Europe’s biggest-ever finals take place at ten stadiums in nine cities across France – and Libero has visited every one, plus every bar, pub, café and hotel recommended in this unique, first-hand guide.

From Lille by the Belgian border to Marseille by the Med, Libero has assessed the new-build arenas and long-revered stadiums, the pre-match drinking venues and lodging options around the grounds and in city centres.

Following Platini’s pattern established at the successful staging (and winning) of the 1998 World Cup in France, group matches are no longer concentrated in local clusters but spread out across the country. That way fans of England, Wales, Northern Ireland and Ireland will be visiting at least three different cities this June (and hopefully July...) – and football aficionados in each area get to see a random mix of teams over the course of the month.

As in 1998, each city has a designated fan zone, such as the Champ de Mars under the Eiffel Tower in Paris, the Plages du Prado in Marseille. These will be heavily policed throughout the tournament. Sadly and inevitably, following November’s terrorist attacks around Paris, security will be the prime concern at Euro 2016. It may be that, as was being suggested at press time, that the fan zone in the capital will close on match days. Others may follow. Already one town, Lens, has banned alcohol on the four days it is due to stage games, including for England-Wales on June 16. In fact, build-up to the big kick-off on June 10 could hardly have been worse. Nationwide transport strikes and severe flooding brought France to a standstill, not to mention the fact that organising body UEFA itself currently has no elected president after the demise of Platini himself.

We can only hope that the Euro 2016 finals run as smoothly and as peacefully as France ‘98 – and as Euro 2012 in Poland/Ukraine, the previous tournament initially overshadowed by so much doubt and negativity. Many Ireland fans will still remember the party in Gdansk...

And this year, followers of Wales and Northern Ireland get their chance to join the 24-nation Euro gala – along with new arrivals from Albania, Iceland and Slovakia, and long-awaited returnees Hungary.

And welcome to liberoguide.com!

The digital travel guide for football fans, liberoguide.com is the most up-to-date travel companion to the game’s most exciting destinations, city-by-city, club-by-club. Using thousands of original photos and only first-hand research, taken and undertaken over the last five seasons, liberoguide.com has been painstakingly put together to enhance every football weekend and Euro night experience. From airport to arena, downtown sports bar to hotel, liberoguide.com aims to give the best out of your visit to Europe’s main clubs and major football cities.

Stadiums, bars, stores and tours, liberoguide.com features all members of Europe’s top five leagues plus the key ones from 30 others.

Right now, we’re just sorting through our photos and notes from Leipzig, Dijon, Deventer, Crotone and other newly promoted destinations, plus CL and EL qualifiers, to create the definite travel guide to the 2016–17 season. Not to mention, of course, Spartak Myjava...
France 2016

Euro 2016 is, of course, a sell-out – officially at least. After 90,000 tickets changed hands through official UEFA channels in March, in early June the four-week tournament. Remember also that Accor Hotels (www.accorhotels-group.com/en.html) that oversees the ibis, Mercure, Novotel, Sofitel, Pullman and F1 chains has its base in France and encourages direct booking.

Barring any strike action, national train company SNCF can whisk fans around France swiftly and reliably – and, with advance tickets booked online (www.sncf.com/en), reasonably affordably. Don’t forget, if you have a paper ticket rather than an online print-out one, that France still has the arcane system of validation by using the little orange machines on platforms before you board.

From London St Pancras, Eurostar (www.eurostar.com) trains head for Paris Gare du Nord 20 times a day. Budget-air companies EasyJet, Ryanair, Flybe, Jet2 and Monarch serve French destinations from several airports in Britain and Ireland. Lesser-known European low-cost carriers such as Transavia (www.transavia.com/en-EU/home) are also worth investigating.

France is certainly not as cheap as Poland/Ukraine – but these days most pubs and foreigner-friendly bars offer early-evening happy hours. And, of course, the affordable lunchtime plat du jour at many bistros and restaurants is a national institution...

Have a splendid, safe Euro 2016!
Bordeaux

Introduction

Home of the Girondins, dominant force in France during the golden era of the mid 1980s, Bordeaux is a classic one-club city in the mould of a Marseille or a Toulouse.


The Chaban Delmas was also home to the Bègles rugby team, Bordeaux being situated deep in the oval-ball heartland of south-west France. Given the significant British expat community gathered here in wine country, there’s ample demand for the many sports pubs in town.

In fact, it was an English family, descendents of Nathaniel Johnson, who sold the city council the land, formerly vineyards, on which the former stadium was built. Its part Neo-Classical look and maritime decorative touches reflecting the city’s grand appearance and history, the venue was originally named after the area it was set in: Lescure.

Now a new chapter has opened in the city’s sporting history. The Nouveau Stade, also named after its sponsor Matmut Atlantique, stands near the exhibition centre, Parc des Expositions, surrounded by chain hotels. It’s also at the terminus of tramway line C, part of the city’s swish, modern transport network, which will ferry fans for five Euro 2016 matches, including a quarter-final. France have already played an international match here, a 2-1 friendly win over Serbia.
**Bearings**

**Bordeaux-Mérignac Airport** is 12km (7.5 miles) west of Bordeaux city centre. Budget airlines use the **Billi** terminal adjacent to the main one, where public transport can be found.

**City bus Liane** 1 (every 10min, Sun every 20–30min) takes 40min–1hr to reach the main train station of St-Jean, on the same tramline C as the main square/Euro fanzone of Quinconces and the stadium stop of Parc des Expositions at the end of the line. For the stadium, it’s a 40min journey from St-Jean and 12 stops from Quinconces.

**Public transport** consists of three tramlines (A, B and C) and buses. A **day pass** (Tickarte Jour) is €4.30, available from machines at every stop – validate on board for each journey. For the Euros, a frequent shuttle bus runs from **Cité du Vin** (tramline B) to the stadium, journey time 20min.

A **taxi** (+33 5 56 77 24 24) from the airport to town should cost around €30.

**Bed**

There’s a room-booking service at bordeaux-tourism.co.uk.

A handful of hotels in the Accor chain are set up near the Nouveau Stade, including the **Novotel Bordeaux Le Lac**, which has its own pool, as has the **Hotel Pullman Bordeaux Le Lac**. At the budget end of the scale are the **ibis budget** and **Mercure Bordeaux Le Lac**.

Also in the same complex are the three-star **INTER HOTEL Apolonia Bordeaux Lac** and affordable chain **Campanile Bordeaux Nord Le Lac Hotel**.

Near the station, among the chains, internet cheapie **Hotel Stars** has a maritime theme that extends to cabin-sized rooms. It’s a convenient one tram stop from the station.

In town, hotels within easy reach of focal Quinconces include the **Acanthe**, the **St Rémi** and the **Hotel de la Presse**. Slightly more upscale – and closer to Quinconces – are the **Hotel de Normandie** and the landmark **Grand Hotel de Bordeaux**.
The Nouveau Stade Bordeaux, renamed Matmut Atlantique after its sponsor, was opened at the end of the 2014-15 season, a year before its hosting of five matches for Euro 2016.

When Zinedine Zidane kicked off the inaugural match there, the last game of the 2014-15 campaign against Montpellier, he brought an end to eight decades of history. His former club, the Girondins de Bordeaux, had been based at the Stade Chaban-Delmas (aka Parc Lescure) since it was adapted for the World Cup of 1938.

When conceived by key Bordeaux architect Jacques D’Welles and Art Deco stylist Raoul Jourde, the former Parc Lescure was a grand rebuilding of an existing, modest velodrome-cum-sports ground. With the feel of an ocean liner – a decorative echo of Bordeaux’s past – it was embellished with a vast concrete arch, a Neo-Classical courtyard and two Olympic towers. Art Deco touches added a final flourish.

The arena was ready just in time to host three games for the 1938 World Cup, all involving the great Brazil side and all featuring goals by the great Leonidas. The last match, a third-place play-off, was also the swansong of legendary pre-war World Cup referee John L. Langenus.

Too small to be considered for the 1984 Euros, the Parc Lescure was the smallest of the France ’84 host stadiums.

Renamed after a long-term city mayor in 2001, the Stade Chaban-Delmas was replaced in May 2015 by the Nouveau Stade Bordeaux at Bordeaux-Lac, just north of Les Aubiers, northern terminus of the C tramline.

Holding 42,000 people, the €168-million arena has been created by Herzog & de Meuron, also responsible for the Tate Modern in London and Munich’s Allianz Arena. Surrounded by signature poles representing the woodland beyond this commercial zone north of Bordeaux, the stadium comprises four stands, away fans for domestic fixtures allocated sectors 50 and 51 between the north end and East Stand.
Beer
There’s nothing around the stadium complex except for standard chain and fast-food restaurants, including the Ristorante del Arte pizzeria near the Parc des Expositions tramstop.

In the city centre, Bordeaux, as a football town, a rugby hub and teeming with students, is full of bars where matches screened. Even a downtown landmark such as the Grand Café on place Gambetta will put a large screen outside on big-game nights. Nearby, Casey’s (14 rue Castelnau d’Auros) is specifically sport-focused.

The square to head for is place de la Victoire, where you’ll find the barn-like Café des Sports (5 cours de l’Argonne) and the Pub Saint-Aubin, the best bar/restaurant in town for sports fans. Outside, a terrace covers a huge chunk of the square, while within, a four-room space suits diner and drinker alike.

Just off the main square of Quinconcès, Nulle Part Ailleurs (19 cours du Maréchal Foch) is a more upscale brasserie, owned by ex-Girondins star Christophe Dugarry for ten years.

For a real football bar with a European flavour, the Relais St-Michel (12 rue Camille Sauvageau) is decked out in Iberian soccer paraphernalia, with table football, too. It stands close to the riverbank, where you’ll also find expat pubs such as the Charles Dickens, Molly Malone’s and, near a branch of nationwide chain Frog & Rosbif, Sweeney Todd’s (2 cours Alsace-Lorraine).

All show football on TV, as do the centrally located City Bar (21 rue du Palais-Galien), the Sherlock Holmes, Connemara and the Cock & Bull (23 rue Duffour Dubergier). Perhaps the best of the bunch, the friendliest and also famed for its burgers, is the Golden Apple (46 rue Borie/corner rue Pomme d’Or).

FIXTURES
June 11, 6pm CET Wales-Slovakia
June 14, 6pm CET Austria-Hungary
June 18, 3pm CET Ireland-Belgium
June 21, 9pm CET Spain-Croatia
July 2, 9pm CET QF

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Introduction
With a stadium completely rebuilt for Euro 2016 and tourists flooding in to visit a new branch of the Louvre, gritty Lens is not only revamped – it’s the perfect setting for the England-Wales clash of June 16.

An easy shuttle from the Eurostar hub of Lille, the stadium a stroll from the station, Lens already attracts a regular following from the UK. They’re part of the large and loyal fan base of home club Racing Club, known as the Sang et Or – Blood & Gold.

The club has only won the league once, the same year that the town hosted the World Cup of 1998.

The later departure of iconic winning coach Daniel ‘The Druid’ Leclerq led to a gradual decline. Lens festered in the lower flight.

Promotion in 2014 coincided with the closure of the Stade Bollaert-De-lilis for renovation during 2014-15. Abandoning their ground of 41,000 capacity – 5,000 more than the town itself – RCL played home fixtures at nearby Amiens and attracted 70,000 to the Stade de France for games with Paris Saint-Germain and Marseille.

Sadly, mismanagement saw Lens forcibly relegated before they had even begun their top-flight return. A demotivated side finished bottom of La Ligue on points anyway. Now RC Lens are in the second division, aiming for a promotion place – controversially reduced to only two spots this season.

70,000 to the Stade de France for games with Paris Saint-Germain and Marseille.

World Cup hosts in favour of this former coal-mining village says mountains for the football tradition here.

It dates back to 1905, when students gathered at the Café Douterlinghe on boulevard des Écoles to form a club.

With World War I fought on the doorstep, RC Lens took a while to get going. When they did, it was Félix Bollaert who initiated it. A football-loving local mine owner (whatever happened to them?), Bollaert set to work improving post-1918 conditions of work and leisure for his employees. A football stadium was top priority.

Unveiled in 1933, the Stade Félix-Bollaert took its patron’s name after his death in 1936. The French and Polish anthems were played at the opening ceremony. The local workforce – and local football team – contained a significant number of Poles.

As club and community later fell on hard times, it was André Delilis, local mayor for three decades, who revived both. This modern-day Bollaert had the town council buy the ailing club and persuaded the French footballing authorities to bring Euro 84 to this bleak corner of north-east France. Lens’ crumbling stadium was rebuilt.

Delilis then landed the bigger prize of the World Cup 1998. Sadly, one game saw German hooligans attack police, leaving one officer, Daniel Nivel, in a coma. England fans have a different picture of Lens. It was here that David Beckham made his arrival onto the world stage with a 30-yard free-kick strike against Colombia.

For Euro 2016, the Lens stadium has been renamed after both Bollaert and Delilis, who died 2012. Sadly, RC Lens won’t be able to repeat their feat of 1998 by winning the French title the same year.
Bearings
The nearest airport to Lens is Lille, 7km (4.5 miles) south of its city centre. An hourly shuttle bus (single €7, return €9) connects with the centre. Euralille is a hub for Eurostar services with London St-Pancras.

From Paris Nord to Lens, domestic trains take 1hr 10min, the cheapest tickets around €35.

Lens does have a local bus service, Tadao, but distances between station, stadium and town centre are easily walkable.

For the stadium, turn left out of the station to the end of rue Jean Letienne, cross the main road onto rue Maurice Carton and turn right by the park – the Bollaert-Delilis is ahead of you. Allow 10-15mins.

Taxis stand outside the train station. To call one, contact Ass.Lensoise de Taxi (+33 3 21 28 36 36).

Bed
With the opening of the Louvre-Lens gallery in 2012, Lens has been geared towards tourism. The Tourist Office has a comprehensive database of hotels in the region.

Right by Lens stadium, the 54-room Hôtel Espace Bollaert is a tasteful three-star with arty touches whose bar offers TV sports and billiards. Diagonally opposite Lens station, the Hôtel de France (2 place du Général de Gaulle, +33 3 21 28 18 10) is pretty run-down but cheap. Round the corner, le Paris-Brest, taken over by a friendly North-African couple, is a bit more basic.

About 4km north of town, the outdoor pool and contemporary furnishings of the homely Lensotel, near the Centre Commercial Lens 2, may make it worth the bother of an out-of-town stay – the nearby Campanile is a bit more basic.
Stadium
The new Stade de Bollaert-Delilis was reopened for the first home match of 2015-16 after its €70 million rebuild. Capacity, a bone of contention among petitioning fans, is now 38,000 – some 3,000 lower than the pre-2014 figure but still more than the population of Lens itself.

The reason is enshrined in the stadium name. Félix Bollaert was head of the local mine company, which in 1929 bought a large patch of land west of the town centre. Despite the discovery of several unexploded grenades from World War I, a stadium was built in four years. Bollaert died in 1936 – a year later Lens reached the top flight. By the 1970s, with the club cash-strapped and in decline, and the stadium in decay, Lens city council bought the ground for a nominal fee and set about renovating it. It was further developed before hosting Euro 84, which saw the opening of the large East Stand of 20,000 places. By the early 1990s, capacity had passed 50,000, reduced by 10,000 as the Félix-Bollaert became all-seated for the 1998 World Cup. Three of its stands were knocked down and rebuilt for the occasion, sadly marred by terrible violence for the Germany-Yugoslavia clash.

For Euro 2016, the €70-million rebuild keeps the fiercest home support in the Tribune Marek-Xercès along one sideline. Opposite, the Tribune Lepagnot accommodates VIPs and sponsors. Behind the goal, away fans gather in the Tribune Trannin, home ones in the Tribune Delacourt.
Beer

Lens has decided to ban the sale of alcohol on match days.

Bars by Lens stadium remained popular during the rebuild of 2014-15. Supporters’ buses continued to set off from betting bar Le Racing (5 route de la Bassée) – as they have done for 30 years of away travel. It stands near the junction with route de Béthune, where former Le Bollaert pre-match bar is now a Corsican restaurant, Le Maquis. Turn the corner on Béthune and you come to La Mi-Temps (No.24), a real RCL hang-out. A row of scarves over the bar counter complements arty images of local football scenes, with a Jackson Pollock touch. It does cheap lunches, too.

The RCL bar par excellence is Chez Muriel (17 rue Edouard Bollaert), whose landlady has been talking Racing form with regulars for 35 years and counting. The league ladder is faithfully annotated every weekend, while photos and souvenirs testify to past RCL triumphs and European ventures.

In town a short walk away, bars line the main street, boulevard Emile Basty, including football-focused locals’ spot Reinitas (No.94), with RCL match scarves and pennants and a TV for live action. Nearby Les Pirates (No.106) is a late-night spot.

Two expat-friendly pubs stand near a major junction in the town centre: the Irish Tavern is a two-floor spot with daytime opening weekdays and DJs at night; Mac Ewan’s opens from 4pm and is more sport-oriented. Of the French haunts, Le Sporting (38 rue de la Gare) had to close in 2014 (anyone want to buy a classic corner bar?), while at the station, La Loco (105 rue Jean Letiennel) combines its previous guise of Lens Frites with a burger bar, and large displays of yellow and red.

FIXTURES

June 11, 3pm CET Switzerland-Albania
June 16, 3pm CET England-Wales
June 21, 9pm CET Turkey-Czech Republic
June 25, 9pm CET Round of 16

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Lille

Introduction
The Eurostar hub of Lille by the Belgian border is home to one of the most successful French clubs in recent years – and a new stadium, played at the futuristic Stade Pierre Mauroy, set for Euro 2016.

This club is 2011 French champions LOSC Lille. Pierre Mauroy was the local mayor who stepped in when the City became its major shareholder in 1980.

Though modern-day LOSC were formed in 1944, their roots date back the very beginnings of the French game.

Olympique Lillois were formed in 1902, based at the Café Bellevue on Lille’s main square and playing at the Stade Victor-Boucquey on avenue de Dunkerque. Under the helm of secretary and later president of the club and regional league Henri Jooris, Olympique headed the thriving football scene of north-east France either side of World War I.

Also prominent were Iris Club Lillois and Sporting Club Fives, based at the Stade Jules-Lemaire in the Fives area of town. Fives embraced professionalism and reached the French Cup final in 1941.

The Stade Victor-Boucquey was re-named after Jooris following his death in 1940. It staged one game at the 1938 World Cup, Hungary’s 2-0 win over Switzerland.

Olympique amalgamated with Iris Club, and then, in 1944, Fives, to create today’s Lille Olympique Sporting Club.

LOSC did the double in 1946 and became regular cup winners and championship challengers. Switching home games between the crumbling Stade Henri-Jooris and the former Fives home of Stade Jules-Lemaire, LOSC moved into a new stadium, the Grimonprez-Jooris, in 1975.

Close to the old Henri-Jooris and the childhood home of locally born Général de Gaulle, the Grimonprez-Jooris was unsuitable for LOSC when they qualified for the Champions League in 2001. Home games were held in Lens. A long-term solution was needed.

Film producer Michel Seydoux, club president from 2002, created a centre for training and development, and hired coach Claude Puel for the first team. In six years under Puel, Lille finished league runners-up in 2005 and made the knock-out stages of the Champions League.

By 2010, Belgian prodigy Eden Hazard, nurtured by Lille, debuting at 16, was ready to shine in attacking midfield. Fellow midfielder Rio Mavuba, born stateless on a boat off the coast of Angola, had the drive and personal touch to captain the outfit, spearheaded by prolific Senegalese Moussa Sow and savvy Gervinho, whom coach Rudi Garcia would later take to Roma.

The result was the double of 2010-11, a high-scoring triumph that lifted Hazard, Cabaye, Gervinho and Garcia into the limelight. The three players left for the Premier League, Garcia later for Serie A.

Based at the sports ground of the Stadium Nord, renamed Lille Métropole, LOSC maintained a Champions League position thanks to on-loan Joe Cole.

Shortly afterwards, but after a decade of debate, a new 50,000-capacity arena opened for the 2012-13 season, moving Lille onto a higher, international level.

The Stade Pierre-Mauroy shifted Lille’s football hub from the grey terraced streets north of the centre, where little changed since de Gaulle’s day, to the eastern suburb of Villeneuve d’Ascq, a contemporary complex of science and technology.

Still standing proud near the old stadium, and close to de Gaulle’s house, Au Celtique on place de St-André is a classic football bar where a century of local soccer history is revered.
Bearings

Lille Airport is at Lesquin, 7km (4.5 miles) south of the city centre. An hourly shuttle bus (single €7, return €9) connects with the Euralille commercial centre in town, journey time 20 mins. Euralille is set between the city’s two train stations, Lille Europe and Lille-Flandres, a short walk apart and close to the centre. Taxi Union (+33 3 20 06 06 06) charges around €20 from the airport into town.

Lille is linked to London St Pancras by Eurostar, with flights every 2hrs, journey time 1hr 30min. Trains come into Lille Europe.

Local transport run by Transpole consists of two fast and frequent metro lines, two tramlines and buses. A single ticket (transfers allowed) is €1.50, a day pass €4, two days €7.50. Three metro stops serve the stadium, none right next door. The one named after the stadium, 4 Cantons Grand Stade, at the end of the yellow M1 line, is the furthest away, a leafy walk through the university complex. On the same line, one stop nearer town, Cité Scientifique Pr Gabillard is in the same wooded complex and slightly closer. Two stops away, seven from Gare Lille Flandres, Villeneuve d’Ascq Hôtel de Ville gives access to the bars and restaurants on place Salvador Allende. The stadium is less than 10min away.

Bed

Lille Tourist Office has a hotel booking service and weekend packages. Near the stadium, by boulevard de Tournai, stand three hotels. The Park Inn by Radisson Lille Grand Stade is the classiest (and priciest), with a gym and conference facilities. Next door, the B&B Hotel LILLE Stade Pierre Mauroy is a functional and affordable option, while the Tulip Inn Lille Grand Stade is a more business-friendly choice.

Hotels surround the two train stations in town: Flandre-Angleterre is one of several while nearer the station of the same name, Lille Europe is slightly classier. Just behind, the Suite Novotel Lille Europe Hotel is a budget option. Also nearby, in the complex near Cité Scientifique metro station, the Ascotel is a neat three-star. Halfway between the stadium and Villeneuve d’Ascq metro, Hotel Stars is a budget option.
Renamed in honour of the recently departed mayor behind the project, the Stade Pierre Mauroy was opened in August 2012.

Previously, LOSC and antecedents Olympique and Fives had played at the Stades Henri-Jooris and Jules-Lemaire, before moving into the new stadium of Grimonprez-Jooris in 1975. Proximity to Lille’s historic citadel had prevented the club from being able to expand, and debates between club, engineers, architects, historians and conservations raged for years.

During this time, LOSC moved out to the eastern suburb of Villeneuve d’Ascq, to play at a sports complex initially named the Stadium Nord. As it became obvious that the Grimonprez-Jooris would have to be demolished – a process almost as expensive as expanding it would have been – so a new arena 2km south of the Stadium Nord was planned.

An energy-saving arena of just over 50,000 capacity, with a retractable roof, the stadium immediately attracted over 30,000 season-ticket holders before its inauguration against Nancy in August 2012 – nearly twice the average crowd at the Stadium Nord the season before.

Cost €324 million to build, €282 for the stadium, part-funded by the Metropolitan Community of Lille and regional council. Work started in September 2010 and continued for nearly two years.

An energy-saving arena of just over 50,000 capacity, with a retractable roof, the stadium immediately attracted over 30,000 season-ticket holders before its inauguration against Nancy in August 2012 – nearly twice the average crowd at the Stadium Nord the season before.

Surrounded by hotels and restaurants, the future Stade Pierre Mauroy cost €324 million to build, €282 for the stadium, part-funded by the Metropolitan Community of Lille and regional council. Work started in September 2010 and continued for nearly two years.

France. Able to be quickly adapted to a 29,500-capacity concert arena, the stadium is laid out in two main tiers for LOSC games.

North (gates C-E) along main boulevard de Tournai and South Stands (I-L) are behind each goal, East (F-H) and West (M, N, A, B) the sidelines. For league games, away fans are allocated a sector between gates H and I, in the south-east corner of the stadium.
Beer
Local Flemish influence means that the city’s bars are well stocked with Belgian beers, of the lager, wheat and fruit varieties.

Of the string of outlets at Les Terrasses on the boulevard de Tournai side of the stadium, the only two bars are recommended La Regie (‘culture pub’) and the standard Beers & Co. Pub-like La Regie (featuring ‘Flair-bartending’) features a big screen for football coverage. Tables are reserved pre- and post-match but you should find elbow room at the long bar counter.

The only bar close to Villeneuve d’Ascq Hôtel de Ville metro station is corner spa Le Mondrian on place Salvador Allende. Large, bare and unwittingly retro, it serves locals with cheap beers (including Pelforth) and wines, and has been known to distribute LOSC match tickets at the tabac counter at one end of the bar.

In the city centre, while terrace cafés and faux pubs abound, the main bar street is rue Masséna and offshoots. Arguably the most popular, its ever-busy terrace and blackboard of scheduled TV sports overlooking a downtown junction of streets, Magnum (No.55-57) attracts a mainly French crowd. On the same stretch, the more bar-like Shooters (No.23-25) offers TV football amid retro US decor.

Nearby Temple’s Bar (No.20) and superior Le Sherwood (No.40) appeal to the expat crowd – elsewhere downtown you’ll also find Tir Na Nog (30 place Philippe Le Bon), MacEwan’s (8 place Sebastopol), O’Scotland (168 rue de Solférino), L’Irlandais (160 rue Solférino) and, inside Lille Europe station, O’Conway’s.

Of the many bars around the station, Les 3 Brasseurs brews its own beer.

For a real taste of local football history, Au Celtique (7 place de St-André) north of the city centre near the old stadium brims with classic memorabilia such as souvenirs from the 1948 French Cup Final and any number of scarves and signed photos. There’s a kitchen, too.

**FIXTURES**
- June 12, 9pm CET Germany-Ukraine
- June 15, 3pm CET Russia-Slovakia
- June 19, 9pm CET France-Switzerland
- June 22, 9pm CET Ireland-Italy
- June 26, 6pm CET Round of 16
- July 1, 9pm CET QF

For more information, visit www.liberoguide.com
2016 has been a memorable year for Lyon and its flagship club, Olympique Lyonnais (‘OL’). First came the unveiling of the Parc Olympique Lyonnais, the long-awaited new stadium due to host six matches, including one semi-final, at Euro 2016.

Then, from February, OL went on a 14-game streak of 11 wins, two draws and one narrow defeat, a run that culminated with the 6-1 destruction of Monaco, Lyon’s nearest rivals for a group stage spot in the Champions League 2016-17, behind Paris Saint-Germain.

France’s second city and gastronomic capital only became a real football hub in the 21st century. Entrepreneur Jean-Michel Aulas had taken over his home-town club in 1987, promising to make it a European powerhouse. Producing players and signing future stars such as Michael Essien and Florent Malouda and allowing them to flourish, OL enjoyed unprecedented domestic success and made significant profits from selling players on.

As well as those seven straight titles, Lyon reached the knock-out stages of the Champions League every season but two over the course of the decade.

Not bad for a club that was founded as recently as 1950.

The club’s former ground of the Stade Gerland was built as a velodrome and athletics ground either side of World War I. It had been slated to host one game at the 1938 World Cup but Sweden were allowed a free passage to the next round as their opponents, Austria, had been swallowed up as part of Nazi Germany three months earlier.

Lyon Euro 2016

Welcome to Lyon

Lyon did host a semi-final of Euro 84, a surprise win for Spain over Denmark, and the tense group game between the USA and Iran at the 1998 World Cup. The Gerland will also be remembered as the site of the death of Cameroonian midfielder Marc-Vivien Foé, who collapsed in a Confederations Cup semi-final here in 2003.

What will happen to the Stade Gerland from now on isn’t clear. It was even passed over a site for a Euro 2016 fan zone for central place Bellecour.

Over in Décines-Charpieu, a suburb some 12km east of Lyon, the Parc Olympique Lyonnais, the third biggest stadium in France, centrepieces a 50-hectare site slated to become ‘OL Land’. Two hotels, a swimming pool and a commercial centre will be ranged around an OL Museum – and alongside training facilities to keep the Lyon gravy train running.

Lyon Euro 2016
Bearings

Lyon–St Exupéry airport is 20km (13 miles) south-east of the city centre, connected by Rhône Express tram (€16/€27.50 return, every 15min, every 30min after 7pm, last service midnight, 30min journey time). A taxi should cost around €40-€45. Local firms include Lyon Taxis (+33 4 86 68 88 77, +33 6 11 95 54 77) and Taxi Lyonnais (+33 4 78 26 81 81).

The Rhône Express runs to Part-Dieu, the city’s main train station, via Vaulx-en-Velin La Soie, towards the new stadium that you’ll pass on the way. Both Part-Dieu and Vaulx-en-Velin have match-day tramlinks.

Local transport (TCL) consists of a four-line metro, a five-line tramway system and buses. Tickets are €1.80 (€2 on board), €5.50 for one day and various other passes. Day tickets must be validated on each journey.

On match days, 2.5hrs before kick-off and 1hr after the final whistle, shuttle trams serve the stadium. Look out for the red N (‘Navette Tramway’) sign near Part-Dieu station (exit on the Rhône Express side, walk about 350 metres to the right, it’s signposted) and from Vaulx-en-Velin La Soie at the end of red metro line A. Journey times 25min and 10min respectively.

You can also reach the stadium by Tramway 3 from Part-Dieu (Rhône Express side; every 7-15min, evenings every 30min) to Décines Grand Large (journey time 20min). Signs for the Parc lead you down rue Francisco Ferrer, to Turkish restaurant Le Mevlana, by a roundabout, where you turn left. After 200 metres, the stadium will appear on your right. Allow 10min from the tramway stop.

Bed

The local tourist office on place Bellecour has a room-booking service www.en.lyon-france.com/Sleep.

There’s a handful of hotels walking distance to the stadium, just the other side of the Rocade Est A-road. They are accessible for pedestrians or one stop on the No.85 bus from the Peyssilieu stop directly opposite the affordable, standard B&B Hôtel Lyon Meyzieu Grand Stade on rue de la République.

Just around the roundabout, a cluster of three chain hotels includes the 30-room Abys is a basic, clean two-star with weekend reductions and, behind it, the three-star Comfort Hotel Stadium Euro-expo Lyon, with big-screen TVs in its 73 rooms. Between them is the three-star Hôtel Grand Est.

Around Part-Dieu station, one building houses an ibis Budget, an ibis Styles and a Mercure – with a Campanile behind them. Through the station on the city side, you’ll find a Novotel, alongside the three-star Athena.

Right on Bellecour, beside the Euro 2016 fanzone, the Hôtel Royal is a classy landmark set above a culinary institute run by legendary Lyon chef Paul Bocuse. Nearby, three-star Hôtel des Artistes is a suitably awash with paintings.

By the cluster of bars on the Vieux Lyon side of pont de la Feuillée, St-Paul is a clean two-star, Le Phénix is one star above while the school-themed Collège Hotel delivers a charming four-star stay and fine local cuisine in its adjoining Barâgones restaurant – where OL games are screened over drinks.
At the height of Lyon’s hegemony, shortly after the last of seven consecutive titles in 2008, club president Jean-Michel Aulas revealed his plans for **OL Land**. Comprising a 59,000-capacity stadium, hotels and a leisure centre, it was sited at Décines-Charpieu, out towards the airport. Costing some €410 million, the project was announced nearly two years before France won hosting rights for Euro 2016.

Work began in 2012, the first stone was laid in 2013 and OL opened the stadium against Troyes in January 2016. Crowds have often surpassed 55,000 – only Marseille can claim better. The stadium has also hosted major international rugby.

End to end, though, this is a soccer arena, with home fans behind each goal and the AirFibr hybrid grass pitch up close to the spectators. Sound bounces off the photovoltaic roof to create a cauldron of noise for the match-long call-and-response chants of local Gones supporters – OL have a stadium they can be proud of.

Construction of the rest of the complex will be completed after Euro 2016.
Beer

Within the stadium, the Brasserie des Lumières requires reservation on match days. Nearby, Le Couëron is an affordable, unpretentious, two-room restaurant run by Véronique and Jean-Jacques Mirzoian for more than 30 years. For match days, they put a makeshift bar on the forecourt to create a real pre-game atmosphere, with the stadium just opposite.

Nearby, on a corner by the roundabout towards Décines Grand Large tramway stop, Le Mevlana is a standard Turkish restaurant, with kebab platters at €10. It has a backyard with tables but no booze – this is a dry ship.

In town, bouchons and Bocuse not bars and beer bring tourists to Lyon, but traditional local restaurants and world-famous chefs can be complemented by a lively nightlife driven by a significant student population.

Bars cluster around a small area between St-Paul and Vieux Lyon stations, and the river. On facing waterfront corners, the Wallace Bar and Elephant & Castle pub are pleasantly busy during happy hour – the E&C goes big on Sunday lunches, Wells & Young’s beers and TV football.

Further down the riverfront, on rue St Georges, behind the church and footbridge of the same name, Johnny’s Kitchen and Johnny Walsh’s complement each other perfectly, one great for superior daytime dishes and chatty evening beers, the other springing to life after midnight.

Over the river, by focal place Bellecour and the Euro fanzone, Ed’s is a burger-and-cocktail joint, more US in style but sure to screen big matches. Towards Cordeliers metro station, near place des Jacobins on rue de la Monnaie, King Arthur is in the same family as Elephant & Castle and other Brit-style pubs across France. TV sport is the big draw here.

If you’re looking for something more local, there’s a cluster of bars behind the Opera House, on rue de l’Arbre and the other side of the Opera House, tucked up rue du Griffon, Flanigan’s is a popular, late-opening venue with live music, pub grub and TVs everywhere.

Moving back towards Vieux Lyon on rue Constantine, 405 (at No.9) offers generous happy hours to sample its many draught beers and gawp at sport.

Finally, right in Part-Dieu station, facing towards town, O’Conways is convenient for a first or farewell pint in Lyon.

**FIXTURES**

June 13, 9pm CET Italy-Belgium
June 16, 6pm CET Nth Ireland-Ukraine
June 19, 9pm CET Romania-Albania
June 22, 6pm CET Hungary-Portugal
June 26, 3pm CET Round of 16 July 6, 9pm CET SF

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Marseille

Introduction
The regenerated, cosmopolitan port of Marseille is home to the only French club to truly hold a city in its grip: Olympique Marseille, known by all as l’OM.

No arena in France can provide the kind of atmosphere generated at the fiery Stade Vélodrome. Backdropped by the hills of Provence, this 67,000-capacity venue has the fiery colour more familiar to the passionate stadia of Spain or Italy.

Whereas much of southern France is in thrall to rugby, Marseille is firmly football personified by its flagship club and fans.

Formed in 1899, OM were pioneers of the French game. Competing in the early French amateur and professional leagues, Marseille were cup specialists, winning six trophies between the wars. After the first in 1924, a tradition was set, locals celebrating around the Vieux Port.

Back then, OM played at the tiny Stade de l’Huеaune, near the stream of the same name.

In 1934, the Stade Vélodrome was commissioned as a venue for cycling and football – and as a source of local pride by mayor Alexandre Ribot. Marseille had just seen the slaying of Yugoslav King Alexander I, an event of Kennedy-like proportions. The city needed something great and good.

The two main stands, the Jean Bouin and the Ganay, were named after heroic local sportsmen. Athlete Bouin, an early victim of World War I, lost the 1912 Olympic 5,000 metres in the world’s first photo finish. Gustave Ganay was a Marseille-born cyclist who died when crashing at full pelt at the Parc des Princes in 1926.

For the 1938 World Cup here, star player Leόnidas of Brazil was controversially left out of the semi-final. Italy triumphed, then won their second consecutive trophy.

The first hero of the Vélodrome was Larbi Ben Barek. The original ‘Black Pearl’, Barek grew up an orphan in poverty in Morocco. Playing for US Marocaine, he was discovered by Marseille. After a stunning debut, he was picked for France. As war approached, he moved to Paris, before returning to Marseille.

In the mid 1960s, chairman Marcel Le-clerc revamped the Vélodrome as a real football arena. He brought in stars from the 1970 World Cup, including Brazilian Jairzinho. The club did the double in 1972.

The most memorable match here didn’t involve l’OM but Platini’s France. For the dramatic 3-2 semi-final win over Portugal at Euro 84, BBC commentator John Motson, for once, lost his voice.

After entrepreneur Bernard Tapie arrived in 1985, the club scaled unprecedented heights – and plunged to depths – never known in the French game. In came top-quality players, both French Jean-Pierre Papin, Marcel Desailly, Didier Deschamps) and foreign (Chris Waddle, Rudi Völler, Alen Boksic).

L’OM won four titles in a row. In 1993, Marseille beat AC Milan 1-0 to win the inaugural Champions League. France had at last won the trophy it had given the world – until a domestic match-fixing scandal broke. L’OM were stripped of their 1993 league title and top-flight status. Tapie was jailed.

Thanks to a prolific Tony Cascarino and Marseille’s loyal following, the club clawed their way back. The Vélodrome was revamped for the 1998 World Cup, when the Vieux Port was swamped by Dutch, Argentine and Brazilian fans. From 2011, the stadium underwent a three-year overhaul for Euro 2016.

As for OM, by the time current French national coach Didier Deschamps arrived in 2009, the club once again had the highest average gates in France, and a new team featuring winger Hatem Ben Arfa. A League Cup win in 2010 was followed by a league title. Key players were later sold off, including Ben Arfa and Loïc Rémy. OM are still in the process of rebuilding.
Bearings
Aéroport Marseille-Provence is 27 km (17 miles) north-west from town, linked by a shuttle bus (every 15-20min, journey time 25 minutes, €8/€8.50 inc 1 onward journey, €12.80/€13.60 return) that runs to Gare St-Charles station. A taxi (+33 4 91 02 20 20) should cost €50.

The station, a 10min walk downhill to town, is the crossing point of the two-line metro system, complemented by buses and two tramlines. A single ticket is €1.50, a 24hr pass €5.

The Vélodrome is located by Rond Pont du Prado metro station on line 2.

If you’re getting a taxi, traffic can be heavy along the main road from the town centre, boulevard Michelet. Several city buses also run along the boulevard: No.83 goes down to the seafront, offering a winning combination of beach and top-notch football.

Bed
There’s a room-booking service at marseille-tourisme.com.

Convenient for the Vélodrome, the Adagio Access Marseille Prado Périer offers affordable apartment-style units with hotel accoutrements, such as a reception area. The same group has other properties by the Vieux Port and station.

The Vieux Port is surrounded by other hotels, such as the classic mid-range Alizé, right above the Brasserie OM. The nearby Escale Oceania is also mid-range and well located. Around the harbour you’ll also find the Belle-Vue and the New Hotel Vieux Port, with room prices raised for sea views.

By the station, you’ll find a prominent Holiday Inn Express and a few cheapies on the right-hand side as you walk down the grand staircase. These include the Terminus St-Charles, the former Beaulieu.
Stadium
The fiery Stade Vélodrome is the finest club ground in all of France. Built for the 1938 World Cup, and successfully staging another 60 years later, this one-time cycling and football arena is now fully geared up for Euro 2016.

The revamp of the Vélodrome – city mayor Jean-Claude Gaudin pledged not to sell its name to any sponsor – involved a three-year, €267-million refit. With the reopening in October 2014, capacity hit just over 67,000.

The open bowls behind each goal are the Virage Sud, home of the club’s South Winners, CCS and Ultras fan groups, and the Virage Nord de Peretti, named after Patrice de Peretti, aka Depe. Fan leader Peretti supported his beloved l’OM with his torso bare, home or away, whatever the temperature. He died suddenly in 2000, aged only 28. His MTP (‘Mar- seille Tout Puissant’) group are in the Virage Nord, along with the Yankees and the Dodgers.

For domestic fixtures, away fans, temporarily allocated a far corner of the sideline Ganay Stand at the Virage Nord end, are now back in the opposite Jean Bouin.
Beer
A couple of bars stand by the Vélo-drome, diagonally facing each other across boulevard Michelet. On the stadium side, Le Fair Play gets mobbed on match days, particularly its terrace. Opposite, the Brasserie du Stade displays a museum of OM photos, including a large one of Basile Boli’s decisive header from the 1993 Champions League Final.

In town, right on the Vieux Port, the former OM Café is now the upscale Brasserie OM (3 quai des Belges), without the adjoining ticket or souvenir outlet that once stood here.

Around the harbour is the place to be, particularly the stretch of quai de Rive Neuve around the timeless Bar de la Marine (No.15), backdrop for the Colin Firth proposal scene in ‘Love Actually’. Shamrock next door goes big on sport, while O’Malley’s (No.9) basks in a huge, harbourfront terrace.

Round the corner, the Little Temple Bar (7 rue de la Paix) is more about drinking than posing by the waterfront. The other sport-centric expat bar of note is Le Kilt (169 avenue du Prado), one metro stop towards town from the stadium, with a large terrace.

Once the finest football bar in town, the Bar des Allées on allées Léon-Gam-betta is now a souvenir and ticket outlet for the Club Central des Supporters. Instead, at the junction with boulevard d’Athènes, the more prosaic Brasserie des Allées is a corner bar filled with football souvenirs and talk.

FIXTURES
June 11, 9pm CET England-Russia
June 15, 9pm CET France-Albania
June 18, 6pm CET Hungary-Iceland
June 21, 6pm CET Poland-Ukraine
June 30, 9pm CET QF
July 7, 9pm CET SF

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Nice

Introduction
Host of the Euro 2016 qualifying draw and home to a new football stadium built to stage the competition, Nice is set on re-establishing itself at the forefront of the French game. Ignored for the 1938 and 1998 World Cups in favour of Antibes and Montpellier, Nice also hosted a rare international in 2014, France playing Paraguay.

Flagship club OGC Nice achieved a strong league finish in 2013, six decades after a string of championship wins and subsequent mediocrity. True, fourth place was followed by a weak showing in the Europa League – but this was the Eaglets’ first Euro campaign for 15 years. A heroic extra-time cup defeat that February to moneyed Monaco by a ten-man OGCN only served to bolster local pride. As the scarves say in Nice bars, ‘Allez Nissa La Bella’ – ‘Go Beautiful Nice’.

The club vacated its century-old, city-centre Stade du Ray in 2013 – but in the cafés around it, the football pages of ‘Nice-Matin’ are still debated from opening time onwards. Unlike the rest of the rugby-blighted south, Nice has always been firmly football-focused.

Though the modern French game first developed in Paris and the Channel coast, the south of France was also an early pioneer and later producer of talent. Zinedine Zidane, Patrick Vieira, Eric Cantona and Jean Tigana all started their careers by the Med. Close to North Africa and the Basque Country, the area has also been a staging post. Just Fontaine, scorer of a record number of goals at a single World Cup finals, made the journey from Casablanca to OGC Nice, dominant in the 1950s. A founding member of the French league in 1932-33, ‘le Gym’ developed rivalries with Marseille and, in particular, Cannes – the Derby de la Côte d’Azur.

Cannes would later fade, leaving Nice to challenge the big northern clubs of Reims and Lille. Fontaine moved from Nice to Reims in 1956, though Nice still beat a strong Rangers side in the European Cup of 1956-57. The great Real Madrid stopped the Eaglets’ progress, as they did again in 1960.

The next great European night at the Stade du Ray was the 3-0 win over Barcelona in the UEFA Cup of 1973-74, Marc Molitor and Dominique Baratelli taking the Aiglons to a runners-up league spot in 1976.

Left in the shadow of Marseille, Monaco and later Montpellier, Nice won the cup in 1997 but suffered a series of relegations. The move to the Allianz Riviera, north-west of the city at Saint-Isidore by the A8 motorway known as ‘La Provençale’, came early in the 2013-14 season. Nice-born city mayor Christian Estrosi has promised a viable solution for the old Stade du Ray. Seven thousand fans bade farewell to its home end, the Tribune Populaire Sud, by walking en masse from place Masséna for its last match, against Montpellier in September 2013.
The Aéroport Nice Côte d'Azur is 6.5km (four miles) south-west of the city. EasyJet uses terminal 2, BA and Ryanair terminal 1, a free shuttle linking the two. Shuttle bus (€6) Nos. 98 and 99 run to town every 20min and 30min respectively – No. 99 runs to Nice main train station (15min). Both call at both terminals. City bus No. 23 (€1.50, day pass €5, ten-journey multi €10) serves terminal 1 and Thiers/ Gambetta near the station.

Single tickets for all airport services are valid for an onward journey by bus or tramway. The one-line tramway will be complemented by two new lines, one serving the airport and Allianz Riviera, by 2017.

Central Taxi Riviera Nice (+33 4 93 13 78 78) charges around €25-€30 from airport to town.

Match-day bus No. 95 sets off every 6min from Hôpital St-Roch east of the city centre, passing rue de l'Hôtel des Postes and its continuations of rue de la Liberté/de la Bufla/Dante. Journey time to the stadium is 1hr. For the way back, it terminates at the cathedral.

Alternatively, on all days of the week, bus No. 11 sets off from the Lycée Masséna by the cathedral, passing the Carrefour supermarket at Carras Frémont, then runs to the stadium area, 40min from Masséna, 20min from Carras Frémont. The nearest stop of La Carrière is a tricky walk to reach the stadium – it would be easier to alight at Saint-Isidore/Eglise or Vérola. Coming back, the No. 11 only goes as far as Carras Frémont.

Another way is to take the train from Nice-Ville to St Isidore (€1.70, 10-15min journey time), though services are every 2hrs at weekends. From St Isidore, it’s a 10min walk along a marked route to the stadium.

Bed

The Nice Tourist Office runs an online booking service.

Near the Allianz Riviera, four-star Servotel on avenue Vérola should provide the Servella family ample reward for 60 years’ work in the business, guests taking advantage of the newly convenient location, outdoor pool and expansive St-Joseph restaurant. Diagonally opposite across, two-star Kyriad Nice Stade is a convenient chain with weekend deals.

In town, seafront four-star Beau Rivage offers contemporary style with timeless class – plus the longest private beach on the Riviera. Nearby Le Méridien basks in its prestigious address of 1 promenade des Anglais, the picter of its 300-plus rooms offering sea views. It has pools indoor and out, a rooftop restaurant and a private beach, too. Modernised, waterfront Hôtel Suisse is nearer the bars and restaurants of Vieux-Nice.

Of the plethora of downtown hotels and convenient for the station, Petit Louvre (10 rue Emma et Philippe Tiranty) is cheap but comfortable, featured on generic booking sites. In-room WiFi is a plus. Around the station, the Mirabeau is a handy three-star while the Interlaken is affordable if modest.
Stadium
Venue for Euro 2016 and new home of OGC Nice, the Allianz Riviera was opened in September 2013.

Back in 2002, the original plan, was for an expansion of the Stade du Ray, home of the OGC from its inauguration in 1927.

Before then, the club had been based at Les Baumettes, in the west of town just in from the seafront.

Originally known as the Stade Saint-Maurice because of its location north of the city centre, the Stade du Ray saw a 3,000-capacity main stand built in 1948. Crowds of around 20,000 gathered during the club’s golden era of the 1950s, though by the 1990s the Stade du Ray was in need of serious modernisation.

With Nice overlooked as World Cup venue for 1998, local politicians successfully lobbied for hosting rights for Euro 2016.

Given the condition and limitations of the Stade du Ray, in 2006 an out-of-town new-build at Nice-Lingostière was agreed.

Created by Jean-Michel Wilmotte and costing €245 million, the Alliance Riviera puts Nice back on the football map. In 2014, the city hosted its first France international since 1970.

As at the Stade du Ray, the home end is the Populaire Sud, here the nearest to rue du Sapin. For domestic fixtures, away fans are allocated a corner of the opposite goal, Tribune Garibaldi. The press box is in the Tribune Sécurans opposite Garibaldi.
Beer
In the area around the stadium, by Saint-Isidore/Eglise, Les 4 Coins (436 ave Sainte-Marguerite) is a pleasant corner brasserie with bar/betting shop attached.

Nearer the ground, snack bar El Patio (136 boulevard des Jardiniers) has a little terrace and sport on TV.

By the stadium, Chez Stella (280 boulevard des Jardiniers) is a pre-match drinks van with a sit-down terrace, decked out in OGC flags.

Outlets within the stadium itself include the private space of the Fan Club Rouge et Noir, and Pub 1904, accessed by season ticket, both on the Garibaldi side. Opposite, in the Ségurane, upscale Brasserie des Aiglons is reservation-only.

In town, bars line cours Saleya and streets nearby in Vieux-Nice, particularly rue Droite and rue de la Préfecture. Expat-friendly venues include the King’s Pub, Wayne’s and Paddy’s Pub, with the prominent Akathor probably the best of the bunch, with a genuine pub vibe, terrace, live music and big-screen sport. There’s more TV football, party music and towers of beer, at evening-only Check Point, nearer place Masséna, and focused on a younger crowd.

At the very top of rue Droite where it meets rues Collet and Sainte-Claire, family-run Le Sauveur is a classic OGC hang-out, named after the grandfather of the current owner, Sauveur Papa, a mad supporter of Le Gym in the club’s classic era. Among the OGC Nice paraphernalia are messages in praise of the historic region of Savoy and the pan bagnat, a tuna bap, which are to Provence what pasties are to Cornwall.

Towards to the old stadium, behind the station, Le Penalty (2 rue Verrier) is another friendly locals’ bar focused on Nissa La Bella, run by a singing, bearded gentlemen whose portrait sits amid the red-and-black iconography. A St-Omer beer can be enjoyed on the sunny terrace.

On the promenade, Sports 11 is a US-style sports bar-cum-cocktail spot decked out in images and equipment from football, tennis and Formula 1.

**FIXTURES**
June 12, 6pm CET Nth Ireland-Poland
June 17, 9pm CET Spain-Turkey
June 22, 9pm CET Sweden-Belgium
June 27, 9pm CET Round of 16

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Introduction
The role of the French capital in the history and development of the world game cannot be overestimated. The World Cup, the European Championship and the European Cup were devised and agreed upon in the boardrooms of Paris, which has played host to many finals.

The most memorable have involved France itself, namely the European Championship win of 1984 starring Michel Platini and the World Cup win of 1998 starring Zinedine Zidane. The venue for 1984, the Parc des Princes, and the arena built for 1998, the Stade de France, are international stages worthy of any great occasion.

Each is a major host of Euro 2016 – surely to be overshadowed by issues of security after the terrible events in the French capital in November 2015. As part of a city-wide wave of terrorist attacks, the Stade de France was targeted by suicide bombers during a match between France and Germany, explosions clearly heard around the packed arena. Four died outside the ground, including the three attackers.

The tragic events occurred just as the domestic club game is going through a significant and seriously funded revival. Football in the French capital has changed completely thanks to the huge financial injection by the Qatar Investment Authority in Paris Saint-Germain, now crowned champions four times running. Based at the Parc des Princes, until 2013 PSG had only claimed two titles in over 40 years.

As well as Zlatan Ibrahimovic, the signing of David Beckham put PSG onto a level they had never known before. After the first post-Qatar title win of 2013, PSG beat monied Monaco to a second consecutive title in 2014. In 2015, they went one better and won the treble.

2016 saw PSG win the title by mid-March, sweeping everyone aside. There’ll be no more Zlatan in 2016-17, however – and European success has proved elusive.
Paris has two international airports: Charles-de-Gaulle and Orly. CDG is 25km (16 miles) north-east of the city centre. The RER (suburban rail) line B takes 25 minutes to reach the Gare du Nord, the main train station and terminus for Eurostar services from St Pancras. RER trains (single €9.10) run every 15 minutes. A taxi to town should cost about €50.

Some budget airlines use Beauvais airport, 85km (46 miles) north of Paris, linked by buses (€15.90 online/€17) to Porte Maillot (journey time 1hr 15mins).

For zones 1 and 2 (including the Stade de France), For a taxi, call +33 60 76 04 914.

Orly is 13km (8 miles) south of town. The Orlyval shuttle links with Antony on the RER B line (€10.90 including onward journey to town). A taxi to town should cost about €35.

City transport in Paris consists of métro, RER lines, buses and trams. A single ticket is €1.80, a carnet of ten €14.10 and a Mobilis day pass €7.

For the Stade de France, two RER stations, La Plaine-Stade de France (line B) and Stade de France-Saint-Denis (line D) are both one stop from Gare du Nord (12 minutes) but require a ticket (€2.50) beyond zone 1. The day pass Mobilis (€7) for Paris covers this part of zone 2.

From the Gare du Nord, for RER B, follow the plane icons signposted in the RER area – trains for the Stade also serve Charles de Gaulle-Roissy airport. The signs lead you down to adjoining platforms 41 and 43. Check on the departure board that La Plaine-Stade de France is illuminated.

For the Parc des Princes, take métro line 9 to Porte de Saint-Cloud, a short walk from the stadium. As you walk up the avenue des Parc des Princes, the Tribune Paris is to your left.

Line 9 runs through key stations such as Franklin D Roosevelt and Trocadéro near the Eiffel Tower – near the main Euro 2016 fan zone that stretches along Champ de Mars beneath the city’s iconic landmark.
Bed
Room reservations can be made at parisinfo.com.

For the Stade de France, the four-star Suite Novotel is directly opposite, on restaurant-lined rue Jules-Rimet. Rooms start at €110 but are quickly booked for big games. There is also an ibis on two sides of the stadium: Sud and, one star up, Ouest, plus a bottom-of-the-range Formule 1 option nearby.

For the Parc des Princes, by Porte de St-Cloud métro station, the three-star Hôtel Murat usually has doubles for under €170. The nearby Holiday Inn Paris-Auteuil should charge around €270. Convenient for the Eurostar terminus and transport to the Stade de France, hotels of varying quality ring the Gare du Nord. In the Accor group are the ibis Styles Gare du Nord TGV and the four-star Mercure Terminus Nord, along with similarly wallet-friendly Kyriad Paris X Gare du Nord. Squeezed between the chains, the Richmond and the New Hotel are perennial cheapies. Even cheaper, by the Gare de l’Est, the Lorraine (3 rue d’Alsace, +33 1 40 35 81 80) is strictly no-frills but eminently affordable.

Also in the vicinity, and in the lower price range, the Campanile 10 is another chain while the Hôtel des Arts is conveniently located in Bastille.

For St Michel, the Hôtel de Nesle is that rare combination of charming and affordable.
Stadium/Stade de France

The **Stade de France** is the country’s national stadium, due to stage the opening game and final of Euro 2016.

Built for the 1998 World Cup, the Stade is set around a former gasworks in what was run-down **Saint-Denis**. Since then, this futuristic arena has been the main stage for the French game – home of Les Bleus from Zidane to Ben Arfa, scene of every single domestic Cup and League Cup final since 1998 – the Stade has contributed to the revival of the surrounding area, with tall, swish offices and hotels where only derelict buildings used to be.

Sadly, this history has since been overshadowed by the terrible terrorist attacks of November 2015.

The French Football Federation decided to build a new national stadium when France won 1998 hosting rights, after a poor performance at Euro 92. Not having qualified for the previous two major finals, France needed to recapture the glory of the 1980s, when Michel Platini captained the host nation to victory at Euro 84 at the Parc des Princes.

Back then, the Parc was the de facto national stadium. Its expansion was tricky, given the proximity of the Périphérique ring road and residential buildings. The brave step was taken to site the new arena in St Denis, between the city’s main airport of Charles de Gaulle and main station, the Gare du Nord, connected by swift, suburban train, the RER. Even braver was the design, by the four-man (and French) SCAU design team later responsible for the rebuilding of Euro 2016 semi-final venue, the Stade Vélodrome in Marseille.

The major and most expensive feature was the signature elliptical roof, which cost €45 million alone, held up by 18 steel masts and appearing to float over the body of the stadium. ‘Heavier than the Eiffel Tower and longer than the Champs-Elysees,’ as they like to say on the stadium tour, the roof allows in plenty of precious sunlight.

The other key feature was the movable lower stands, slid back for athletics meets and big rock concerts.

The total cost came in at just under €300 million – about a third of the new Wembley a few years later.
Stadium/Parc des Princes

Home of PSG and before that the French national team, the Parc des Princes in south-west Paris near the Bois de Boulogne started life as a velodrome. In fact, it was used as the finish line of the Tour de France until 1967. A venue for the 1900 Olympics but not the 1924 Games, the Parc later fell victim to the building of the city’s ring road, the Périphérique. Rebuilt in 1972, shortly afterwards it became home to PSG, the French national side and, briefly, a revived Racing Club. Only PSG remain, though the Parc did host five games for the 1998 World Cup finals when the Stade de France replaced it as the national stadium. With a capacity of 49,000, the Parc has enjoyed considerable improvement since the recent investment in PSG.

The stadium is divided into a lower red section and upper blue. The hardest home fans, the Kop, occupy the lower Boulogne end nearest Porte de St-Cloud métro. Opposite, the Auteuil end is also PSG. The best seats are in the Présidentielle Francis Borelli by rue du Commandant Guilbaud.

For domestic fixtures, away fans occupy the corner between Auteuil and the Présidentielle, accessed from rue Claude Ferrière. Neutrals may be best placed in the Tribune Paris along the eastern sideline nearest the métro.
Beer
At the *Stade de France*, bars line avenue *Jules Rimet* on the east side of the stadium nearest the main entrance.

The first is *Le Rendez-Vous*, a classic corner brasserie with tasteful decorative nods to rugby and football – note the images of Eric Cantona and David Beckham. Nearby is *La 3ème Mi-Temps*, also recommended, a friendly, laid-back two-floor venue.

Alongside, the more prosaic *Le France* at No.33 is a standard brasserie.

For the *Parc des Princes*, the classic PSG bar has always been *Aux Trois Obus* (120 rue Michel-Ange), right by Porte de St-Cloud métro station. Although now gentrified in retro orange and brown, with arty images of sporting action, this classic Parisian café still features its signature back mirror of the Parc des Princes.

Right by the Parc, *Les Deux Stades* (41 ave du Général Serrail) is a timeless table-football bar, perennially the best choice for a pre-match drink.

Around Paris, there is a bar on every corner. Locals still flock to *Oberkampf* and *Bastille* while tourists swarm around *St Michel*. There, happy hour at 4pm on *rue de la Huchette* sees a frenzy of activity.

Bar staff trying to tempt in punters with promises of cheap (£5!) pints. Venues include *Bull’s Brothers*, *Ze Bar* and *Georges Café*.

Friendlier establishments include the sport-centric expat chain of *Frogpubs*, with five branches in town. These are smart operations with own-brewed beer and a textopint service to buy someone a drink by your mobile phone. Another chain is *O’Sullivans*, which also specialises in post-work drinks, pub grub and TV sports. Half-a-dozen branches are placed in prominent spots around the city. Irish-themed *Corcoran’s* has seven operations around Paris.

On the Left Bank, *The Long Hop* on rue Frédéric Sauton is a long-term favourite, a steep stroll away from *The Bombardier*. On the same side of the Seine, *The Mazet* (61-63 rue St-André-des-Arts) can be great on its night.

**FIXTURES**

**STADE DE FRANCE**
June 10, 9pm CET France-Romania
June 13, 6pm CET Ireland-Sweden
June 16, 9pm CET Germany-Poland
June 22 6pm CET Austria-Iceland
June 27, 6pm CET Round of 16
July 3, 9pm CET QF
July 10, 9pm CET Final

**PARC DES PRINCES**
June 12, 3pm CET Croatia-Turkey
June 15, 6pm CET Switzerland-Romania
June 18, 7pm CET Portugal-Austria
June 21, 6pm CET Nth Ireland-Germany
June 25, 6pm CET Round of 16

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Saint-Étienne

Introduction
The most romantic name in French club football represents the former industrial hub of Saint-Étienne. Forever linked with the great side of the 1970s, AS St-Étienne and the epic 1998 World Cup clash between England and Argentina, this revamped art destination west of Lyon will once again stage a major tournament in 2016.

Geoffroy Guichard was the local entrepreneur behind the Casino supermarket chain, set up in Saint-Étienne. Own-brand goods, loyalty cards, trading stamps, sell-by dates, they all started here. The company started up the sports club in 1912, the football section adopting its green colour scheme and, originally, its name, after World War I.

As a football club, AS St-Étienne are a post-war phenomenon, first winning the title in 1957 and dominating the domestic game from the mid-1960s onwards. At the helm was president Roger Rocher, a former local miner turned industrialist, who had taken over from Geoffroy Guichard’s sport-mad son Pierre in 1961. It was Rocher, a St-Étienne man through and through (‘In football, St-Étienne is the capital, Lyon the suburbs’), who lifted the club to cult status in France, dominating the domestic game long before Marseille or Lyon managed to.

But it was only in the mid-1970s that ‘Les Verts’ began to make progress in Europe. St-Étienne were stopped by Franz Beckenbauer’s Bayern Munich two years running, the second time the disputably thick width of the crossbar preventing the French champions from taking the lead in the 1976 European Cup Final in Glasgow.

AS St-Étienne is also where Michel Platini finished his French playing career before joining Juventus, helping Les Verts to a record tenth title but not making a European final. Three years later, Platini’s France did win Euro 84, their captain scoring a hat-trick at the Geoffroy-Guichard against Yugoslavia in their final group game.

Le Chaudron, as it still nicknamed, ‘The Cauldron’, was relit for the 1998 World Cup. It was Platini’s idea that, given the quality of French infrastructure, groups should not be confined region-by-region, but games distributed around France. Thus crowds at Saint-Étienne saw Austria, Chile, Holland, Iran, Mexico, Morocco, Paraguay, Scotland, Spain and Yugoslavia – the World Cup circus pulling out of town after the heartstopping 2-2 draw between England and Argentina, Beckham’s red card, Michael Owen’s wondergoal, David Batty’s penalty and all.

Meanwhile, AS St-Étienne suffered scandal after scandal and attempted comeback after comeback – while local rivals Olympique Lyon were claiming seven straight titles. With the League Cup win in 2013, AS St-Étienne have bounced back, making European competition five years running. There’s life in Les Verts yet.
Bearings

Saint-Étienne’s underused airport is 12km (7.5 miles) north-west of town. There’s no direct public transport to town. **City bus No.37** only runs to Hôpital Nord, where you must change onto tramway T1 for town, passing the Stade Geoffroy-Guichard. Tramway T2 runs parallel, then onto Saint-Étienne’s train station of **Châteauroux**.

**Radiotaxis St-Étienne** (+33 4 77 25 42 42) charge €20-€25 from airport to town.

The nearest main airport is **Lyon St-Exupéry** but with no direct transport to Saint-Étienne. There’s a direct rhônexpress tram to **Lyon Part-Dieu**, where a train leaves every 30min for St-Étienne Châteauroux (50min journey time, €12).

In Saint-Étienne, transport consists of a two-line tramway and buses. A single ticket is €1.40.

The Geoffroy-Guichard has its own tramstop on the T1 and T2 lines, seven north of the Hôtel de Ville – it’s then an 8min walk along rue Claude Odde/boulevard Roger Rocher.

**Bed**

The **Saint-Étienne Tourist Office** has a comprehensive database of hotels.

Adjoining the supporters’ club bar of Le Chaudron Vert by the stadium, the **Hôtel Nord** (23 rue des Trois Glorieux) is a basic but convenient two-star.

Several hotels stand opposite Châteauroux station, including affordable two-star **Hôtel d’Anjou** and three-star **Terminus du Forez**, with weekend deals and TV football in its bar, La Loco.

Nearby, the three-star **Hôtel Tenor** is a notch above the competition while the **ResidHotel** comprises 76 studios and apartments.

There is plenty of affordable accommodation around the Hôtel de Ville in the city centre. Two-star, design-friendly **Hôtel Continental** offers cheap rooms with shared facilities as well as comfortable, mid-range ones. Opposite, **Hôtel Le Cheval Noir** is more basic but equally friendly. Equally central, some of the rooms in the **Hôtel de la Tour** suffer from years of guests smoking, and those on a budget may be better accommodated at the brighter **Furania**.
Modernised for Euro 2016, the Stade Geoffroy-Guichard has been St-Étienne's home for most of the club's history. It is known as Le Chaudron, the Cauldron, based on its reputation earned and maintained since the 1970s.

Named after the club's founder who bought the land it was built on, the stadium was opened in 1931, when Les Verts were still an essentially a works team. Holding less than 2,000 spectators, with a running track and changing and administrative facilities in the one stand, the Geoffroy-Guichard suited St-Étienne's then modest needs.

A second stand was added soon afterwards but Le Chaudron didn't resemble the English-style football ground of Rocheteau lore until Les Verts' first title win of 1957. With the running track removed and standing areas opened, capacity rose to 25,000-plus, floodlights erected a decade later when the City of Saint-Étienne bought the stadium from the Guichard dynasty. After expansion to nearly 40,000 in the golden years of the late 1960s, the next real overhaul came with the hosting of Euro 84. With three new stands, capacity reached nearly 50,000, and crowds for league games remained high despite the club's demise.

St-Étienne's fortunes were hardly better by the time France 98 came around but, as head of the organising committee, ex-Verts star Michel Plati-ni insisted on the stadium's inclusion. The north and south terraces were knocked down and all-seater stands raised their place. The pitch was also relaid, the perfect canvas for Michael Owen to score his wonder goal for England against Argentina here.

Since then, after talk of a move, the Geoffroy-Guichard has been chosen for Euro 2016. Building works took place between 2011 and 2014, reducing capacity to the current 42,000.

The traditional home end is the Kop Nord, with the Paret Supérieur tier above, mirrored by the Kop Sud with the Snella tier above. For league games, away fans are placed in an area between the Kop Nord and the sideline Pierre Faurand stand. Press, VIP and the best seats are found opposite, the Tribune Officielle.
Beer
The Geoffroy-Guichard does not want for pre-match bars.

Pride of place goes to the Chaudron Vert (23 rue des Trois Glorieuses), the supporters’ bar/restaurant that opened shortly before the memorable night in 1976 when Rocheteau’s Verts beat Dynamo Kyiv across the road. Set by two hypermarkets over the main road north of the stadium, it also features a grill and outdoor bar for warmer nights at the Geoffroy-Guichard.

Closer to the stadium, two bars stand along rue Bergson: the Café des Abattoires (No.137), with its framed flag and TV, and suitably raucous Le Bergson (No.119), bar staff singing along with fans as kick-off approaches. By the club shop, the Casino Cafeteria is a standard pit-stop for a pre-match snack.

The town is well facilitated for bars. Trendy locals gather at L’Excuzé (38 rue de la Résistance), a cool spot with occasionally live music and football screenings. Reconfigured in the spring of 2016, it now features retro TVs. L’Elixir (12 rue Francois Gillet) also concentrates on providing match action and decent sounds.

The Smoking Dog (5 rue Georges Dupré) appeals to locals and expats with a fine range of beers and live sounds. The Soggy Bottom (9 rue des Martyrs de Vingré) stands on the site of an Irish pub of 1998 vintage and also offers live music. St Patrick (44 rue des Martyrs de Vingré) might also be a good option for match-watching.

For after-hours fun, Slag Heaps (8 place Albert Thomas) attracts a slightly edgier, slammer-slurping crowd while country-style Time Well Wasted (66 rue Francis Baulier) focuses as much on big-screen sport as live music.

For a more local crowd, evening-only Barberousse (27 rue Léon Nautin) provides rum shooters to complement TV football, and more sedate Café St Jacques (13 rue des Martyrs de Vingré) is going big on the Euros this summer.

**FIXTURES**
- June 14, 9pm CET Portugal-Iceland
- June 17, 6pm CET Czech Republic-Croatia
- June 20, 9pm CET England-Slovakia
- June 25, 3pm CET Round of 16

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Toulouse

Introduction
The rugby hub of Toulouse is also the home of Toulouse FC, whose Stade Municipal is used for both codes. Set on an island west of the city centre, ‘Le Stadium’ was built for the World Cup of 1938 and hosted several games 60 years later, including Romania’s last-gasp win over England.

Le Stadium and its surroundings have been upgraded and relandscaped to host Euro 2016. Regular hosts TFC ('TéFéCé') continued to use it through 2015–16 – as did multi-titled rugby club Stade toulousain for Heineken Cup and Top 14 fixtures.

This gap in profile between the local sports teams – TFC have only one French Cup to their name – points to football’s patchwork history here. Today’s Toulouse FC derive from Union Sportive Toulouse from the 1970s, themselves derived from the original TFC formed, like Le Stadium, on the eve of the 1938 World Cup.

Teams of local students and enthusiastic amateurs first practised football in the early 1900s but it wasn’t until an exhibition tournament in 1936 here that the idea of a professional team took root. The following year, at a meeting on the main square of place du Capitole, the original Toulouse FC were formed.

TFC made Ligue 1 in 1946 and attracted healthy crowds to Le Stadium, expanded after the war. The club’s best period came in the 1950s, when TFC pushed Reims close for the title in 1955, and won their only trophy, the French Cup, in 1957.

Under Communist millionaire owner Jean-Baptiste Doumeng, TFC maintained a Ligue 1 presence – until his millions ran out. The club was amalgamated with Red Star Paris in 1967 in a doomed attempt to keep it alive.

A decade of inconsistency then followed before international aerospace hub Toulouse had its flagship football club salvaged then sent into back into Europe by a man who made his fortune in airline catering. In 2001, Toulouse-born aeronautical entrepreneur Olivier Sadran stepped in to save his home-town club. Since then, TFC ('TéFéCé') have qualified for both European tournaments, including a debut season in the Champions League in 2007–08.

The same development programme that produced Fabien Barthez in the late 1980s is now bringing more young stars through, players who have kept TFC in Ligue 1 since. In 2015–16, this proved to be a close-run thing.
**Bearings**

Toulouse-Blagnac Airport is 7km (four miles) west of town. A new branch of the T2 tramline runs every 15min via Arènes, terminating at the Palais de Justice over the river, journey times 20min and 30min.

A single journey on the tramline, two-line metro and bus network is €1.60 (valid 1hr or 1hr 30min from the airport), a day pass is €5.50, €8.50/€10.50 for 2/3 days. There are machines at stations and stops, including the airport. You must validate the ticket each time on board the tram/bus or at the metro station, even day passes.

**Capitole Taxi** (+33 5 34 250 250) charges €20-25 from the airport to town.

A new stop on tramway line T1, Croix de Pierre, is a short walk over the water to the stadium. It’s two stops from Arènes (linked with the airport) and four from Palais de Justice on the same T1 line.

On match days, free buses also shuttle from Arènes tramway stop, which links with red métro line A, and the city’s train station of Matablau and bus station alongside.

Empalot and St-Michel Marcel Langer stations on yellow métro line B are about 10-15min walk from the stadium.

**Bed**

You’ll find an [online room-booking service](https://toulouse-visit.com) at toulouse-visit.com.

With the stadium being on an island, there are few accommodation options in the immediate vicinity – though beside St-Michel Marcel Langer métro station you’ll find the Aparthôtel Lagrange City Toulouse Saint Michel, with a mix of comfortable studios for one to six people.

Also on the right bank, nearer to Palais de Justice and close to St Michel bridge, Le Pier Toulouse Hotel has 28 smallish but charming rooms and a panoramic view from its upper terrace. Further up, nearer Esquirol metro and right by the bridge it is named after, the Hôtel des Beaux-Arts is a boutique, upscale four-star. Alongside, the Hotel Garonne is colourful, modern and affordable.

The city centre is full of hotels.

Close to the main square of place du Capitole, the Albert 1er is a superior three-star with a personal touch. Right on the square itself, the Grand Hôtel de l’Opéra is arguably the best address in town, with a spa and hammam to boot. Nearby, Le Grand Balcon is a historic gem, echoing the pre-war Toulouse.

Conveniently set near Jean-Jaurès, crossing point of the metro lines and stop on the airport bus line, mid-range Hôtel Wilson Square is a calm spot despite its city-centre location. The nearby Ours Blanc is one of a family of three two-to-four star hotels in the vicinity.

Both near the station, the Hôtel le 30 Étoiles and the Hôtel Saint-Severin provide modest, wallet-friendly options, as does Le Toulouse at 63 rue Bayard.
The Stadium Municipal, known as 'Le Stadium', was built for the 1938 World Cup. Due to stage one first round match, it ended up hosting two as Cuba’s game with Romania went to a replay after a 3-3 draw. Then it was also referred to as the Stade Chapou – today the name of a swimming pool north of Île du Grand Ramier, the island that had hosted local sports since the 1920s.

Attendances for the two games were just under 10,000. Yet Le Stadium was not even complete – this only happened after World War II.

Regularly filled with crowds of 30,000 plus for big rugby matches, Le Stadium came to life for the round-ball game in the 1980s, and the visits of Maradona’s Napoli and Rinat Dassayev’s Spartak Moscow.

Overlooked for Euro ‘84, Toulouse improved on its functional appearance with it came to France ‘98. Out went the pillars and roof, in came a natural light and a metallo-textile covering. Capacity crept up to 37,000, neutrals enjoying late goals by Romania’s Dan Petrescu and Holland’s Edgar Davids to settle vital ties against England and Yugoslavia respectively.

Today another €40 million has been invested to bring facilities further up to scratch for Euro 2016. Capacity is now 33,150, less than the 35,000 originally envisaged, a slight downsizing of the revamp as budget strings were tightened.

Local architects Cardete & Huet, aka Amsycom, were part responsible for the work, which saw the lower part of the stands knocked down and rebuilt – Le Stadium will also be used as a major concert venue.

For domestic fixtures, home fans are housed in the Virage Est, also named after TFC fan Brice Taton who lost his life in Belgrade.

Away fans are usually allocated a sector in the Virage Ouest and/or given a limited number of places in a far end of the Honneur Nord.

Neutrals are best accommodated in the Honneur Nord or Sud along the sidelines.
Beer
Le Stadium is set in an area of sport and recreation on an island – there are no bars or restaurants in the immediate vicinity.

The nearest you’ll find is on the west bank of Croix-de-Pierre bridge, at 144 avenue du Muret. La Taverne is an unpretentious restaurant set up in 2015 by the team behind nearby Latin bar Nuevo Barrio Latino, carrying on the tradition of tapas and TV football.

On the east bank nearest town, you’ll find a couple of pubs by metro stations: Killarney by the Palais de Justice and Irish-run Mulligans by St-Michel Marcel Langer, opened by a pair of mates from Derry in 1998. Also close is Dublín, at 46 avenue Marcel Langer, and, more French in style, L’Évasion, a few doors down from Mulligans.

Between the two metro stations, the G’BU Saloon is named and vaguely themed after the Clint Eastwood film, ‘The Good, the Bad and the Ugly’. All bars are around a 15min walk from the stadium.

In the city centre, Toulouse has two main bar hubs: place Saint-Pierre by the river, and downtown place St-Georges, where you’ll find snazzy Le Wallace. Though not a traditional sports pub, this loungey hang-out does put up TV screens for major football occasions.

You’ll also find a few bars around place Wilson, including the unmissable Melting Pot Pub (26 boulevard de Strasbourg), the city’s prime sports pub now in its fourth decade.

Another destination for TV sports, less pub-like and more upscale, is Le Donjon (2 rue du Poids de l’Huile). One of many Iberian bars in town, El Ruedo (3 rue Baour Lormian) includes big-screen TV sport among its Spanish-themed attractions.

More pub-like, close to Capitole and the Basilica, is the late-opening George & Dragon, offering ales, darts and live music. A short walk away, The Classroom at 42 rue Pargaminères is more brasserie than pub but still puts its focus on TV football as well as quality meals.

Nearer Jean-Jaurès is a branch of the nationwide chain Frog & Rosbif.

Finally, don’t miss De Danú, between François Verdier metro and the river at 9 rue du Pont Guilhemery, a large pub/restaurant with sport firmly on the menu.

**FIXTURES**

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