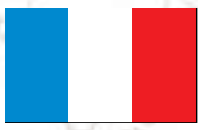


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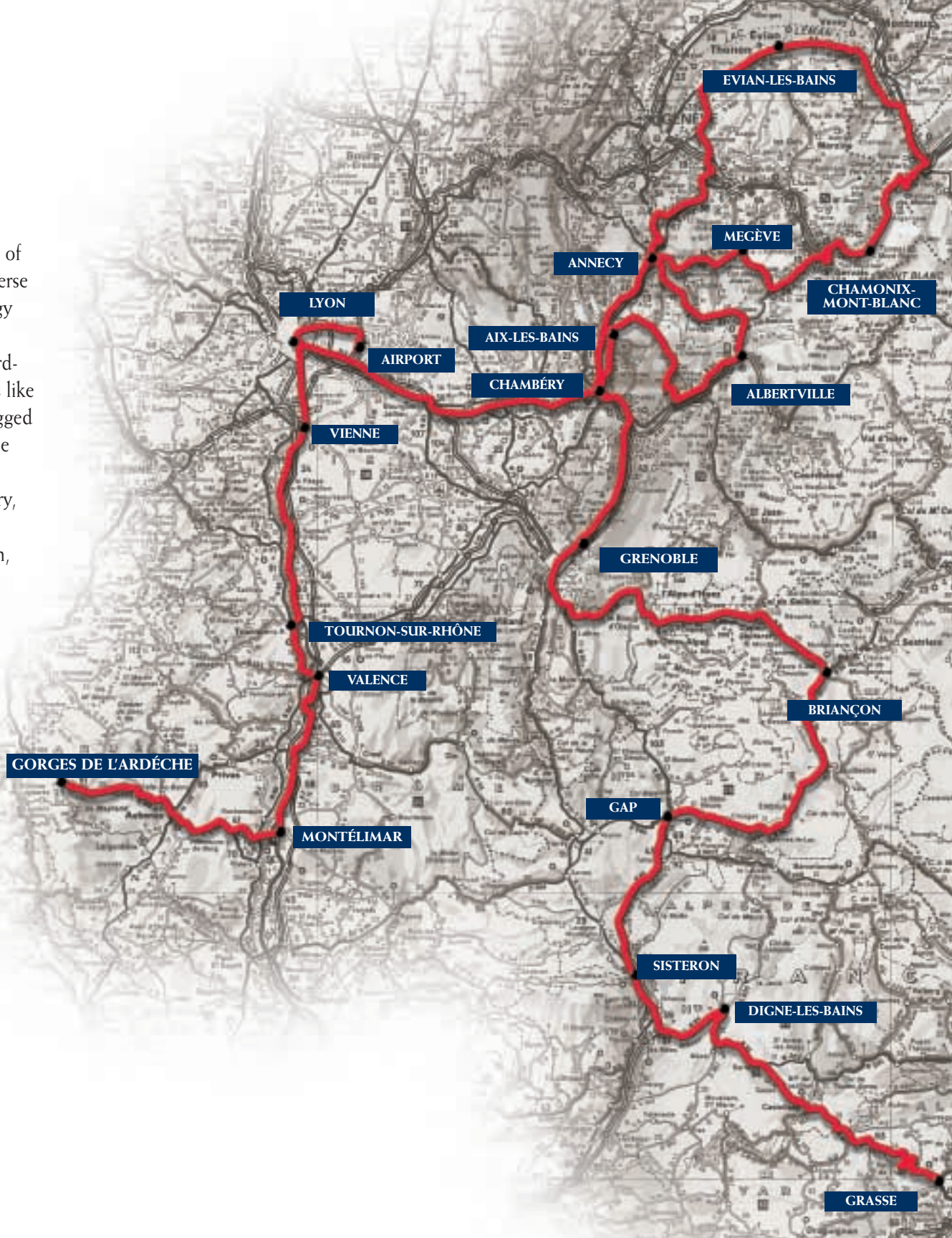
Rhône-Alpes Region



# RHÔNE-ALPES REGION

AS ANYONE WHO'S TRAVELED in the heart of France knows, the Rhône-Alpes region is diverse and dynamic. Start with the charm and energy of Lyon, France's second city, the capital of gastronomy. Then move down the vineyard-covered banks of the Rhône to Roman towns like Vienne and Valence, and westward to the rugged Ardèche. Eastward lie the Alps, home to some of the world's best ski and spa towns, a place of glacial lakes and dramatic mountain scenery, including Mont Blanc, Europe's highest peak. Then go south, along the Route de Napoleon, following the route taken by Napoleon on his return from Elba in 1815.

In the Rhône-Alpes region, you can spend your days walking in flower-filled alpine meadows, lazily soaking in Evian water, or strolling the medieval marketplace of Annecy. It's an area where outdoor enthusiasts can canoe, ski or hike, museum-goers can linger over Roman artifacts and gourmets can indulge in the region's bounty of fresh produce, game and local wine. The Rhône-Alpes has a two-thousand year history as a cultural crossroads, so you should take as long as you can to explore every back road.





# RHÔNE-ALPES REGION

(Mileage is estimated from each preceding city or site. Before you begin your trip, please note: For space reasons, we could not provide the most detailed map with this brochure. We recommend the use of **Michelin Map No. 244 Rhône-Alpes** in conjunction with this guide.)  
To order Michelin maps call:  
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**LYON-SATOLAS AIRPORT** The gateway to central and southern France, flying into this airport means you're ideally situated to explore the Rhône-Alpes region.

**LYON** The second city of France, Lyon is perhaps best known as the country's gastronomic capital, the home of chef Paul Bocuse and dozens of other lauded culinary artists. But it's an appealing city on so many levels. Start with its extraordinary architectural heritage, from Gallo-Roman remains to the Renaissance splendor of the old city. In Old Lyon, along the west bank of the Saône River, you'll find cobblestone streets, covered passageways known as "traboules," and great bistros. You'll also find two Roman amphitheatres, including the Grand Theater, the oldest theater in France, which dates from 15 BC. Then cross over to Presqu'île, the narrow peninsula of the city that lies between the Rhône and the Saône Rivers. Walk slowly along the pedestrian-only Rue de la République, explore the shops and bistros, and visit the Musée des Beaux Arts, which has a collection that reaches from Etruscan statues to works by Rodin. The city's fabled silk industry is documented at the Musée Historique des Tissus as well as the Musée des Arts Décoratifs.

*64 Miles*  
**CHAMBÉRY** There's a dignified air to this town, which befits the former capital of the Savoie. You can get a sense of the past glory by pausing at the 14th century Château des Ducs de Savoie.

*12 Miles*  
**AIX-LES-BAINS** The Romans were the first ones to take the waters at Aix-les-Bains, one of France's premier spa towns. Lying at the foot of Mt. Revard and on the shores of Lac du Bourget, the baths of Aix-les-Bains became very chic during the 19th century, attracting none other than Queen Victoria. Thanks to the splendid architectural vision of Lyon architect Jules Pin, Aix-les-Bains still has the air of a 19th century Belle Epoque pleasure zone. After you step into the waters, pay a visit to his masterpiece, the Château de la Roche du Roi. Then visit the Musée Faure, a collection rich in impressionist works by Corot, Degas, Sisley and Pissarro. Or take the ferry across Lac du Bourget to the Abbaye Royale de Hautecombe, a Benedictine abbey that serves as final resting place for the Savoie dynasty.

*47 Miles*  
**ALBERTVILLE** Of real interest here is a museum to the 16th Winter Olympics, which Albertville hosted in 1992. You can also visit the Olympic Stadium and the speed-skating rink. To look farther back into Albertville's past, drive to adjacent Conflans, and stop at the restored 16th century Château Manuel de Locatel.

*29 Miles*  
**ANNECY** With a backdrop of mountains, a city-center bisected by canals and a lake-side perch on Lac d'Annecy, Annecy is one of the most delightful towns in all of France. The old quarter is especially charming, particularly the market on Rue de la République and Rue Ste-Claire, a place where you can get a quick education in wild mushrooms and the famed cheeses of the Savoie region. Pause at the 15th century church of St. Maurice, with its chapels bearing the emblems of aristocratic families and guilds. And be sure

to see the Palais de l'Isle, a compact 12th century château that sits squarely in the middle of a river. In past life, it did duty as a prison, a mint and law courts. Today it houses the Musée de l'Histoire d'Annecy, offering a glimpse into Savoie's rich history.

*60 Miles*  
**MEGÈVE** This may well be France's most fashionable ski town, a place that also beckons in summertime with its bracing climate, delightful forests and hiking opportunities. You can take the gondola up Mont D'Arbois, summer or winter, for panoramic views of the Aravis and Fiz mountains as well as nearby Mont Blanc.

*33 Miles*  
**CHAMONIX-MONT-BLANC** The actual and spiritual headquarters of French mountaineering, Chamonix offers some of the most staggering mountain scenery in the Alps. It was the site of the first Winter Olympics in 1924, and you'll find that skiers come to Chamonix in summer as well as winter, hikers come in droves and even the non-athletic can avail themselves of an extensive cable car network to access the best views. The most memorable are perhaps those from the Aiguille du Midi cable car, which is a hair-raising ride in itself. Hikers have an endless number of choices, from a multi-day tour of Mont Blanc to a two-hour ramble between La Flegère and Planpraz, with cable car rides to make it easier. In the town, the Musée Alpin, housed in the former Chamonix-Palace, can give you a sense of early mountaineering and skiing.

*106 Miles*  
**EVIAN-LES-BAINS** Located at the edge of Lake Geneva, with its back to the dramatic Prealpes du Chablais, this is one of the most famed spa towns in the world. The health benefits of the eponymous Evian water have been known since 1789. But Evian-les-Bains really blossomed as a chic spa town in the mid-19th century, leading to the building of the baths and

the casino. The town still has the feel of a turn-of-the-century spa resort and the Jardin Anglais, lakeside, is perfect for views of the distant Swiss shore.

*125 Miles*  
**GRENOBLE** The capital of the French Alps and the site of the 1968 Winter Olympics, Grenoble is a modern city that's surrounded by imposing mountain ranges. To get a view worth remembering, take a cable car up to the Fort de la Bastille. Begin your city explorations at the Musée de Grenoble, which houses one of the most impressive and wide-ranging fine arts collections in France. Then explore the old town, lingering at Place Grenette with the locals, and pausing at Maison Stendahl on Grand Rue, a house where the acclaimed French writer lived as a child. Continue on to the Palais de Justice, arguably the finest piece of architecture in the city, which manages to combine the Gothic and Renaissance styles. The Musée Dauphinois, a museum of regional art and Savoie life, is of interest, as is the Église-Musée St-Laurent, a church where excavations of earlier 6th and 7th century churches remain uncovered. The highlight is the St. Oyand Crypt, an early medieval oratory.

*118 Miles*  
**BRIANÇON** The highest town in Europe, Briançon has at its heart the Villa Haute, a fortified old town surrounded by a ring of forts that date back to Louis XIV's period. The streets may be steep, but the 18th century church, Collegiale Notre-Dame, and the inviting shops along the Grande Gargouille are worth it.

*88 Miles*  
**GAP** Lying along the Route de Napoleon, the town has a Musée Départemental with a collection of antiquities. Just outside of town, the Domaine de Charance gives you a chance to wander around a classic French estate. Formerly the domain of the bishops of Gap, it's now the headquarters of the Parc National des Écrins.



44 Miles

**SISTERON** Located at that point where Provence begins, the town has a real medieval character. Start your tour with the Citadel, a pastiche of 12th and 17th century fortifications, with a museum that details Napoleon's journey from Elba. The old town is engaging, with narrow streets and vaulted passages that are called "andrones." If you're especially interested in Napoleon, note that he allegedly had lunch at No. 64 rue Saunerie.

39 Miles

**DIGNE-LES-BAINS** If you're in Digne-les-Bains come September you can attend the lavender festival. At any other time, you can enjoy the sulfurous waters of the famed baths and then stroll the streets of the old town. The Musée de Digne is where you'll find a celebrated astronomical clock, a natural history collection of fossils, shells and minerals, and an array of paintings by the likes of such Provençal artists as Ponson and Nardi. Don't miss the Jardin Botanique des Cordeliers, a medieval garden on former monastery grounds. Avid travelers should pay homage at the Fondation Alexandra David-Neel, the house of the writer and explorer who traveled through Tibet in 1924.

117 Miles

**GRASSE** The epicenter of the French perfume industry, Grasse is host to the Musée International de la Parfumerie. But for a contemporary whiff of perfume, visit the perfumeries of Fragonard, Galimard and Molinard. Long a refuge for the winter-weary, Grasse has been welcoming the well-to-do since Victorian times.

(SOUTH FROM LYON)

19 Miles

**VIENNE** Devotees of architecture have long made pilgrimages to Vienne, which has splendid Roman ruins. The Temple d'Auguste et Livie, fronted by Corinthian columns, is one of the most imposing structures. The Theatre Romain is a restored amphitheater, still used for musical events. The Musée des Beaux-Arts et Archéologie is where to find a well-considered collection of Gallo-Roman treasures. Be sure to go across the Rhône to St-Romain-en-Gal, where more Roman ruins have been discovered.

59 Miles

**TOURNON-SUR-RHÔNE** The tree-lined promenades of this town are worth seeing, as is the 15th century château, which offers a museum of local history as well as great views. Oenophiles should note that across the Rhône lies the village of Tain l'Hermitage, where some of the finest Côtes-du-Rhône wines are produced.

15 Miles

**VALENCE** You can stop here for the market, for the views of the Ardèche cliffs and for a visit to the Cathédrale St-Appollinaire, which dates back to the 11th century.

58 Miles

**MONTÉLIMAR** Your sweet tooth might dictate a stop here, in the French town best-known for its production of almond-studded nougat. In the medieval town center are dozens of shops selling variations on one of France's best-loved confections.

65 Miles

**GORGES DE L'ARDÈCHE** You could be forgiven for thinking that you've been momentarily transported to Arizona here in the middle of France. The Gorges de l'Ardèche are the result of thousands of years of erosion, leading to some of the wildest and most dramatic scenery in the country. They can be seen by driving along the D290 that parallels the river for 32 kilometers or so. But if you're more intrepid, you can rent a canoe or kayak for a run along the Ardèche River.

## HOTELS

**The Chalet du Mont d'Arbois** is a cozy 24-room chalet that's owned by Benjamin and Nadine de Rothschild. Surrounded by firs, with lovely views and a stone fireplace dominating the lounge, it's a refined but relaxed hotel, with down comforters, antiques, and more than a few bottles of Bordeaux from the Rothschild vineyards. 447, Chemin de la Rocaille, 74120 Megève; Tel: (33) 04 50 21 25 03; Fax: (33) 04 50 21 24 79; For reservations in the U.S.: 800-735-2478.

**The Auberge du Bois Pin** is a delightful 11 room chalet, with rooms and balconies offering superb views of Mont Blanc and the surrounding mountains. Monique and Denis Carrier supervise the inventive cuisine. 69, Chemin de l'Herminie, Les Moussoux 74400, Chamonix Mont-Blanc; Tel: (33) 04 50 53 33 51; Fax: (33) 04 50 53 48 75; For reservations in the U.S.: 800-735-2478.

**La Tour Rose** is the name of Philippe Chavent's silk-swathed hotel, which occupies several houses around a courtyard. The glass-roof restaurant was once a chapel. Each of the 12 rooms is named for an old silk factory and is plushly decorated. 22 rue du Boeuf, Lyon. Tel.: (33) 04-78-37-25-90; Fax: (33) 04-78-42-26-02.

**La Verniaz et ses Chalets**, tucked into the mountainside above Evian, is an ensemble of old Alpine houses and chalets secluded in a manicured parkland. Many of the 30 large, cozily-decorated rooms have their own private balconies. Av. d'Abondance, Neuvecelle-Église, 74500 Evian-les-Bains. Tel.: (33) 04 50 75 04 90; Fax: (33) 04 50 70 78 92. For reservations in the U.S.: 800-735-2478.

**The Auberge du Choucas** is just up the road from Briançon in the village of Monêtier-les-Bains. You're surrounded by mountains here, in this chalet-style hotel. Many of the 22 rooms have balconies and the restaurant serves marvelous local food at reasonable prices. Monêtier-les-Bains, 05220 France; Tel.: (33) 04-92-24-42-73; Fax: (33) 04-92-24-51-60.

## RESTAURANT

Celebrated chef **Michel Chabran** serves creative and remarkably light fare in his self-named restaurant, from mille-feuille de foie gras with artichokes to grilled fillet of rouget and lobster. His cuisine is perfectly married to the vintages here in the center of the Hermitage region. Av. du 45ème parallèle, RN 7, 26600 Pont-de-l'Isère; Tel.L33) 04 75 84 60 09; Fax: (33) 04 75 84 59 65; For reservations in the U.S.: 800-735-2478.





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