



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

January 2018 Newsletter

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BOOK NOW FOR 2018!

Now is the time to plan for 2018 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 are already getting enquiries.

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 (sleeping 12 or more). Our British guests especially those that keep returning to the island every year have discovered that early planning is helpful.

THE ORIGINS OF THE NAME RÉ

It seems to come from the Latin name Ratus which means fern, a plant that covers much of the Ile de Ré. The island was constituted of four islets; they were naturally linked by sediments and then by the man-made salt marshes. Originally, the Ile de Ré was part of a group of islands composed of three islands: two small ones in the North (Ile de Loix) and the West (Ile d'Ars) and closer to the mainland (Ile de Ré). This group of islands was part of the Gaul tribe Lémovices' territory: that is why, later, the Ile de Ré took the Latin name of Arica Insula.

Afterwards this name was given to the whole group of islands. Before the bridge connecting the island to the mainland was built in 1988, there used to be a ferry line ensuring the liaison.

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LEGENDS

A legend tells that a terrible earthquake engulfed a Roman city called Antioche and that only Oléron and Ré remained. The inhabitants say that when the weather is fine, the mythical city's ruins can be seen in the distant water.

This is how the legend goes, but in 1809 a ship ran aground on the headland of Chanchardon and it is said that the captain saw the “calcareous paving which seemed to be the ruins of a Roman construction”.

Moreover, in the famous Universal Geography, the geographer Elisée Reclus determines the position of the town of Antioche as being in the same position as Chanchardon. But according to the local saying “when Antioche reappears, Ré will disappear”.

Another legend says that sailors of Ancient Egypt, sent by Ramses II to sail around the world ran aground on the Martray (close to the present village of Ars) and built a small pyramid.

OYSTER FARMING ON ILE DE RE

The first oyster fossils ever found were 230 million years old. The Greeks presumably, ate quantities of oysters that could naturally be found and collected on the shores and shells were used as ballot papers. Oysters were much appreciated under the Roman Empire. The Romans would have them imported from Gaul and consume them at different festivities. An oyster platter on the harbour of Saint Martin will convince you that oysters have never lost their reputation over the centuries.



THE PRISON OF ILE DE RE

For several centuries, the citadel of Saint-Martin had a military purpose. Following the French Revolution and the subsequent troubled years, it eventually became a prison. At the end of the 18th century, over 1,000 rebel priests who were rotting on the pontoon of Rochefort were transferred here along with 133 other prisoners and packed together in a space that could only contain 500. Survivors were set free and their ordeal ended after the signature of the treaty of the 14th of July 1801.

During the Empire, other residents arrived. In 1830 Napoleon's faithful soldiers were in turn imprisoned in the citadel. Then for more than 50 years there were only servicemen. In 1871, the citadel was declared a State prison. 400 prisoners were locked up. In 1873 the citadel was restructured to become a warehouse as well as a waiting place for prisoners, due to be sent to the infamous penitentiary of Cayenne, in the French colony Guiana.

During WWI, the transportation was stopped and the citadel housed German prisoners.

After the conflict ended, every year the inhabitants of Saint-Martin could watch about 700 convicts sail away to Guiana until on the 17th of June 1938 a decree was eventually signed to abolish the penal colony of Guiana.

In 1946, it became a prison once again and has been a prison ever since.

For many tourists, the prison of Saint Martin bears the seal of the deportation to the penitentiary of Guiana. Nowadays with its 485 cells, the prison is one of the biggest in France and its administration, with 285 civil workers, the main source of employment of the island. The case is probably a unique feature in France and in Europe: the prison is located in the heart of a famous tourist spot and is a sight that no tourist on his/her way to visit the capital of the Ile de Ré can avoid.

THE MARSH OF POITOU OR MARAIS POITEVIN

On your way to Ile de Ré you should stop for a night or two in the Marais Poitevin, an outstanding scenery in Charente maritime: it is practically flat territory, no higher than 3 meters above sea level. Also called the "Green Venice" with its characteristic landscapes, it is a complex hydraulic system with thousands of canals. It is an example of remarkable biodiversity whose maintenance is expensive and demanding. It is after the Camargue the second biggest humid zone in France. The Marsh of Poitou spreads from Niort in the Deux Sèvres to Aiguillon's bay in Vendée, with a detour in Charente Maritime. It covers 100,000 hectares and is 70 km long from East to West, from Niort to the Ocean. Come and venture in the heart of nature, by foot or cycle on the shady tracks along watercourses, by car on the small roads along the canals or by boat. You will discover a land of contrasts, a perfect balance of shadows and lights.

OUR PROPERTIES

In Paris

The Apartment

The studio

At Le Cannet, Cannes

The Villa

**On Ile de Ré,
The Villa**

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