



Magnifique villa en front de mer à louer sur l'île de Ré - Luxurious Beachfront villa for Rent on Ile de Ré, France

January 2015 Newsletter

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For those that are visiting once again their favourite French resort, the Ile de Ré off La Rochelle, they know the island is a wonderful French secret. It is often described as a paradise by French magazines. There are 10 little villages on an island that is just 30 km by 5 km. The north side of the island has charming ports filled with colourful small fishing vessels that bring in fresh catch daily. The south side of the island has broad sandy beaches bordered by fragrant pine forests.

In the wintertime there are 16,000 residents, but when summer arrives that number swells tenfold. People love Ile de Ré because it gets the same amount of sunshine as the south of France, and enjoys a constant light breeze. That is perfect for water-sport lovers.

The island reminds a lot of New England, but it is a bit more casual. The summer weather is similar too with its warm days and cool evenings. The north side of the island has marshes where salt is still gathered by hand. The villages are white washed with winding narrow streets bordered by rose-coloured hollyhocks. That with the clear blue skies, perfect weather and calm blue seas, makes for beautiful scenery.

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JOIN THE DANCE ON BASTILLE DAY

Here comes the high season and with it a host of happenings and an influx of juilletistes (July holidaymakers) - the first batch of happy holidaymakers. Motoring on the main tourist routes often gets clogged and dangerous, with overheated tempers and engines.

Bastille Day: The celebrations - fireworks, dancing firemen, military parades, balls, street eat-outs and so on - are staged variously on July 13 or 14. Check dates with tourist offices or scan the local paper. In the larger towns with more sophisticated pyrotechnic displays, it is best to arrive well before sundown if you want a good view - and really rub shoulders with the oohing and aahing crowd. In the small rural communes, don't be shy and deign to join the dance (bal musette) - these jinks can get incredibly high as pompiers and locals let their hair right down, to the strains of the accordion, surely a vital part of any integration curriculum.

NEW ON THE ISLAND THIS YEAR!

This year you will discover that the supermarkets of the island are doing their best to please British visitors: in most of them you will find Worcester Sauce, Sweet Piccadilly, Bird's custard, Heinz Baked Beans with or without pork sausages, Marmite, Scones Mix, Wines gums, Maple Syrup and Cranberry Sauce!

PARIS TO LA ROCHELLE BY TRAIN

Even though there are regular flights to La Rochelle Parisians love to ride the train from Montparnasse train station in Paris to La Rochelle. The train to La Rochelle takes just 2 hours 49 minutes, travelling up to 186 mph.

Of course, when you arrive you need to rent a car, take a taxi or better, get onto the bus. If you cannot see the bus right away on getting out of the station in La Rochelle ask for "Les Mouettes" to Ile de Ré. Normally there is a bus waiting in front of the station a little bit to the left. The bus does not leave before the Paris train has arrived. Be careful: usually you even have two buses stopping at different bus stops on the island. Make sure you board the right one, the one going to La Noue.

TIP: When you're looking for English-speaking help, teenagers and those in their early 20s are usually the best age range to approach. But the best way to quickly get integrated is really to learn a few words of French before you arrive. It helps lots and you will find perfectly helpful people provided you do not address them in English from the start. Suddenly you will find that most of them do speak a little bit of English as well!

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RIDING BIKES ON ILE DE RÉ

What is great about this island is that the main mode of transportation is **bicycles**. Riding your bike is the fastest, healthiest, easiest, and by far the most popular way to travel. That makes everything so slow and relaxing - no horns, no speeding, no hurry. If you cannot bring your own bike you will find exactly what you are looking for at a wealth of rental stations, many of which even have a breakdown service free of charge. Most paths are **flat**, lying **along** the water and between the **marshes**. No hill is steeper than 19 metres / 62 feet. The entire island is totally accessible by bike paths. Everyone rides a bicycle including grandparents, children and even dogs in baskets! There are over 60 miles of sign-posted bike paths, mostly out of the way of cars. In the early morning you may ride to the **bakery** in La Noue, the best one on the island to **stock** up on chocolate croissants and fresh **baguettes**.

RIDING TO SAINT-MARTIN

From villa **Les Ensemberts**, you may even ride to Saint Martin, which looks far on the map, but is not. You will see lots of horses and sheep grazing, wild birds, **vineyards** (of course you have to **stop** and check out the **grapes**), sunflower fields and the famous furry Poitou donkeys. Also, once you are in Saint Martin do not miss one of the favourite bike rides along the coast and oyster farms amid vineyards and **salt marshes** towards Loix.

Saint Martin is another **beautiful** historic **port** city. This place hustles and bustles in summer, primarily with European tourists. It is considered the Saint Tropez of the Atlantic (but is much more laid back than that) because of its resemblance to that famous resort. There is plenty to do here, from **shopping** on the narrow cobblestone streets, to relaxing at a sidewalk café or sightseeing. Saint Martin is surrounded by **impressive** Vauban **fortifications**, first set up in 1681. In town, a Gothic **church** dominates the skyline.

BEACHES NOT JUST FOR SUNBATHING

The beaches here are wide, **sandy** and **beautiful**. Remember to take a **walk** down the beach to check out one of the many German bunkers. They were built during World War II, and can be found up and down the coasts. They were built to be indestructible and the French haven't removed them -- but over the years some have slid down the top of hills. If you walk from the beach at the foot of the villa towards the west you will soon find a couple of them on the dune to your right. The walk is especially nice at sunset.

For those that read French, here is **a good website** to get acquainted with the history of the island.

THE AQUARIUM IN LA ROCHELLE

La Rochelle is rich in museums of all sorts and the first time you visit you may not feel like spending your time in museums: if you travel with your children one of the musts is a visit to the Aquarium in La Rochelle, one of the biggest in Europe. It is an unforgettable encounter with the undersea world...

The aquarium is right in the heart of town, four minutes from the railway station. Just follow the signs that say "Aquarium". By bus, bus stop "Aquarium", lines 10,19 and 30. There is a free parking nearby.

The aquarium is open every day:

- October to March 10:00 am - 8:00 pm,
- April to June and September 9:00 am - 8:00 pm,
- July and August 9:00 am - 11:00 pm.

The visit takes about 2.5 hours. Last entries are 90 minutes before closing time. The Aquarium, la Boutique and le Café are all air conditioned. Non-flash photography is permitted.

THE NEW WORLD MUSEUM

The second most interesting museum if you are vacationing with children is the New World Museum in La Rochelle. Situated in a magnificent mansion house it has a unique collection retracing the relationship between France and the Americas from the XVIth century.

The New World Museum website

IN CONCLUSION

A famous painter, Chevalier de la Légion d'Honneur and Officier des Arts et Lettres, Chapelain-Midy fell under the spell of the Ile de Ré. In 1959, he bought the large house near the lock of the Saint Martin harbour, opposite the Hôtel de Toiras. Of the island - scene of many of his works - he said, "... it has a very special light (...) that paradoxically manages to be both bright and subtle, Italian and Breton together, a sort of little miracle that God has created for painters with a taste for space and a love of emptiness".

We hope you will appreciate that special light as much as we do and enjoy your stay at villa

OUR PROPERTIES

In Paris

The Apartment

The studio

At Le Cannet, Cannes

The Villa

On Ile de Ré,

The Villa

