

**ROUNDTABLE DEBATE:** The world of corporate travel management is undergoing a seismic shift. Our expert panel tackles the issues at stake

# ARABIAN Travel News

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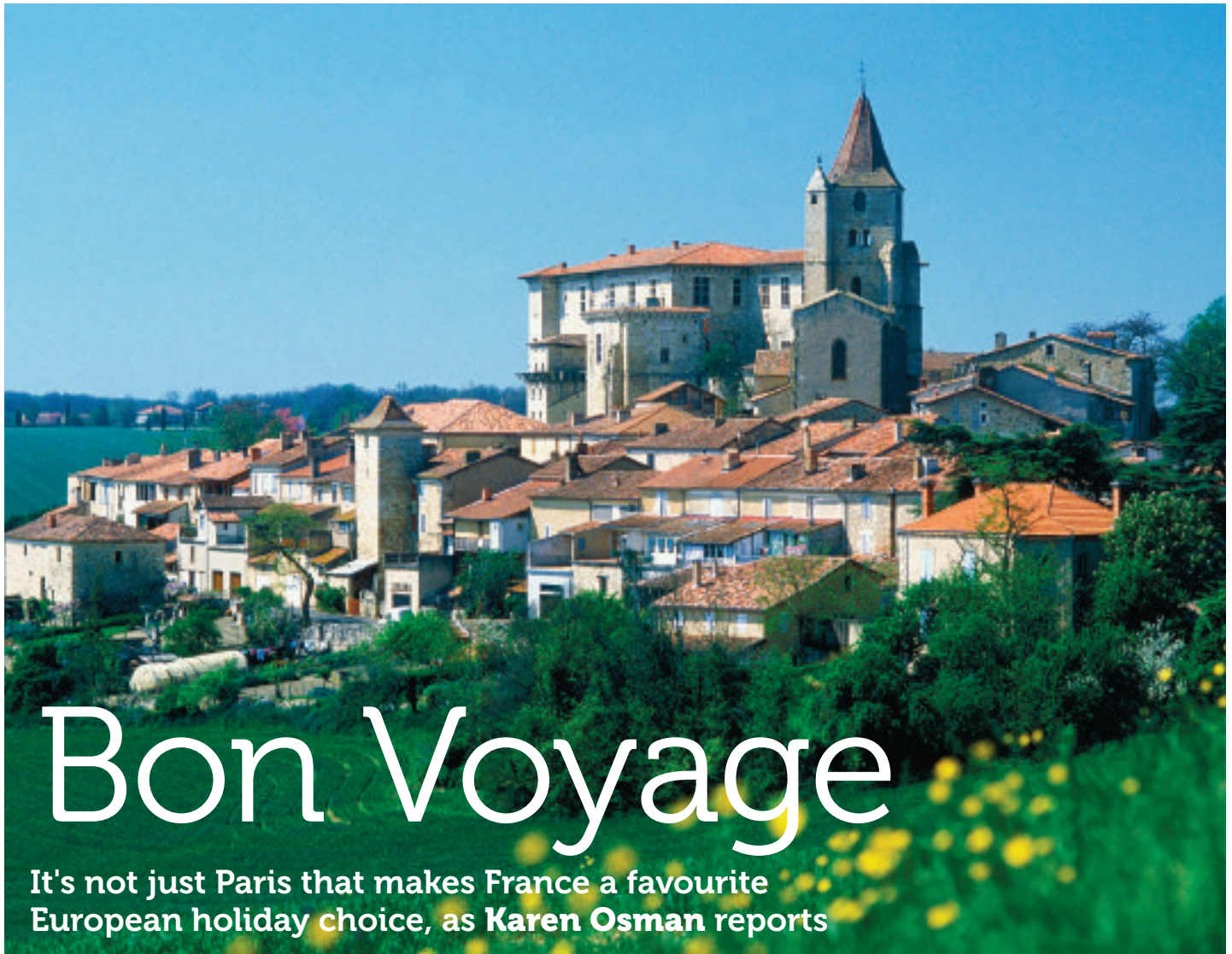
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It's time to look past Paris when selling France





## Bon Voyage

It's not just Paris that makes France a favourite European holiday choice, as Karen Osman reports

In 2012, France was placed first in the 2010 World Tourism Organisation (UNWTO) list of the top 10 most visited countries in the world. Based on the number of international tourist arrivals, 76.8 million visitors were recorded. With its history, culture, attractions and a well-founded reputation for dining, it is perhaps no surprise then, that France is already an established destination for Gulf travellers.

Attracting 833,000 travellers from the Middle East in 2010 — an increase of 14.9% on the previous year — the destination's popularity is reflected in Emirates' recent announcement in March to increase frequency to 19 flights a week to Paris (Charles de Gaulle) by the end of the year. France has been part of the Emirates network since 1992 and in addition to Paris, Nice is also served as a gateway. Air France also has daily flights to and from the region, making France easily accessible.

### From Paris with love

Paris is the first port-of-call for many tourists and an excellent starting point for any visit. The city always offers up something new to see and do, so repeat visitors will love it just as much as first-timers.

The cultural scene is one of the capital's strongest draws with events mapped out until 2020. All year round; some 300 artistic events take place in every type of cultural domain. Highlights include Paris-Plages — a summer event which sees parts of the city transformed into a seaside resort

and Paris Illumine Paris — a festive end-of-year illumination covering all the districts of the city.

The cultural year in 2012 features major exhibitions with classics such as Leonardo da Vinci, Raphael, Degas and Dali, while the Paris Photo is an established major international photo exhibition.

One of the world's style capitals, it's impossible to visit Paris and not be tempted by the huge array of stores from designer goods to bargain markets.

The major winter and summer sale periods will appeal to anyone seeking some retail therapy, and

### Top tip

14 museums in Paris are free. The first Sunday of each month sees many museums open their doors for free.

**"Marseille is the oldest city in France with more than 2,240 historical sites and monuments, 15,000 kilometres of hiking trails and 57 kilometres of coastline. Events, concerts and exhibitions take place year-round"**



# HOW TO SELL

**How to get there:**

Air France, Etihad Airways, Qatar Airways and Emirates Airline all have daily flights to Paris with Emirates also flying to Nice.

**When to go:**

France is a year-round destination. While the country is generally cold in winter and warm in summer, mild winters and hot summers are the norm in the South West of France. It's best to avoid the summer tourist season of July and August and aim for the spring and autumn months of April to June and September to October. The skiing season usually runs from December to April.



**Food and Culture:**

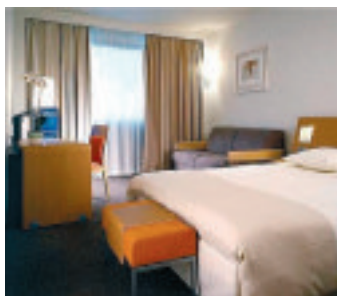
Paris is a multi-cultural city and it's not too difficult to find halal food on sale, especially around key places of interest. French people are passionate about food and dining with some of the world's top chefs being French.

**Visas:**

VFS Global is the outsourced partner appointed by the Consulate General of France, Dubai to facilitate visa applications to France and to Schengen countries. Visit Joint Visa Application Centre, Showroom No. 2, Ground Floor, Jumeirah Palm Residence (next to Capital Hotel and Dubai Bank, Al Mina Road, Al Hudaiba, Dubai.) Submission timings are between 9.00 am to 3.00 pm with collection times between 3.00 pm and 5.00 pm. Visit [www.vfsglobal-fr-ae.com](http://www.vfsglobal-fr-ae.com) for the latest information and application requirements.



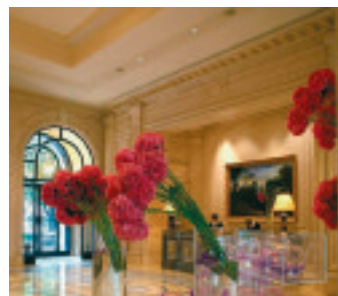
## WHERE TO STAY



**HOTEL NOVOTEL PARIS TOUR EIFFEL**

Located right on the banks of the Seine and just 10 minutes' walk from the Eiffel Tower, Hotel Novotel Paris Tour Eiffel is an ideal location to explore the capital. With 764 spacious rooms including family rooms and leisure facilities including a well-being centre made up of an indoor heated pool, sauna and fitness centre, the hotel acts a practical and comfortable base, complemented by its restaurants and 24-hour room service.

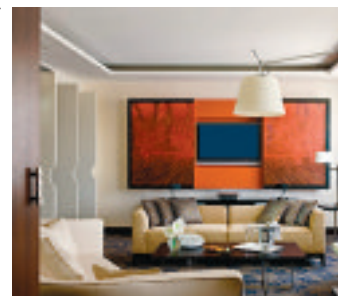
[www.novotel.com](http://www.novotel.com)



**FOUR SEASONS HOTEL GEORGE V**

Just off the Champs-Élysées stands an eight-storey landmark built in 1928. Many of the 244 luxurious guest rooms and suites feature private terraces overlooking the city. The historical design, inspired by Louis XVI period, is elegant and comfortable. Restored 18<sup>th</sup> Century tapestries add to the hotel's charm. With a 24-hour concierge on hand to help plan your visit, the Four Seasons Hotel George V is the epitome of an upscale vacation.

[www.fourseasons.com/paris](http://www.fourseasons.com/paris)



**SOFITEL MARSEILLE VIEUX PORT**

This luxurious 134-room and suite hotel is known as the 'best address' in Marseille thanks to its unique views overlooking the old port. Positioned in the centre of the city, the rooms are light and spacious with a marine-inspired décor and 24 rooms with balconies. The spa is the ideal place to revive after a day spent exploring with a hammam, jacuzzi, pool and a fitness centre all part of the offering.

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

# HOW TO SELL

## Paris in numbers

- 17,500 shops
- 72 days of sales per year
- 25,000 artists working and living in the city
- 36,000 works exhibited at the Louvre
- Nine million visitors in 2011
- 10,100 tonnes of steel is used for the Eiffel Tower

## Paris top tips for 2012:

- Visit the Eiffel Tower at night and experience the landmark in all its glory. [www.new-paris-ile-de-france.co.uk](http://www.new-paris-ile-de-france.co.uk)
- Stroll the banks of the Seine and visit the 'Bridge of Locks' where couples have placed their own lock to the bridge as a symbol of their love. [www.bonjourparis.com](http://www.bonjourparis.com)
- Visit the Musee d'Orsay for one of the largest collections of Impressionist paintings in the world including Millet, van Gogh, Renoir, Millet and more. [www.musee-orsay.fr](http://www.musee-orsay.fr)

## Marseille in numbers

- 300 days of sunshine a year
- 2,600 years of cosmopolitan history
- 2,240 historical sites and monuments
- 15,000 kilometres of hiking trails
- 57 kilometres of coastline

## Marseille top tips for 2012:

- Pointe Rouge Beach, the largest of Marseille's sandy beaches is ideal for families and adjoins the port of the same name. [www.marseille-tourisme.com](http://www.marseille-tourisme.com)
- Young people will enjoy the MAC – Contemporary Art Museum which features art from the 1960s to present day including artists such as Arman, Gilles Barbier and more. [www.marseille.fr](http://www.marseille.fr)
- The Bastide des Bains is a hammam located in an old printing house, close to the Vieux Port and ideal for those looking to relax. [www.bastide-des-bains.com](http://www.bastide-des-bains.com)



France is known for being a shoppers' paradise, with 72 days of sales per year. Shoppers can complement the retail therapy with lunch in one of the many quaint cafes.

Sunday has become synonymous with shopping thanks to the opening of shops in seven tourist areas including Montmartre and the Marais or Champs-Élysées. While for sport fanatics, the Tour de France, Paris Marathon and The French Open Tennis Championship are the major draws.

For families, children will forever cherish memories of a trip to Disneyland Paris, which is celebrating its 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary this year. A number of new rides including Mission 2, Buzz Lightyear Laser Blast and Captain EO have opened along with a new parade and evening show

Located just outside of the city centre, Disneyland Paris features seven hotels as part of the entertainment complex, and visitors can easily spend several days in this magical environment. The attraction welcomed its 250 millionth visitor last year. Frans Leenaars, vice president of sales and distribution for Disneyland Paris says travel agents should take advantage of 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebrations: "Agencies that familiarise themselves with Disneyland

Paris and all of the entertainment offerings can successfully incorporate the celebration into their marketing plans and leverage their clients' enthusiasm for the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary to increase their sales."

Agents can enroll in the Disney Stars programme — an online correspondence course that teaches agents about the entire DLP vacation portfolio. The programme helps agents improve their selling skills and increase sales commission potential by familiarising them with the resort's seven hotels, two theme parks, dining, retail, entertainment areas, and the latest booking procedures and vacation packages from Disneyland Paris. This year, the Disney Stars programme launched 'The Virtual Sell Programme', a new award-winning, interactive game that engages travel agents while expanding their sales skills and knowledge of Disneyland Paris. Agents who successfully complete this platform will have the opportunity to win prizes, including a luxury holiday at Disneyland Paris.

**Top Tip**  
Enroll in the Disney Stars programme for tips on how to sell Disneyland Paris

## Marseille, a cultural capital

While Paris is no doubt the most popular destination in France, the French tourism development agency Atout France is taking a proactive approach to highlighting other regions in France that Middle Eastern travellers can easily explore.

One such example is Marseille in Provence which has been appointed 'European Capital of Culture' 2013.

Marseille's popularity has grown significantly over the last 10 years mainly thanks to the development of the airport. There are now 173 destinations with direct flights.

For Middle East travellers, flights by Air France from Paris are daily and the TGV train takes just three hours with regular connections. Growing popularity of the destination is reflected in hotel development. There are currently 6,700 hotels in Marseille ranging from five-star luxury with the world's biggest hotel groups such as Accor, Radisson Blu and Concorde to small family-run inns. The InterContinental Marseille opens in 2013.

In preparation for next year, Marseille's tourism authority is already hard at work communicating its



▲ Paris is the cosmopolitan capital of France and has been dubbed one of the world's most beautiful and romantic cities. Around 2.2 million people live in the dense central city area, and more than 12 million in the metropolitan.



▲ The Louvre in Paris is one of the world's largest museums and is also said to be one of the globe's most visited.

programme of more than 400 events in order to achieve its target of an additional two million tourists to its current annual 10 million visitors a year.

Marseille is the oldest city in France with more than 2,240 historical sites and monuments, 15,000 kilometres of hiking trails and 57 kilometres of coastline. Throughout the year, a series of events, concerts and exhibitions will take place all

dedicated to the culture of Marseille. From air shows to fire displays and art exhibitions to cooking festivals, the European Capital will showcase the best of the region 350 days of the year (visit [www.mp2013.fr](http://www.mp2013.fr) for the full programme).

### Supporting the industry

In a bid to support the travel trade, Atout France has taken the initiative

to launch a digital platform to create a community of travel professionals. The online platform is broken down into four areas; a website ([www.rendezvousfrance.com](http://www.rendezvousfrance.com)), a collaborative platform which collects content provided by partner tourism professionals before publishing it on the website; a Hexatourisme, which provides specific responses to online visitor requests as well as suggesting destinations, accommodation and activities linked to their request and finally a Customer Relationship Management (CRM) system which is used to help deliver relevant content to customers.

The overall aim is to generate loyalty and increase market share.

Speaking at the 'Rendez Vous En France' exhibition last month, Jean-Pierre Blat, director of Comité Régional du Tourisme Paris-Ile de France commented: "56% of products or services bought online revolve around tourism\*.

"The offer supply is fundamental

and France will lose market share if we do not implement this digital strategy," he added.

Another bonus for travel agents is that all the latest offers, updates and information from every region is in one central online location for both travel trade and visitors alike.

Marc Béchet, Director of Rhône-Alpes Tourisme reported: "Previously, each region was doing its own thing. With the new platform, everything is in one place, making it much easier for our partners."

With online sales in the tourism sector amounting to 10.7 billion euros (\$14 billion); and a third of all French tourism sales made on the internet, the digital platform is a strategic move to position France even more competitively in the market.

The Middle East market will also be able to benefit as one of the regions for the website as well as plans for an Arabic version.

For more information, visit [www.rendezvousenfrance.com](http://www.rendezvousenfrance.com) 