

Nantes

Nantes is the capital of the northwestern French region of Pays de la Loire. That said, Nantes has strong historical connections with the adjoining region of Brittany, and is the historical capital of the region (though not its official capital since the days of Napoleon).

Background

Nantes was once an important port located 50 km up the Loire River. It grew rich on the triangular trade with Africa and the West Indies. Nantes is also famous for being the home of the science fiction writer Jules Verne. Rain is frequent, and beware if it's sunny because brief but fierce tempests have been known to appear unexpectedly. Always carry an umbrella or raincoat when going out. Winters are typically mild.

Several well known districts in Nantes:

- **Place du Commerce** : This is the centre of the city and everybody will be able to direct you here. Near here you will find *la Place Royale*, *le Quai de la Fosse*, *la rue Crébillon* (famous for its posh shops)
- **Place du Bouffay** : old Nantes, with many restaurants and known for foreign food. There are also many bars.
- **Talensac** : famous for its market.
- **Decré** : Á pedestrian shopping district close to *Bouffay*.
- **Ile de Versailles** : An island in the river Erdre close to the city centre (reach it from Tram line 2). The entire island is a Japanese garden and is a pleasant place to relax.
- **Rue Crébillon** : semi pedestrian street at the junction of *la place Royale* and *la place Graslin*, where the main clothes shops are situated. *Pour ceux qui ne compte pas leur argent* (for those who do not count their money).
- **Quai de la fosse** : The red light district of Nantes. Called by locals *Quai de la fesse* (Quay of Buttocks).
- **Butte St-Anne** : west of the *place du Commerce*, in the quartier de Chantenay. Old buildings and a view of the former port.
- **Le quai des Antilles** : A nice place to get a drink. Lots of bars and restaurants.

To arrive or to look around

By plane

There is an international airport in the south of Nantes (Nantes-Atlantique). Regular connections to Paris, Lyon and other French cities. Ryan air and British Airways operate flights from London.

There are three ways to get to the airport from the centre of the town.

- By bus (TAN AIR) which runs from the center of Nantes (Commerce) takes 20 minutes, or from the Nantes station taking 30 minutes
 - From Commerce take tram line 3 in the direction Neustrie
1. from the terminus station "Neustrie", take the bus 37, which terminates at Nantes Atlantique airport (TEL 02 40 84 80 00). This will take around 35 minutes.
 2. get off at the tram stop "Pirmil", then take bus line 98 to the stop "Aéroport". This will also take around 35 minutes plus a two minute walk

The last two method just require the regular TAN ticket valid for an hour and will cost you 1,30€ (or less if you already have a day ticket etc.) Also, all tram stations have a very clear tram and bus map and you will easily be able to see these method to get to the airport.

By train

Nantes is just over 2 hours (depending on the number of stops) by TGV from Paris passing through Le Mans and Angers. Trains run regularly throughout the day. There are also direct connections from Nantes to Charles de Gaulle airport and to Lille (stopping at Disneyland Resort Paris) that will bypass Paris.

It is also possible to go to

- Roissy CDG Airport in 2h50
- Grenoble in 5h35
- Lille in 3h50
- Lyon in 4h20
- Marseille in 6h20

SNCF information: 3635

- Exit North: tramway to the city centre.
- Exit South: pedestrian access to Nantes International Convention Centre.

By car

Car hire is available on many websites if you are traveling to Nantes. Car Hire Centre has an information guide about Nantes and offers car hire in the area. <http://www.car-hire-centre.co.uk/rd-france/nantes.html> Major companies like Budget <http://www.budget.co.uk/> and Hertz also provide quotes if Car Hire is how you want to get around. <https://www.hertz.co.uk/rentacar/index.jsp?bsc=t&targetPage=reservationOnHomepage.jsp>

By bus

The TAN public transport system links Nantes to several nearby burgs, as does the Lila system of regional buses. For more information (French) <http://www.tan.fr/>

By boat

- Contact TEL **+33 (0) 2 40 37 04 62** for detailed information about the cruises.
- River Ferries (Navibus) Information & schedule TEL **0810 444 444** (TAN ticket valid for crossings.)

Get around

Public transport

There are very good public transportation services provided by the TAN (Transports de l'Agglomération Nantaise). It consists of 3 tram lines, a bus way (like a tram line and numbered as such but with buses rather than trams), many bus lines, and several Navibus (public boats) lines. Once on the bus, tram, or Navibus you must validate the ticket in one of the green ticket validation machines. The ticket is then active for one hour with unlimited transfers. Tickets are cheaper if you buy them in bulk a "carnet" of 10 tickets, there are also 24-hour as well as weekly passes available. The trams start early and run till after midnight, later on Saturdays, however there are also several night bus lines.

By taxi

Nantes's taxi number is 02 40 69 22 22. There are designated taxi waiting spots near Place du Commerce and the train station, but taxi service is infrequent.

By bike

Nantes is a very bike-friendly city. There are bicycle lanes alongside most major roads, demarcated by green arrows, and many small streets and trails that are only accessible to pedestrians and cyclists.

Bikes can be rented from **Nantes Métropole** at one of eight parking lots in the city. You may rent a bike for 1€ for 2 hours, 4€ for a day, 10€ for a week, or 25€ for a month. Additionally, there is a 50% discount for holders of an SNCF or a TAN pass.

Bicloo, Nantes self-service bicycle network at 79 locations, offering 700 bicycles. Registration starts at 1€ for a day (with a 150€ deposit in case of damage to the bike), but you can only use the bike for 30 minutes at maximum, and there are no Bicloo stations outside of the Nantes area. <http://www.bicloo.nantesmetropole.fr/>

See

- **Château des ducs de Bretagne**, (Castle of the Dukes of Brittany) - Nantes History Museum - Expositions.
- **Cathédrale Saint Pierre** and its two crypts where the treasures and the history of the cathedral are displayed. Next to the Château des ducs de Bretagne.
- **Musée des Beaux-Arts** (Fine Arts Museum), Rue Clémenceau. Very beautiful building with an excellent art collection and temporary exhibitions.
- La **Chapelle de l'Oratoire**. Rue Henri IV. Near to both the Castle and the Cathedral.
- **Place Maréchal-Foch**. Contains one of the few existing statues of Louis XVI, the beheaded king, left in France
- **Le Passage Pommeraye**. A shopping mall between la rue Crébillon and la rue de la Fosse built in the 19th century.
- l'**Île de Versailles**, a peaceful island in the Erdre with a Japanese garden.
- Le **Cours Cambronne**. A few steps from la place Graslin containing imperial buildings.
- La **Place Mellinet**. Contains some of the restored architecture in Nantes and consists of eight perfectly symmetric houses built around an octagon. 200 meters from Port and from *Maillé-Brézé*.
- **Place du Bouffay**. A pedestrian area between the Castle of the Dukes of Brittany, Saint Pierre Cathedral et la Place du Commerce; ancient medieval quarter of Nantesvieux known for its Breton culture and for the pubs and restaurants.
- **Île Feydeau**, magnificent architecture of the 18th century. Ship owners' houses in the sculptured mascarons and the balconies of wrought iron illustrate the wealth accumulated at the time of the triangular trade.
- Le **Maillé-Brézé**, a warship (which never saw a battle) which has been moored in Nantes for many years which is open to visitors
- The **Jules Verne Museum**, on the Butte Sainte Anne, which has just been completely restored. Has a very good collection of memorabilia and objects associated with Jules Verne. There is also a very nice view of the port of Nantes.
- The new **Palais de Justice** on the Île de Nantes, designed by Jean Nouvel and built in 2000.
- La **Tour LU** (The LU Tower) - a picturesque tower guarding the entrance of a former Lefevre-Utile biscuit factory.
- The **lieu unique**, centre of atypical art shelters a restaurant, a bar, a shop, theaters, etc.
- **Musée Thomas Dobrée**.
- Le **Jardin des Plantes** (Garden of Plants), situated just outside the main train station (North exit).
- Le **Marché Talensac**, the main town market, full of high quality local produce.
- The **Machines de l'Île** (Machines of the Isle of Nantes), an exhibition of fantastic mechanical animals including the Great Elephant on which you can take a ride. Take tramway line 1 to Chantiers Naval, then walk across the bridge. Price is around 6 euros.

Around Nantes

The beach, especially the resort town of La Baule, is only a short drive away or can be easily reached by train. There are often cheaper deals if you take the local trains such as the TER or Corail (as opposed to the TGV). You can also travel to the beach at Pornic, a very beautiful town and much less of a beach resort than La Baule. The salt swamps at Guerandes, where Breton sea salt is harvested, are worth a visit, as well, and feature an exhibit on the salt-harvesting process.

Learn

- There are around 50 000 students in Nantes Metropole among which 32 000 students in the University of Nantes, the third multi-disciplinary university in France.
- The city supports the research in the excellent domains of the town with 2 200 researchers and 200 research laboratories.
- And 15 Elite Schools.

Work

The "Maison de l'Emploi" of the Nantes metropolis was created on October 17th, 2005. This initiative allows to make employment more accessible and also to act against the discriminations in the districts where the unemployment rate is the highest.

Buy

- **La Frindande**, *12 rue Paul Bellamy*, from caramels, candies, jams to home-made chocolates.
- **Les Rigolottes nantaises**, *18 rue de Verdun et rue Franklin*, Nantes candies, chocolates and other regional specialties.
- **ABC Terroirs**, *5 place St Pierre*, regional products of Pays de la Loire.
- Bookshop of the **Castle of the dukes of Brittany**, *place Marc Elder*, artworks, objects, postcards and collections.
- **Lieu Unique Boutique**, *quai Ferdinand Favre*, LU collections and artists' creations.
- **Tourist Office Boutique**, *3 cours Olivier de Clisson et 2 place St Pierre*, books, guides, postcards, regional specialties, etc.

Eat

Nantes has many restaurants! For its famous and finest wine and seafood. Also, this region of France is famous as the birthplace of crêpes. For a more savory variant, try the *galettes de sarrasin* (buckwheat crêpes).

Budget

- Some cafés and crêperies offer affordable prix-fixe menus for lunch.

Mid-range

- **Cafe Moliere**, located in the Place Graslin next to the Theatre Graslin, offers excellent lunch fare, including sandwiches, croques-monsieur (open-faced sandwiches with ham and melted cheese; a delicious variant is the croque-anana, which also features a pineapple slice), steak-frites (steak and French fries), and salads. Coffee and dessert are also available, and the restaurant becomes a bar at night. Get a table outside if Nantes is experiencing rare sunny weather.

Splurge

- **La Cigale**, situated in the Place Graslin, has been called "the most beautiful brasserie in France" for its turn-of-the-century decor. Seafood is a particular specialty (as in all of Nantes), and the chef can be seen preparing seafood in front of the restaurant, where there is outdoor seating during warmer months. Fixed price menus are available starting at 15 Euro. A cheaper way to experience this delightful place is to go in the afternoon for dessert and coffee.

Drink

Nantes's nightlife is concentrated in the Bouffay area, although there are also many bars and nightclubs near the Place du Commerce and the Théâtre Graslin.

- **Le Bar du Coin** located next to the Église Saint-Croix, with an old-fashioned interior.
- **Les Fées Maison** bar decorated in a fairy-tale theme, offering many unique cocktails and local beers, located near Place du Commerce, close to the tram stop.
- **La Maison** bar decorated in the style of an old house. You can have a drink sitting in a bathtub in the "bathroom" of the house. Located on the rue Lebrun, a small alleyway off the rue du Maréchal Joffre near the Place Foch.
- **John McByrn's** popular Irish bar in the quartier Bouffay.

Try Breton cider, similar to beer, which comes in either a brut or doux (sweet) variety. A variation is a kir breton, which is cider mixed with a fruit liqueur (usually black currant, blackberry, or peach). The Nantes area is also known for its Muscadet wine, inexpensive but surprisingly delicious, which goes well with seafood dishes.

Contact

The first part of the WIFI network covers the city center, lieu unique, SNCF train station, and Ile de Nantes district. From the Nantes WIFI portal site, the access is free and directs towards some sites of practical information in Nantes Métropole (in English and French).

- Hotel bookings
- Cultural and tourist activities
- Restaurants
- Traffic information

Many bars and cafés also offer free Wifi to those with a laptop computer. Look for the WiFi logo in the windows.

Stay safe

Nantes is a very safe city in comparison to most major European cities. Police presence is reasonably visible and TAN officials patrol the trams at night. Be prudent and exercise caution after dark. The European emergency number 999 is accessible in Nantes.

Cope

There is a very strong international presence in Nantes because of the many international students attracted by the large and well-known Université de Nantes. Every Wednesday evening international students meet at Buck Mulligan's bar to meet new people and socialize in a variety of languages. In addition, there are several Irish bars in Nantes in which the bartenders speak fluent English. Most Nantais are fairly friendly and will do their best to help you get by, although obviously they will be happier if you make an effort to communicate in French.

Get out

- **Guérande**, a fortified city surrounded by Medieval walls. Guérande is also famous for its sea salt production.
- **Clisson**, a small town with a ruined castle and an annual open-air heavy metal festival, Hellfest, in June.
- **Le Croisic**, a small fishing town, also a short walk from the scenic Côte Sauvage.

For more info see: www.wikipedia.org

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