



# INDEPENDENT

## This French Riviera town is perfect for an art-filled getaway



When Pierre Bonnard first came to the **French Riviera** in 1904, he was just one of the countless artists who travelled southward seeking the unique light of **France's** famous coast.

“Take your painting to Paris,” he said, “and the blues become grey. In the light of the French south, everything is illuminated, and painting reaches the peak of its vibration.”

I was in search of this light in Saint-Paul-de-Vence, a charming medieval town that's been inspiring artists for over 100 years. André Derain painted here, Marc Chagall lived here; plenty more drank here.

As my guides are keen to tell me, the art scene in Saint-Paul-de-Vence is thriving today. They should know: they are the Leroy brothers – artists themselves, and owners of **Toile Blanche**, a beautiful boutique **hotel** in the hills that's a five minute drive from the town.

The three Belgians started the hotel in 2004 when it was just a three-bedroomed B&B. Now, it boasts 22 luxury suites and a villa, but what makes Toile Blanche special is its private collection, from paintings on the walls of the rooms to sculptures dotted all over the grounds. Many are sourced from galleries in Saint-Paul.

Guests can explore Toile Blanche Contemporary, an on-site exhibition space, so you don't even need to leave the hotel to have an art-filled holiday if you don't feel like it.



The Toile Blanche hotel is dotted with artworks, many borrowed from the town's galleries (*Henry Roberts*)

There are several works by the artist Raymond Leroy, the brothers' grandfather, which reminds guests that, for the Leroys, creativity has long been in the family.

To experience that creativity, visiting during the cooler months is probably ideal. Back when the French coast was becoming a hotspot for rich tourists in the early 20th century, it was largely empty during the summer.

British travellers were advised to leave in April, so as to not miss the "season" back home. Nowadays, travellers would do well to avoid the crowds and the heat of the height of summer.

So if you're happy simply wandering from gallery to gallery, taking in the views of the sea, and enjoying an aperitif in the gentle evening heat, take a trip to Saint-Paul-de-Vence in the spring.

## Where to stay

Room rates at **Toile Blanche** start from £175 and include breakfast.

Adults only, children upon request.

[BOOK NOW](#) 

*Henry was a guest of Toile Blanche.*