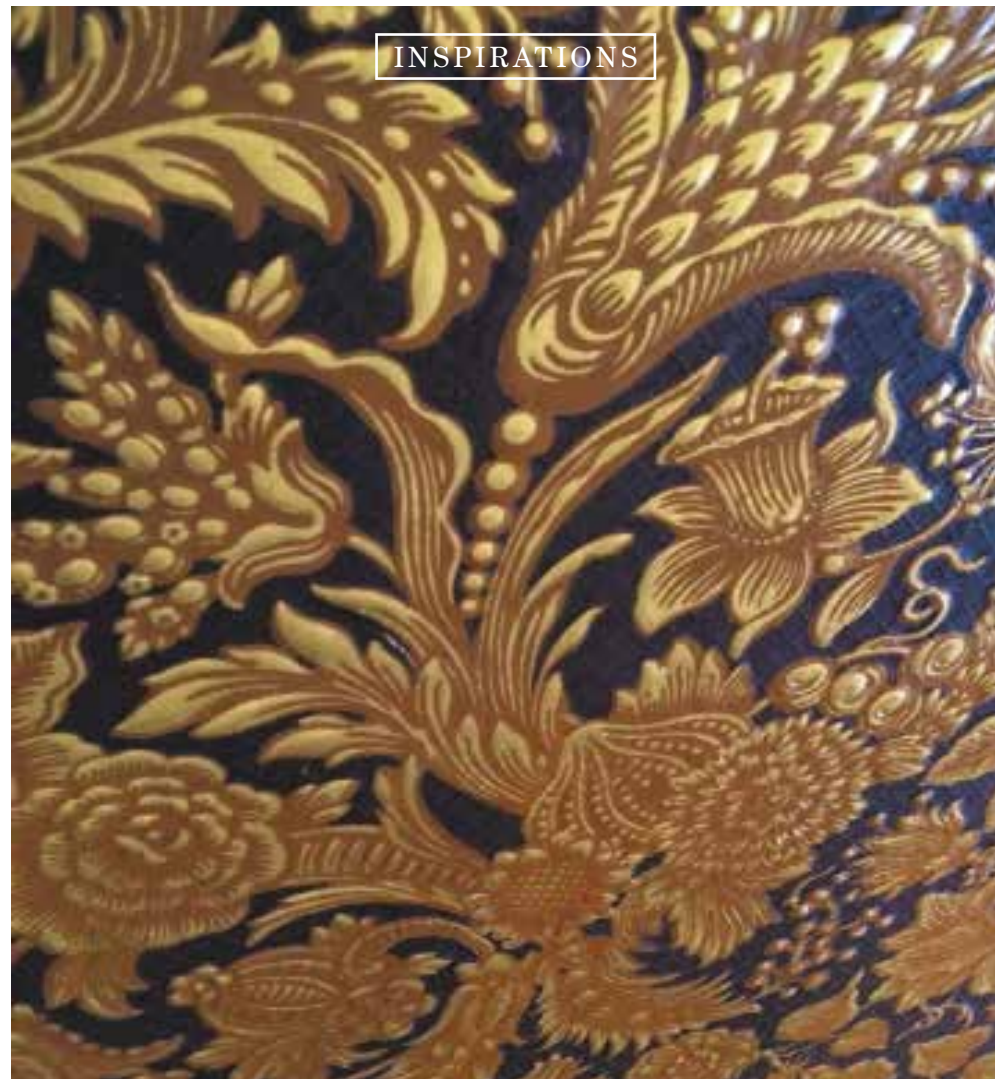


JOIE DE VIVRE

Our pick of splendid things, great and small, that showcase the joy of French life, from what to buy to where to go...

INSPIRATIONS



HOME IS WHERE THE ART IS

Predictable décor? Liven up your nest with the playful designs of Atelier d'Offard! Based in Tours, this specialist company upholds the traditional craft of block-printed wallpaper, reproducing exact designs to clad rooms with panache. They offer an eye-popping collection of styles, from intricate illustrations to gilded, metallic and embossed effects, so you can have fun beautifying your *maison*. www.cargocollective.com/atelierdoffard



ON AIME Peanut butter doesn't get better than this luxury spread from zChocolat, made from crushed caramelised hazelnuts and creamy milk chocolate. www.zchocolat.com

Little black book



France Today writer Roger Thomas shares his favourite places in Vaison-la-Romaine

A PLACE TO STAY

It's worth threading your car through the narrow town of Vaison to get to L'Hostellerie le Beffroi. Dating from 1554, it's a 'boutique historique' mix of old beams, rustic walls, rich furnishings and a panoramic terrace to top it all off. www.le-beffroi.com



MIAM! WHERE TO EAT?

It has to be Bistro du'O, where chef Philippe Zemour conjures up clever cuisine that's classic in its precision but never fussy. It's all about flavour, based on local seasonal produce. Oh, and the wine list is exceptional. www.bistroduo.fr



SECRET PLACES

You can't miss nearby Mont Ventoux, the fabled 'giant of Provence', but you can miss its hidden north side, which tumbles from a bleached summit through screes and trees into the Toulourenc Valley. It's where the locals go swimming, picnicking, cycling and gorge walking.

IMAGES © ERIK HANSEN | WWW.BISTRODUO.FR



IMAGES © AQUAPHYTE

Among these gorgeous mossy orbs, one almost expects to find The Little Prince and his beloved rose atop their asteroid

SMART DESIGN

PLANETS IN YOUR PALM

As much art as botanical genius, 'kokedama' (or 'moss balls') from Japan have taken France by storm. Typically, these miniature marvels are formed by exposing a plant's roots, packing them in a sphere of mud and wrapping it in a toasty moss coat. Based just outside Paris, Aquaphyte specialises in creating its own versions, ranging from soft ferns to spiky agave plants (pictured). The company also sometimes pairs the greenery with wildlife models to create the effect of bamboo forests and pastures, transforming them into pint-sized worlds. They make wonderful indoor ornaments and, for the more adventurous, can even be turned into hanging gardens (top). www.aquaphyte.com



ON ÉCOUTE

WOODKID

Discover the audiovisual pioneer



Born in Poland and raised in France, Woodkid, a.k.a. Yoann Lemoine, commands a broad range of talents

As a solo artist, Yoann Lemoine is the enigmatic 'Woodkid' – a singer-songwriter with a flair for dramatic orchestral scores and poetic lyrics. In other capacities, he's a prolific and highly-successful graphic designer and video director, having governed music videos for the likes of Katy Perry, Lana Del Rey and Taylor Swift.

The Golden Age (2013) is in fact Woodkid's only studio album to date, but

what a triumphant pop-scene debut it is. The single *Iron* first propelled him into fame, and is closely followed in popularity by *Run Boy Run* and *I Love You*. These songs both champion youth and lament its passing, with exultant highs and bittersweet lows. You can't hear it and not be thrown back to the glorious days of childhood.

It's unclear whether a second album is – or ever will be – in the works, no matter how loudly fans clamour. In the meantime, we can enjoy Lemoine's many other diverse musical collaborations. Most recently, he's even shot and soundtracked films for Louis Vuitton's Autumn/Winter 2017 collection.

IF YOU LIKE THIS, YOU MIGHT LIKE...



LANA DEL REY

The sultry pop sensation has worked with Woodkid on videos and on stage. **Born to Die** Interscope Records



NILS FRAHM

German classical/electronic composer and pianist with a hauntingly melodic style. **Late Night Tales** LateNightTales



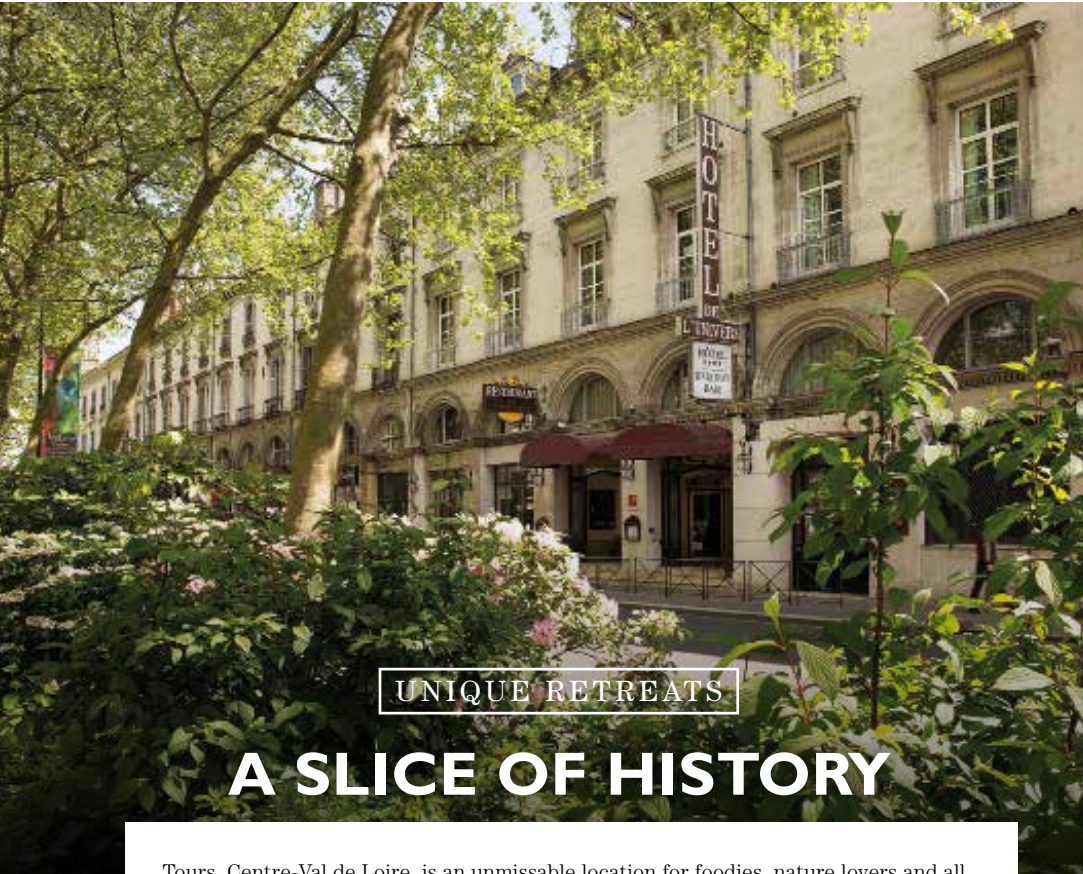
HANS ZIMMER

World-famous composer and leader in the field of epic movie scores. **Film Music of...** Silva Screen Records

INSTA FRANCE

The beauty of France on Instagram. This issue: #pique-nique

It's time to dust off those patterned blankets and wicker baskets – summer's here! These posts exhibit the joy of a good picnic, from **sweetcabane's** *fromage* feast and **lamayie's** rice-packed lunch boxes to **kykat01's** colourful bowls of fruit, chia seeds and honey. *Bon appétit!*



UNIQUE RETREATS

A SLICE OF HISTORY

Tours, Centre-Val de Loire, is an unmissable location for foodies, nature lovers and all manners of culture vulture. If you're planning to visit, factor in a stop at place Plumereau for starters. The city's old heart is still very much beating and its thriving square is populated by visitors drawn by the medieval half-timbered houses and outdoor restaurants. The area also offers wine-tasting sessions (this is the Loire Valley, after all), a fascinating art museum and hiking trails through the countryside.

So, after exploring this place of old-world charm, where can the weary traveller rest his head? Well, if you walk along the gorgeous tree-lined boulevard

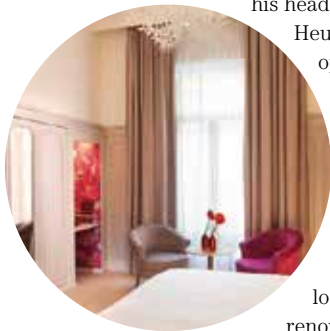
Heurteloup, you'll come across an invitingly grand four-star hotel opposite the City Hall. This is none other than the acclaimed Oceania Hôtel de l'Univers, historic favourite of the elite. The establishment has opened its doors to a number of famous writers, actors and political figures over the years, including Winston Churchill, Édith Piaf, Katherine Hepburn and Ernest Hemingway, to name just a few.

Today, we mere mortals can enjoy the best of both worlds: the hotel's appealing original features combine with a fresh, new look following refurbishment. It has more than 90 rooms, a newly renovated restaurant and brand new furniture throughout, plus an

impressive list of amenities, from a wellness spa and fitness room to a swimming pool and jacuzzi. The hall even boasts a gallery of paintings commemorating its esteemed past visitors (it's great fun to see who you can spot!).

No matter whether you're journeying solo around Tours or visiting with loved ones, l'Univers offers luxurious sanctuary away from the hubbub.

● **L'Hôtel de l'Univers**, 5 Boulevard Heurteloup 37000 Tours www.oceaniahotels.com



ON ADORE How can anyone resist these miniature pastel elephant lamps? Their saluting trunks and cheerful smiles will brighten up any child's bedroom. lavantgardiste.com



3

of our favourite...
BEACHES

For many of us, summer is our cue to flee to the seaside. Here's our pick of some of France's dreamiest *plages*, both popular and secret...



PLAGE DE LA SAMBIÈRE

In Normandy, the pretty little port town of Barfleur is home to Plage de la Sambière, a small, sandy beach perfect for soaking up the surroundings. Also, did you know that Barfleur is twinned with the UK's own coastal town of Lyme Regis? www.barfleur.fr



DONNANT

Ah, Belle-Île. Brittany's largest island boasts nearly 60 beaches for visitors to enjoy. One of the most popular is the sandy, rocky Donnant, a hotspot for surfing and fishing activity. www.belleileenmer.co.uk



PLAGE DE L'ESPIQUETTE

Made up of fine gold sand, this well-loved beach is the quintessential postcard image. Punctuated with dunes, it stretches on for more than 18km. www.vacances-en-camargue.com

IMAGE © WWW.BARFLEUR.FR, DAMIEN ALBERT, BATHILDE CHABOCHE