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17 Towns in France That Feel Straight Out of a Storybook

From wine country to the Alps (and everywhere in between), these are the most beautiful small towns in France.

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If you're itching to see more than just dazzling Paris or bustling Marseilles on your next visit to Europe, head to the most beautiful small towns in France. Scattered throughout the French countryside, these charming villages, slow-paced communes, and historical petites villes offer local cuisines, experiences, and hospitality. Many of them are hilltop towns in the South of France, with origins that go back to the medieval period, when locals moved uphill to escape pirate raids and mosquito-borne diseases, which were prevalent in humid lowlands. Some are found along striking coastal landscapes like the French Riviera in the south and the Granite Coast in the north (keep an eye out for the [best beaches in France](#)). And others are situated among the [exciting slopes of the French Alps](#) or the [best wine regions in France](#).

This list includes only small towns in France with a population of less than 10,000 people; and some are part of [Le Plus Beaux Villages de France](#), an association of—literally translated—the most beautiful villages of France. From Chamonix to Saint-Paul-de-Vence, here are 17 of the prettiest and most charming small towns in France.

This gallery has been updated since its original publish date.



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Saint-Paul-de-Vence, Provence-Alpes-Côte d'Azur

Population: 3,190

Despite its small size, this Provençal town has hosted many famous visitors and residents, like French icons like Jean-Paul Sartre and Pablo Picasso, who stayed at [La Colombe d'Or](#); and the legendary American writer James Baldwin, who had a home here (it has since been razed over, unfortunately). These days is home to many museums and galleries of modern art, like the [Fondation Maeght](#). Saint-Paul-de-Vence is just 30 minutes away by car from Nice Côte d'Azur Airport, making it an easy two-night stop on any French Riviera itinerary, between bustling [Nice](#) and glamorous [Cannes](#).

Stay here: With a name that literally means “white cloth,” [Toile Blanche](#) promises that exact vibe: fresh, crisp, and comfortable. Though the property has been around since 2004, it was beautifully reimaged in 2022 by the owners: Gilles, Gregory, and Nicolas Leroy—all brothers who are celebrated contemporary artists. The hotel's 22 rooms (some with their own private plunge pools) are exquisitely decorated; the property's design-forward style is evident too in the dedicated art space and gallery. For the 2025 season, the hotel is adding five suites, extending their art space, and unveiling an additional third pool.

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