

Montpellier

STYLE city

BREEZY, FRESH AND STYLISH, **MONTPELLIER** HAS BECOME A TOP DESTINATION FOR FASHIONABLE LIVING. WITH ITS MEDITERRANEAN CLIMATE, INVITING STREETSCAPES AND EASE OF GETTING AROUND, IT'S EASY TO SEE WHY.
BY **RUBY BOUKABOU**

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Keen to know more about the city's impressive architecture? Our English-language architecture app includes three suggested architecture itineraries, commentary and interviews with architects. www.ot-montpellier.fr/en/app-contemporary-montpellier



Above: The RBC Design Centre, designed by Jean Nouvel, is the ultimate design concept store (photo: © Marie Caroline Lucat).

Right: Montpellier is France's fastest growing city and students make up nearly a quarter of the population (photo: KFH-Beatriz Azorin).



entrees; confit de canard or pan fried salmon mains and dizzying desserts like the famous mille feuilles.

Inspired to try a bit of cooking yourself? With the current global cooking craze, book in for some tips on classic French and regional dishes by Montpellier's top chefs at Atelier de Valérie (www.atelier-valerie.com) or Jardin des Sens (www.jardindessens.com/en/a-cookery-lesson-invitation-29.html).

TAKE TO THE SHOPS

Montpellier's centre is also a haven for boutiques and bars housed in gorgeous medieval and renaissance buildings. You'll find all the big labels as well as a diverse range of jewellery shops, design galleries, trendy second-hand shops and fine wine and food stores. If shopping on Tuesday or Saturday morning, dip down to the local market beneath the Arceaux aqueduct for fresh fruit, flowers and fine local produce.

With all this walking, pedalling and shopping, you would have built up a thirst. All the better, as Montpellier's historic centre is brimming with new restaurants and wine bars. Spanish, French and Italian wines are on the menu, but make sure to try a local Gres de Montpellier. Other drops from the region include Coteaux du Languedoc, St Chinian and Pic St Loup.

EVENT HIGHLIGHTS FOR 2013

- **Festival Radio France et Montpellier Languedoc-Roussillon, July 11 – 25**
An eclectic and original musical festival featuring more than 200 events. With a focus on classical, the festival now spans opera, jazz and electronic music, along with talks, master classes and more – many of them free.
- **Festival Radio France Signac: The Colours of Water, July 13- October 27**
Water, sky and light exploration by Neo-Impressionist Paul Signac (1863-1935), at the Musée Fabre. Works include oils, watercolour and ink wash.
- **Les Estivales, June – September**
Every Friday night rom 6pm to 11:30pm at the Place de la Comédie, enjoy local wines, international foods, concerts, street shows and a night market. For details, visit the tourism office website and go to the annual 'events' or 'what's on' sections. ■

» FURTHER INFORMATION

Office de Tourisme de Montpellier
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www.resamontpellier.com

Day or night, Place de la Comédie is a hub of energy in the city's centre (photo: © Anatome/Marc Ginot).

As France's eighth-largest city, Montpellier is urban, historic and intimate all at once. It's a pleasure to navigate by public transport, with chic city trams sporting sleek interiors designed by the likes of fashion icon Christian Lacroix.

It's also a great city to explore by bike, with over 50 public rental bike stations around town. Get into the spirit of the Tour de France and try the new bike path along the Lez River and vineyards to the beach. And if your dates can coincide, visit in early July to catch the cyclists on their stop between the Alps and the Pyrénées.

NEW IN TOWN

Want to be up with the latest in town? Just opened in June 2013 is La Panacée (www.montpellier.fr/3215-panacee-centre-art-contemporain.htm), a contemporary art and culture hub with gallery spaces, gardens, cafés, restaurants, and artist workshops.

Lunch at the hotelier school, Lycée Georges Frêche (www.lyceehoteliergeorgesfreche.fr), set within an impressively designed structure by architect Massimiliano Fuksas. The school recently opened its restaurants to the public. The menu varies, but you can expect French cuisine classics such as salads or saucy mushroom