

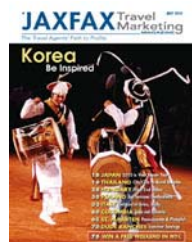


May 2010 eMagazine
Cover feature: Korea



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France's Big Summer Festivals

By Monique Burns

When warm weather returns, Europe turns festive. Spring through fall, music, dance, theater and art festivals enliven the continental agenda, starting with offerings like Florence's Maggio Musicale in May, continuing with events like the Edinburgh International Festival in August, and ending with autumn standouts like Munich's Oktoberfest, celebrating its 200th anniversary this year. France takes center stage in 2010, hosting two blockbuster events. The first-ever Normandy Impressionist Festival lures visitors to France's northwest province of bucolic meadows, rugged coastlines and historic cities. South, amid the sunny, palm-fringed beaches and yacht-filled harbors of the Côte d'Azur, the International Jazz Festival of Antibes-Juan les Pins—or, simply, Jazz à Juan—celebrates its 50th anniversary as Europe's longest-running jazz festival.



Festival bookings can be tricky, but there's help at hand. For Jazz à Juan, the official tour operator is French Experience, a subsidiary of EuroQuest, based in Hoboken, N.J. In addition to handling ticket sales, French Experience has a three-day/two-night Jazz-à-Juan package for \$558, with a four-star hotel, daily breakfast and transfers. The company can also craft custom tours, from budget to deluxe, of any length, for singles, couples, families with children and those with special interests. For the Normandy Impressionist Festival, French Experience and other companies can arrange tours (see "For More Information" at end of article).

About two dozen two and three-star hotels in Antibes-Juan-les-Pins are offering special festival rates of 82-155 euros (about \$110-\$205), double. In Juan-les-Pins, the 65-room, four-star Hôtel Hélios has a two-night "Jazzy Farniente" package, available July 14-25, offering two nights in a superior double, all breakfasts, hotel taxes, use of the hotel's private beach and two tickets to Jazz à Juan for 549 euros (about \$370) for two. Several other hotels in Antibes-Juan-les-Pins have summer packages.

Visitors to Jazz à Juan also can stay anywhere along the Riviera's 70-mile stretch, from St. Tropez to Monaco. In Cannes, just seven miles south of Juan-les-Pins, the four-star 1835 White Palm Hotel is offering a \$540 daily rate for a deluxe sea-view room with breakfast during the festival, July 14-25. The 134-room hotel, with a rooftop restaurant, thalassotherapy spa and views over Cannes bay, reopened in 2009 after a multimillion-dollar renovation. When booking, mention the promotional code "JAZZ."

Jazzing it Up on the Côte d'Azur

At Jazz à Juan 2010, top headliners like guitarist George Benson, vocalist Dee Dee Bridgewater, pianist Keith Jarrett and bassist Marcus Miller take to the main stage. But the 50th edition of the International Jazz Festival of Antibes-Juan-les-Pins promises more than nine magical evenings beside the Riviera's sparkling blue waters. The five-month anniversary party—launched this past April with New Orleans-style jazz parades—continues through August with concerts, jam sessions, jazz-themed tours, food and wine events, art and photo exhibits, and other happenings.

The jazz festival is the main event. Beyond evening performances beneath the pine trees of the seaside Pinède Gould, concerts will be held throughout the day, onstage and in the streets, by individual musicians and groups, including combos from the Conservatory of Music in Antibes and marching bands from U.S. colleges. Jazz à Juan has always been an important venue for young, up-and-coming performers. In fact, many of America's most famous jazz performers, including Dizzy Gillespie and Ella Fitzgerald, were discovered there. At onstage Master Classes, musicians, young and old, learn from each other while delighting audiences. At the annual Jazz Revelations, new performers display their singular musical styles while competing against one another.

Evening main-stage performances range from \$21 (standing room) to \$126 (stage-side seats); moderately priced tickets cost \$25-\$40. Several special VIP packages include tickets plus food and drink. Le Club 50, the least expensive, offers VIP box seats for one concert, Champagne and a hot-and-cold buffet on the beach, and after-concert Champagne and a table at the Eden Jazz Club. Prestige VIP evenings cost 500-1,000 euros (about \$660-\$1,326) for two, and 2,400-5,000 euros (about \$3,180-\$6,630) for groups of 10. Beyond the main stage, events are free, or available for a nominal charge, or the price of a cover charge and a few drinks in area nightclubs or restaurants.

When Jazz à Juan takes to the stage, a simultaneous Festival "Off"—also known as "Nights of Juan"—occurs. For Jazz à Juan's 50th anniversary, expect a ramped-up version of this accompanying festival, which showcases a variety of jazz performers in hotels, restaurants, jazz clubs and even the streets. Concerts are free or cost a nominal fee. Festival "Off" details were not available at press time, but should be available now.

Normandy Impressionist Festival

Drawn to the beauty and diversity of Normandy's landscapes and seascapes, Monet, Renoir, Degas and other 19th-century Impressionist painters set up their easels in historic cities like Rouen, in Fécamp and Etretat along the rugged Alabaster Coast, in pretty harbor towns like Dieppe and Honfleur, on the beaches of Deauville and Trouville, and in working ports like Cherbourg and Le Havre. Not only did their canvases capture the beauty of nature, they captured life's joie de vivre, the purely visceral pleasure human beings take in romantic seaside rambles, rollicking dance parties, and good food and wine enjoyed in the great outdoors.

Fittingly, art is just part of the draw at the Normandy Impressionist Festival. Spanning four months, from June through September, the Normandy Impressionist Festival celebrates the painters' lives and work with woodland picnics, boat rides on the Seine, parties in riverside dance bars called guinguettes, music and theater performances, sound-and-light shows, video screenings and outdoor cinema, and art and photography exhibits. Of more than 200 events scheduled, there are about 30 major presentations and installations. Following in what organizers call the artists' "vagabond footsteps," events will be staged from one end of Normandy to the other.

On June 20, the Normandy Impressionist Festival officially kicks off with lavish picnics in various locales. On July 13 and 14, to celebrate Bastille Day, balls will be held throughout Normandy. Rouen—where Joan of Arc was burned at the stake and where Monet painted his famous cathedral façade series for several months in varying light and weather—will be the scene of the festival's major exhibit, "Une Ville Pour l'Impressionisme: Monet, Pissarro et Gauguin à Rouen," at the Museum of Fine Arts, June 4-September 26.

In nearby Giverny, visitors can explore Claude Monet's House and Gardens, and the next-door Giverny Impressionist Museum, where, April 1-July 18, an exhibit of 60 major works trace the influence of the Seine River on the Impressionists.

Art exhibits and festivals are planned for the cities and towns of the Alabaster Coast, including Dieppe (also hosting the September 10-12 International Kite Festival), Honfleur (home of pre-Impressionist Eugène Boudin), and Fécamp and Etretat (whose dramatic cliffs and offshore rock formations were a favorite Impressionist subject). Major events are slated for Le Havre and Cherbourg as well as the elegant beach towns of Deauville, Trouville and Cabourg. Children can enjoy special exhibits at the Zoological and Botanical Park in Clères, and the Festyland theme park in Caen, nor far from the World War II D-Day landing beaches.

For More Information

For more information on Jazz à Juan, log on to www.jazzajuan.com or www.antibesjuanlespins.com. For tickets and tour bookings, contact French Experience at www.frenchexperience.com; 800-283-7262 or 212-986-3800; customer@frenchexperience.com. For the Hôtel Hélios package, "Jazzy Farniente," contact www.hotelhelios.fr; e-mail info@hotel-helios.fr. For the special 1835 White Palm Hotel festival promotional rate, contact www.1835-hotel.com or email reservations@1835-hotel.com.

For a calendar of Normandy Impressionist Festival events, visit www.normandy-tourism.org. Major tour operators include Avant Destinations (www.avantdestinations.com), Enchanted France (www.enchanted-france.com), Eurobound (www.eurobound.com), France Vacations (www.francevacations.net) and French Experience (www.frenchexperience.com). A complete listing of U.S.-based tour operators specializing in France can be found at www.franceguide.com/travel-trade.

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