



Lyon's pride

The historic site of Lyon was included on UNESCO's World Heritage List in 1998, with an emphasis on enhancing the visitor experience. Almost a decade on, high quality local hotels and gastronomy – and an abundance of art and culture – make it one of Europe's premier destinations by its own accord

Situated on and around a narrow peninsula at the convergence of two of Europe's major rivers is the city of Lyon. In from the north flows the Saône, carrying a name that derives from the Gallic river Goddess Soucanna. To the south flows the Rhône, rising in the Swiss glaciers and dividing at Arles, near its mouth at the Mediterranean Sea.

For more than 2,000 years this confluence has inspired art and culture, almost 500km away from the shadows of Paris' Notre-Dame Cathedral. As France's second wealthiest city, there is an undeniable pride in the subtropical air.

From the Roman Amphithéâtre des Trois Gaules (circa 19 A.D.) to the steel and glass Musée de Confluences (2015), there

are more than 120 performance spaces (theatres and auditoriums) and 30 museums in Lyon. Just walking the city's traboules (covered passageways between buildings) through Vieux Lyon (old Lyon), one comes across a deluge of statues, churches and architecture, old and new. A stroll along the beautiful river walk, by St Georges Footbridge, unveils a host of romantic bouchons (eateries) on barges.

It may not be a city that can boast Paris' nineteenth-century decorative masterpieces, but handsome medieval and Renaissance architecture adorns the centre, and trompe l'oeil murals illuminate the surrounding façades.

Lyon has prospered over centuries of silk weaving, banking, pharmaceuticals and chemicals

and now the Lyon-Confluence expansion promises to drive the economy forward. Among other flagship projects, there is an ambitious plan to extend the city centre over 150 hectares to double its size by 2025, bringing greater opportunities for start-ups and innovative clusters.

Many *Lyonnais* have made their mark in the history of science, art and creation: the Lumière brothers (inventors of cinema), André Ampère (for his achievements in physics), and Claude Bernard and Marcel Mérieux (in the field of medicine).

In a statement in September 2016, Jean-Marc Ayrault, French

Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Development said, "I welcome the fact that Lyon was named 'Europe's Leading City Break Destination' by the World Travel Awards' panel of judges.

"I want to stress in particular the importance of the contrat de destination "Only Lyon", signed in 2014 with the state to define a strategy for promoting tourism and gastronomy. These efforts are in line with the priority areas identified at national level: the digital sector, visitor experience, training and investment." ■

CULTURE ONLINE

Musée des beaux Arts

mba-lyon.fr

Musée de Confluences

museedesconfluences.fr



Above: Church Saint George and Fourvière Hill from the Saône River Right: Place Bellecour statue of King Louis XIV