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**Press Contact Marseille Provence Cruise Club**

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www.marseille-cruise.com
When, in the middle of the 1990s, cruise ships began calling in the Mediterranean, Marseille was just another port on their route. The major American companies were at that stage more interested in Barcelona and ritzy Villefranche and Cannes as prestige port calls for their customers. Winning over the cruise companies was a very long drawn-out process. For twenty years, the Marseille Provence Cruise Club methodically set out its assets to the cruise companies, convinced of the value of Marseille’s strategic position in the Mediterranean. The industry professionals gradually came around to its view: from 96 in 1997, the number of port calls tripled over the next decade and increased a further 50% the following decade, with passenger numbers exploding. More than 10 million cruise passengers have already passed set foot in Marseille.

The Club itself became structured, with several strategic partners coming on board (Marseille Provence Airport, Marseille Provence Cruise Terminal, Metropole Aix-Marseille-Provence, Aix-en-Provence, …) and around thirty professional and industrial bodies are now members. Today, the Club is the single contact point for all the industry’s professionals and the mediation interface working on a daily basis to ensure port calls go smoothly. The association’s president since January 2015 has been Jean-François Suhas, a pilot as was his predecessor Jacques Truau. His ambition is to ensure continued growth, increase the number of turnaround port calls and to create “a centre of excellence” in Marseille that will bring together all the various components from ship repairs to cruise operations (ships’ services, terminal management, excursion logistics…).

The success of a destination also relies on sustained promotion to enhance its profile, another of the Marseille Provence Cruise Club’s missions. To this end, in coordination with port and tourist actors, the Club invites cruise companies to Marseille, conducts marketing drives aimed at cruise operators, promotes Marseille among travel agencies and tourism students and talks part in many trade fairs and exhibitions in France and overseas (Seatrade Cruise Global, Mahana Lyon, Salon Mondial du Tourisme…). In Marseille, the Top Cruise industry forum, which the Club created, is also an important event that brings together travel agents, cruise companies and tourism professionals for workshops and meetings to discuss the latest trends.

The Club also has an informational role, working on a daily basis assisting port call operations and passenger movements by providing important practical and logistics information (access, welcome guide, addresses, “must-see” sights, getaways…).

Since the Board of Directors of 9th March 2017, the Governance is as follows:

- President: Jean-François Suhas
- Honorary President: Jacques Truau
- Vice-President: Clarisse Bainvel, City of Marseille
- Vice-President: Christine Cabau-Woerhel, Marseille Fos Port
- Vice-President: Jacques Massoni, Chamber of Commerce and Industry Marseille Provence
- Secretary: Pierre-Guy Solle, Chamber of Commerce and Industry Marseille Provence
- Treasurer: Laurent Cohen, UPE13
Three questions for Jean-François Suhas, president of the Marseille Provence Cruise Club

“Provence’s tourist offer is unique in the world”

Is an increase in the number of turnaround port calls vital to ensure the future of the cruise sector in Marseille?

It’s the segment that is most profitable for the local economy. In Barcelona, it represents 60% of all cruise departures, with passengers generally arriving three and a half days prior to boarding. The trickle-down effect on the retail and hotel trades is substantial. In Marseille, turnarounds only account for 30% of traffic, 500,000 passengers. Our objective is to reach a figure of 50% by 2022. It’s attainable. Just 20 years ago, Marseille wasn’t even in the top 300 cruise ports. Today, it’s 17th and will be in the top 10 by 2020.

The boom in the cruise sector will make things easier…

More than 70 cruise ships are currently under construction and will all be operational by 2025. Some of these will replace older ships, but the increase in the world fleet should be at least 15% to 350 ships, all better class than the current fleet. Marseille is in good position to attract at least some of these on a turnaround basis: it is in vogue and people are eager to come here.

But it could be a passing fad…

The region has many assets that it can use to ensure the long-term presence of the world’s largest cruise companies. Huge investment has been made at the port to make more room and offer better security for the largest ships berthing here. Marseille also can offer cruise companies a competitive advantage with its No.10 Dry Dock, the largest in Europe, allowing them to repair and maintain the largest ships in today’s market. Lastly, the tourism package proposed by the city and region is unique in the world in terms of both quality and variety. The catalogue of UNESCO world heritage sites accessible from Marseille is unequalled: the Pont du Gard, the Camargue, Arles, the Papal Palace and the Pont d’Avignon, Vauban forts, Le Corbusier’s Cité Radieuse, the Roma theatre in Orange… Don’t forget that Provence is the second most popular destination in the most visited country on the planet.
Cruise sector review and perspectives

Top of nothing at all back in 1996 when the cruise business started in Marseille to one of the world's top 17 ports last year... In two decades, Marseille has earned its status as a regular-fixture destination in cruise operators’ catalogues. And that's just the start: the Marseille Provence Cruise Club predicts that, by 2020, Marseille will have gained three more places and enter the top 10, passing the landmark 2 million passengers per year.

Since 2014, this audacity has already propelled it into the top five of Mediterranean ports and each new successful tourist season sees it consolidate its position. Last year, 72 ships from 32 companies called at the port of Marseille, putting ashore more than 1.6 million passengers. Operators' increasing confidence has seen a corresponding increase in ship size: for example, between June and October 2016, Royal Caribbean Cruise Line's behemoth Harmony of the Seas, the largest ship in its category at 362m in length and able to accommodate 6296 passengers, called 18 times at Marseille on its inaugural route. Even better, attracted by the Western Mediterranean sector, several companies including Costa Cruises, MSC Cruises, Croisières de France and Norwegian Cruise Line, offered no less than 353 cruises departing from Marseille and attracting a total of 500,000 turnaround passengers –the most conducive to growth, a leap of 100% in five years.

A total of 12 million passengers have passed through Marseille in 20 years, the fastest growth anywhere in the world, producing a return of €1.5bn to the region's economy for a mere €6.9M in promotion/communication costs.

The growth in the cruise market can only be a cause for optimism. "An unprecedented frenzy" according to one professional. Despite economic uncertainty, geopolitical problems and the rise of terrorism, new cruise ship orders have never been more plentiful: 46—not counting contract options—are due to be delivered between now and 2021. And their capacities are huge, with 1000-cabin ships becoming the norm and a generalization of the "World Class" design able to house 7500 including crew. The new orders represent an additional 200,000 beds over and above the 500,000 already offered by the global cruise fleet. This is more than double the capacity available in 2001, while the number of vessels –set to reach 300- has increased by a quarter.

The customers have responded: from 16 million in 2008, the number of passengers rose to 24 million last year, with a lessening of the seasonality factor in Marseille and worldwide. Between April and November, an average of 5000 passengers pass through Marseille each day, with peaks of 6000 in the height of summer, but they are also coming in winter, with an average of 2000 passengers per day.
EVOLUTION OF CRUISE ACTIVITY IN MARSEILLE

OBJECTIVE: 2 Millions of passengers in 2020

Total Pax
Accomplished from 1996 to 2016 – Forecast from 2017 to 2020
(=forecast at January 10th 2017)

2015    VS    2016
450 calls     480 calls
1 450 000 pax     1 597 000 pax
560 000 pax in transit     1 110 000 pax in transit
500 000 pax embarking/disch IPS
487 000 pax embarking/disch IPS

The line of 1 M of passengers crossed in 2013

WORLD PORTS RANKING

Top 20 ports in the world in 2015
Source: Cruise Insight 2016

MEDITERRANEAN PORTS RANKING

Objective: Top 3 of Mediterranean Ports

TOP 10 Mediterranean Ports
Source: Medcruise March 2017
The port's assets

To attract operators, Marseille can count on its geographic position: 80 Mediterranean ports within reach of its docks, a catalogue of excursions into the hinterland that many ports can only dream of, transport infrastructure for passengers’ ease of access and, thanks to a €39M investment programme carried out over the past few years, the capacity to handle six mega-cruise ships simultaneously, with no size limit and with a draught of almost 15 metres, not forgetting a "5-star berth" for smaller luxury cruise ships at La Joliette, right by the city centre.

For cruise companies, the list of advantages doesn't stop there, however. Anticipating the arrival of even bigger ships, the Grand Port Maritime de Marseille is investing several million Euro in widening the main northern channel and enhancing berthing safety in high winds. The cruise companies will also benefit from the three dry docks able to cater for any ship up to 450m in length, with the commissioning the No.10 Dry Dock being the largest in the Mediterranean, and a comprehensive range of technical support services allowing companies to schedule maintenance stops with the minimum impact on operations.

The No.10 Dry Dock is managed by the Italian group Genova Industrie Navale (GIN), owners of the dock's operator Chantier Naval de Marseille, a group that combines expertise in two complementary industrial domains, that of ship repair (with San Giorgio) and the construction of mid-sized cruise ships (Marriotti). Since 2010, the company has worked on several hundred ships in Marseille (ferries, cruise ships, container ships, tugs...) that could not be handled at its shared facility in Genoa due to lack of space.

With the No.10 Dry Dock, the port delivers a long-awaited alternative for the regional cruise sector. Up until now, operators have opted for the cheaper yards in Turkey, Croatia and Africa for their regular maintenance work. But there are only two shipyards on the northern Mediterranean coast able to handle the more complex work required for mega-hulls, from simple overhauls to conversions of older ships to cater for the change in clients' tastes, enlarging decks, creating more spacious suites, fitting swimming pools...

These efforts have been universally applauded by the cruise companies. So much so that two of them, Costa Cruises et MSC, have agreed to invest in the management of four terminals under the Marseille Provence Cruise Terminal (MPCT) umbrella. These were used by 32 companies in 2016 and cover more than 22,000 sq. m. Each offers the same services as an airport terminal: check-in desks, luggage handling (with in-cabin delivery), security gates, covered car parks and easy access to bus services. As an added bonus, free shuttle buses run (non-stop on peak weekends and certain weeks) to and from the city via the port's private road network, thus avoiding traffic jams when several cruise ship are in port. Luxury – Made in Marseille.
2017 Cruise season

Despite the repositioning of several ships this year and the "loss" of 100,000 passengers, the milestone of 2 million passengers in 2020 remains on the cards. The industry’s two biggest players, Costa Cruises and MSC Cruises, first intend strengthening their positioning, thus opening perspectives in the long term by scheduling 318 departures from Marseille. Costa will be committing eight of its ships, including several of its stars such as the Diadema, the Mediterranea and the Favolosa. MSC will follow suit with the latest addition to its fleet, the Meraviglia due to be christened in Le Havre. From June onwards, this giant of the seas, larger but slightly shorter than the operator’s previous ships at 315m in length, 43 wide, with 1536 crew members catering for a maximum of 5714 passengers in 2246 cabins, will be offering week-long cruises from Marseille. Lastly, Rivages du Monde will be offering one departure from Marseille with the Astoria.

Aimed firmly at the family cruise market, the new-generation ships, of which nine will be making inaugural port calls at Marseille, will feature more and more sophisticated leisure and entertainment packages to attract North European clients: water parks with giant toboggans, high-wire courses, covered sports arenas, grand prix simulators, bowling alleys and theatres with sea views. The luxury end of the market will also receive a boost, with the arrival in Marseille of several prestige ships: Silversea Cruises’ Silver Muse in April, Seabourn Cruises’ Seabourn Encore in May, Regent Seven Seas Cruises’ Seven Seas Explorer in October and port calls by Viking Cruises and Aida Cruises, proving once again the port’s growing attractiveness and its ability to deliver the levels of service and security expected by the most demanding clients. All these offers will allow the port to handle 421,000 turnaround passengers, added to which will be added 1.075 million transit passengers with the peak coming in October.
Getting to Marseille is the easiest thing in the world, with its air, sea, rail and road links. The first stop on the coast for French holidaymakers, the city is 3 hours by road from Lyon along the A7 autoroute, an hour more from Geneva and is equally close to several major Italian and Spanish cities.

By train, direct TGV services from all over France arrive at Marseille’s St. Charles Station or Aix-en-Provence TGV. Travelling at 300 kph at top speed, the TGV means Paris is a mere 3 hours away from the Mediterranean and Lille only 4 ¾ hours.

Those in a real hurry will choose the plane. France’s 4th largest airport, Marseille Provence Airport handled more than 8.5 million passengers last year and almost 91,000 air movements, 59% of which were international (+4%). Although not a major air hub like some of its northern counterparts, the airport does have a dedicated low-cost terminal and, through continued investment, has managed to establish itself as a regular destination for Europe’s major airlines. Provence, land of festivals, turnaround port for the world’s largest cruise lines, Capital of Culture and capital of the holiday home attracts airline business. The airport is already home to 35 regular airlines serving 107 direct destinations in 28 countries. In France, the main routes in terms of passenger numbers are to and from Paris, Nantes, Bordeaux, Ajaccio, Lille and Brest. Internationally, numbers follow the tourism trends: London, Amsterdam, Algiers, Rome, Brussels, Lisbon, Madrid and Munich are increasing their obsession with the destination. And success breeds success: 20 new regular routes have been announced for next season, including Montreal, Athens, Stockholm, Vienna, Venice, Milan and Berlin, bringing the total to 107 direct destinations out of the 150 services operated.

Once here, visitors can take advantage of an increasingly wide choice of hotel accommodation. In ten years, the number of classified hotel rooms in Marseille has increased by almost 30%: more than 80 hotels offer a total of 5600 rooms (11,214 beds) and quality is increasing too. Three-star (32 hotels), four-star (15) and five-star (4) hotels now account for 63% of the market, with more quality accommodation opening, such as the InterContinental Hôtel-Dieu, AC by Marriott in the heart of the new Prado business district and the Toyoko Inn, a first for the chain in Europe. To keep up with this competition, the established chains are moving up a gear. For example, the Grand Hôtel Beauvau-MGallery by Sofitel (4-star) on the Vieux-Port harbour front has refurbished all its 73 rooms, without losing the timeless spirit inherited from the many famous people who have stayed there, from Frédéric Chopin to the poet and politician Lamartine.
Destination Marseille Provence

Leafing through a tourist brochure on Provence is an invitation to discover a land of scent-filled valleys, gastronomic pleasures, ancient villages and timeless traditions... Under the warm southern sunshine, the region offers countless opportunities to gorge the senses and sate the eye. The list of not-to-be-missed sights is almost endless: a stone's throw from Marseille, just where the urban rumble subsides, the Massif des Calanques, with its steep, rocky inlets, is a natural paradise for locals and tourists alike, a playground for climbers, hikers, divers and those seeking a quiet spot for a siesta. A protected area, the 4000-hectares (10,000 acres) of limestone coast dotted with pines is home to a large number of rare animals such as Bonelli's eagles.

The classic icons are all there: the swathes of violet covering the high plateaux between Forcalquier, Valensole, Albion and the Luberon, the lavender soaking up the sun to produce its pungent essence, interspersed with fields of scarlet poppies that lay at the foot of hilltop villages with melodious names such as Gordes, Roussillon, Lacoste and Bonnieux, or the medieval village of Les Baux-de-Provence, perched on a rocky outcrop overlooking a mosaic of olive groves, another emblematic feature of these ancient lands. From these lands, some of the finest wines are crafted, their labels bywords for the Provence art de vivre: Bandol, Sainte-Victoire, Coteau d'Aix...

These wines can be enjoyed whenever a convivial moment presents itself: under a plane tree on a Provence marketplace, with its rich colours and aromas, sitting on a cool fountain in one of the backstreets of the Papal city of Avignon, or resting comfortably on the terrace of one of the bustling cafés on Aix-en-Provence's Cours Mirabeau.

Provence is also enjoyed for its cultural heritage, with many themed excursions on offer. For example, you can explore the town of Arles, where Van Gogh's creative genius led him from exaltation to the edge of madness. Although his works are not on show here, the town is full of the atmosphere so present in the many works he produced while here, including Sunflowers, Café Terrace and Van Gogh's Bedroom in Arles, bedroom which can be visited.

Further east, the imposing silhouette of the Sainte Victoire evokes another artistic genius –this time Cézanne. The native of Aix-en-Provence, which virtually ignored the artist when he was alive, now has gained the recognition he deserves with the exhibition at the Musée Granet, visits to his workshop and a walking route through the historic city centre which bears his name.

Moving on a little further to the coast, you will discover another kind of patchwork, cultural this time, in the port city of Marseille, with its impetuous, Latin character, a city full of life where people seem to yell, call each other names and laugh all in the same sentence. Everything here is extravagant: grandiose vistas of a city nestled between rocky mountains and turquoise sea, architecture culminating in the unique MuCEM museum and even its trading history, which goes back 2600 years. Faced with such a variety, the hardest thing won't be deciding where to go, but having to face the fact that you can't do it all...
Depending on whether you see the glass half-full or half-empty, Marseille is an urban jumble or a journey in itself. The least charitable will say that Marseille was built with no architectural vision, huge housing estates, roads and public infrastructure being thrown up in an emergency as and when the situation dictated. The result is a tangle of different districts, the remains of the 111 villages that once bordered the Vieux-Port. By absorbing these, Marseille has managed to reinforce the clichés of which its image derives: pronounced accents, an unequalled cultural diversity and chaos seemingly everywhere...

The optimists will see a chance to journey into unchartered territory, a mixture of Barcelona's Mediterranean ambiance and the slick city life of New York. Ranked second in the New York Times list of places to go in 2015, and number five among the most beautiful coastal cities by National Geographic, brash Marseille is now a firm favourite among tourists (5 million visitors in 2016), attracted as much by its timeless folklore as its modern architecture and underground cultural scene or its MuCEM, which has become a benchmark in the museum world, or its Terrasses du Port shopping centre, which invented the "shopping with a sea view" concept. The must-see sights are all within walking distance: the Vieux-Port (Old Port), Notre Dame de la Garde basilica perched on the highest point of the city (162m), the historic Panier district, Marseille’s "Latin quarter", Le Corbusier’s Cité Radieuse modern architecture masterpiece, a UNESCO heritage site, or even the Marché des Capucins in the bustling district of Noailles.
Due to its elegant architecture, a legacy of 500 years of prosperous trading, Aix-en-Provence has become known as the “Florence of Provence”, a city of art and water that remains proud of its richly-decorated facades that delight tourists today. Located a mere 30km from Marseille, the aristocratic charm of Aix-en-Provence is still as present as ever. And for good reason: set inside a ring road that gives it an almost fortified air, the old city is a museum in itself, where you can stroll down the tree-lined streets and admire elegant town houses, flower-filled squares, mansions (more than 200), ancient fountains and the many monuments including the former archbishop’s palace, the Cathédrale Saint-Sauveur and Pavillon de Vendôme. The city is the epicentre of the Provençal art de vivre, but the high-end version. Cafés, boutiques, gastronomic restaurants, exhibitions, festivals, museums… each street corner in Aix reminds you that you are at the heart of a culture and lifestyle immortalised in the works of Cézanne, Picasso and Kandinsky. You just have to walk down Cours Mirabeau, with its grand fountain adorned with lions, swans and angels on dolphin-back, pass through the doors of the former Hôtel de Caumont -now an arts centre- or the Musée Granet to realize it. There are more than 12,000 works of art in the city’s collections, many from major donations of modern and contemporary art. If you continue a little further to the outskirts of the city, you will find another of Aix’s treasures, the Vasarely Foundation, created by the master of op-art art himself. A bridge between art and urban planning. Which is precisely the vocation of the city itself…
To appreciate Arles, you first need to adjust your mind to the scale of the town. Because it only takes an hour or so to criss-cross the “little Rome of the Gauls” on foot. It’s through examining the small details that the visitor begins to understand the town’s exceptional Roman heritage going back 2000 years, with more than a hundred monuments (including seven UNESCO heritage sites), including the bust of Julius Caesar that was recovered from the River Rhône ten years ago and which is now the star exhibit at the Musée de l’Arles Antique. It’s a rare find, since it's the only known portrait of the emperor made during his lifetime. Arles is also known for bullfighting, horses and its light, the latter magnificently rendered in the works of Van Gogh, a grand and proud town set in the heart of the Camargue wilderness. Take, for example, the amphitheatre, still frequented today on special occasions by local men in their Sunday best and the beautiful Arlésiennes with their richly coloured dresses, a reminder of the town’s prosperity and which have inspired the designer Christian Lacroix. Built on the model of the Coliseum in Rome, the amphitheatre can hold 20,000 spectators. A stone’s throw away, the more open Théâtre Antique offers the visitor a more romantic atmosphere, perhaps still inhabited by the spirit of the Emperor Constantine, who held court there when Areleta was the Roman Empire’s second city. In summer, the Rencontres Internationales de la Photographie, which organizes exhibitions all over town, gives visitors the chance to discover some of the other remarkable buildings, including the Saint-Trophime cloisters, the baths, the forum’s cryptoportica and Montmajour Abbey. Of course, one hour won’t be nearly enough to see it all!
Destination Marseille Provence > Avignon

Made eternally famous as the seat of Papal power during the 14th century, and more recently for its Theatre Festival, Avignon is full of historical sites and architectural treasures. Visitors come to Avignon in the same way they go to visit the Eiffel Tower – to see with their own eyes a monument, in this case one that for nearly a century symbolized the power of Christianity, a seat of temporal and spiritual authority. The Papal Palace, the construction of which began in 1335 under the austere Benedict XII and Clement VI, is a fortress, château and abbey all in one and is the most remarkable example of Gothic style. A visit is a “must” to discover the huge main courtyard, Saint-Martial’s Chapel and the Rocher des Doms, a limestone outcrop overlooking the Rhône with several levels, criss-crossed by tree-lined alleys with ponds and a number of small vineyards.

But it is far from being the only sight. With its fortified walls, the UNESCO-listed historic centre has many other places that will delight the visitor. Make a stop on the Place de l’Horloge, built on the site of the ancient Roman forum and watch the street performers or sit at a café terrace and watch the world go by. A little off to the side, the Urban V Orchard now hosts artists’ workshops and features a cultural centre. A short walk away is the Rue Banesterie, lined with mansions, which in turn leads to a maze of narrow streets that forms the heart of a peaceful village of old stone-built houses. From there, it’s a matter of following your explorer’s instinct to discover shaded squares, the city’s bohemian areas and dozens of museums. There’s no danger of getting lost – the ramparts guide the visitor’s steps.
Destination Marseille Provence > La Ciotat

A charming and authentic Provençal town centre, beautiful sandy beaches, stunning calanques carved into the unspoilt wooded coastline, a perpetual holiday atmosphere... welcome to La Ciotat, nestled in the quaintly-named Golfe d’Amour. A water-sports centre certified for its excellence in the field, the former shipbuilding town is gradually metamorphosing into a swanky seaside resort with, behind the palm trees and pines, a character all of its own.

You have to explore the narrow streets of the old town to get a feel of the atmosphere that gave birth to Provence’s Mannerist architecture, pétanque and the Lumière Brothers’ cinema. Then it’s off to relax on one of the beaches along La Ciotat’s 7km of coastline. You can choose between fine sandy beaches with shallow waters for a family outing or head for the calanques and their shingle beaches set between high limestone cliffs. The locals’ favourite is Liouquet, surrounded by reddish rock faces dotted with pine trees. Further west are other calanques set in a nature reserve, including the Calanque du Mugel, an area of remarkable flora of 12 hectares with an exceptional botanical collection, including rare tropical plants and palm trees, set on a promontory offering stunning views over La Ciotat Bay. Or take a stroll in the Calanque de Figuerolles, a sea of green tucked away between cliffs of red conglomerate, their strangely-shaped outcrops forming a phantasmagorical bestiary.

The calanque is known for one particular eccentricity: its inhabitants proclaimed it an independent republic in 1956 and there is an (un)official 1-hour time difference between the calanque and France, 300 steps further up. It is theoretically possible to pay your bills in the local currency, the fig, which used to grow locally (100g = 1 Euro at the latest rate).
A casino, ice-cream parlours, a multitude of café terraces, multi-coloured fishing boats, docksides taken over by local produce exhibitions, a maze of paved alleyways and steps… there’s no doubt that Cassis, a few kilometres from Marseille, is a true all-year round holiday resort. It’s difficult not to be in such surroundings: the town is located in a marine amphitheatre, a jewel in a setting of green on the edge of the blue Mediterranean. And to make the picture even more perfect, the deep ochre of the majestic Cap Canaille contrast with the white limestone of the facing calanques. The resulting light was much sought after by some of the greatest painters, from Fauvists such as Derain, Vlaminck and Dufy to the Pointillist Signac, not forgetting local artists such as Ponson, Crémieux, Guindon, Seyssaud and Winston Churchill.

If you visit the Musée Méditerranéen d’Art et Traditions Populaires de Cassis to see these works, you will also be able to appreciate the architectural features that formed these landscapes. The Castrum de Carsisis, a remnant of the Middle-Age fortifications perched on the marl cliffs overlooking the town is one example. Today in private hands, it has been converted into a luxury guest house. The town hall is another: behind its shingle-paved courtyard, this splendid 17th-century mansion built by the former Consul of Marseille sports all the bourgeois pomp of the time. Make a point of passing the Maison des Mascarons, typical of 18th-century homes with its architectural “rule of three” that was used at the time: three floors with three windows per floor.

Want to get out of town? What better than a walk through the terraced vineyards bordering Cassis, with their characteristic red soil, one of the first classified wine areas in France. On the opposite side of town, Port-Miou is the first of a dozen or so calanques that stretch 20km along the rugged coast all the way to Marseille. In 2012, this 8500-hectare zone, which each year receives between 1.5 and 2 million visitors, was granted the status of national park. It takes a good 11 hours to complete the hike along the marked trail that crosses the park, but less than one hour to see the calanques from the sea on one of the tourist boats that leave from Cassis harbour.
Take a trip to Pagnol country, to the hills so vividly described in the famous author’s childhood trilogy that has marked the school years of several generations. Just a few kilometres from Marseille, Aubagne basks in an unspoilt environment with organic farms touching the outskirts of the town. It’s generally too off the beaten track for tourists - and it’s a pity. Because this town of barely 43,000 inhabitants concentrates all the popular traditions of coastal Provence along with its typical sun-bathed landscapes of pines, aromatic *garrigue* and limestone. Since antiquity, its clay soil has made it a centre for pottery and ceramics and the city is home to many manufacturers such as the famous Poteries Ravel, whose terracotta products have been decorating gardens and balconies for 170 years. A visit to the factory will take you past some of the buildings that characterize peasant religious beliefs in former times: the Eglise Saint-Saveur church, the Chapelle des Pénitents Blancs, the Pénitents Noirs…

The idyllic childhood described by Pagnol in his books is the source for a number of walks in the hills around Aubagne, many with evocative names: the Vallon des Escaouprés (Vale of Escaouprés), the Pas des Bartavelles (Partridge Pass), the Taoumé, the Puits de l’Aroumi (Aroumi Well), the Grotte de Grosibou (Grosibou Cave)… An easy walk starts at the Font de Mai, a former 100-hectare farm that can be explored along a comfortable path.
Outline and perspectives

At the Board meeting of 9th March, 2017, the Chairman and members of the Board set out the priorities for the Marseille Provence Cruise Club for the coming months:

- Strengthen promotional and communication work aimed at the 35 or so cruise companies. This includes implementing new measures in conjunction with the airport aimed at developing turnaround traffic and air links (Asia, USA, Europe), as well as attractiveness and visibility with the hosting of a major cruise-sector event.
- Work on improving the reception and organization of cruise passenger volumes to maintain cruise customer satisfaction levels and the societal acceptability of cruises.
- Set up an economic watchdog with new tools to better understand cruise customers’ activities in the region and their expectations.
- In conjunction with local and national stakeholders, put in place a planned and coordinated communications drive around the cruise business and related issues (economic, tourism, technical, environmental, sustainable tourism).

If the Cruise Club’s role as a coordinator and creator of synergies is recognized nationally and internationally - and welcomed by the cruise companies-, the 9th March Board meeting also ratified the opening up of new public and private-sector partnerships to ensure its work continues. Thus, the Aix-en-Provence Tourism Office and companies including Village des Marques and Schneider Electric have joined the Marseille Provence Cruise Club, following the Aix-Marseille-Provence Metropolitan Authority, the PACA Regional Council and the Bouches-du-Rhône General Council in 2016.

Lastly, the development of the river cruise business was also raised by the Arles Tourism Office, an activity that is complementary to ocean cruising and an avenue for further work within the Cruise Club.