

Press kit

Press Office

Valence Romans Sud Rhône-Alpes Tourist Office

Here is where the Midi begins

Valence, the strategic capital of the Drôme département, is the gateway to the South of France. Situated where the Vercors Mountains meet the Ardèche, on the banks of the mighty River Rhône, Valence and its surrounding area reflect a certain lifestyle, a way of life on a human scale.

With a population of 70,000 inhabitants and a conurbation of 210,000 inhabitants, Valence has held on to all the charm and unspoilt character typical of the historical towns and cities of the South of France. Its colourful markets, parks and gardens, characterful shady terraces and welcoming pedestrianised streets have a distinctly Provençal feel about them. In ancient times a Roman city, Valence boasts a host of sights that prove a draw to visitors: a highly original historical and architectural heritage, awarded 'Ville d'Art et d'Histoire' certification in 1985; a rich and varied gastronomic reputation combining big names in French cuisine with mouthwatering culinary specialities; an active cultural and sporting scene which animates the whole area all year long.

Today, Valence is the beating heart of an urban community that draws on a wealth of riches from the surrounding countryside.

Here, curiosity is an asset

AN ARCHITECTURAL HERITAGE THAT REFLECTS A VIBRANT HISTORY

Valence's fascinating history is laid out for all to see in the streets and historical centre, which is crammed with architectural treasures. The host of monuments in the heart of the pedestrianised district that survive to this day reflect the different eras and key chapters in the city's development.

The Kiosque Peynet: The best-loved of all the city's monuments is still the Kiosque Peynet, a splendid bandstand built by Eugène Poitoux in 1890 and made world-famous by a romantic story. On a summer's evening in 1942, the illustrator Raymond Peynet, who was staying in Valence at the time, drew a cartoon of two young lovers – a violinist and his sweetheart – which became known as 'les amoureux de Peynet'. Standing in the middle of the city centre, overlooking Valence's biggest park, the Kiosque Peynet has become a symbol of French romantic love.

The Maison des Têtes: The Maison des Têtes was built in Valence in the early 16th century. The property of a university professor who was also consul of Valence, this building owes its name to the many carved heads decorating its façade, representing emblematic figures such as the Winds, Fortune, Law, Theology and Medicine. The way to the Renaissance-style internal courtyard is through a corridor lined with busts of Roman emperors.

The Pendentif: One of the city's first buildings to be listed as a historical monument, the Pendentif is so called because of its unusual architectural design: its arch contains a cupola on pendentives. Constructed in the cathedral cloister in 1548, this building has served a number of functions over the years. Initially built as a funerary monument, it is also thought to have once been a bar and even a cesspit before becoming part of the city's historical heritage.

The steep streets: Valence, a Roman city, was built on a series of levels, the 'terraces' that give the city its terraced appearance. All over the city, steep cobbled streets connect the different quarters, from the banks of the Rhône up to Valence-le-Haut.

Cathédrale Saint Apollinaire: The cathedral, one of Valence's most ancient monuments, was consecrated on 5 August 1095 by the Pope while he was on his way to preach the First Crusade. Since then the cathedral has undergone many transformations, particularly during its reconstruction in the early 17th century following the Wars of Religion. A staging post on the pilgrimage route, it has an ambulatory for accommodating travellers. In the middle of the cathedral stands a bust of Pope Pius VI, a historical figure who was taken prisoner in Valence during his flight from Rome, which had been taken over by the Directory. It contains his entrails and heart in commemoration of this episode from history.

Eglise Saint Jean: On the corner of Place Saint-Jean with its distinctive market canopies is the Eglise Saint Jean. This quarter is one of the city's oldest parishes. Rebuilt on several occasions, this monument has a number of features that make it worth the detour: a fine 19th century neo-Romanesque belfry which dominates the square, and above all the eight distinctive carved Romanesque capitals at its bottom.

CULTURAL DIVERSITY

The thriving Valence conurbation is a key centre of the region's cultural and recreational life. A diverse cultural heritage has grown up in this culturally vibrant city.

The Armenian Heritage Centre: The only interpretation centre of its kind in the Rhône-Alpes region, the Centre du Patrimoine Arménien (CPA) takes an original look at the history of peoples and cultures. The Centre explains an important episode in Valence's history when thousands of Armenians fled their homeland for Valence during the Armenian genocide. The CPA takes up the history of this city at the crossroads of major trade and migration routes in its examination of the society of which we are part and in the light of civilisations that have come and gone. The Centre is home to a permanent exhibition about the history of Valence's Armenian population as well as temporary exhibitions and events reflecting international current affairs

www.patrimoinearmenien.org

The Musée de Valence, Art et Archéologie: Reopened in December 2013 following a major refurbishment, the Musée de Valence now boasts a new layout of Fine Arts and Archaeology exhibits. With more than 20,000 works on show, the museum provides a varied and fascinating insight into the history of mankind and civilisations through the ages. From the rooftop viewing room, the Musée de Valence also gives visitors an uninterrupted 360° view of the Rhône Valley and Vercors Mountains. With temporary exhibitions complementing the permanent displays, the museum includes a number of works never previously shown in public in France (including a temporary exhibition of works by Gainsborough and Turner in summer 2014 and an exhibition featuring local artist Bernard Cathelin in winter 2014). The building is also home to a documentation centre containing more than 10,000 works on art and archaeology.

www.museedevalence.fr/

Comédie de Valence: Home to the Centre Dramatique National de Drôme-Ardèche, the Comédie de Valence arts centre boasts a rich and varied mix of cultural offerings every year. Each season a new group of artists-in-residence is tasked with putting on a series of shows, and the Comédie de Valence's cultural season also includes a number of top shows touring nationally and internationally. One of its leading functions is to organise events outside the theatre which benefit the community at large, and it regularly performs shows in hospitals, schools, prisons and elsewhere.

www.comedievalence.com

Film, a key part of the city's cultural life: Film has a special place in Valence's consciousness, embodied by the Lux, also known as the Scène Nationale de Valence, whose offering is centred on film, which forms the framework of its arts programme. Here, film is combined with other disciplines that foster and complement the 7th Art, and every year, the Lux organises a festival of cinematographic art known as (é)mergences. In the city centre there are two other major cinemas: the Navire, a 'Recherche et Découverte'-certified experimental arts cinema showing subtitled foreign films, and the Pathé Cinema (run by the famous French Gaumont-Pathé company). With 12 screens, alongside its mainstream programme the Pathé also hosts a variety of themed cultural events such as children's days and broadcasts of Bolshoi ballet performances from Moscow.

www.lux-valence.com

www.lenavire.fr

Musée de Madagascar: Situated in the neighbouring *commune* of Montélier, the Musée de Madagascar features 700m² of exhibition space dedicated to the island in the Indian Ocean. Covering Madagascar's rich traditions and past, the objects and works on show provide a fascinating insight into life on the island.

www.museedemadagascar.com

The Jardin aux Oiseaux: The Jardin aux Oiseaux zoological and botanical park is home to

nearly a thousand birds of 215 different species. Every season the Jardin puts on two shows featuring birds flying in complete liberty.

www.jardin-aux-oiseaux.com

Other places of interest in Valence and beyond:

Spotlight on: the Cartoucherie, a competitive cluster dedicated to the animated image. Situated in the Bourg-Lès-Valence area, the Cartoucherie is home to:

- 'La Poudrière' European School of Animation
- The 'Folimage' production studio
- 'L'Equipée', a promotion and distribution association
- 'Les Films du Nord', which produces animated short films by auteur film-makers
- TeamTO, an independent studio that makes innovative TV series and films
- Les Tanukis, a studio that creates cross-media content
- La Commission du Film Drôme-Ardèche, which was set up to encourage filming in southern Rhône-Alpes
- Fargo, a company active in audiovisual creation, institutional production and animated films
- Les Ecrans, an association of independent cinemas in the south of the Rhône-Alpes region
- Toondra, a VOD website dedicated exclusively to animated short films.

Here, there are lots of fun things to do:

- With so many organised events going on locally, Valence and the surrounding area have plenty to offer throughout the year when it comes to cultural, sporting, historical and heritage events that bring together locals and visitors.
- Every season brings its own fantastic events, some new and others firm favourites, which are first and foremost a great way of appreciating the wealth of cultural interest in the Valence area. Here are the main events held throughout the year in Valence and the surrounding area:
 - **January to March**
 - **Festival (é)mergences:** Organised by the Lux arts centre, this cultural event takes a look at changing practices arising from the new technologies.
 - **Motocross international:** Held on the third weekend in February every year for the last 10 years, this international motocross competition attracts the world's top riders.
 - **Festival rencontre entre les mondes:** Every spring for 10 years, the town of Chabeuil has hosted this cross-discipline celebration of music, circus arts, theatre and dance over a three-day festival.
 - **Festival d'un jour:** Valence and surrounding area: Organised by the Equipée association, the 'One-Day Festival' actually lasts for six days, during which more than 130 animated short and feature films are shown free of charge to audiences in nearly 12 cinemas in Drôme and Ardèche. The festival has been going for 20 years and attracts an average audience of nearly 10,000.
 - **April, May and June**
 - **Valence fête le printemps:** Every year, crowds of locals get together to celebrate the arrival of spring through nature-based activities (mini-farm in the city, farmers' and plant market, demonstrations of skilled craft professions, etc.).
 - **Boulevard de Chines:** Boulevard de Chines is an outdoor antiques market held once a year right in the heart of Valence. The event brings together amateur and professional flea market traders, antiques dealers and designers offering some very unusual and original objects for sale...
 - **Fête des Canaux:** Every year the city's canal heritage is celebrated in the Fête des Canaux, an exciting event packed with guided tours, boat trips for children, exhibitions, workshops, events and more, showing another side to Valence's unique heritage.
 - **Springshop:** A craft market featuring some forty exhibitors, Springshop is organised by the Mouchettes association, whose main aim is to promote and remind people of the value of hand-made and home-made goods. The event has taken over the Halles Saint-Jean market hall every year for the last four years – and the locals love it!

- **July, August and September**

- **Spotlight on: the Festival de Valence:** The Festival de Valence is a month of free concerts performed for locals and visitors by national and international artistes. Over the years this event has become an unmissable part of summer in Valence, as shown by audience figures that have grown steadily and now total nearly 45,000 every year.
- **Bonaparte à Valence:** For 9 years now the Bonaparte Association has organised this three-day re-enactment event harking back to the Napoleonic era. With historical costumes, shooting events, camps and concerts, Bonaparte à Valence brings to life one of Valence's greatest historical figures.

Cinéfil: Cinéfil is a travelling summer festival of open-air concerts and film shorts that has been going for 8 years and takes place in several *communes* adjoining the River Rhône, including Valence.

- **Les Fêtes du Rhône:** Les Fêtes du Rhône is held in Bourg-Lès-Valence over two days, when visitors and locals can come to watch jousting competitions, float processions, street parades and more...

L'été côté cour: For one month, concerts and film-showings are held every Tuesday evening in the courtyard of the Armenian Heritage Centre. In intimate surroundings, the event is a great way to discover different musical cultures and 'migrant' music through a variety of themes ('From Italy to Argentina' in 2014 and 'Exile' in 2013). This important cultural event has been going for 4 years and on average attracts audiences of between 500 and 600 for all of the shows.

Chabeuil ouvre les portes du temps: 'Chabeuil ouvre les portes du temps' is a biennial medieval festival held in Chabeuil just outside Valence that gives spectators the chance to experience city life in the Middle Ages. Through various events and demonstrations, locals and visitors hear stories about what went on in those days and learn about how their ancestors lived.

- **October, November and December**

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Festiv'Jazz: Festiv'Jazz is a jazz festival held in Chabeuil with a line-up that combines up-and-coming talent with established jazz performers.

Lumières et Images en Fête / Fête des Lumières: The Lumières et Images en Fête festival is a magical event held in Valence in December to mark the Fête des Lumières, the Festival of Lights held in nearby Lyon. For the whole evening, the city is lit up with figures created from lights in the streets and on monuments around the city.

Here, nature is purer

Having grown up on the banks of the Rhône, Valence makes the most of the river, which gives it a calm, soothing atmosphere. Surrounded by greenery and awarded 4 flowers in the 'Floral Town' scheme, Valence boasts no fewer than eight major urban parks which account for 10% of the city's total surface area, creating unique, verdant surroundings that enhance the quality of life in the urban streets and city centre.

Parc Jouvet:

- One of the biggest parks in Valence, right in the city centre, Parc Jouvet is a stunning expanse of greenery with more than 700 trees of a variety of different rare species. Awarded 'Jardin Remarquable' status in 2006, the park has plenty to offer and you'll come across a few surprises along the way: the rose garden, the little sightseeing train, fountains, an animal house, an aviary and more... From Parc Jouvet you also get an uninterrupted view of the iconic ruins of the Château de Crussol in Ardèche.

Parc Perdrix and the water towers:

- Parc Perdrix on the edge of Valence forms a lovely setting for its unique architectural heritage, the twin water towers. This 57-metre-high 'sculpture', the only one of its

kind in the world, was recognised as 'best urban work of art' in France in the 1970s. In addition to lovely surroundings and everything you would expect from a public park (promenade, children's playground, pétanque (boules) terrains and fitness trails), Parc Perdrix is also a venue for major events such as firework displays. With nearly 4,000 trees covering 26 hectares, this park offers a beautiful panorama of the Vercors Mountains and Vivarais region.

The Village Botanique and Jardin Mexicain / Montélier: Officially designated a 'Village Botanique', Montélier boasts both a historical and a natural heritage. The village is home to no fewer than eight fountains and also the Jardin Sémaphore, a green space laid out in a spiral shape that includes an aviary and an extension of the Village Botanique. In the village centre you'll also find the Jardin Mexicain, complete with agaves, opuntias and other desert plants.

La Pangée / La Baume Cornillane: The standing stone 'La Pangée', in the centre of the village of La Baume Cornillane (the French name for the earth's single supercontinent which existed 240 million years ago) is thought to mark the centre point of Pangaea, where today there is a discovery trail.

The canals:

- One of the most surprising and least-known aspects of Valence's heritage is the network of canals which has surrounded the city since Roman times.
- There are canals all around the city, and today they are home to some fascinating animal and plant life. In all there are 40 km of canals surrounding Valence, 17 km of them uncovered, an unsuspected find appreciated by tourists, nature-lovers and anglers alike. The canals form little havens of peace and quiet a stone's throw from the city hubbub. They are a highly original part of Valence's ecological and historical heritage, an asset that must be preserved and an important tourist attraction. Every year, the city's canal heritage is celebrated in the Fête des Canaux, held in June. A map of canal walks is available from the Tourist Office.

Spotlight on ViaRhôna: this is a 450km-long greenway running through Rhône-Alpes, which follows the River Rhône all the way from Lake Geneva to the Mediterranean Sea. By bike, on roller blades or on foot, ViaRhôna is a wonderful way to experience the wonders and riches of the Rhône-Alpes countryside. Valence is a stopover town on the greenway, which passes through Epervière Marina, from where you can explore the town. There is a choice of routes and stopovers, with something to suit cyclists of all kinds.

Epervière Marina:

Just a stone's throw from the city centre, Epervière Marina gives Valence a big advantage when it comes to tourism: the ability to accommodate small leisure boats. The entry point to the city for river boats, Epervière offers an extensive leisure and recreational facility centred on a 32,000m² marina which also provides a year-round home for various sports clubs including sailing, canoeing, rowing and swimming clubs.

This river port in the middle of the Valence countryside is also the venue for various cultural and social events such as the 'Tête en l'air' science event that studies the flight paths of migratory birds, and the summer Cinéfil festival featuring showings of short films and concerts in the open air.

All of these facilities and tourism initiatives, designed with respect and protection of the natural environment in mind, won Epervière Marina European Blue Flag status in 2012 for the eighth year in a row.

Valence forms the geographical centre point of both France's road network and its navigable waterways, and the Mediterranean is just one day's sail from Epervière Marina.

Libélo is a bike hire scheme run by Valence city council. Open to both tourists and

locals, it allows everyone to explore the city in a very different way along the many cycle paths crisscrossing the Valence conurbation. The first half-hour of bike hire is free.

Here, sport is a big hitter

SPORT CREATES A SENSE OF COMMUNITY

With the establishment of the Office des Sports Valentinois more than half a century ago, sport is an integral part of life in Valence. This organisation creates a link between the people of Valence and the sports associations and clubs active in the area.

Today, sport is more than an activity, it is an integral part of recreational life in the Valence area.

The Office des Sports Valentinois currently includes more than 200 sporting associations representing nearly 90 different activities. The city boasts 25,000 registered members of the different sports federations who give their all every year to improve and uphold Valence's reputation as a dynamic and diverse sporting destination.

VALENCE, HOME TO A HOST OF SPORTING EVENTS

Every year a large number of unmissable sporting events are organised in the Valence area. Home to a host of sporting events, Valence brings together young and old alike in embracing the values championed by the different disciplines: sharing, improving performance and reaching objectives. Sport remains a strong driving force in the city's daily development, creating a stronger sense of community in the Valence area.

Major sporting events hosted by Valence in recent years include the following:

- The French Elite Athletics Championships – 2014 and 2010. In July 2014 the 'cadet' and 'junior' age-group competition was once again held at the Georges Pompidou Stadium. In 2010 the event saw a new record set by French athlete Christophe Lemaître, who achieved his first national record in the 100 metres, making him the first white sprinter to run this distance in under ten seconds since the introduction of electronic timing.
- The Climbing World Cup in 2013
- The French Fencing Championships in May 2011
- The Boucles Drôme-Ardèche, a cycle race organised by the Union Cycliste Montmeyran-Valence.
- The World Rally Championship in 2013, 2012 and 2011.
- A stage town for x years in the Historical Monte Carlo Rally, which features cars that have taken part in the Monte Carlo Rally in past years.
- Water jousting competitions (a sport little-known elsewhere in the world) as part of the Fêtes du Rhône festival.
- The International [Motocross](#) competition,
- The French Curling Championships, in 2011, 2012 and 2014.
- Eurofleuret, the European fencing competition, hosted by the Valence fencing club Cercle d'Escrime Rhodanien.

SPORTS PERSONALITIES FROM VALENCE / DROME

Valence has produced a number of sporting champions who took up their sport in local sports clubs or simply grew up in the Valence area.

The Gille brothers: All three brothers are professional handballers: Benjamin (Chambéry Savoie Handball Club); Bertrand (Hamburg – voted best player in 2002, twice Olympic champion in 2008 and 2012, twice European champion in 2006 and 2010, twice World champion in 2001 and 2011); and Guillaume (HSV, Hamburg – French Champion in 2001 with Chambéry Savoie Handball and winner of the 2007 Cup-Winners' Cup with Hamburg. With the French team, Guillaume won two Olympic gold medals and was twice World champion and twice European champion.). Today, the three brothers from Valence fly the flag for French handball both nationally and internationally.

Loïs Habert: From a very young age, Valence-born Loïs Habert was passionate about sport, particularly alpine skiing. He showed great promise, and at the age of 7 joined Schuss Valentinois ski club. In 2001 the young Loïs took up biathlon, a discipline that really suited him since he went on to become French champion in 2002. As a member of the national Biathlon team, Loïs competed in his first World Cup events, coming second in the 2005 European Championship.

Flavien Guérimand: Flavien Guérimand is a professional climber who began his sporting career with the Valence climbing club Mineral Spirit. Through determination and hard work, this young athlete won the title of French Universities' Champion on two occasions, in 2008 and 2009.

Sébastien Chabal: Born in Valence, the former rugby champion played for Valence Sportif before joining CSBJ Rugby Club in Bourgoin-Jallieu near Lyon and embarking on his international rugby career with the French team.

Other athletes who grew up in Valence or Drôme

- **Guillaume Bonnafond:** Professional cyclist Guillaume Bonnafond was born in Valence. He rides for AG2R La Mondiale (Valence).
- **Bryan Bouffier:** this motor rally champion born in Die has competed in a large number of races including the Monte Carlo Rally.
- **Érik Comas:** Born in Romans-sur-Isère, Erik Comas is a former motor racing driver. Having competed in 46 Grand Prix races, he remains one of the biggest names in French Formula 1.
- **Axel Domont:** Since 2013, Valence-born Axel Domont has been competing as a professional cyclist with the French pro cycling team AG2R La Mondiale.
- **Olivier Milloud:** Born in Saint Vallier (Drôme), this former rugby player saw great success with the French Rugby Union squad.
- **Alain Robert** (climbing): Known for his exploits as an extreme climber, Alain Robert has freeclimbed dozens of buildings and monuments all over the world. Nicknamed the French Spider Man, the fearless urban climber grew up in Valence.
- **Philippe Saint-André:** Hailing from Romans-sur-Isère, Philippe Saint-André is a former rugby player and coach with the French International Rugby Union squad.

SPORTING FACILITIES FOR DYNAMIC CLUBS

Sport in Valence has gone from strength to strength thanks to the efforts of the many clubs which every season set themselves the objective of bringing on and enhancing the performance of their members in their preferred sport. Each of these clubs plays an important part in the local sports scene today. Some have earned justified reputations as the clubs to beat at departmental, regional and even national level:

- **Mineral Spirit:** the Drôme département's biggest climbing club, Mineral Spirit enjoys 'National Level Club' status in France. With more than 400 members this year, the club has achieved great things in numerous regional and national competitions and on several occasions has organised the French Climbing Cup.
- **Valence Triathlon:** With nearly 250 members, Valence Triathlon boasts plenty of top sporting talent such as Mathilde Cini, Simon Viain, Olivier Marceau et al. Officially recognised as a *** triathlon school by the Fédération Française de Triathlon, the club has ensured it remains accessible by providing coaching at all levels. One of the key annual events that Valence Triathlon organises is the Valence Triathlon, which attracts the region's professionals and amateurs. The 2014 Triathlon took place at Epervière Marina, right in the heart of Valence.
- **Entente Athlétique Drôme-Vercors:** Three athletics clubs, USACHabeuil, CAValence and EATainTournon, have joined forces to establish Entente Athlétique Rhône Vercors 26 07. In August 2013, this club promoting all the athletics disciplines had 850 members competing at all levels. The Fédération Française d'Athlétisme has highlighted the club's dynamic approach and quality by renewing its 5-star Quality certification, the highest distinction achieved by an athletics club in Drôme-Ardèche to date.
- **Cercle d'Escrime Rhodanien:** Ranked as a 'Grand Club' by the Fédération Française d'Escrime (FFE), the Cercle d'Escrime Rhodanien (CER) fencing club has been providing competitive and recreational fencing at all levels (from the age of 3) since 1980. It is the leading club in Drôme-Ardèche, and continues to attract more members each year. Since 2000, CER has organised 'Eurofleuret', a European fencing competition, earning it the title of 'Best Competition Organisation' by the FFE and Office des Sports Valentinois.

- **Valence Handball:** Founded in May 1988, Valence Handball Club has now gone down to Division 2 of the French Pro Championship after competing in Pro Division 1 for some time. The Pro D2 team boasts several key players but is not the only team in the club, which also runs senior and under-18s coaching.
- **Moto Club Valentinois:** Valence moto cross club has been going under this name since 1995, but moto cross has long been a key feature of Valence life since it has been among the city's sports associations since 1950. Every year, Moto Club Valentinois organises the MotoCross International, which attracts the top national and international riders.
- **Valence Patinage Artistique:** This figure skating club has been providing coaching for children and adults for more than 40 years. It has more than 150 active members in Valence. Every season the club promotes the sport by performing several shows to the general public.
- **Rhône Ovalie Club / la Voulte – Valence:** A rugby club formed by the merger between Voulte Sportif and Valence Sportif, ROC-la Voulte includes players such as...
- **Les Marsouins:** Since 1977, Les Marsouins has been practising two rather unusual water sports: finswimming with bifins and monofins in both indoor and openwater events. Offering coaching to both children and adults, the club continues to produce new champions such as the monofin specialist Jehan Pontal, who won a bronze medal at the Junior World Championship and three silvers at the Junior World Cup.
- **Union Cycliste Montmeyran-Valence:** Today, UC Montmeyran-Valence, which is affiliated to the Fédération Française de Cyclisme, has 25 cyclists on its books. Besides competing in different races (in both the junior and adult categories), the club has distinguished itself as a pro-active player, organising five sporting events including the FFC Elite Rhône-Alpes Championship, the Rencontre des Écoles de Cyclisme and the Boucles Drôme-Ardèche.

In terms of sports facilities, Valence offers a wide variety of installations of different sizes, ranging from modest training facilities to venues for national sports competitions. The Valence area boasts 8 gymnasiums, 3 stadiums, 3 swimming pools, a skating rink, the Pierre Mendès-France sports stadium, the Magakian gymnastics complex and the Colette Besson sports park.

Here is foodie heaven

CHEFS

Baptiste Poinot

Awarded one Michelin star and three toques in the Gault et Millau guide, Baptiste Poinot was also crowned 'Grand de Demain' (Future Great Chef) in 2013. Having gained experience working at Michel Chabran's one-Michelin-star restaurant in Pont de l'Isère, the young chef opened in own restaurant, Flaveurs*, in the city centre in 2006.

The restaurant offers intimate, cosy surroundings, pinpoint lighting and discreet service pitched at the right level. His cooking features respect for produce, beautifully cooked dishes, judicious use of fragrant vegetables and classics revisited with flair: all good reasons to enjoy the fabulous dining experience on offer there. On the back of his success, the young chef has opened a new gourmet address, Epithèque, which is more family-friendly than his Michelin-starred restaurant Flaveurs* but features the same respect for top-quality produce. A stone's throw from Place de la Pierre, in the little Rue Pelleterie, this smart restaurant features subdued lighting. There is no set menu, since everything is à la carte: Iberian cured meats, warming casseroles (fricassée of farm chicken with porcini or spiced cheek of pork confit), dainty seasonal *tartelettes*, his famous savoury éclairs (choux pastry filled with wild shrimps, avocado and ginger), his in-house *foie gras* recipe and the finest mature cheeses. "Epithèque is a bit like a creative workshop where I try out new dishes, most of which end up on the menu at my gastronomic restaurant," explains the chef.

And then there is the impressive wine list, also inspired by his gastronomic restaurant, which among the other fine wines features an extensive selection of local *crus*. With two dining rooms with different ambiances, Epithèque gives diners a choice between a gourmet lunch on the hoof and a more relaxed way to try his specialities in the intimate surroundings of the cosy lower-ground dining room.

His gourmet picks:

Anne-Sophie Pic

Cooking has always been in the family in the Pic household, and today Anne-Sophie Pic has taken up the reins. For three generations, Maison Pic has been an institution close to the hearts of the people of Valence, creating its own unique gastronomic aura.

Anne-Sophie's plaudits have included 2007 Chef of the Year followed by Best Female Chef in the World in 2011, and in 2013 she became the female chef with the most Michelin stars. She follows in the footsteps of her father and grandfather, consistently combining a warm welcome, sophisticated and creative cuisine and perfect attention to detail in her presentation. Following the success of her smart bistro, Bistrot 7, which serves up elegant cuisine in an old-style bistro setting, Anne-Sophie has opened Daily Pic, her 'gourmet diner' near the city centre. Daily Pic is Anne-Sophie's way of offering accessible everyday cuisine of high quality. On the menu are *verrines* in summer and hot soups in winter, all featuring the quality and delicacy that has become the Pic trademark. With not only a gastronomic restaurant, smart bistro and 'gourmet diner' but also a cookery school and *épicerie* delicatessen, the Pic empire today covers the full range of fine dining experiences.

A new restaurant in New York is on the cards for the future, confirming the fame that Maison Pic has won on the international gastronomy scene.

Masachi Ijichi

Japanese chef Masachi Ijichi has been passionate about French cuisine since his early childhood. On arriving in France he perfected his skills working for Anne-Sophie Pic. He also worked in the kitchens of the Pourcell brothers in Montpellier and at Key Passion in Nice. Returning to Valence, Masachi opened his own restaurant, La Cachette*, in 2005, and his high-quality blend of European and Oriental cuisine soon proved a great success. His cooking is a subtle combination of flavours complemented by friendly service and a warm welcome. And if La Cachette* is a must-try dining experience in Valence it is also because of the totally fresh ambiance created by the clean lines of the uncluttered décor. Awarded a Michelin star since 2009, Masachi Ijichi has also opened Grenache, his gastronomic bistro serving up choice cuisine not far from the city centre.

Spotlight on: learning to cook in a cookery workshop

Whether you plump for the Atelier Gourmand by Julie H. or Anne-Sophie Pic's Scook cookery school, gourmets and gastronomes can hone their skills in the kitchen by attending one of the many cookery workshops on offer every year.

Covering both sweet and savoury dishes, for both newbie foodies and the cognoscenti, these workshops are first and foremost about making Valence's gastronomy more accessible and teaching the required skills.

SPECIALITIES

The Vignes Saint-Jean

Planted in 1997 on the initiative of the 'Commune Libre de Saint Jean', since 2009 this vineyard has been maintained by the 'Amicale des Anciens de la Cave de Tain l'Hermitage' association. It consists of 500 viognier vines planted on natural terraces in the heart of Old Valence, which overlook the Rhône and form a striking sight in the city at sunset. They produce some 250 to 300 bottles of vin de pays annually.

Le Suisse

This 200-year-old Valence speciality is a 'shortbread man' flavoured with confit orange peel. The story goes that a local baker invented it as a tribute to Pope Pius VI, who died in Valence in 1799. Its shape is modelled on the uniform of the Vatican's Swiss Guard.

La Pangée

Invented in June 2001, this cake is made of apricots and contains caramel, almonds and honey. Its round shape is supposed to represent Pangaea, the single continent that existed on earth 250 million years ago. The missing part represents the initial fault, and the apricot in the middle symbolises Drôme in the centre of the world.

Caillette

This is a small and tasty pressed-meat dish of pork and herbs. After roasting, Caillette can be eaten hot or cold. Today it is the town of Chabeuil that continues the tradition by cooking up this tasty titbit.

Spotlight on: markets

Our fine cuisine may have made gastronomy a way of life in Valence, but it is also a product

of the markets held in and around the city. Every day, the streets of Valence are lined with food and manufactured goods stalls, offering local and tourists a varied choice. The best time of the week to buy choice fresh food is Saturday morning, when businesses and producers converge on Place des Clercs in Valence. Full of the typical atmosphere of the South-of-France, these markets are an opportunity to wander among the colourful stalls and take in the variety of unusual odours and flavours.

What's more, Drôme is France's leading organic département and the biggest agricultural producer in Rhône-Alpes.