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Marseilles

Mediterranean darling



The Cosquer Méditerranée in Marseille, France. Alamy

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France's second largest city is fast becoming one of southern Europe's leading cultural destinations, with the June opening of the Cosquer Méditerranée.

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The attraction houses a full-scale replica of the famous Grotte Cosquer, a cave



in the city's scenic Calanques National Park that prehistoric people etched with artwork before it was eventually submerged underwater.

But a visit is decidedly contemporary. The replica is located in the ultramodern Villa Méditerranée, and guests ride through in silent autonomous electric vehicles.

The city is also one of the 10 stages of the “In the Footsteps of Mary Magdalene” hiking trail, a new 222-km-long route that retraces the biblical journey of Mary Magdalene through Provence.

Any trip to France is incomplete without sufficient gastronomy, and Marseilles's food scene is carving out its own identity. Europe's first 100% solar-powered restaurant, Le Présage, has taken root in a leafy corner of the Technopôle de Château Gombert. La Famille Marseille serves Moroccan-inspired vegetarian dishes in an intimate outdoor courtyard.

And in July, Les Grandes Halles du Vieux-Port, with 15 food stalls linked by their menus of Mediterranean flavors, opened its doors on the lively Cours Honoré d'Estienne d'Orves near the harbor.

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