



## CHRISTMAS TIME

in Provence-Alps-Cote d'Azur



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**In Provence, Christmastime traditionally lasts 40 days, from Saint Barbara feast day (4 December) to Candlemas (2 February). Provençal culture truly awakens during Christmas festivities.**

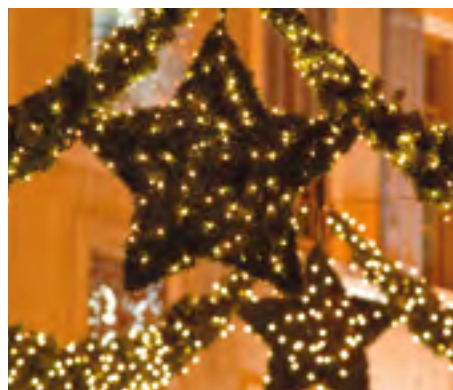
The region's towns and villages are brought to life with living nativity scenes and pastoral plays. Locals sit down to share the gros souper on Christmas Eve, a lean yet hearty meal that ends with the thirteen Christmas desserts. At Candlemas, nativity scenes are taken down and the feast of the purification of the Virgin and "renewed fire" are celebrated.

Christmastime is also an excellent season for gourmets, with prestigious Christmas and New Year's Eve dinners and cooking classes provided in exceptional settings.

Exploring the Christmas traditions of Provence is an opportunity to get a glimpse of and take part in authentic regional culture and the local experience.



# PROVENÇAL CHRISTMAS TRADITIONS





## Christmastime in Provence-Alps-Côte d'Azur region is steeped in tradition and packed full of festive cheer.

From the feast day of Saint Barbara and the 'wheat of hope' to the feast day of Saint Lucy and its lanterns, nativity scenes and their santons (little clay characters), culinary traditions with the gros souper and thirteen desserts, as well as the pastrage and pastoral play, ending on a high with the Epiphany and Candlemas.

### THE FEAST DAY OF SAINT BARBARA

The Provençal almanac tells us that Saint Barbara lived in the 3rd century, and was the patron saint of miners and explosive specialists. The feast day is celebrated on 4 December, when locals plant a few seeds of wheat and lentils on a fine bed of watered moss in several different saucers.

In the 20 days between Saint Barbara and Christmas, these seeds sprout, creating pretty little tufts of green - the first hint of future harvests and the first sign of the festivities to come.

On 25 December, if the seeds have sprouted the harvest will be good, but if the seeds have turned rotten, families can expect disappointing crops! The most impressive of the saucers is placed on the Christmas dinner table, while the others are included in the nativity scene, tucked away among the rocks and bushes.

### THE FEAST DAY OF SAINT LUCY

The feast day of Saint Lucy occurs on 13 December and is a celebration of the first sign of winter before the solstice on 21 December. By celebrating the season, locals attempt to get Old Man Winter on their side. Winter is symbolised by a sprig of mistletoe and holly, both of which take their roots in old pagan beliefs.

The druids believed that mistletoe had miraculous powers, and today it is hung above doorways as a symbol of peace and goodwill.

Holly has a powerful spiritual significance, as it represents Moses' flaming bush and Christ's crown of thorns. Holly is said to keep witchcraft at bay.

The arrival of winter ushers in the cold and the fear of frost, generating in turn a host of superstitious beliefs. On Saint Lucy's Feast Day, lights are lit (candles, lanterns, etc.) and placed in the windows of houses to keep out evil winter spirits and curses.

### NATIVITY SCENES

Families put up their nativity scenes beginning on the feast day of Saint Barbara. This is an important family moment in Provence, as santons are handed down from father to son.

A nativity scene is 'a manger in a box-like shape of varying lengths and placed on a pedestal that may occasionally serve as a bed.' Nativity scenes are an age-old custom, and were said to have been invented by Saint Francis of Assisi who recreated the nativity scene using live people and animals in an abandoned stable. With the Revolution came the tradition of having a nativity scene in each homestead, and this beautiful Provençal tradition spread across France. An authentic nativity scene is an idyllic representation of a Provençal village, where each person and domestic animal has its place. The décor is an illustration of both communal life with houses, wells, ovens, water mills, snow, pine and olive trees, a starry sky, and a stable featuring the Baby Jesus, the Virgin Mary, Joseph, the donkey and cow, and the star that was later to guide the Magi and the crowd that gathered before the little family. Nativity scenes are taken down on Candlemas.

### SANTONS

No nativity scene is complete without its santons. The word stems from the Provençal term "santoun", meaning "little saint". They are made from original moulds and depict a variety of popular Provençal figures that the santon-makers leave to dry before painting. Next, a mould is made from plaster, or very occasionally from resin. The santon is then cut out of its base and around its edges before being hand-pressed a second time on the mould. It is left in a dark place to set, and trimmed again when dry. The figurines are then painted using gouache paint, beginning with the lighter colours such as on the face, and followed by darker shades.

The very first santon came from Marseille, and the oldest known mould is from Lagnel, and is displayed at the Vieux Marseille museum (La Maison Diamantée).

There are roughly 3 sizes of santon: miniature santons ('puce') measuring between 1 and 3 cm, traditional santons that are thumb-sized and large santons that can reach up to 18 to 20 cm. Some - generally the larger santons - may be clothed. All of the characters are placed around the Baby Jesus, Mary and Joseph, with the Three Wise Men making their appearance on 6 January.

Every santon-maker creates a handful of set types based on folklore and tradition, such as the shepherd with his offering of a lamb (a reminder of the act of sharing) and a woman with a black hen (the soup of which is recommended for new-borns).

Thus, the scene showcases all the various trades and crafts of the last century, for a total of around fifty evocative characters that are well-known to locals:

- Roustido is the kindly bourgeois lady with a red umbrella held by her husband.
- Bartomiou, an incorrigible drunk, wearing a long cotton hat and offering the Baby Jesus a piece of flat, dried cod.
- Pistachié, an oaf with a donkey bearing a heavy load of wheat.
- Lou Ravi, featured with arms outstretched to the sky as a symbol of admiration.
- The baker and his basket of fougasse bread.
- Other characters include the garlic seller, the fishmonger, the farm hands carrying a lantern, the fisherman with a net slung over his shoulder, the worshippers (seen kneeling), etc.

Santons are a purely Provençal phenomenon that are fully integrated into local Christmas tradition. Naive and funny, popular yet dignified, these little figurines have been a source of joy for Provençal children for a long time, as well as an intriguing and touching craft loved by adults.

## Christmas Eve

### THE "CACHO-FIO"

Christmas Eve begins with this semi-religious, semi-magical practice that is a living memory of Roman libations. The oldest family member chooses a candle from all of the lit candles, and walks back with it towards his family. If the flame lies flat like a heavy ear of corn, the harvest will be good. If the flame remains upright, the crops will fail. The cache-fio is the ritual lighting of the Yule log, traditionally a log from a fruit tree (pear, cherry, olive). "Cacha le feu" means to light the log, with one variation being "Bouta cacho-fio", meaning to set fire to the log.

Before sitting down to eat, the eldest and youngest two of the family place the log in front of the chimney and pour mulled wine over the wood three times in a row before placing it in

the fireplace and lighting it, while chanting the following words: "Alègre ! Diou nous alègre Cacho fio ven, tout ben ven ; Diou nous fagué la graci de veïre l'an que ven, Si sian pas mai que siguen pas men", which translates into English as "Let us rejoice! God has given us the joy of celebrating the cacho fio, all is well. God gives us the grace of glimpsing the year that lies ahead. Let us have no less if we are to have no more".

### THE "GROS SOUPER"

The gros souper, which translates as "grand supper", comes straight after the cacho fio, and consists of a lean meal that nevertheless requires enormous amounts of preparation. The table is the focal point of the room, and is decorated with little sprigs of red-berried holly, sometimes roses of Jericho and wheat from the feast day of Saint Barbara. A loaf of seasonal bread is placed in the middle. Three white tablecloths cover the table and three candles are placed down it in memory of the Holy Trinity. The thirteen loaves of bread that are eaten with the meal symbolise the Last Supper taken by Jesus and the twelve apostles. The same applies to the thirteen desserts that still feature on today's Christmas dinner tables. They may be laid out at the beginning along with the wine as a symbol of abundance and to add to the table. Christmas is the season of Charity, and a place is therefore set for a stranger, known as the 'poor man's seat'. It was once said that this seat at the table was for the spirits of dead ancestors that were also invited to the festivities.

Seven lean dishes were cooked to commemorate the "seven wounds of Christ". As a time of fasting and abstaining from meat, the Christmas Eve meal is lean yet hearty. This abundance is a sign of good things to come and future prosperity. Each village appears to have one or two specific traditional dishes, which reflects the wide diversity of different Christmas meals. There is no single 'set menu', but traditions that are consistently followed from region to region. Generally speaking, the Christmas meal is adapted to regional produce and local availability and so varies from place to place, with differences between coastal Provence and the inland areas.

In towns and villages on the Coast, fresh fish plays an important role in the meal (eel, tuna, sea bream, cod, etc.) while in inland Provence, vegetables take centre stage (oven-baked spinach in Apt with garlic and parsley, chard and cardoon, raw celery with anchovy pâté, blanched leeks and oven-baked squash, etc.). In the Provençal mountains, the traditional dish is crouzets, strips of pasta that are also known as crouches or crouizes.

The abundance of Christmas dishes contrasts with normal every-day eating habits, yet these dishes remain simple and easy to prepare.

## EASY

### ANCHOVY PÂTÉ RECIPE

For 4 - Preparation time: 5 min

- 3 anchovies
- 2 teaspoons of vinegar
- 6 tablespoons of olive oil
- 2 cloves of garlic

Crush the garlic. Break down the anchovies in the hot vinegar. Add the oil. Anchovy pâté goes beautifully with chard or celery.

## WHERE TO EAT A CHRISTMAS "GROS SOUPER"

### • FRIDAY 5 DECEMBER 2014

At the Château d'Eau in Montoux

**Bookings: Ms Anne-Marie Bernabé**

☎ +33 (0)4 90 66 35 86

### • FRIDAY 5 DECEMBER 2014

In Pernes les Fontaines at the Goutte d'Eau

**Bookings: Mr RAME**

☎ +33 (0)4 90 61 65 49

### • 20 DECEMBER 2014

In Bédarrides at the Espace Polyvalent des Verdeaux  
Christmas carols and explanations of traditions provided throughout the meal.

**Informations : Ms FERREIRA**

☎ +33 (0)4 90 33 03 21 - ✉ j.ferreira68@sfr.fr

### • 5, 12, & 19 DECEMBER 2014

at the "Le Mas des Vertes Rives"  
farm and inn in Châteauneuf-de-Gadagne  
Other dates available upon request.

☎ +33 (0)4 90 22 37 10

✉ [contact@mas-des-vertes-rives.com](mailto:contact@mas-des-vertes-rives.com)

[www.mas-des-vertes-rives.com](http://www.mas-des-vertes-rives.com)

## THE THIRTEEN DESSERTS

The number thirteen symbolises Christ and the twelve apostles. Although once associated with Provence and the Calèna tradition in the County of Nice, today they are found throughout the Occitan region and as far as Catalonia. They are served at the end of the Gros Souper, a ritualised Christmas Eve meal.

The 4 mendicants each represent the different Catholic religious orders that took vows of poverty, and serve as the basis for the 13 desserts:

- walnuts and hazelnuts for the Augustinians
- dried figs for the Franciscans
- almonds for the Carmelites
- raisins for the Dominicans.

In addition to these 4 first desserts, depending on the region, the town or even the particular family, items can include:

- the 'oil pump', a flat, sweet brioche made with olive oil, also known as fougasse or gibassier
- black and white Provençal nougat (from Allauch or Sault, flavoured with lavender honey and Provençal almonds)
- apples and pears
- prunes (Brignoles)
- verdaù (green melon kept in its skin)
- oranges (a sign of wealth), mandarins and clementines
- Christmas melon
- white grapes
- candied fruit (from Apt, for example)
- quince paste or jam
- sweets such as chocolate truffles or candied pastry parcels
- Calissons d'Aix sweets
- bugnes (or merveilles or oreillettes) fritters, little orange blossom infused doughnuts
- milk shortbread
- almond cake
- dates (that may be stuffed with almond paste)

According to tradition, each dinner guest must sample a little of each dessert with some mulled wine in order to ensure good fortune for the year ahead.

## MIDNIGHT MASS

The tradition of attending midnight mass on 24 December dates back to the 5th century, and Provence's influence when it comes to this Christmas rite speaks for itself: it is a tradition that is cherished around the world.

Before the actual mass comes the vigil: a moment of coming together in which hymns and music fill the church. "Noëls" feature heavily, and the term generally refers to a hymn or carol sung in Provençal to convey religious fervour and local tradition. "Noëls" are sung as a dialogue, and work particularly well in the scenes found in the pastorales (pastoral plays). The most famous among them are those from the Avignon-born Nicolas Saboly (1614-1675), whose works were described by Frédéric Mistral as "bringing whole churches to tears of emotion".

As well as the carols and sung Noëls, the midnight mass involves a specific event that takes place when the offering is made, known as the pastrage.

## THE PASTRAGE

The rite involves a lamb being brought into the Mass at midnight, known as the pastrage (from the word "pâtre", meaning shepherd). Shepherds clad in long habits slowly walk towards the high altar behind the tambourine and galoubet flute players, carrying pillar candles and one of them carrying a milk lamb. In front of the altar, the lamb is offered to the prior, who takes it into his arms. The shepherd tells the tale of the journey of adoration that he and his companions have made through the hills and valleys.

Other offerings may be presented, such as juicy fruits, vegetables, fish, fougasse bread, with offerings varying according to villages and regions, each aiming to offer up their finest produce. All wear the dress of their craft or trade. It can be described as a colourful, motley procession imbued with a sense of fervour as participants inch their way towards the altar to the sound of folk music.

## THE PASTORAL PLAYS

The pastorale (pastoral play) is first and foremost a depiction of the journey to the stable and the pious devotion to the new-born Christ. The story never varies: it tells the tale of Saint Joseph who was looking for a room for the night in Bethlehem, going from house to house and door to door, until he was shown the way to a cave where his family might take shelter for the night.

Authentic mysteries in the medieval theatre sense of the word, these pastoral plays were first staged in the church itself and incorporated into the mass. The ceremony was then moved to outside the walls of a temple of God. Among the most famous are the pastoral plays of Maurel (1844) and of Bellot. The pastoral play of Maurel is a staging of the walk following the guiding star.

A spontaneous pilgrimage, this is in fact the story of a journey towards a miracle. The dialogue is in the Provençal language and has a naive, satirical flavour. The story is led by the comedic character of Pistachié and his excessive stammerer of a friend, Jiget. The duo's misadventures provide much hilarity, before the atmosphere is softened by the character of the blind man and his son. The "Boumian" is always the baddie of the story, and the "Rémoulaire" is always presented as a wine aficionado...

## THE EPIPHANY

The word 'epiphany' means 'apparition', and in this case refers to that of the Magi. Christmas rejoicing ends on 8 January with the galette des rois, which translates as the 'cake of the Magi'. The Provençal galette des rois is very different from a traditional puff pastry cake, and takes the shape of a kind of crown-shaped brioche encrusted with candied fruits, symbolizing the jewels of the Magi.

Once upon time, local bakers would offer this treat to their very best clients in a bid to drum up trade.

## CANDLEMAS

2 February marks the end of Christmas festivities. This is the day on which nativity scenes are taken down. Liturgy marks Candlemas as the day of the purification of the Virgin Mary.

In Antiquity, the month of February (a word that takes its roots from the Latin verb februare, meaning 'to purify'), is associated with 'renewed fire', nature's purification period in preparation for the end of winter. As the days get longer, so the hope of renewal grows.

In an attempt to bring its concept of penitence closer to this pagan tradition, the church embarked on a custom of blessing green candles, the colour that has symbolised purification since the beginning of time. In Marseille, Candlemas celebrations are still as dazzling as those of yore, as for the "Navettes" blessing, biscuits in the shape of the rowing boat that brought the Saint Maries to the shores of Provence.



## OUR CHRISTMAS MARKETS AND EVENTS PICKS



## Colourful Christmas markets, stunning nativity scenes, must-see santon fairs, magical light displays, mass in the Provençal language, pastrages and pastoral plays...

### FAIRS AND MARKETS...

#### • 57<sup>TH</sup> SALON INTERNATIONAL DES SANTONNIERS

##### ARLES

15 November 2014 to 12 January 2015

Since 1958, the international santon-maker fair of Arles has been a window display into the world of Christmas nativity scenes. Every year, nativity scene enthusiasts flock to discover the latest santon trends, to admire collectors' treasure troves, to meet iconic santon-making families and feel inspired by the boundless imaginations of some of the santon-makers on display here.

#### • THE MOST TRADITIONAL OF SANTON FAIRS

##### MARSEILLE - PLACE CHARLES DE GAULLE

15 November 2014 to 31 December 2014

Every year in Marseille, the santon fair is the Christmas season's must-see event. Around forty different artisans are dotted around the Place du Général de Gaulle square, offering hundreds of different kinds of santons for visitors to take home. From the rarest to the most original via traditional figurines in card, cork or glued paper, enthusiasts will be spoilt for choice in adding to their collections. Since 1803, the santon fair in Marseille has stood its ground as the leading event in the trade.

• **Opening on Sunday 16 November** with traditional mass in Provençal at the **Saint-Vincent de Paul les Réformés church at 10.30 am**, in the presence of town officials. Procession down to the Canebière and tour of the fair.

#### • SANTON FAIR AT THE COUVENT ROYAL

##### SAINT MAXIMIN LA SAINTE BAUME (VAR)

Saturday 15 and Sunday 16 November 2014

Tradition has it that Maximinus was the steward of the Bethany family and one of the 72 disciples of Jesus. He accompanied Lazarus, Martha and Mary on their crossing. He began evangelising in Aix-en-Provence with the help of Mary Magdalene. Then Mary Magdalene left him to his apostolate, to retire in solitude in the Sainte-Baume ('Baume' means 'cave' in Provençal). On the day she felt she would die, she returned to the plain, back to Maximinus who was on his way to meet her, and who gave her communion and buried her. He requested that his tomb be placed near hers, a wish that was granted. Worshippers built him a sarcophagus in the 3rd or 4th century, known as the sarcophagus of Saint Marcella.

Christmas is the perfect time to discover the Basilica of Saint Maximinus and its relics - the Couvent Royal is now a spectacular hotel - and to wander down to the Mary Magdalene cave, where a midnight mass takes place in celebration of Christmas.

#### • CHRISTMAS MARKET AT CHÂTEAU D'ESTOUBLON

##### AIX-EN-PROVENCE - PLACE DE LA ROTONDE

15 November - 27 December

In the Alpilles mountain range, this winegrowing and oil-producing estate offers its Mediterranean elegance.

For Christmas, traditional decorations from many different countries form an integral part of this truly one-of-a-kind market which features fine foods as well as collector items. For children, there is an old-fashioned merry-go-round, a "Chalet des Douceurs" (chalet for sweets) and pony rides.

[www.estoublon.com](http://www.estoublon.com)

### • SANTON FAIR

#### AIX-EN-PROVENCE - PLACE DE LA ROTONDE

**From 20 November to 31 December 2014**

**Open 7 days a week from 10am to 7pm**

Founded in 1934 by santon-maker Jérôme Fouque, the santon fair in Aix-en-Provence encompasses the very best local craftsmen. Each stall boasts stunning figurines as well as the very latest creations from the artisans and essential accessories and decorations for your nativity scene. The fair kicks off with a santon-maker's mass held at the Cours Sextius church (30 November) followed by a procession down to the Place de la Rotonde where the fair is officially opened.

### • PROVENCE PRESTIGE

#### ARLES

**From 20 to 24 November 2014**

Launch of the Christmas season with this trade fair held at the Convention Centre of Arles for the 20th year. 150 exhibitors, all from Provence, 3,500 m² of stands, 4 eating places: all in a delightful, magical setting. Craftsmen, farmers, entrepreneurs, all are committed to providing visitors a customized welcome with complete information on their products, history and secrets.

[www.provence-prestige.com](http://www.provence-prestige.com)

### • MARCHÉ AU SANTON ET À LA CÉRAMIQUE

#### AUBAGNE

**From 21 November to 31 December 2014**

The traditional santon-makers' and ceramic artists' market of the Pays d'Aubagne et de l'Etoile is open for the Christmas period at the Cours Maréchal Foch in the heart of Aubagne town centre.

This market is a great chance to discover the latest designs from ceramic artists and santon-makers from around the Pays d'Aubagne et de l'Etoile region, as well as a fantastic opportunity to add to your nativity scene or pick up a quirky or traditional Christmas present.

**6 and 7 December 2014.** Santon-makers from across France gather at the "Marché au Santon et à la Céramique" in the Biennale de l'Art Santonnier.

### • HUGE CHRISTMAS MARKET

#### AVIGNON

**From 29 November 2014 to 3 January 2015**

**(subject to change)**

A magical Christmas Market held at the Place de l'Horloge square, featuring a "Chemin des crèches": a stunning trail that leads you along to discover a variety of different living and illuminated nativity scenes, encompassing some beautiful examples of traditional santons. Parades, folk dances and Christmas carols.

#### PLEASE NOTE

- > The 10 m nativity scene: Place de l'Eglise des Célestins
- > Santon-makers: Place des Corps Saints.
- > Delicacies and food: Place Crillon
- > Ice rink: Place Pie
- > Christmas trees and decorations: Place des Carmes
- > Saint Agricola and Saint Didier churches: wax santons from 20 December

### • CHRISTMAS MARKET "CHRISTMAS VILLAGE"

#### CASSIS

**5 to 14 December 2014**

A real Provençal market taken straight from the stories of yore, with a festive atmosphere, an appearance by Father Christmas and a host of events and activities: living nativity scenes, street performances, Guignol, creative workshops for kids, hot mulled wine and chestnuts... Exhibitions on Christmas traditions are also available to visit. Events and activities held at the library and the Mediterranean Municipal Museum of Popular Art and Tradition.

### • XXVII<sup>e</sup> SALON DES SANTONNIERS FAIR

#### CARPENTRAS

**From 10 to 24 December 2014**

As part of the Carpentras santon-maker fair, craft demonstration workshops and creative workshops for kids will be held. **Open from Monday to Thursday from 2.30 pm to 6.30 pm and from Friday to Sunday from 10.30 am to 12.30 pm and from 2.30 pm to 6.30 pm.**

### • LA MIRANDE CHRISTMAS MARKET

#### AVIGNON

**12, 13 & 14 December 2014 from 11 am to 11 pm.**

**Opening night on 12 December from 7 pm.**

A pretty covered market inside one of Avignon's most stunning 5-star hotels. A carefully curated selection of designers bring you unique, quirky pieces that are perfect for original Christmas presents. In the hotel's old kitchen, a "Christmas Special" culinary spectacle is staged, as well as kids workshops and cookery lessons on Saturday and Sunday.

[www.la-mirande.fr](http://www.la-mirande.fr)

### • CHRISTMAS MARKET

#### AND PROVENÇAL LIVING NATIVITY SCENE

#### ALLAUCH

**13 and 14 December 2014**

Looking for unusual Christmas gift ideas, a treat for Christmas guests' taste buds or just a bit of festive atmosphere in an authentic Provençal village setting? Head to Allauch and wander through the maze of stalls, where 120 local farmers and artisans are waiting to introduce you to their wares. Candles, ornaments, santons, calissons, nougat, truffles, ceramics, and more - around every corner lies a whole new treasure trove of delights.

From 22 November 2014 to 25 January 2015 - first founded in 1978, today the Gilbert Orsini nativity scene stretches across 130 m² with 800 clothed santons, 40 of which are animated and all of which combine to tell the tale and traditions of Provence. This year, new designs have been added into the mix of clay figurines scattered around this beautiful nativity scene.

**Made in Allauch since 1834, white Allauch nougat is a must-have sweet to be included in the thirteen desserts of Christmas.**

### • 5<sup>TH</sup> SALON DES SANTONNIERS ET CRÉCHISTES FAIR

#### CADEROUSSE

**13 and 14 December 2014**

Exhibition – sale, 52 designers and artisans Musical shows, creative craft workshops and santon painting for children, as well as stories and legends of Provence. Salle des Fêtes-Pierre Cuer. Free entry on Saturday from 10am to 7pm and Sunday from 10 am to 6 pm.

Guest of honour: santon-maker Gérald ROUX. In attendance, the painter, sculptor and artist Liliane GUIOMAR, awarded the title of "Meilleur Ouvrier de France" [Best French Craftsman] in 1986 and 2000 (Master Santon-Maker).

[www.salonsantonnierscaderousse.fr](http://www.salonsantonnierscaderousse.fr)

### • VILLAGE MARKET

#### VACQUEYRAS

**From Sunday 14 December 2014**

The village of Vacqueyras will be kick starting its open-air market at the Cours Stassart. Wander around the market moving from hut to hut, choosing from among the many gifts for young and old alike as well as high quality local delicacies and Vacqueyras wines - with a free glass of mulled wine, too. Kids events on offer.

### • 13 DESSERTS MARKET

#### AIX-EN-PROVENCE

#### AT THE PLACE FRANÇOIS VILLON SQUARE

**From 18 to 24 December 2014 From 10 am to 7 pm.**

A Provençal Christmas without the traditional thirteen desserts wouldn't be the same! So to help you dine in style, take a trip to Aix-en-Provence and stroll around the thirteen desserts market.

Under a 500 m² tent, around forty different farmers and artisans display their Christmas specialities and produce. From calissons to 'oil pump' bread via fig honey, this market is a feast for eyes and tummies alike!

### • CHRISTMAS MARKET

#### PERNES LES FONTAINES

**21 December 2014**

The 15<sup>th</sup> edition of the Christmas Market open from 9 am to 6.30 pm, brought to you by the "Folklories" association, location to be announced. An array of different stands bring you all the ingredients you need to prepare your gros souper (with recipes to inspire), Christmas dinner and its 13 desserts, as well as gift ideas, santons and much more.



## NATIVITY SCENES...

### • CRÈCHE DE LA PETITE PROVENCE DU PARADOU

#### LE PARADOU

From 17 November 2014 to 18 January 2015

At Le Paradou, nativity scenes take centre stage all year round at the Musée de la Petite Provence du Paradou museum. 400 m² of exhibition space, 32 models and over 400 santons combine to bring you one of the biggest nativity scenes in the world.

At Christmas, the Museum exceeds itself with a reconstruction of a traditional Provençal village, featuring a winter transhumance scene and flurries of snow!

[www.lapetiteprovenceduparadou.com](http://www.lapetiteprovenceduparadou.com)

### • LIVING NATIVITY SCENE

#### AUBAGNE - ESPACE DES LIBERTÉS AT 5 PM

20 December 2014

In Aubagne, the nativity scene is used as a stage and brought to life with Provençal dancers from the "Lei Dansaire de Garlaban" association! To celebrate the nativity, around fifty performers slip into characters of the nativity scene to the sounds of tambourines and fifes. Shepherds, fishmongers, fishermen - for a magical hour and a quarter, these traditional Provençal characters come to life.

### • "THE NATIVITY SCENE TRAIL"

#### PAYS DE FORCALQUIER (ALPES-DE-HAUTE-PROVENCE)

Du 25 décembre 2014 au 2 janvier 2015 + weekends au mois de janvier (jusqu'à la Chandeleur)

From 25 December 2014 to 2 January 2015 + weekends in the month of January (until Candlemas).

Tours of the nativity scenes in Cruis, Dauphin, Lardiers, Lurs, Mane, Reillanne and Vachères. All of them are beautiful, and some feature santons that are listed historic monuments! Spectacular old clothes illustrate the fashions of villagers at the end of the 18th century. Santons are staged in landscape settings that are typical of the Provençal highlands.

The nativity scenes are made by associations or private individuals. Free entry.

## TRADITIONS...

### • THE FESTIVAL OF SHEPHERDS AND TRADITION

#### ISTRES

From 20 November to 7 December 2014

Istres gets back to its roots and traditions with a line-up including the pastrage, a story-telling evening, transhumance procession, folklore show, sheepdog competitions and artisanal craft fair.

**On Sunday 7 December:** Provençal mass, artisanal craft fair and impressive transhumance procession (decorated, flower-embellished cart floats harnessed to 12 cart horses, 3,000 sheep, ewes and rams herded along by shepherds, watchmen, folk groups and tambourine players). Closing show.

### • CÉRÉMONIE DE L'AUBADE

#### BAUX-DE-PROVENCE

24 December 2014

Every 24 December, the little village of Les Baux-de-Provence marks the beginning of Christmas with a spot of music. Between 2pm and 4pm, shepherds gather in the heart of the village to usher in the Aubade (dawn serenade). Dressed in traditional garb, they sing traditional songs once sung by the troubadours of Provence to the beat of the tambourine and galoubet flute as local girls from Arles hand out little loaves of fougasse to passers-by.

### • THE MARCHÉ DES ROIS

#### AIX-EN-PROVENCE

11 January 2015

The Three Wise Men in the streets of Aix-en-Provence? A little hard to believe, maybe, but when they come with their camels, servants, shepherds, peasants, angels and various animals, it's hard not to stop and look! A festive afternoon in Aix-en-Provence, with a procession of all the traditional characters from the nativity scene. Moving from place to place, the troupe stops here and there to sing traditional Christmas carols before arriving at the Saint-Sauveur cathedral at 4 pm, where a children's choir marks the end of the Magi's Walk.

### • CHRISTMAS AT THE CHÂTEAU DE FARGUES

#### PONTET - AVIGNON

From 8 to 31 December 2014.

"La Magie Automate" (Automaton Magic) exhibition, open from Monday to Friday from 9 am to 12 pm and 2 pm to 6 pm. Exceptional opening on Sunday 14 and Sunday 21 December 2014 from 2 pm to 6 pm. **Free entry.**

### • DRÔLES DE NOËL

#### ARLES

From 20 to 24 December 2014

A real festival of street arts, this event plunges young and old alike into the magical world of Christmas. All shows are free, and the city of Arles offers town centre parking for the duration of the festival for ease of access.

## REGIONAL TOURISM BOARD

Provence-Alpes-Côte d'Azur  
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Région



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