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Covered in sweet-smelling eucalyptus and pine, Ste-Marguerite makes a wonderful day trip from Cannes. Its shores are a succession of castaway beaches ideal for picnics, and there are numerous walking trails.

The island served as a strategic defense post for centuries. Fort Royal, built in the 17th century by Richelieu and later fortified by Vauban, today houses the Musée de la Mer, with exhibits on the island's Greco-Roman history, artefacts from the numerous shipwrecks littering the shores, and a small aquarium focusing on Mediterranean fauna and flora.

You can also visit the cells of the former state prison, where the most famous inmate was the Man in the Iron Mask, and walk around the compound, which boasts grand views of the coast.



At the end of the 17th Century, Louis XIV's general commissioner of fortifications personally inspected the fort, and gave instructions to strengthen the square. Work carried out as a result of Vauban's visit give the fort most of the appearance that we still recognise today. 26 meters above sea level, the structure projects over a rocky cliff on the northern coast of the Island of Sainte-Marguerite, opposite cape Croisette. It is a small fort that is pentagonal in shape, flanked by four bastions at its weak points, on the land side. On the coastal side, the structure's stone ramparts are supported by an earth embankment and blend remarkably into the sheer cliff.

Inside the compound, a chapel, and several barns used to house the troops and the artillery stores still survive today. Amongst the latter, we can see the impressive building that constituted the powder store, surrounded by the walls of the royal bastion to the south of the fort, probably intended to reduce the consequences of any accidental explosion. After this, the structure was the subject of minor alterations. And so, in 1862, a semaphore was constructed by raising one of the fort's old towers. Later, during the occupation by German troops during the Second World War, a surveillance station was established on one of the fort's triangular promontories Today, several buildings are in ruins and the invading vegetation is gradually taking over the demi-lunes and the ramparts. However, teams of young workers from Provence-Alpes-Côte-d'Azur have been helping to renovate the fort for more than thirty years. The ramparts have been made safe and building repairs and much restoration work have been carried out so as to make visits possible to this fortification, which is unique along the Cannes coastline.



From 1637 onwards the first cells were fitted out in the governor's château. But it was in 1685, at a time when the Royal fort accommodated a large garrison, that the fort was dedicated definitively and first and foremost to be used as a state prison. So, in 1687, Governor Saint-Mars, on the orders of Louis XIV, had a parallelepiped stone building constructed inside the compound, inside which several cells were soon fitted out. The prisoners held inside the fort include most notably: the famous, but nevertheless unidentified, Iron Mask, held for 11 years from 1687 to 1698; ix protestant pastors, imprisoned following the revocation of the Edict of Nantes, from 1689 until their death in 1713; Jean-Baptiste Suard, who would become the eternal secretary of the French Academy, incarcerated between 1751 and 1753; The Smala d'Abd el-Kader, from 1843; 600 Austrian prisoners, detained in 1859 after the battle of Montebello; Marshall Bazaine, the only prisoner to have escaped from the Royal fort in 1873, in what legend describes as a fantastic escape and after whom a terrace of the fort is today named. The Royal fort also has a smaller detention area, reserved for soldiers. The Museum of the Sea, located inside the fort, allows visitors to look at some of the cells, including that of the Iron Mask, as well as those occupied by the protestant pastors, to whom there is now a memorial.

THE POND OBSERVATORY

The pond is home to many migratory birds and some species breed there. An observatory has been set up to contemplate and recognize them.



MARITIME MUSEUM

The maritime museum is located in the oldest part of the fort royal on Sainte Marguerite, a listed historical monument, overlooking the sea and surrounded by forests of pine and eucalyptus. You can explore the state prison and the cell of the man in the iron mask, where the mysterious prisoner was held for eleven years, as well as murals and the underwater archaeological finds from the roman ruins.

Open: Tuesday -Sunday 10:00-17:45h





La Guérite will be pleased to welcome you for the new season from April. Since 1935, a worldwide clientele has been seduced by La Guérite's charm, authenticity, and cuisine, which is both Mediterranean and healthy. Nestled on the rocky cove of Sainte-Marguerite island in front of Cannes, La Guérite features 1000 m2 of space where you can come and discover authentic Mediterranean cuisine, which has been created by one of the wonders of Greek gastronomy: Yiannis Kioroglou.

Open: during the season every day of the week at 10am for lunch and from June 25th for dinner

Dress code: Chic classy

Features: you can use the restaurant tender

Booking: During high season we recommend to book at least 4 - 5 days prior lunch or dinner date



The island, known to the Romans as Lerina, was uninhabited until Saint Honoratus founded a monastery on it at some time around the year 410. According to tradition, Honoratus made his home on the island intending to live as a hermit, but found himself joined by disciples (including Saint Caprais (Caprasius) who formed a monastic community around him. This had become "an immense monastery" by 427, according to the contemporary writings of John Cassian. Reputedly, Saint Patrick, patron of Ireland, studied at the monastery in the fifth century. Over the following centuries, monastic life on the island was interrupted on several occasions by raids, mostly attributable to Saracens. Around 732, many of the community, including the abbot, Saint Porcarius, were massacred on the island by invaders. According to myth, many of the monks escaped, because Porcarius had been warned of the attack by an angel and had sent them to safety.

In medieval times, the island became a very popular place of pilgrimage. This was encouraged by the writings of Raymond Féraud, a monk who composed a mythological life of Honoratus.

In 1635, the island was captured by the Spanish, and the monks were expelled. They returned from exile in Vallauris two years later when the island was retaken by the French.

The monastery continued to suffer from Spanish and Genoese attacks. The number of monks dwindled to four and, in the proto-revolutionary climate of the time, the monastery was disestablished in 1787. Under the Revolution, the island became the property of the state, and was sold to a wealthy actress, Mademoiselle de Sainval, who lived there for twenty years.

In 1859, the island was bought by the Bishop of Fréjus, who sought to re-establish a religious community there. Ten years later, a Cistercian community was established, which has remained there ever since.



The island retains a monastery, which is home to 30 Cistercian monks, and is a popular tourist attraction offering pleasant woodland surroundings, in common with its neighbour the Île Sainte-Marguerite. Points of interest include a number of disused chapels erected by monks on the island at different points in history, as well as the remains of a Napoleonic cannonball oven and a Second World War gun emplacement.

The Abbey of Lérins and the 15th Century fortified monastery are open to visitors, and a monastery shop sells various monastic goods, including wine and honey produced on the island. The modern monastery is closed to visitors, although it is used as a Christian retreat.

The island is served all year round by a regular commercial ferry service from Cannes.



La Tonnelle

The restaurant La Tonnelle is located in a unique setting, on the waterfront, in the heart of the Saint Honorat island, in a relaxed atmosphere that emphasizes well-being and serenity. The chef, Nathan Laurent, offers Mediterranean cuisine, made with seasonal products, such as gourmet salads, fish, grilled meat and other crustaceans. Closed from the beginning of November to mid December.

Open: Monday -Sunday 12:00-14:00h

Features: Very quite and cozy. Local monks might serve you lunch.

Dress code: Non

Booking: During high season we recommend to book at least 3-4 days prior.

For preseason bookings a notice of 24-48h shall be sufficient