

# *Saint Tropez*



## **The port of Saint-Tropez**

Saint-Tropez is not a fishing village as is often believed, but a village of sailors. The main reason for this is the draft of the port (4m), which allowed it to accommodate large ships and therefore to develop trade with the export of certain products, such as cork and oil. Its sailors also conducted “maritime caravans”, sailing from port to port in search of contracts (commissions to protect ships and attack enemy ships). Great military figures like Le Bailli de Suffren sailed from here. Lord of Saint-Tropez, he participated in several military campaigns in America, but especially in India where he was victorious over the English on several occasions. He attained the rank of Bailli (Bailiff in English), the highest rank in the Order of Malta.

His statue, inaugurated in 1866, is made from the bronze of guns taken from the enemy. Other marine related activities were also established in Saint-Tropez (boat building, underwater cabling factory, torpedo factory from 1914). Saint-Tropez's maritime vocation is still evident today with prestigious nautical events such as the Giraglia Rolex Cup in June, the Voiles de Saint-Tropez in September, and the Voiles Latines in May. The ultra-modern Port can accommodate up to 800 boats, and in particular the yachts on which its reputation and its appeal have been built.

## The Porte de la Poissonnerie and the Place aux Herbes

This was the location for one of the town's fortification towers, the Port Tower. This area is decorated with neo-Greek mosaics and remains one of the symbols of the Tropezian art of living with its daily fish market, and stands next to the Place aux Herbes, a small market offering seasonal fruits, vegetables and flowers. The word "herbes" in Provence means fruits and vegetables and this square was the original location of the market in Saint-Tropez. Thus we enter the Old Town, with its picturesque houses and alleys.



## Rue du Cepoun Sanmartin

The street gets its name from Sanmartin, penultimate Cepoun, guardian of traditions. The role of Cepoun, a lifetime appointment, is an intrinsic part of the life, culture and history of Saint-Tropez. Here we see "the Tropezian soul", symbolised by the Bravadades which take place each year on the 16th to 18th May following a ritual that has remained unchanged since 1558. The Bravadades commemorate the glorious military past of the Town and at the same time celebrate Torpes, its Patron Saint.



## Quai Mistral

The quay is named after Frédéric Mistral, writer and defender of the Provençal language. It has only existed since the post-war period. Previously, the houses came almost to the water's edge. You can see the doors of old boathouses, and it also gives you the chance to admire the typical houses of Saint-Tropez. The rather narrow, ochre and pastel toned facades are curved at the base to provide extra solidity, as these houses were the only ramparts to face the sea.

## Môle Jean Réveille

The *banc des mensonges* (bench of lies) can be found at the foot of the jetty, and the elders sometimes still gather here. From here you can admire the fishermen's boats (the pointed ones with lateen sails) as well as the Portalet Tower, one of the town's first fortifications (16th century). Here, on 15th June 1637, the 21 Spanish galleys that had come to destroy Royal Navy ships were pushed back. This Tropezian victory is still celebrated every year during the Bravade des Espagnols.

## Le Château Suffren

Or Guillaume Tower. Guillaume Comte de Provence is famous for having "liberated" Provence at the end of the 10th century. Built in 980, it is the oldest civil and religious construction in Saint-Tropez. The current building was constructed later, probably between the 14th and 15th centuries.

## Place de la Mairie

Here you can find the School of Hydrography, created in 1802 by Napoleon to train long-distance captains. It operated until 1914. One of the symbolic elements of the glorious maritime past of Saint Tropez is the Zanzibar door. It was brought back by Captain Justin Cerisola, for his friend and fellow captain, Annibal Bérard (former representative of a trading company in Zanzibar). This clove wood door has geometric and plant-like decoration and a Swahili style. This square also contains the Town Hall, built in 1872.



## The Church

The yellow and pink bell tower is famous around the world. Its clock is only visible on three sides, and we like to say that the fourth side, facing Sainte-Maxime, has no clock so that the Maximois (enemy brothers) cannot see what the time is from there! The reality is more mundane. A clock on this side of the bell tower would soon have been damaged as it is more

exposed to the winds. It is not the town's original church, the original being located on the nearby beach (behind the Town Hall) which was abandoned due to the great expansion of the town during its

reconstruction. So, a new one was built here in the 18th century. You can see a statue of the Knight Torpes dressed as a Roman centurion. Torpes is not only to be seen in the church, but also throughout the town. There are more than 40 urban oratories in Saint-Tropez, as well as four chapels (Sainte Anne, Saint Joseph, la Miséricorde and the Convent). The Church is open in the mornings. Calm and discretion are recommended.

### **The Old Tower (1522) and the Revelen gate (1550)**

This is the departure point for the town's second fortification. It is the same type of entrance as that which leads to the Poissonnerie, one with a chicane, and at which a guard was stationed. Here we leave the inner walls of Saint-Tropez defined by the medieval walls and come to the district of La Ponche, the old fishing port. The name of La Ponche is derived from the original name La Pouncho, which in Provençal means the tip. The Gallicisation of the name may be due to the fact that this district was "colonised" after the war by artists from all over Paris. Later, Brigitte Bardot in the film "And God Created Woman" would come to represent the glamorous Saint-Tropez that we know. Some of the film's scenes were shot on this small beach.

### **The Jarlier Tower (1564) and (17th century)**

The Jarlier Tower was one of the fortifications built following the reconstruction of the town. This marked the starting point for the two surrounding walls which protected the town. The Tower looks towards the hill which was one of the town's defensive weaknesses. This weakness later led to the current Citadel being erected. Below the Citadel lies the Marine Cemetery. It is one of the three marine cemeteries in France, along with Sète and Saint Malo.

### **The street and the Chapelle de la Miséricorde (Chapel of Mercy) (1635)**

This district has retained traces of its rural activity (rue des Bouchonniers, rue des Moulins, rue Bergère). Arriving in rue Gambetta, you enter the new town, dating from the 18th and then 19th century, where the well-to-do had their mansions built. The facades are different from those of the old town, being wider, using a finer plaster and with more architectural details. The main ornamentation of the Chapel of Mercy's facade is the serpentine door, in a beautiful green stone. This chapel was that of the Black Penitents, lay people who until the middle of the 19th century took care of the sick, prisoners and funeral services.



## Place des Lices

This is the other bustling heart of Saint-Tropez, after the Old Port. Until the end of the 18th century, this was an area of ditches and pastures for animals. Today the square is renowned for its market day atmosphere, held on Tuesdays and Saturdays. And every day, summer and winter, you can

see the game of pétanque being played. Its famous plane trees were immortalised in a painting by Signac, exhibited at the Annonciade. Finally, the street that we see running from here towards the Port is rue Sibilli. This street was once the bed of the Garonne stream, but is today the street for luxury shops.

The Salle Jean Despas, named after a Resistance fighter from the town, recalls that Saint-Tropez was the first town in Provence to be liberated on 15th August 1944. Saint-Tropez was awarded the Croix de Guerre for its armed resistance (rare for a town).

## La Bourgade and rue Allard

Most of the houses in this district date from the 19th century. Its gardens, generally enclosed by walls, give it an intimate feel. The rue Etienne Berny houses the Butterfly Museum, and leads to rue Allard, notable for a particular door known as the Moor and the Negro, which is a testimony to the prosperous period of maritime trade in the 17th and 18th centuries.

Built in 1568, this former chapel of the White Penitents (responsible for raising funds for the liberation of Saint-Tropez sailors captured by the Barbarians and reduced to slavery), is today a museum dedicated to post-impressionism (Fauve, Nabi and Pointillist periods). The Museum invites you to learn about the history of this building which, before becoming well known following the shooting of the gendarmes' films, housed the Gendarmerie brigade. It also gives pride of place to the representation of the gendarmes through the films, as well as tracing the history of Cinema in Saint-Tropez.

