona's Boqueria market. He is known for his tapas that incorporate the very best ingredients, including Pata Negra ham. Another highlight: his seafood *fideo*, with grilled cuttlefish and prawns, angel hair pasta and squid ink. *Lunch menus at €35. 53 rue St Pierre, 5<sup>e</sup>; Tel. 33/4-91-48-68-23; restaurant-cablanca.com.*

**Les Akolytes** With a prime waterfront location opposite the Plage des Catalans, this restaurant bears some resemblance to a modern cafeteria, with its trendy plastic chairs and orange accent walls. There's no menu, just a chalkboard featuring 15 daily specials. They include Marseille-style fusion cooking and large portions of tapas—pork *bastilla* with pistachios, chicken brochettes in peanut sauce,



and marinated sardines served on an open-faced sandwich with arugula. The desserts, especially the chocolate caramel *pot de crème*, are irresistible. *About €4 to €7 per item. 41 rue Papety, 7<sup>e</sup>; Tel. 33/4-91-59-17-10.*

**Le Café des épices** You used to have to drive across the city to get to this great restaurant. Now you can simply hop on the ferry at the Quai Rive-Neuve and work up an appetite as you sail across the harbor. Upon your arrival, you'll see the restaurant's recently completed terrace dotted with olive trees in oversized planters. The place is always packed, and for good reason: Try the *terrinerie de brousse* with piquillo peppers and preserved lemons, follow it up with a mackerel and spinach napoleon with white truffle oil, and top it all off with a lightly whipped *fromage blanc* served with candied citrus fruits and a fresh tea biscuit—truly unforgettable. *Lunch menus at €23, dinner menus at €35. 4 rue Lacydon, 2<sup>e</sup>; Tel. 33/4-91-91-22-69.*

**Les Buvards** Occupying prime real estate at the base of Le Panier, this tiny establishment—sort of a wine cellar where they also serve food—is a great place to try good wines paired with simple fare: *jambon persillé*, homemade foie gras, Mont d'Or cheese with Calvados and impeccable mackerel filets. Wash them down with a glass of Original, a slightly meringuey white wine from Perpignan. Only "natural" wines are served here—they may or may not be organic, but all have very low sulfite levels. *Fromage frais* laced with maple syrup is the perfect dessert. *Around €20 per person. 34 Grand*

*Rue, 2<sup>e</sup>; Tel. 33/4-91-90-69-98.*

**Pizzeria Sauveur** Sauveur has been serving up pizza since 1943, and the recipe hasn't changed a bit. The dough is fine and crusty, topped with fresh tomatoes, finely sliced melt-in-your-mouth *champignons de Paris*, Corsican *figatelli* or Italian sausage. Nothing complicated or fancy, just good ingredients. Right before serving, the pie is drizzled with olive oil delicately infused with garlic. *€1.50 a slice; pies from €9.50 to €15. 10 rue d'Aubagne, 1<sup>er</sup>; Tel. 33/4-91-54-33-96.*

## L'APÉRO

*L'heure de l'apéro is especially important in southern France, where people enjoy lingering over a glass of pastis, basking in the late afternoon light.*

**La Caravelle** Located on the second floor of Hôtel Bellevue, La Caravelle offers a dramatic view of the Vieux Port, with La Bonne Mère appearing close enough to touch. The little place is always so full you'd think no one else in Marseille serves drinks. There's a balcony with four tables, a room that's a bit dated but still popular, a piano, good jazz, a bar—and that's pretty much it. *34 quai du Port, 2<sup>e</sup>; Tel. 33/4-91-90-36-64.*

**Les Danaïdes** Regulars come here to sip coffee and read the paper in the

**Marseille's accommodations run the gamut from the friendly, boho Hôtel Vertigo (opposite, above) to the new, uber-chic Radisson (below). Opposite below: Navettes, the city's signature sweet.**



morning, play chess after lunch or enjoy an *apéritif* in the evening, when the lighting gives the café a *guingette*-like atmosphere. *6 square Stalingrad, 1<sup>er</sup>; Tel. 33/4-91-62-28-51.*

## SWEET STUFF

*Whether you're looking for classic French pastries or local specialties, Marseille offers a tempting selection.*

**Les Navettes des Accoules** José Orsoni is king of the *navette*, the baguette-shaped Marseille cookie made without yeast and flavored with orange blossom water. His are made fresh each day (as are the rest of his cookies, *macarons* and *sablés*). Anything not sold the day it's made is donated to local community associations. A collector's item: his decorative tins containing 12 *navettes*. *68 rue Caisserie, 2<sup>e</sup>; Tel. 33/4-91-90-99-42.*

**Sylvain Depuichaffray** For the past four years, this *pâtissier* has been the talk of the town. Since taking over a neighborhood pastry shop, he has been turning out designer pastries reminiscent of Pierre Hermé (his *macarons*! his *Ispahan*!). Also noteworthy are his fabulous violet and black-currant cake, and his Christmas tree that incorporates Provence's traditional 13 desserts. Anything made with chocolate or passion fruit is bound to be divine. You can enjoy these delicacies in his tearoom or get them to go. *66 rue Grignan, 1<sup>er</sup>; Tel. 33/4-91-33-09-75.*

**Maison Michel** This bakery is always super-popular but at Christmas, the line stretches all the way to La Canebière. The Marseillais know this is



## LE PETIT NICE

the best place to buy *pompes à l'huile*, a seasonal cake made with olive oil (also known as *gibassier*, it's one of the famous 13 desserts). The Chelsea bun with raisins and cinnamon is worth going out of your way for. *33 rue Vacon, 1<sup>er</sup>; Tel. 33/4-91-33-79-43.*

**Boulangerie Aixoise** This bakery's *tarte au nougat* and *castel au nougat* have become classics. Same with the *courabiés*, cookies made from a *pâte sablée*, butter, almonds and powdered sugar that are a Greek specialty handed down from the owner's grandmother. Then there are the yummy *navettes*, the lemon tart.... *45 rue Davso, 1<sup>er</sup>; Tel. 33/4-91-33-93-85.*

**Alain Pollosson** The Pollosson family has been making meringues at this same location for 40 years. These

"The sea is my garden," says Gérard Passédât, glancing out at the waters that surround his restaurant, Le Petit Nice, on three sides. Passédât grew up admiring this stunning view: His grandfather founded the restaurant here in 1917 and his father later earned it two Michelin stars. Following a contemporary renovation that plays upon the natural beauty beyond the floor-to-ceiling windows (and includes a tree trunk in the middle of the dining room), Le Petit Nice received three stars this year for Passédât's pure, poetic cooking style.

Local fishermen arrive at all hours, bringing in freshly caught fish and crustaceans that make up 90 percent of the menu. His supplier of sea anemones dives deep below the surface for his prey, which supposedly taste better than those gathered higher up. The chef prepares certain fish simply, whole and perfectly cooked in their skin. Others take center stage in a refined play of contrasts, such as red mullet with a pistachio bouillon and star anise consommé, or a Brittany lobster on a bright blue hibiscus consommé with green mango purée. Passédât's version of bouillabaisse—the best in Marseille and probably the world—is a deconstructed tour of the Mediterranean, a seven-course "descent by layers," from the rocky shallows to the bottom of the sea. You'd be hard-pressed to find a better guide.

Le Petit Nice has always been a place to celebrate special occasions, but now Passédât is giving guests a reason to come more often: a €55 weekday lunch menu. That's a bargain for food of this caliber. Allow time to enjoy a drink at the bar, a destination in and of itself, with one of the best island views to be had in Marseille. *17 rue des Braves, 7<sup>e</sup>; Tel. 33/4-91-59-25-92; petitnice-passedat.com.*

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delicious sweets are a beloved childhood memory for many locals, but visitors might wonder what they have that other meringues do not. The answer: They're topped with whipped cream. They come in various sizes, and there's even a whipped cream and meringue cake. *167 avenue du Prado, 8<sup>e</sup>; Tel. 33/4-91-79-12-42.*

**Plauchut** This shop is devoted to real whipped cream—the old-fashioned kind, hand-beaten with the best fresh cream, sugar and high-quality vanilla. As the sign says, Plauchut has been making it that way since 1820. But that's not all they make: There are also chocolates, ice cream and sorbets, *navettes*, *canistrelli*, dark and light nougat, *macarons* and amaretti. *168 La Canebière, 1<sup>er</sup>; Tel. 33/4-91-48-06-67.*

**Dites-moi tout** Sébastien Mahier, 32, studied at the Ritz and Le Grand Véfour, two of Paris's greatest restaurants. He makes only what he likes: an exquisite apple tart, *macarons* to die for, super-light éclairs with orange blossom water and fabulous chocolates. *33 bd Phillipon, 4<sup>e</sup>; Tel. 33/4-91-62-01-73.*

**Xocoatl** Located at the foot of Le Panier, this family-run *chocolaterie* never ceases to amaze chocoholics, for whom it's a real treasure trove. There are 36 varieties in all, including impeccably prepared classics and excellent ganaches. All are delectable. *28 Grand Rue, 1<sup>er</sup>; Tel. 33/4-91-90-22-91.*

## ETHNIC EATS

*Marseille's history as a port city has made it a culinary melting pot. You can find some of the Mediterranean's best fare in the Noailles neighborhood, just two minutes from the Vieux Port.*

**Le Cèdre** Pitas stuffed with kebab are ubiquitous in Marseille, but for really fresh ones, you have to go to Cèdre, an authentic Lebanese *boulangerie*. They bake theirs every morning between 9:00 A.M. and 11:00 A.M. *70 centimes for a package of*

*5 pitas. 39 rue d'Aubagne, 1<sup>er</sup>; Tel. 33/4-91-33-66-40.*

**Le Femina** The storefront of this restaurant is super modern, but the family-owned Femina has been here since 1921. Run by Algerian Kabyles, their specialty is handmade couscous, served with Sisteron lamb, lamb meatballs, merguez, chicken, kebabs or any combination you fancy. *Couscous from €14.30 to €20.90. 1 rue du Musée, 1<sup>er</sup>; Tel. 33/4-91-54-03-56.*

**Le Zénith** Marseille's Noailles neighborhood is a bit reminiscent of Algiers, and that means plenty of grilled meats. This restaurant is known for its small but divine lamb's liver kebabs prepared in a wood stove according to a family recipe. Wash them down with a traditional mint tea. *€2 for four kebabs. 6 rue d'Aubagne, 1<sup>er</sup>.*

**Hanna** The Algerian pastries at this *pâtisserie* near the casbah-like Marché du Soleil are better than anywhere else. Specialties include a pink cake sprinkled with silver dragées, a square pastry made with semolina and almonds, baklava and six types of *galettes*. You can sit down and enjoy a *crêpe mille trous* drizzled with honey, accompanied by a small coffee. *51 avenue Camille Pelletan, 1<sup>er</sup>; Tel. 33/4-91-90-99-46.*

**Pâtisserie Orientale Journo** Journo offers the best of Tunisian Jewish cuisine: *fricassées* (fried rolls stuffed with *chakchouka*, tuna, hard-boiled eggs and black olives); *bricks* (a thin dough stuffed with egg and various other ingredients, then fried); and daily specials you won't find anywhere else, such as *pkeila* (spinach and green vegetables) and *gnaouia* (an okra-based stew). *About €10 for the daily special. 28 rue Pavillon, 1<sup>er</sup>; Tel. 33/4-91-33-65-20.*

**L'Univers alimentaire** This shop is piled high with bags of spices, dates, dried fruits, rice, semolina, mint tea, harissa, rosewater and clarified butter. Everything needed to stock a Maghrébin pantry can be found here—even

special bouillon cubes used for preparing tagines. *34 rue d'Aubagne, 1<sup>er</sup>; Tel. 33/4-91-33-77-49.*

**Arax** This is the place to get authentic goat's milk feta from Athens. Very white and not too salty, you can eat it in flaky *bôrek* pastries or by the spoonful. *24 rue d'Aubagne, 1<sup>er</sup>; Tel. 33/4-91-33-94-89.*

## STREET FOOD

**Panisses** Panisses are fried cakes made from chickpeas and olive oil. There's nothing simpler and nothing better with a Sunday pastis. They can be found only in L'Estaque; the best ones come from the stands run by Freddy and Magali (look for the signs). *Plage de l'Estaque, 16<sup>e</sup>.*

**La Maison de la glace** This shop has been churning out creamy ice cream for six decades now. You'll find such classic Provençal flavors as honey-lavender, *calisson*, nougat and honey-rosemary but also Soliès fig, mango and Cavailon melon. Special kudos for the hazelnut! *94 rue Sainte, 7<sup>e</sup>; Tel. 33/4-91-33-17-23.*

## PACKING A PICNIC

**Charcuterie Payany** This *traiteur-charcutier* consists of a small marble counter and a display case, and that's about all. Twice a week, on Tuesdays and Thursdays, Payany makes all the cold cuts: sublime *figatelli* with juniper berries; thickly sliced cooked ham; sausage without a hint of grease... He's also well known for his home-made potato chips, which are fried in olive oil and hand-packed in individual bags. *72 rue Breteuil, 6<sup>e</sup>; Tel. 33/4-91-37-08-95.*

**Pasta & Dolce** The owner comes from Genoa, and this grocery/deli is an Italian fantasy. Ingredients are piled on shelves from floor to ceiling—the classics, of course (fresh pasta, tomato preserves, pesto) but also items that are more difficult to find, including

*mostarda* from Cremona, *burrata* from Puglia, cuttlefish-ink sauce and Sicilian *fleur de sel*. It's also a great place to pick up a sandwich. *199 avenue Mazargues, 8<sup>e</sup>; Tel. 33/4-91-77-33-60.*

**Normandy** A shrine to great cheese, Normandy has reigned at this location for 85 years. The *fromagerie* has more than 400 different types of cheese, aged on site. Most are French, with the exception of two-year-old Parmesan. *77 rue Davso, 1<sup>er</sup>; Tel. 33/4-91-33-86-38.*

**Boulangerie La Paline** Thomas Teffri-Chambelland was a teacher before becoming a baker at age 25. He'd been making bread at home for some 10 years before taking the leap, experimenting, reading everything he could find, meeting with bakers.... Based in Sisteron, he uses only organic ingredients and natural yeasts, producing a dough with a higher-than-usual liquid content that keeps the bread moist and fresh longer. *Available at Marseille's organic market on Cours Julien, Wednesdays from 6:30 A.M. to 1:30 P.M. painbio.com.*

**Les Caves de l'abbaye** The grandson of distillers, Lionel Cusenier has always had a passion for wine, which he has been selling for four years. But he's no wine snob—he sometimes even serves customers in shorts and flip-flops after coming in from a morning on his boat.

His shop is also a tad unusual: A mechanic for 17 years, Cusenier has integrated cars and motorcycles into the decor. The wines are all personal favorites he's discovered through vintners or their agents. *99 rue Sainte, 7<sup>e</sup>; Tel. 33/4-91-55-54-65.*

## BOATING PARTIES

**Yacht&More** On Sundays when the weather is good, the Marseillais head for the sea, islands and *calanques*. If you're tempted to join them, contact Yacht&More, which offers boat rentals and a variety of custom services. They

can even have a picnic lunch waiting for you when you pick up your boat. *From €350 for a rental from 1:00 P.M. to 6:00 P.M. and a picnic for four. 33 bd Longchamp, 1<sup>er</sup>; Tel. 33/4-91-08-12-35; yacht-and-more.com.*

## WHERE TO SHOP

*There are hundreds of places to shop in Marseille—after all, it's France's second-largest city—but these boutiques all boast a local pedigree.*

**Sessun** Launched nearly 11 years ago, Sessun showcases the brand created by owner Emma François as a way to finance her studies. Originally inspired by street fashion, her line has become fresher and more sophisticated. Must-haves include leather ankle boots, super long scarves, leather jackets and lots of great prints. *6 rue Sainte, 1<sup>er</sup>; Tel. 33/4-91-52-33-61; sessun.com.*

**Marianne Cat** Housed in an 18th-century townhouse with dramatic light fixtures by Argentinean designer Octavio Amado, this is Marseille's first concept store. Local designer Marianne Cat has a great eye for everything that's new and cool: Belgian designer tank tops, Upla bags, Yohji Yamamoto for men and clothes by up-and-coming young designers. Along with fashion, you'll find fragrances by Carthusia di Capri and Floris London, scented candles by Catherine Memmi and Doux Me's organic cosmetics. *53 rue Grignan, 6<sup>e</sup>; Tel. 33/4-91-55-05-25.*

**La Compagnie de Provence** This is *the* place to buy *savon de Marseille*, the classic olive-oil-based soap made in the area since the Middle Ages. They've got it all: the traditional cubes as well as shampoos, body lotions—



**Above:** La Compagnie de Provence, famous for its *savon de Marseille*. **Opposite, top:** Casual cool at the Caves de l'abbaye wine shop. **Opposite, bottom:** The edgy Galerie of Marseille.

even soaps shaped like little ducks (€5.90). The line is extensive, the packaging simple and contemporary. The company, which just came out with an organic line, also offers soap for washing fruits and vegetables. *1 rue Caisserie, 2<sup>e</sup>; Tel. 33/4-91-56-20-94; lcdpmarseille.com.*

**Un Jour, une Sardine** This whimsically named shop specializes in designer goods for the kitchen—everything from blue-parrot bottle openers to Alessi teapots, colorful metal trashcans, Peugeot electric pepper grinders and great saucepans. And of course, an assortment of wares from local designers. *157 rue Paradis, 6<sup>e</sup>; Tel. 33/4-91-37-94-14; deco-unjourunesardine.com.*

**Empereur** Visiting Marseille's oldest hardware store (founded in 1828) is almost like making a pilgrimage to Notre Dame de la Garde. The chatty sales staff knows everything there is to know about their products, and the kitchen department is amazing—you'll find Screwpull "wine keys" that automatically age wine, old-fashioned crank-operated potato peelers, coffee mills, design-y saucepans and a wide range of household items. *4 rue des Récolettes, 1<sup>er</sup>; Tel. 33/4-91-54-02-29; empereur.fr.*

## ART BEAT

*In a sign of the times, Marseille now has a lively contemporary art scene. Here are some of the newest arrivals.*

**Galerie V.F.** Marseille's latest up-and-coming neighborhood is the area near the Palais Longchamp. The proof is that a contemporary art gallery opened its doors there in March 2007. Attractive and airy, it hosts collective and monographic exhibits of international artists. *15 bd Montricher, 1<sup>er</sup>; Tel. 33/4-91-50-87-62; vfgalerie.com.*

**Station Alexandre** In the northern district known as Le Canet, the former sorting station of an old olive oil mill has been converted into a fabulous space that's part Eiffel, part mid-century. Along with businesses, medical offices and a daycare facility, there's a great cultural center that offers jazz concerts and dance performances; coming up are art shows and theater performances mounted in collaboration with Le Théâtre du Merlan and Le Massalia. *31 bd Charles Moretti, 14<sup>e</sup>; Tel. 33/4-91-00-90-00; station-alexandre.org.*

**Galerie of Marseille** If you've just visited Marseille's Museum of Contemporary Art and are in the mood for something a little more underground, head straight for this gallery. Founded by the urban design group Bureau des Compétences et des Désirs, it features edgy installations and photography and video exhibits. The artists hail from



## HONORÉ

Local designer Annick Lestrohan created her own brand in 1985, selling children's clothing and then expanding into women's wear and accessories. In 2005, she founded Honoré, which quickly became a Marseille institution. Customers love the charming sophistication of Lestrohan's linens and housewares—everything from wooden dishes to handmade wicker bulls' heads and woven straw lamps. The boutique also carries dresses and a line of leather bags that have become collectors' items.

Lestrohan's son Edouardo, a fan of Spanish food, operates the little restaurant inside the store. The menu offers temptations galore—creamy white bean soup, salt cod and preserved lemon, vitello tonnato, manchego cheese, berry meringue, *fromage blanc*.... Attention is paid to even the smallest details, from the tiny wooden bowl filled with *fleur de sel* to the toasted bread that is brought to your table as soon as you are seated, with a mixture of tomatoes, garlic, basil and olive oil for do-it-yourself crostini.

Soon those who can't get enough of the Honoré lifestyle will be able to live it both day and night: This summer, Lestrohan is opening a four-room B&B right next to the boutique. *Rooms from €150. 121 and 123 rue Sainte, 7<sup>e</sup>; Tel. 33/4-91-33-08-34; honore-france.com.*

Marseille as well as Dijon, Paris, Italy, Morocco and beyond. *8 rue du Chevalier Roze, 2<sup>e</sup>; Tel. 33/4-91-90-07-98; galerieofmarseille.com.*

## WHERE TO STAY

*Whatever your budget, you can find distinctive accommodations in Marseille. Here's a short list of places that are long on style.*

**Sofitel Vieux Port** This four-star luxury hotel has an unbeatable location overlooking the harbor and the city's pink stone forts. Luxuriously renovated, it eschews Provençal clichés in favor of a contemporary nod to regional style. There's a panoramic restaurant and a great lobby bar—a favorite with locals. *Doubles from €150. 36 bd Charles Livon, 7<sup>e</sup>; Tel. 1-800/SOFITEL; sofitel.com.*

**Radisson SAS Hotel Marseille** Centrally located, this new hotel offers 189 sleek, modern guest rooms and suites with flat-screen TVs and Wi-Fi, a fully equipped fitness center, a gourmet restaurant and a heated pool with stunning harbor views. *Doubles from €165. 38-40 quai de Rive Neuve, 7<sup>e</sup>; Tel. 1-800/333-3333; marseille.radissonsas.com.*

**Hôtel le Corbusier** Located within Le Corbusier's famous Cité Radieuse, Hôtel Le Corbusier offers a unique lodging experience. Practically nothing has changed since this iconic structure—envisioned as model of utopian living—was built in 1952. Along with the hotel, the Cité houses apartments, shops, exercise facilities, a pool and restaurant. Accommodations range from monastic cabin rooms with furniture by Charlotte Perriand to mini suites sleeping up to four people, with balcony and ocean views. *From €59 to €120. 280 boulevard Michelet, 8<sup>e</sup>; Tel. 33/4-91-16-78-00; hotellecorbusier.com.*

**Hôtel Vertigo** Marseille now boasts something that most cities sorely lack: a train-station hotel that's nothing like, well, a train-station hotel. This convivial, charmingly decorated establishment aims to create the feel of a family pension or group house where you can meet people from other cultures over a cup of coffee in the kitchen. *From €23.90 per person for a shared room (4 to 6 people) to €60 for a deluxe room. 42 rue des Petites Maries, 1<sup>er</sup>; Tel. 33/4-91-91-07-11; hotelvertigo.fr.*