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Île Saint-Honorat: 20 Minutes from Cannes Into Another World

The historic island is home to a monastery that produces beautiful wines

May 21, 2014 | 05:06 PM By [Jess Novak](#), Special Contributor



Ruins of the original monastery, dating from the 11th century, are open to visitors.

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"Fried" Catfish with
Potato Sticks

If you're visiting Cannes this week and are looking for a quick jaunt to escape the swirling film festival madness for a few hours — and you would like an excuse to watch the city melt into the pristinely blue water of the Golfe de la Napoule — a trip to the [Île Saint-Honorat](#) is an ideal adventure.

A short 20 minute boat ride southeast of Cannes, you can catch one of the regular ferries to and from the island for just 12 euros — assuming you didn't swing into town your yacht, naturally (and who doesn't!): the island does offer a small marina, of course, should you be in need of one.

[Île Saint-Honorat: 20 Minutes from Cannes Into Another World \(Slideshow\)](#)

The smaller of the two islands that comprise the Îles de Lérins archipelago, the Île Saint-Honorat has been home to 16 centuries of monastic life. The Cistercian monks who

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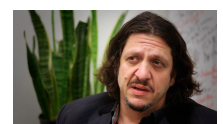
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dwell on the island have been living exclusively on the fruits of their labors since the 7th century, and they currently produce wine, liqueurs, honey, and soaps to support themselves and their charities. Monks in robes sell these wares the monastery shop, and their wine is also available on the menu of the island's restaurant, [La Tonnelle](#).

Only 21 monks populate the island, but the Île Saint-Honorat is far from uninhabited: tiny salamanders rustle through the grasses and sun themselves on rocks everywhere, and a small flock of wild pheasants has made its home near the monastery grounds. The island is devoted to quiet reflection, and the calm of the natural world here inspires that aim — one which would seem like a fantasy in the city that lies such a short distance away: palm trees sway beside gentle rocky coves, and morning glories curl around the base of a small building regulated for solitary reflection. The air is warm and salted, the landscape remarkably varied for such a small island — the acreage to the east east feel like many seaside wildernesses, covered in small bushes and trailing vines, but this terrain quickly transition into small, verdant oak forests to the west, which in turn melt into flat fields and sunny vineyards farther inland.[[slideshow](#)]

While the current monastery is reserved for the monks who inhabit it, ruins of the original monastery, dating from the 11th century, are open to visitors who would like to climb its dizzying spiral staircase and enjoy the amazing view from the tower.

The **Cuvée Tonnelle 2011 rosé** is lovely: crisp, and refreshing, with citrus on the nose, a pleasant acidity on the palate, and notes of grapefruit, white pepper, and pear. The light mineral edge comes care of the terroir — the island is comprised largely of limestone covered in a layer of red clay.

Viniculture



Cultivated vineyards cover 17 acres of the tiny island, which was once a popular destination for pilgrims.

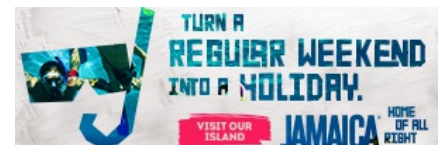
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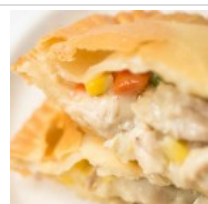
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A monastic community devoted to reflection, reminders of the island's purpose are found throughout the island.

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Jess Novak is the Drink Editor of The Daily Meal. Follow her on Twitter [@jessthenovak](#)

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