

Tourist Guide

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saint-nazaire



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STUNNING[®] saint-nazaire

Visiting Saint-Nazaire means a journey into the unexpected, exploring a town with a thousand different shades to its personality:

urban and seaside, industrial and natural, historic and innovative.

From the tiny creeks to our vast submarine base and the silence of the Brière wetland – come to Saint-Nazaire and you'll really feel you've travelled.

Ready to be bowled over?





P. 14 ATTRACTIONS & TOURS


P. 15 HIGHLIGHTS




HOW TO GET HERE

 BY ROAD:
- Paris: 270 mi / 4¼ hrs (Motorway A11)
- Nantes: 40 mi / 1 hr

 BY RAIL:
The high-speed train TGV links Saint-Nazaire to Paris several times a day; allow for approx. 2½ hours on direct trains.

 BY AIR:
Nantes Atlantique airport (less than one hour from Saint-Nazaire); there are numerous domestic and international flights.



 West Pier Wharf, Saint-Nazaire



Saint-Nazaire Agglomération Tourisme
Société Publique Locale au capital de 250 000 € | RCS Saint-Nazaire 828 620 831 | SIRET 828 620 831 00010 - APE 7990Z - TVA FR49 828620831
Garantie financière APST | N° Immatriculation au Registre des Opérateurs de Voyages et de Séjours : IM044170008
Document réalisé pour l'année 2022. Informations données à titre indicatif. Non contractuel. Ne pas jeter sur la voie publique.
Conception : Saint-Nazaire Agglomération Tourisme - D. Provenzale
Crédits photographiques : F. Makhouf / A. Lamoureux / V. Bauza / A. Klose / J. Jehanin / JC Lemée / B. Biger / M. Leduc / M. Launay / C. Robert / L. Quinkal / Ville de Saint-Nazaire / Photographe inconnu, Collection Saint-Nazaire Agglomération Tourisme - Écomusée.
Traduction : Agent British - Annaliza Davis
C503 - 03/2022 - 1 000 ex - Impression : La Contemporaine - Imprimé sur papier PEFC pour une gestion durable des forêts.



Paddle-boarding on Mr Hulot's beach

A city by the sea

If you ask locals the way to the beach, they'll probably ask, "Which one?" This is, after all, a town boasting 20 beaches! Here in Saint-Nazaire, the long stretch of coast includes flat, sandy beaches perfect for sunbathing, tiny creeks and rock pools, quiet coves and even top spots for watersports.

A town boasting 20 beaches

• Do you have lively little ones?

Take your beach gear to Saint-Nazaire's central beach, where you'll find wooden castles, bridges and diggers, as well as swings and games made from driftwood.

• How about skimboarding and windsurfing?

Head to La Courance or the central beach, with the seasonal watersports centre, 'Le Skate Park'.

• Or some peace and quiet?

Seek out the little coves around Port Charlotte or at La Petite Vallée and simply relax.

To go further



Seafront

Stroll along The Prom

Saint-Nazaire's seafront promenade is a fantastic spot for strolling, cycling and rollerblading. Alternatively, you can sit on one of the extra-long wooden benches and people-watch, enjoying the sunshine.

For many people, the particular charm of the promenade comes from the many fishing huts you can see here. Picturesque and intriguing, they come to life when their owners arrive to grab their catch of the day.

A very famous coastal path

Saint-Nazaire is home to the most southerly section of a famous coastal path: the GR®34. Tracing the coast of Brittany for more than 2,000 km, this trail was created in 1664 so customs officers could look out for possible smugglers!

Now, this fabulous coastal path is open to everyone, offering a breathtaking walk from Saint-Nazaire as far as Pornichet. It's like a seaview balcony so however far you explore, be sure to take your camera!



Place du Commando



The place to be

Place du Commando is the social heart of Saint-Nazaire, with decking, pine trees and stunning views, while the nearby beach has WiFi parasols, a playground and sun loungers. To make the most of life's pleasures, this is the place to be!



A trendy city

Saint-Nazaire is a modern, charming and surprising city, great to live in or visit. It's always lively, with rich cultural life and art on every corner. Walk through quiet streets that take you back to the 1900s, sip a drink by the sea, browse the market: what could be better?

Welcome to La Havane

In the district of La Havane, the colourful 'Belle Epoque' villas between the seafront and botanical garden give you a glimpse of the original Saint-Nazaire. Street names such as Santander, La Havane and Veracruz remind you of the city's transatlantic past.



La Havane

Artwork wherever you look

Our streets are like an open-air gallery: as you explore, you'll see vast mural paintings, contemporary art installations and exhibitions tucked away in unusual places. You'll even notice a curious collection of tiny blue characters created by a local graffiti artist.

If you'd like to track down all the artworks and sculptures scattered around Saint-Nazaire, ask the Tourist Office for your free brochure.

What's on? There's always something!

Cultural life in Saint-Nazaire is very dynamic, all year long. The theatre offers drama, dance and music from classical to contemporary. Inside the submarine base, the concert venue 'VIP' hosts everything from rock to rap.

Then our other two venues, 'Le LiFE' and 'Le Grand Café' bring you contemporary exhibitions, often with internationally renowned artists.



Unravel, Adnate



Markets and Producers in Saint-Nazaire

Going to the market is not just another way to get your groceries, it's a feast for the senses. What are you doing tomorrow morning? Take a stroll through Saint-Nazaire's markets! A perfect opportunity to discover delicious local products to enjoy by the sea.



To go further



Place du Commando

A Town of Art, History and Heritage

From its prehistoric burial site of Dissignac Tumulus to its contemporary sculptures and frescoes, from its glamorous ocean liners to its heroic war record, Saint-Nazaire has a unique heritage that earned it official recognition as a 'Town of Art and History'.
Come and explore a city that's bursting with heritage!

A singular city in the heart of history

Originally a peaceful fishing village, Saint-Nazaire's fate changed forever in the 1850s, when it was selected as the outer harbour town for the nearby city of Nantes. Shipyards flourished, Atlantic ocean liners were built, then Saint-Nazaire was destined to play a key role in both World Wars. It was chosen as a US naval base in World War One, before being occupied by the Germans and their warships in World War Two.



Entrance to a burial chamber of the Dissignac tumulus

Meet Sammy, the American monument

From 1917 to 1919, around 198,000 US soldiers were stationed in Saint-Nazaire, a vital entry harbour to the Western Front and transit point for 4,000 tons of material every day. In 1927, the American Monument commemorated their presence, and was fondly nicknamed 'Sammy'.



Sammy, the American monument

Unforgettable losses and heroic victories

On 17th June 1940, over 5,000 people - mostly British soldiers - crowded onto RMS Lancastria to escape the German offensive. Hit by German bombs, the liner sank in 15 minutes, taking some 4,000 souls.

Thankfully, there were many victories, such as Operation Chariot: on 28th March 1942, the Allies sent a British destroyer into Saint-Nazaire port, packed with explosives. The resulting explosion destroyed Germany's big warships and put the dry dock out of action.

A remarkable post-war reconstruction

More than 85% of Saint-Nazaire was destroyed by World War Two, but it rose again. Within 14 years, 12,000 homes, 100 public buildings and 120 km of roads appeared, and the city was reborn. It is forward-thinking and open to the world, as befits a true harbour town.



History and heritage

To find out more about any aspect of Saint-Nazaire's rich history, explore our visitor centres and exhibitions, where there's always something new to learn!



View of the Saint-Nazaire harbour around 1900



A city with a truly transatlantic air

From a quiet village to a Transatlantic star!

This area was once the humble home of fishermen skilled at navigating the River Loire. However, after Saint-Nazaire became the trade port for Nantes, it also became synonymous with transatlantic travel.

In 1862, as the French Line began regular timetables of Atlantic crossings, shipyards started to appear in Penhoët, and Saint-Nazaire exploded into a bustling hive of naval construction and maritime trade. Saint-Nazaire became a renowned transatlantic harbour with a direct line toward Central America.

Saint-Nazaire and Ocean Liners: a long (love) story

Saint-Nazaire has been the birthplace of great ocean liners for over 150 years. Illustrious vessels such as the 'Normandie', 'Queen Mary 2' and the award-winning 'Harmony of the Seas' came to life right here.

Today, our shipyard builds vast cruise liners, and each one is waved off on her maiden voyage by thousands of locals and visitors delighted to see the world's biggest and best liners set sail for the first time.



Entrance to the port of Saint-Nazaire



Ships behind the scenes

Ours is one of the world's oldest and most innovative shipyards, and everything here is gigantic. You'll have to see it to believe it, so join a guided tour and prepare to feel absolutely tiny!



Chantiers de l'Atlantique

Submarine base: once daunting, now iconic

In 1941, the port where ships used to sail to America was obliterated, to be covered by a German submarine base. One of five bases built along the Atlantic Front during World War Two, it stretched 301 metres, used nearly 500,000m³ of concrete, and was built in just 16 months. It housed the fearsome U-Boats plus hundreds of men until May 1945.

Nowadays, the base is an iconic part of Saint-Nazaire, open as a unique cultural centre and tourist site.

The submarine base seen from the lock

To go further





Nature is everywhere

Saint-Nazaire: stunning and surprisingly green!

Over a third of Saint-Nazaire's urban space is green, including free gardens and public parks.

Close to the city centre, the 'Parc Paysager' covers 123 acres of landscaped grounds plus a lake, playgrounds, picnic areas and shady pathways. It's perfect for families, walkers and cyclists.

You can also explore the botanical garden - or 'Jardin des Plantes', overlooking the sea. Dating from the 1880s, it is bursting with Atlantic and Mediterranean seaside flora.



The botanical garden



The belvedere



Brière Regional Natural Park and Wetlands

La Brière is an exceptional wetland of over 50,000 hectares, and its biodiversity is carefully protected. Thousands of birds hibernate here, and visitors can spot bluethroats, herons, egrets, Eurasian bitterns and more.

It's a peaceful, otherworldly habitat with just enough wind to rustle the reeds and lift the silence, accompanying the ballet of birds in flight. The canal laps gently under the flat-bottomed boats and there's water, water everywhere...

Back to nature in Rozé

At the very heart of La Brière, Rozé Port is a bubble of well-being for nature-lovers and eco-tourism. Explore the bird reserve and traditional markets, climb the 24-metre belvedere for outstanding panoramic views or take the cycle path that leads to Saint-Nazaire and La Chapelle-des-Marais.

You can even glide across the water on a traditional, flat-bottomed 'Chaland' boat and simply enjoy the scenery.



Traditional thatched cottages in Kerhinet



Don't miss Le Morta!

Look out for local crafts using 'Le Morta'. This is fossilized oak that's as hard and dark as ebony, highly prized by craftspeople, who shape it into jewellery, knives and sculptures.

Boat ride in the Brière marshes



To go further



ATTRACTIONS & TOURS



Escal'Atlantic

A fascinating journey into the world of ocean liners. Walk in the footsteps of yesterday's travellers, explore the interiors of a liner, and see beautiful collections.

Self-guided tour

Espadon submarine



1964: mission under the ice! The Espadon was the first French submarine to dive under the ice field. Now it's your turn to go down into this steel giant to experience all the sound effects of life underwater, just like a submariner.

Audio guide tour for adults and children



The EOL Centre éolien

The EOL Centre éolien is the first visitor centre dedicated to offshore wind energy and is the only one of its kind in France. Come and pedal, blow and experiment to see how offshore wind electricity is generated. An immersive, playful and interactive tour which will delight young and old alike!

Self-guided tour

Écomusée



Through models, objects, movies and historical photographs, the heritage museum explains the rapid growth of Saint-Nazaire, a city which was built twice in the same century. Family-friendly workshops are held throughout the year.

Self-guided tour



Shipyards

Many legendary ocean liners were built here. The shipyard tour immerses you into an outstanding industrial adventure. You will see assembly docks and gigantic installations all around you.

2-hour guided tour

Discovery cruises

Take a boat trip along the coast and see the town from a new angle. For an hour or two, gaze at the coastline, beaches, cliffs, shipyard and quays across the water. From afternoon light to magical sunset, boat trips showcase all that's stunning in Saint-Nazaire.

Live commentary in French only



'Les Escales'

A key annual event, 'Les Escales' is an urban festival held on Île du Petit Maroc and at the port. It takes place on the last weekend in July, offering an eclectic programme including pop, rock, soul, world music and electronic music, featuring major headliners as well as new and upcoming musicians.

Every year, in July, in Saint-Nazaire



'Saint-Nazaire Côté Plages'

'Saint-Nazaire Côté Plages' encourages you to enjoy summer to the full by offering many playful, sporting and cultural shows, festive and leisure events, and outdoor spectacles on the central Plage de Saint-Nazaire or in the Saint-Marc Quarter.

Every year in July and August



Christmas fun

For seasonal Christmas fun, enjoy the free ice-skating rink and bobsled track, the fair, the light projections and the Christmas Market!



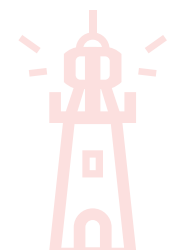
Saint-Nazaire Côté plages



Ship departures

In Saint-Nazaire, each time a vessel leaves the shipyard, a spectacular open-air show takes place in the Loire Estuary to the delight of locals and visitors alike. Enough to send shivers down your spine!

News and information



STUNNING[®] saint-nazaire

The Tourist Information Centre team welcomes you all year round to provide you with information, advice and pampering! Our team will be happy to help you plan your visit and give you some tips on local events, accommodation, ideas for outings and share its excellent knowledge of the region as well as telling you all about its gems.

Where to stay?



Food & Drink



Things To Do



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