

*explore*

WINING & DINING IN  
**Southern France's  
Languedoc Region**





*Pastries, crepes, French onion soup, coq au vin, crusty baguettes, and an overall cuisine reliant on flour-filled roux are a few of the reasons I'd held off on visiting France. Fears over my lack of French translating into cross-contamination or imagining French cooks becoming reluctant or hostile when asked to alter beloved classic recipes to be gluten-free only heightened my anxiety.*

*However, when I was invited on a trip to Southern France to learn about the sustainable and eco-friendly process and practices of biodynamic winemaking in the Gérard Bertrand vineyards in Narbonne, it was too good an opportunity to pass up. Bertrand, who reminds me a bit of a French Richard Branson type, is a champion of biodynamic winemaking, which takes it even further than organic, considering things like the phase of the moon and calculated uses of herbs to combat pests and weather. As of January 2019, all 15 of his wine estates are using biodynamic techniques in the vineyards.*

*Narbonne is in the **Languedoc-Roussillon region** of France, a historic stretch of coastline that runs along the Mediterranean, from Provence (just outside the French Riviera) down to the Pyrenees in Spain. It's one of the world's largest wine regions, and the largest in France, accounting for over one-third of the wine produced in the whole country and over 40 percent of its exports.*

*In short, if you're looking for a delicious, gluten-free wine getaway, the Languedoc is your spot.*







**Want to taste Gérard Bertrand's biodynamic wines?  
Here's what to sip – with or without the trip!**

**Château la Sauvageonne Grand Vin Blanc** Floral notes with hints of summer fruit, plus slight accents of tobacco and gingerbread. Grenache blanc, Vermentino, and Viognier. Pairs well with shellfish and grilled fresh fish.

**Domaine de Cigalus Red** A velvety red with dark fruit aromas and aged in French oak barrels for 12 months. Cabernet Sauvignon, cabernet franc, merlot, Syrah, Grenache, and caladoc. Pairs well with roasted red meat and cheese.

**Ballerine** Pale rosé with a light bubble that's easy and enjoyable to drink. Chardonnay, Chenin, and Pinot Noir. Pairs well with sunsets and seafood.

## GETTING THERE

The Languedoc's main airport is Montpellier (MPL). There are no nonstop flights from the United States, making it easy to tack on a few extra days on either side of your likely layover in London or Paris. For a literal change of scenery (if you have time) I suggest taking the fast, four-hour train from Paris to Narbonne, soaking in romantic views of the countryside through the windows.

## WHERE TO STAY

**Château l'Hospitalet**, Narbonne

Originally dating back to the 1300s, Château l'Hospitalet has always had a history of housing travelers. In 2016, the 38-room property was renovated and opened as a simple but smart hotel. Surrounded by more than 200 acres of organic vineyards and with the Mediterranean Sea just yonder, it's that picturesque French countryside escape from your daydreams.

Rooms are modern with free Wi-Fi, bathrooms sporting luxe L'Occitane products, and minibars with free bottled water and welcome Gérard Bertrand wine. The 3-star property hosts live jazz nights and packs a punch with on-property features like a small gym, chic pool, putting green, tennis courts, a Michelin-rated restaurant, and tasting room where guests can taste their way through Bertrand's 14 different estates and learn more about organic and biodynamic wine practices.



### Stopping in Paris?

#### Here's where to find 100% gluten-free goodies:

- **Biosphère Café**, in the 8<sup>th</sup> arrondissement, makes delicious crepes, galettes, and baked goods. Baguettes must be ordered a day in advance and reservations are recommended for brunch.
- **Bears & Raccoons** can't be beat for quick and addictively delicious sandwiches, and if you're staying in the 11<sup>th</sup> arrondissement, they deliver.
- **Noglu** has become a must-stop for celiacs, though it has a limited menu. There are a few locations in town but heading to their Passage des Panoramas location will also get you daytime access to their bakery.
- **Chambelland**, though expensive, always seems to have a line out the door. This bakery mills its own flour and offers up a hearty selection of sweet and savory items behind the counter.
- **Helmut Newcake**, in the 1st and 9th arrondissements, is a go-to for decadent pastries, croissants, and sandwiches.
- **Yummy & Guilfree**, in the 14<sup>th</sup> arrondissement and at **Gare de Lyon**, offers thick dessert waffles.
- Others that aren't 100 percent gluten-free, but that I found safe to eat at, include the ubiquitous, be-all-end-all macaron shop **Ladurée**, a Michelin-recommended Italian dinner spot called **Baffo**, and **Côté Sushi**, a Japanese-Peruvian casual chain with several locations around the city.



### WHERE TO EAT & DRINK

Food in the Languedoc is less of the rich, roux-filled French favorites you'll find in places like Paris, and more Mediterranean. Incredibly fresh seafood, simple preparations, crisp vegetables, and fresh herbs may grace plates, and are, of course, accompanied by stellar French wines.

Great food and wine start right at Château l'Hospitalet with a modern take on Mediterranean at **l'Art de Vivre**. Seasonal menus showcase seafood like sea bass and eel, classic French proteins like rabbit and pigeon, and fresh, local vegetables and herbs. I recommend booking into the five- or seven-course tasting menu (which can be made gluten-free), and enjoying it on the terrace, beneath the stars.

Driving 15 minutes into town opens unexpected options, like **Bio c' Bon** health food store loaded with gluten-free goodies, and **Kioskasie**, a Chinese restaurant and shop with gluten-free-marked buffet items. The **Les Halles** food market has loads of vendors peddling everything from incredible cheeses and meats to fresh fish and seasonal produce. Keep your reflexes sharp as you pass **Chez Bebelles**, a butchery café famous for tossing meat to its customers from behind the counter. If steak tartare is your thing, the mammoth portion here can't be missed.

**Les Mille Poètes** is a casual, healthy, organic French café with clearly marked raw, vegetarian, vegan, and gluten-free options, and a sweet owner named Nathalie. Safely stuff yourself full of salads, cheeses, savory and sweet crepes, and take a few pastries for the road.


Seafood lovers looking for a most memorable meal should hightail it over to **La Cambuse du Saunier** in nearby Gruissan. Nosh on salt-baked fish, clam cassoulette, sautéed seafood medleys, and decadent seafood towers with oysters, mussels, sea snails, and shrimp – all served overlooking a gorgeous pink salt marsh.

Inside the walled medieval city of Carcassonne, **Comte Roger** serves up an excellent traditional cassoulet and provides a list of all allergens in their dishes, while the 100 percent vegetarian and gluten-free **Café Robert** can be found outside the walls in town.



## WHAT TO DO

Hone your winetasting skills and whet your palette at Château l'Hospitalet, and then join a wine tour to visit some of the other wineries in the region. If your tour doesn't include a visit to **Saint-Hilaire Abbey**, the 13<sup>th</sup>-century Benedictine monastery where sparkling wine, Limoux, was first invented, go yourself. It's a self-guided tour through the property and you can purchase some bubbly Limoux for later.

Live out your fairytale fantasy with a day trip inside the medieval walls of **Carcassonne**, where endless cobblestones, candy stores, barrels of souvenirs, and delicious cassoulet await. Foodies should consider a walking tour of **Le Salin de Gruissan**. The pink salt marsh makes for out-of-this-world pictures, and you'll get your hands on some of this precious salt rock to take home. For those with an adventurous streak, wild horseback riding in the **La Narbonnaise National Park** is a unique experience, or for city folk, there's always the option for a day trip to check out the art, architecture, and streets of Montpellier. 



### ABOUT THE AUTHOR:

**Katherine Alex Beaven** is a travel and food writer and photographer. Whether on assignment or on vacation, Alex can usually be found at the nearest food cart or restaurant sniffing out the local gluten free goodies. Her photography site, [katherinealex.com](http://katherinealex.com), features some of the wildlife, landscapes, and portraits she's photographed along the way.

# You can safely dine GLUTEN FREE in Italy



This guide to gluten free dining in Italy includes dozens of restaurant recommendations near major sites in Rome, Florence, and Venice.

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