

# LES PRÉALPES D'AZUR

## A JOURNEY BETWEEN MOUNTAINS AND SEA



# SUMMER *guided tours* OF THE VILLAGES

GRÉOLIÈRES

GOURDON

VALBONNE SOPHIA ANTIPOLIS

TOURRETTES-SUR-LOUP

LE BAR-SUR-LOUP



[oti.casa@agglo-casa.fr](mailto:oti.casa@agglo-casa.fr)

DISCOVER THE HERITAGE OF THE  
VILLAGES OF VALBONNE, GOURDON,  
LE BAR-SUR-LOUP, GRÉOLIÈRES,  
TOURRETTES-SUR-LOUP AND  
DURING FREE GUIDED TOURS ALL  
SUMMER !

# WELCOME TO THE PRÉALPES D'AZUR !

## PUBLISHING

### Collection Directors and authors:

Dominique AUZIAS and Jean-Paul LABOURDETTE

### Publishing manager:

Isabelle DREZEN

Authors: Eileen GIACOLETTO, Bernard CROISE,

Jean-Paul LABOURDETTE, Dominique AUZIAS and alter

**Publishing Director:** Stéphane SZEREMETA

**Publishing team (France):** Elisabeth COL,

Mélanie COTTARD, Audrey VEDOVOTTO and Tony DE SOUSA

**Publishing team (World):** Caroline MICHELOT,

Morgane VESLIN, Pierre-Yves SOUCHET, Jimmy POSTOLLEC

and Natalia COLLIER

## STUDIO

**Studio Manager:** Sophie LECHERTIER

assisted by Romain AUDREN

**Layout:** Julie BORDES, Sandrine MECKING

and Delphine PAGANO

**Pictures and Mapping management:** Anne DIOT

assisted by Julien DOUCET

## WEB

**Web Director:** Louis GENEAU DE LAMARLIERE

**Web management and Development:**

Nicolas de GUENIN, Adeline CAUX and Kiril PAVELEK

**Intégrateur Web:** Mickael LATTES

**Webdesigner:** Caroline LAFFAITEUR

**Community Traffic Manager:** Alice BARBIER,

Mariana BURLAMAQUI and Vincent PHAM

## NATIONAL PUBLICITY

**Publicity director:** Guillaume VORBURGER

assisted by Manon GUERIN

**Local publicity management:**

Michel GRANSEIGNE

**Customer relations management:**

Vimla MEETOO and Assa TRAORE

**Heads of National Publicity:**

Caroline AUBRY, François BRIANÇON-MARJOLLET,

Perrine DE CARNE MARCEIN and Caroline PREAU

## INTERNATIONAL PUBLICITY

**Heads of Publicity :** Jean-Marc FARAGUET,

Guillaume LABOUREUR, Camille ESMIEU

assisted by Claire BEDON

## CIRCULATION AND PROMOTION

**Sales promotion Director:** Bénédicte MOULET

assisted by Aissatou DIOP and Sidonie COLLET

**Sales Manager:** Jean-Pierre GHEZ assisted by Nelly BRION

**Press and sponsor partnership management:**

Jean-Mary MARCHAL

## ADMINISTRATION

**Chairman:** Jean-Paul LABOURDETTE

**Administrative and financial Director:**

Valérie DECOTTIGNIES

**Human Resources Director:**

Dina BOURDEAU assisted by Sandra MORAIS

and Eva BAELEN

**Collection:** Jeannine DEMIRDJIAN,

Adrien PRIGENT and Faiza ALILI

**Information and Technology Manager :** Adam M'RAH

**Switchboard:** Assa TRAORE

## ■ PETIT FUTÉ PRÉALPES D'AZUR ■

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To email us, type the surname (lowercase)

followed by @petitfute.com

Write to the editor: [info@petitfute.com](mailto:info@petitfute.com)

Did you say "authentic"? It is an adjective that applies entirely to this hinterland of hills, "baous" and plateaus, which extends from Valbonne to the perched villages of the Préalpes d'Azur.

► **First of all, the hills that border the Côte d'Azur**, like a protective amphitheatre, have seen the villages flourish. Valbonne, Chateaufort, Opio, le Rouret, Roquefort les Pins have developed there, some of them around the cultivation of aromatic plants for the perfumers of Grasse, others around livestock or market gardening. Little by little, and with the development of the Côte d'Azur, these villages have grown to include a population of holidaymakers, retirees, and young households seeking a sweeter life in the south. The post-war period and the development of tourism and the arts on the coast and in the nearby hinterland gave a major boost to the development of these villages. The creation in 1969 of Sophia Antipolis, and the installation of hundreds of companies, researchers and universities, completed the boost to the municipalities of this hilly amphitheatre overlooking the sea.

► **Behind the hills, there are the white cliffs of the "Baous"**, split by the gorges du Loup, and, at their foot, the villages of Le Loup, we speak there of Gourdon, Tourrettes-sur-Loup, Le Bar-sur-Loup, as well as Courmes. They are real balconies on the hills and the sea, which clearly claim their difference. Nestled within their ancient walls, they are bastion villages. They too were able to take advantage of the development of the means of communication at the end of the 19th century, roads and railways, to transform themselves and attract new inhabitants, as well as tourists on excursions. The settling of artists and the development of the hotel business have completed giving these villages their reputation as tourist destinations.

► **Higher up, behind the limestone plateaus that make the transition to the high country**, are the medium mountain villages, grouped around the Cheiron mountain: Cipières and Gréolières, but also Coursegoules, Bézaudun-les-Alpes, Bouyon and les Ferres, Conségudes and La Roque-en-Provence. Less easily accessible, further away, they had to reinvent themselves to survive. They have taken advantage of the surrounding nature, and, for some, of the protection of the Préalpes d'Azur Natural Park to develop nature activities, skiing, canyoning, hiking, mountain biking, horse riding. Today, they see the old walls of their bastides reborn, renovated by new passionate inhabitants, attracted by a fabulous living environment, and developing new ideas for activities in this beautiful medium mountain region.

Whether in the southern hills, in the villages of Le Loup, or in those of the hinterland, you will find a varied hotel business, restaurants that give pride of place to Provençal local products, welcoming villages with their festivals and traditions, varied activities.... Were we talking about authenticity? We invite you to browse through the pages of this guide, to discover a region that extends from Valbonne to the perched villages, and which precisely cultivates its authenticity.



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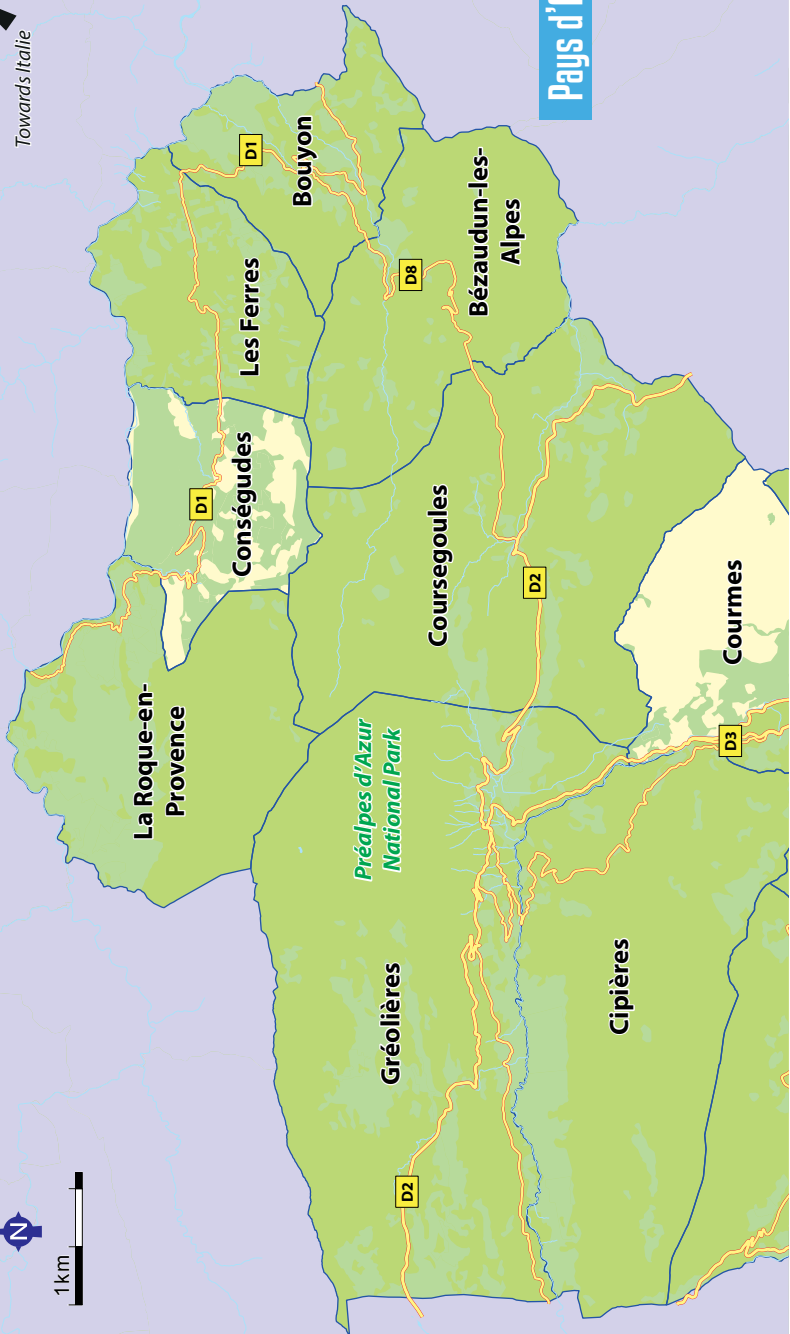
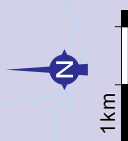
*Gourdon.*

© Bernard CROISE



Towards Italy

# Pays d'Azur





*Gourdon and the coast seen from château de Caussols.*

© Bernard CROISE





# DISCOVER THE PRÉALPES D'AZUR



# IDENTITY CARD

8

*This guide covers 18 towns or villages in the Sophia Antipolis Urban Community, stretching from the hinterland of Antibes to the villages on the Estéron River.*

▶ **The most important municipality** is Valbonne-Sophia Antipolis with 13,190 inhabitants. The least important is La-Roque-en-Provence, with 68 inhabitants.

▶ **The total area of the territory** is 391 km<sup>2</sup>.

▶ **The lowest point** in the territory, 20 metres above sea level, is Roquefort les Pins. The highest point, 1,778 meters, is at Gréolières. (Cheiron Summit).

▶ **The areas of these 18 municipalities** range from 7.1 km<sup>2</sup> (Le Rouret) to 52.67 km<sup>2</sup> (Gréolières).

▶ **There are 5 main tourist sites:** Valbonne-Village, Gourdon, Tourrettes-sur-Loup, Gorges du Loup, Gréolières.

▶ **A regional natural park:** the Préalpes d'Azur regional natural park, which includes 47 municipalities, 11 of which are within the territory of the Sophia Antipolis Agglomeration Community, and are therefore included in this guide.

▶ **Four departmental natural parks:** Parc de l'Estéron in La Roque-en-Provence, Parc du Sinodon in

Roquefort-les-Pins, as well as Parc de la Brague and Parc de la Valmasque, partially located in the commune of Valbonne Sophia-Antipolis.

▶ **Europe's leading technology park:** Sophia Antipolis.

▶ **A river classified as an "exceptional river":** the Estéron, which is one of the top three wild rivers in the Alps, with the Soca (Slovenia) and Tagliamento (Italy)

▶ **A remarkable coastal river,** the Loup: 48 km long from its source at 1,217 m to its mouth. Its gorges are one of the main tourist attractions of the region.

▶ **An unusual place,** Caussols: its karst plateau offers a preserved nature with a specific flora and fauna.

▶ **A massif:** the Cheiron (1,778 m) around which 8 of the communes in this guide are grouped.

▶ **The lowest town hall** is Roquefort les Pins (200 m).

▶ **The highest town hall** is Caussols (1,130 m).

▶ **Two Natura 2000 sites:** Les Préalpes de Grasse (communes of Bar-sur-Loup, Caussols, Cipières, Courmes, Coursegoules, Gourdon, Gréolières, la Roque en Provence, Tourrettes sur Loup) and Rivière et les Gorges du Loup (communes of Bar-sur-Loup, Cipières, Courmes, Gourdon, Gréolières, Roque-sur-Loup).

© Bernard BOUÏSE



Place des Arcades, Valbonne.



*Crystallized violets.*



*Château-Mairie de Tourrettes-sur-Loup.*



*Coursegoules.*



*Gourdon village.*

# MUST-SEES

*From the hills of Valbonne to the villages of the high country, through the communes of Le Loup, the region is rich in cultural, architectural and natural discoveries. Here are some sites that you shouldn't miss.*

## Châteauneuf village

Seeing the medieval village of Châteauneuf from the plain is a guaranteed must with an irrepressible desire to visit it. It is a village that clings to the sides of a hill planted with century-old olive trees, wrapped around a natural hillside. The houses are squeezed together around the church, in a harmony of shapes and colours, giving the whole a true Provençal character. The city has made its reputation around the cultivation of perfume flowers, vines and olive trees, as well as market gardening. While remaining faithful to the agricultural and horticultural tradition, the municipality has also diversified its economic activities both in the field of crafts (ceramics, pottery, sculptures) and commercial. It is a real pleasure to stroll through the flowered alleys, discovering the facades, stairs, vaulted passages, and to admire here a nicely restored house, there a garden planted with a magnolia or a palm tree.

► **To discover:** the fountain-washhouse on the town hall square, the church of Saint Martin (10th century) which houses an 18th century altarpiece, the panorama of the Côte d'Azur from the Old Town Hall square, the orientation table.

## Valbonne village

In contrast to other older villages, grouped around their castle at the top of a hill, Valbonne was built in the 16th

century, on the plans of a Roman city: in a checkered, rectangular shape, the streets surrounding a central square. On each side of the rectangle, a door was open, allowing access to the city. Of the four gates that opened on each side of the city, only those from the north, south and west remain. You enter the old village through these gates, walking through the busy pedestrian streets, which intersect perpendicularly. Here no stairs or steep alleys, everything is flat or slightly sloping, and easy to access. The village, very inhabited, is constantly animated. Pretty shops invite you to push their doors, restaurants have their charming terraces right on the street. The houses have beautiful facades with ochre plasters, on which pastel-coloured shutters add a touch of Provençal colour. The streets are flowered with succulent plants, bouquets of lavender, virgin vines or bougainvilleas.

► **To discover:** the Valbonne goat farm, the Peyrebelle olive grove, hikes along the Brague.

### ■ BUREAU D'INFORMATION TOURISTIQUE DE VALBONNE SOPHIA-ANTIPOLIS 1, place de l' Hôtel de Ville VALBONNE

☎ 04 93 12 34 50

tourisme.vsa@agglo-casa.fr

Open Monday to Friday from 9am to 12.30pm and 1.30pm to 5.30pm; Saturday from 9am to 12.30pm. From 15 June to 15 September, also open on Saturday afternoons from 1.30 pm to 5 pm.

Located on the Place de l'Hôtel de Ville, in the village of Valbonne, you will find here complete information about the city and its heritage as well as the local transport network and the many festivals and events organized by the Commune.



General view of Châteauneuf-Grasse.



*A street in Châteauneuf.*

© Bernard CROISE



*Stroll through the streets of Valbonne.*

© Bernard CROISE

## Tourrettes-sur-Loup

City of Arts, medieval city, city of Violets, secret village, so many qualifiers for such a small village? But yes, Tourrettes-sur-Loup deserves them all. One enters intramural through the old medieval gates, much as one would enter a church. We wouldn't want to disturb too much, but at the same time we want to discover the city, to explore corners and nooks and crannies, alleys, alleys and secret stairs, to see who is hiding there. Craftsmen, no doubt, judging by the shops. Ceramists, potters, weavers, jewellers, perfumers met in Tourrettes-sur-Loup for our greatest pleasure, looking at their looms, workbenches or potter's wheels. This magical village has always attracted artists: Prévret, Sinatra, Cocteau had their habits there. It is necessary to come in March, for the day of the "Autour de la Violette" festival, a celebration of spring in the colours of this delicate flower.

► **To discover:** the church of Saint-Grégoire on the square, the castle, the medieval city, the craftsmen. But also: the Bastide aux Violettes, the Chapelle St-Jean, the Courmettes farm.

### ■ BUREAU D'INFORMATION TOURISTIQUE DE TOURRETTES-SUR-LOUP

2, place de la Libération  
TOURRETTES-SUR-LOUP

☎ 04 93 24 18 93

[www.tourettesurloup.com](http://www.tourettesurloup.com)

[tourisme.tsl@agglo-casa.fr](mailto:tourisme.tsl@agglo-casa.fr)

Open Monday to Saturday from 9am to 1pm and 2pm to 5pm. Closed on Sundays and holidays, except in July and August. Closed at 5pm from November to March, at 6pm from April to July, at 6.30pm in July and August, at 5.30pm in September and October.

The team offers all year long upon appointment free guided tours of the medieval city and the historical heritage.

## Gourdon

It was a fortified place, an eagle's nest, an impregnable tower. It was reached by a vertiginous mule track: 537m of altitude difference! In other words, we only came to Gourdon if we had to. Curiously, it was flowers rather than war that made the village's fortune. By extending into the valley in the 19th century, as far as the hamlet of Pont-du-Loup, the municipality was able to develop at this more favourable altitude the cultivation of perfumed plants, orange trees and olive trees. The 1950s and the development of tourism on the Côte d'Azur did the rest. Today, Gourdon is one of the most beautiful villages in France. Whether you arrive from Le Bar-sur-Loup, the vallée du Loup or Caussols, the view of the village is breathtaking. We must stop the car quickly and immortalize this beauty. Gourdon appears to us on its rocky spur, with its massive Provençal

castle framed by round towers, stone facades and tiled roofs, the bell tower of the church that protrudes... The whole is harmonious and has inspired many an artist. The Côte d'Azur, which sparkles in the distance in its blue setting, completes the picture. We are seized. A walk through the village's alleys leads us to discover some craftsmen's shops: art glassmaker, perfumer or potter. The view of the French Riviera from place Victoria is breathtaking.

► **To discover:** the fountain, the église St-Vincent, the magnificent view from Place Victoria.

### ■ BUREAU D'INFORMATION TOURISTIQUE DE GOURDON

1, place Victoria

GOURDON

☎ 04 93 09 68 25

[www.gourdon06.fr](http://www.gourdon06.fr)

[tourisme.gourdon06@agglo-casa.fr](mailto:tourisme.gourdon06@agglo-casa.fr)

Open from November to March from 10am to 1pm and from 1.45pm to 5pm. Open from April to June, September and October from 10am to 1pm and from 1.45pm to 6pm. Open in July and August from 10am to 1pm and from 1.45pm to 7pm.

You will find here lots of information and a wide range of self-service documentation. The Bureau d'Information Touristique also has a post office open during the week so that you can send a postcard of your holidays.

## The Gorges du Loup

Born at an altitude of 1,200 m in the Audoubert massif, the Loup has dug its way through the limestone of the Pre-Alps, carving its way between the plateaus of Calern, Cavillone and Caussols in the west, and the Saint-Barnabé plateau in the east to form these magnificent gorges. The Gorges du Loup represent the tumultuous section of the river: waterfalls, rapids and siphons are a delight for water hikers. The gorges extend for about 5 km from the Pont du Loup to the crossroads of Bramafan. During the Belle Époque, they were already a tourist attraction. On Sundays in summer, the Provence railways would dump tourists and locals who would go up the river in search of freshness, a picnic basket in hand, at the Pont-du-Loup station. To visit them, you must take the scenic road D6 which follows the gorges on the left bank of the Loup. Before the 2<sup>nd</sup> tunnel you can see the spectacular Courmes waterfall, but it is difficult to stop there because there is no parking space. Further on, the waterfalls of Le Saut du Loup offer parking spaces. A viewpoint has been set up to get closer to the Loup and see the falls...

► **To discover:** the Pont du Loup site with the remains of the railway viaduct destroyed in 1944, the Courmes waterfall, the Saut du Loup site, the banks of the Haut-Loup between Gréolières and Cipières.

Find the index at the end of this guide book

## The Estéron River

No catchments or discharges, no dams, an open river, crystal clear water, preserved landscapes, the Estéron is indeed an exceptional river. From the slopes of Mont Teillon, where it rises at an altitude of 1,160 m, the Estéron quietly runs its course to flow into the Var, after 67 km of travel. The river benefits from a gentle slope for most of its length, which contributes to making its banks a privileged place for fishing or swimming. In areas where the slope is steeper, the river has dug gorges, a real paradise for canyoning enthusiasts! The Estéron Departmental Natural Park, which covers 20 hectares in the municipalities of La Roque-en-Provence and Roquesteron, was created to allow as many people as possible to access the river in a controlled area. In summer, the developed beaches and natural basins allow summer visitors to cool off in the waters of the Estéron. A fishing course allows enthusiasts to fish for trout or bleak fish.

► **To discover:** The Estéron Departmental Natural Park, the municipality of La Roque-en-Provence, the neighbouring villages of Conségudes and Les Ferres.

## Coursegoules

From the road to Vence, Coursegoules appears as a harmonious village, surrounded by its old ramparts, fully representative of the high country. The tourists are not mistaken, everyone stops to take a picture of the village! It is true that nestled on its promontory, with the austere bar of the Cheiron massif in the background and the light of the end of the day on its facades, Coursegoules looks great. It is a village for lovers of old stones, a village of character. Walking through its steep alleys is a journey back in time. Fountains, old washhouses, covered passages, "pountis", houses with stone facades, Coursegoules is a condensed version of the high country. Its location in the heart of a natural area covering the Saint-Barnabé plateau and the Cheiron massif is a godsend for hikers, many of whom frequent the village.

► **To discover:** the ramparts, the chapelle des Pénitents Blancs, the église Sainte Marie Madeleine, the facade of the Freinet school, the residence of Diane de Poitiers,

the views over the valley and the Cheiron, the grain mill, the plateau of Saint Barnabé, the chapelle Saint Michel.

## Gréolières

Gréolières flourishes on the southern slope of Cheiron Mountain, at an altitude of 836 m. The village, among the highest in the region, overlooks the vallée du Loup. The Cheiron mass dominates the village, imposing and protective, with its marked hiking routes. Below are the Gorges du Loup, siphons and waterfalls, natural baths and fly fishing. Gréolières les Neiges is located on the northern slope of the Cheiron massif, 18 km from the village of Gréolières. We ski here 21 km as the crow flies from the Mediterranean! The slopes are laid out on the slopes of the Cheiron on nearly 1,000 hectares. The exposure to the north of the Cheiron limits snowmelt. The resort is also equipped with an automatic snowmaking installation on 4 km of slopes. From the top of the Cheiron, one can contemplate a circular panorama, which includes both the coast and the Mediterranean to the south, as well as the Alps to the north!

► **To see:** the ruins of the castles of the Basses and Hautes Gréolières, Saint-Pierre church, the ruins of the Notre-Dame de Verdelaye chapel, the milestone...

► **Things to do:** In winter, downhill skiing, cross-country skiing, snowshoeing. In summer, hiking in the Cheiron massif, canyoning, fishing and swimming in the Loup.

### ■ BUREAU D'INFORMATION TOURISTIQUE DE GRÉOLIÈRES

Route de Font-Rougères, GRÉOLIÈRES

☎ 04 93 24 10 79

[tourisme.greolieres@agallo-casa.fr](mailto:tourisme.greolieres@agallo-casa.fr)

*From January 1st to March 24th and from July 1st to August 18th: open every day except Monday and Thursday, from 9am to 1pm. From March 25th to June 30th and from August 19th to December 31st: open Wednesday, Saturday and Sunday from 9am to 1pm.*

You will find all the information you need to visit Gréolières, ski or snowshoe in winter, hike, paraglide or mountain bike in summer. A wealth of information to fully enjoy the 5,267 hectares of the commune.



Eglise Saint-Pierre in Gréolières.



*Walk in the streets of Coursegoules.*

© Bernard CROISE



# NATURE

From the shores of the Mediterranean to the great plateaus of the hinterland, the territory that extends from Valbonne to the perched villages of the Préalpes d'Azur passes through a magnificent gradient. It makes the big gap between the Mediterranean and mountain levels. It is not uncommon in winter to see the snow-covered plateaus of Saint-Barnabé or Calern while tourists have lunch on the terrace in Valbonne. This geographical location gives rise to magnificent photos, the sunny hills in the foreground,

and the snow-covered mountains of the Mercantour range in the back. This sometimes confusing climate makes all the salt in the region. Where else but here can we find so much difference in climate in an hour's drive?

Small coastal rivers have made their way through this geographical amphitheatre, sometimes in a masterly way, such as the Loup, which has carved spectacular gorges. This area is mainly occupied by wooded areas with urbanized areas to the south and karst landscapes to the north.

## GEOGRAPHY

### Climate

#### The region's mild climate is proverbial

It attracts thousands of tourists and residents every winter. The average temperature is 10°C in winter, but on sunny days, you can see a few brave swimmers do lengths in a Mediterranean at 15°C. The rains recharge the groundwater and fill the water reservoirs that are the karst massifs. It is the body of water stored in these mountains that supplies the fountains of villages, rivers and coastal streams.

#### A remarkable amount of sunshine

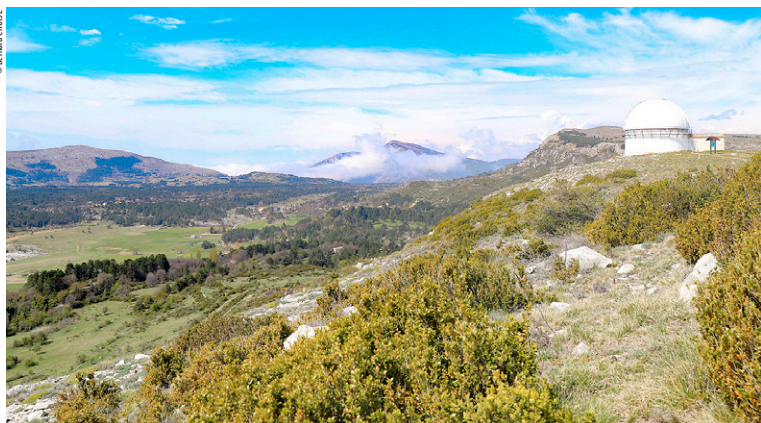
The region is said to have around 300 days of sunshine per year. It is therefore rare that the sun does not shine! Indeed the sun is present in all seasons making winters pleasant. Summers, on the other hand, the heat becomes intense on the coast. In this season it is pleasant to seek freshness in altitude. Gourdon, Caussols, Gréolières, are here to refresh you!

### The compass rose

The Mediterranean plays a soothing role in local weather. Apart from a few rare winter storms, winds in the region are rather moderate, with the mountains of the high country and the Esterel massif playing a protective role. The prevailing winds are from the east or west, and sometimes from the south.

- ▶ **The easterly wind:** coming from the Gulf of Genoa, it is generally an indicator of bad weather.
- ▶ **Mistral:** it is synonymous with good weather. It blows strongly in the Rhône corridor but its effects are largely mitigated in the extreme south-east, protected by the Alps and Esterel mountains which divert it towards the open sea and Corsica. Its violence is feared in the south. In periods of drought, the Mistral fans the slightest forest fire, which then becomes uncontrollable in steep mountain ranges.
- ▶ **Sirocco:** This is the south wind. It blows from Africa bringing mild air and sometimes sand from the Sahara which covers the snow-covered peaks in winter...

© Bernard BOUSF



The Caussols plateau with the Calern plateau observatory.



*Le Loup.*

© BERNARD CROISE

# Agriculture at CASA



*A territory rich in contrasts*

**24 municipalities from the sea to the mountains**

**A high country** characterized by livestock farms shaping the large spaces of remarkable biodiversity

**A middle country** with a diversified agriculture

**A coastline** that brings together the territory's horticultural and market gardening farms



## *A few figures*

**307 farmers** in 2018, i.e. **16,3% of farmers in the Alpes-Maritimes department**

**36% of horticulturists** with traditional crops (roses, carnations, gladioli)

**14% of meat and cheese farmers** (ewes, goats)

**12% of horse and donkey breeders**

**8% other farmers** (fish, bees, poultry, pigs)

**16% of market gardeners** offering quality local products

**8% other growers** (perfume and aromatic plants, citrus fruits, vines, red fruits, violets...)

**4% olive growers** with the Protected Designation of Origin chain « Olive de Nice »



## *Terroirs of future and innovation*

Companies and training centers invested in agricultural research and development (INRA, Lycée horticole et agricole d'Antibes - Vert d'Azur)





COMMUNAUTÉ  
D'AGGLOMÉRATION  
SOPHIA ANTIPOLIS

# CULTURAL GUIDE TO CASA EVENTS

## & GO OUT DISCOVER

festivals | concerts | exhibitions  
conferences | trade fairs | theaters



Available in all tourist offices, town halls and CASA information points or can be downloaded at [casa-infos.fr](http://casa-infos.fr).

# PROGRAM #CASA'VENIR

## ACTING TOGETHER, FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

### AN AREA OF HIGH POTENTIAL

**24 municipalities**, 180 000 inhabitants covering 483 km<sup>2</sup>

**A great diversity of territories** : the urbanized and seaside coastline ; the middle country and the technopole ; the mountainous and unspoilt country

**An exceptional natural and cultural heritage**, which attracts tens of thousands of visitors every year

**A territory at the cutting edge of innovation**, at the heart of the dynamics of the global economy

### « CASA'VENIR l'expo »

Learn all about Sustainable Development  
in a single innovative, fun and sustainable exhibition for everyone !  
+ more info : [casavenir-expo.fr](http://casavenir-expo.fr)



6.95 € Prix France



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