



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

## January 2017 Newsletter

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### **BOOK NOW FOR 2017 !**

Now is the time to plan for 2017 if you are wanting to travel in high season or if you have special needs. Book now and you'll get a better service. In spite of the economic downturn we only have a few weeks left already.

Advance planning is best for rentals in July and August, typically the most popular months especially if you are hoping to book two or more consecutive weeks and looking for a large house with a swimming pool (sleeping 12 or more). Some of our return-guests even secure their bookings as early as December the year before.

### **SAINT-MARTIN DE RE**

The reason why Saint Martin de Ré, the « capital » of the island is left unmolested by developers is because the owners of the buildings have said a flat 'non' to modernisation. Why they have the taste and tenacity to pull that off, while allowing St Tropez to become a trailer-trash park of obese yachts, no one knows. This is the Hamptons of France, and each summer the little town of St Martin is crammed with the chicest of chic Parisians, who have abodes that make Notting Hill look like a slum dwelling.

Each shop has blue-and-white striped awnings and white joined-up French writing to identify what they're selling, so that even a bucket shop looks enthralling.

The marina in the centre is surrounded by cafés, each more nautical than the next. Tables are filled with crustaceans piled high on an iced tray.

You spend hours deciding which restaurant to visit. One is designed like a wood-panelled fishing boat with nets, brass compasses and star fishes; another is all bleached wood and filled with the Gustavian furniture of a Scandinavian 18th-century living room. Every shop screams for you to empty your bank account.

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### **ALISTAIR MCGOWAN REVEALS HIS LITTLE FRENCH SECRET: THE ILE DE RE (DAILY MAIL, 2009)**

For those who like Sixties French films where everyone cycles slowly down endless French roads wearing Breton shirts and smiling 'bonjours!', where rabbits hop around gardens, where children do not scream and the sound of the church bell is the only thing disturbing the peace, Ile de Re is the place for you. This island, on France's west coast feels like the land time forgot. There is not even any sign of electricity cables. Everything is tastefully buried underground.

There are no neon or plastic signs; no billboards, no gnomes; no bright, garish front doors - everything is painted in one of three pastel shades of green, blue or grey as if the residents only had access to one tiny corner of the Farrow & Ball paint chart. It oozes taste, class, simplicity and quiet. If New York is a city that never sleeps, Ile de Re is the island that never wakes up and I'd choose it over New York every time. Ile de Re is a hidden gem, perfect for nature enthusiasts (and beginners) and cycle enthusiasts (and beginners) and easily accessible by train - making it the perfect low-carbon holiday.

I love France. I always have. I love trains. I always have. So being on Eurostar is my idea of heaven. And Eurostar has made it so easy not just to get to Paris but to connect with the rest of France. And, if you've been on French trains, you'll know they are probably the best trains in the world: fast, smooth, clean and comfortable. Changing trains in Paris means crossing from the Gare du Nord straight to the Gare Montparnasse and on to La Rochelle just over three hours away. It is a beautiful, smooth ride past old farms, cattle farms and wind farms.

I cannot understand the antipathy towards wind farms. Passing them on the train, they look beautiful, hypnotic and calming. The movement and principle behind them is no different to that of a windmill — perhaps we just need to cover the turbines in wood and open a gift shop at the bottom and then people would love them.

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On leaving the station at La Rochelle, please, please turn around and have a look back at the station façade; it is quite simply one of the most beautiful railway stations in the world — somewhere between a gleaming, white chateau and a fairy palace.



Cycling is a must in Ile de Re with 60 miles of cycle paths to enjoy.

The transfer to the Ile de Re is the only time you will need to use a car or bus for the whole of your trip. The half hour ride to the Ile de Re takes you over the bridge (which also has a lane for hardy pedestrians and a lane for wind-blown cyclists)

There are 60 miles of cycle paths generally away from the very few main roads. They take you through fields of dancing wheat and poppies, across pungent salt marshes and through cool forests in peace and safety.

You can hire bikes at a large number of cycle-hire shops around the island. And bikes of every sort! Hybrids, tandems, bikes with attachments for children to cycle along behind you, bikes with trailers for dogs, trailers for toddlers and even trailers for babies.

It is a whole new world and the best way to see the Ile de Re. Like everything else on the island, the cycling is generally slow (the terrain is too flat to attract any serious cyclists) so it is perfect for absolute beginners — of any age.

Every part of the island is beautiful and has a different character and it is all well signposted and easily accessible. St Martin, the island's nominal capital, is idyllic — one of the prettiest places you will ever see. Its historic port hosted many sailing ships in the warring, bygone centuries. Led by the Duke of Buckingham in the 17th century the English were repelled by the islanders under the command

of Maréchal de Tiras, and so it is perhaps ironic that the English are now welcomed as visitors all over the island.

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Oysters from Ile de Re.

The island has some lovely beaches (which make great destinations for cycle trips), all of which are very natural and unannounced.

There are no volleyball nets or lifeguards; changing huts or needless noisy little showers; no jet-skis, nobody having smoky, chokey barbecues and nobody selling you sarongs or slices of pineapple and coconut. It is just you and nature and a few impossibly brown French people, just like those Sixties films.

The seas teem with fish and oysters — indeed, there are a small number of places on the island to taste oysters. Watch for “Dégustation d’huitres”.

The only possible downside to the island is that it’s not cheap.

There are plenty of beautiful shops — many filled with cotton and linen delights in a variety of pastel shades, some prohibitively expensive antique shops and one shop (in St Martin) shamelessly aimed at men selling pipes, shaving brushes, knives and bells.

Even the donkeys wear trousers in pastel shades with vertical stripes — presumably to make them look thinner. Apart from the donkey rides, the children on the island (local and tourists) seem happy and have plenty to do. If they are not hooked on nature before they go, they will be by the time they leave.

Every town is full of flowers — the houses are filled with geraniums and the most wonderfully tall hollyhocks that seem to grow out of every crack in the concrete. Butterflies nestle on the cycle paths and fly all around you as you ride. There are

quail, ducks and magpies everywhere and you hear the invisible larks that brought to my mind two lines from Tennyson's In Memoriam:  
'Drown'd in yonder living blue. The lark becomes a sightless song.'

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## NEWS FROM THE VILLA

Maintaining a beachfront villa on Ile de Ré is a constant fight against sea, salt, sand and spray and we spend our winters doing the improvements, repairing, repainting all that needs repairing and repainting for everything to be ready in the spring.

Last year we had spent the winter entirely rebuilding the terrace and surroundings of the swimming pool and repainting the shutters and outer doors, passing from light blue to light grey, all the while respecting the mandatory "palette" of colours of Ile de Ré.



This year we are continuing the renovation work with the inside of the villa and we have chosen the delicate **Farrow & Ball** colours to repaint the villa. The too often seen sea-side blue will give way to pastel shades of off-white, chocolate, Charleston Gray, Skimming Stone Elephant's Breath, etc...

This winter in March as well we will rebuild the glass roof of the winter garden or veranda. It is huge but should improve the aspect of the patio greatly as we will add sliding sunshades on the glass panels and improve the

## OUR PROPERTIES

### In Paris

#### The Apartment

#### The studio

### At Le Cannet, Cannes

#### The Villa

### On Ile de Ré,

#### The Villa

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