

**PRESS KIT**

# **MONTPELLIER 2008**

**Reopening of the Fabre museum,  
Tour de France, Rugby World Cup, and more.**

**2007 was an amazing year.**

**The stage is set for the action to continue in 2008, and  
Montpellier is right on track for tomorrow.**



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Over the years, Montpellier has built a foundation for itself that is worthy of the largest international metropolis. Today, the city's dynamic environment is recognised by all. Its thirst for culture attracts impassioned people from the four corners of the globe. A world-class urban destination, Montpellier has been able to combine the infrastructure of a major city with a delicate Mediterranean lifestyle.

Tourists know it.

Who could guess, sitting at a café on the central Place de la Comédie, with the only background sound that of bustling people and street artists breathing life into the atmosphere, that Montpellier is actually the 8<sup>th</sup> largest city in France? Observing the natural charm of the city's various and varied neighbourhoods, who could imagine that Montpellier has been expanding so quickly, growing from a population of 80,000 people thirty years ago to nearly 250,000 today?

Here, progress and top-quality infrastructure have a single price, that of preserving the local art of living for both today and tomorrow.

Montpellier, cultivating pleasure now more than ever.

## **Portrait of a city**

### **One of Europe's most dynamic cultural destinations**

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## Portrait of a city



Capital of the Languedoc Roussillon region, Montpellier is located less than 3 hours from Spain and Italy, and just 11 km from the Mediterranean Sea.

With easy access via the A9 motorway, by train (only 3 hours 15 min. from Paris) or by plane via the Montpellier Mediterranean International Airport, Montpellier is the ideal destination to stay and discover a lively city and numerous sites, including some of the most prestigious World Heritage sites.

### Appreciate the sweetness of life

In Montpellier, you'll see what we mean by the art of living. Whatever the season, take a seat at one of the city's numerous sidewalk cafes that bathe in over 300 sunny days per year. Wander around the stalls of the city's daily open markets. Treat yourself to an afternoon off and go shopping along medieval streets and alleys.

A day of shopping in Montpellier is a day full of pleasure. Even though the thousand-year old city is the regional meeting place for major brands and prestigious boutiques (jewellery, art galleries, ready-to-wear, designer boutiques and more), many small boutiques continue to provide the charm of yesteryear.

### Cultivating pleasure

Travel across the centuries in Montpellier. For an informal course in history and a guaranteed change in scenery, take its two tramway lines and ride from the Middle Age ambiance of the historical centre to the long plazas of Antigone, the city's modern neighbourhood!

Attractions you won't want to miss in downtown Montpellier:

Place de la Comédie (*the place where people go to see and be seen*), the oldest still-active medical school in the Western world, courtyards of private mansions, a medieval mikveh, the Fabre museum and more.

### An emotional time for your taste buds

A discovery trip of Montpellier's gastronomic side will indulge your taste buds in a real treat. The diversity of Montpellier's surroundings combines with dining pleasure to offer you exquisite cuisine based on a wide variety of regional Languedoc products reflecting every season.

At least 20 gastronomic restaurants await you in and near Montpellier to provide a savoury way to discover the local flavour. Don't forget: with a winery map in hand, you're only one step from the dining table to our vineyards.

Here, wine is the life of the party. A natural part of Mediterranean hospitality, local wineries welcome you throughout your travels with free wine tasting.

**Enjoy exceptional local wines such as AOC Côteaux du Languedoc, and the delicious Montpellier appellation, "Les Grès de Montpellier."**

### THE ESSENCE OF MONTPELLIER

- A city with personality and feeling, historical interest and an exceptionally privileged geographical environment.
- A combination of characteristics unique in France, including fine instrument makers and a deeply ingrained medical tradition.
- A modern, young and avant-garde attitude.

### *Its many complementary advantages make Montpellier:*

1. A major destination for international business tourism.
2. The leading destination for language stays.
3. A popular travel destination for studying architecture and urban development.
4. One of the most culturally dynamic cities.

## The Fabre Museum

*4 years of renovation were needed to prepare Montpellier's new museum, which opened its doors in February 2007. Paintings by Courbet and Delacroix, as well as the largest collection of works by the acclaimed modern painter Pierre Soulages, turned the Fabre museum into one of the most admirable collections in France.*

Three buildings, three periods, three different styles.

The prominent architectural design implemented for the Fabre museum's renovation delivers a new perspective on its collections and highlights the richness of its works.

A path leads from the ancient Collège des Jésuites through the Hôtel de Massilian and to the new building created to welcome contemporary collections. Here visitors find a unique donation by Pierre Soulages, as well as contemporary art exhibits.

Special areas are dedicated to presenting a collection of graphical works of art, bringing together nearly 3,500 drawings and 900 engravings.



**Alongside its permanent collections, the Fabre museum offers an exciting programme of temporary exhibits throughout the year:**

**November 14, 2007 to February 24, 2008**, the museum honours its founder, **François-Xavier Fabre, painter and collector**, and presents a retrospective collection assembling about 75 of his works in an exhibit of national interest.

**June 14 to September 28, 2008**, a world-class exhibit presenting **Gustave Courbet**, a revolutionary painter and founder of the realist movement. This exhibit is co-organised in association with the Musée d'Orsay and the New York Metropolitan Museum.

**July 12 to 30, 2008**, an **exceptional display of Stradivari instruments** will be presented at the Fabre museum, along with conferences, educational workshops, lectures and special sessions with Montpellier luthiers.

**Autumn 2008**, "**Video, art and history, 1965-2005**", an exhibit based on archives from the Centre Georges-Pompidou in Paris presents a retrospective view of this new form of media.

### Good to know

The Montpellier tourist office organises guided visits of the Fabre museum combined with discovery tours of the city. Individuals and groups are welcome.

Starting in 2008, entrance to the museum and temporary exhibits will be free for individuals who have a Montpellier City Card.

Download the quarterly programme of events for individuals, our brochure for groups and information about the Montpellier City Card: <http://www.ot-montpellier.fr/documentation-a-telecharger/>

Find out more about the Fabre museum, temporary exhibits and rates: <http://www.ot-montpellier.fr/musee-Fabre/>

## Montpellier, violin-making capital

*Numerous luthiers have setup their workshops in the heart of Montpellier's Sainte Anne neighbourhood, between the Conservatory of Music and the Carré Sainte Anne (former church now converted into an exhibition hall). Here talented artisans craft fine instruments to be distributed around the world.*

### A bit of history

The first record of violin-makers in Montpellier dates back to 1768, when an anonymous luthier came from Italy to setup a musical instrument and repair shop.

In 1792, there were five luthiers, including one woman, with workshops near the theatre, on the Grand Rue and next to the treasury building.

By the 19<sup>th</sup> century this number had grown to over 15 shops selling instruments, though mostly focusing on repairing them. As the city grew, many luthiers moved to the outskirts. With its wars, emergence of recorded music and new forms of leisure, the 20<sup>th</sup> century was hard on the profession. Then local violin making took off again in the 1980's.

Today there are 9 luthiers in Montpellier, providing special orders as artisans and fine instrument-makers. This explains why they are somewhat "hidden" in workshops, rather than on display behind a boutique window.

A true gathering place for artists and creators, the Sainte Anne neighbourhood is also home to the **International Music Academy of Montpellier**. This organisation works to promote and teach musical culture by inviting reputed international professors to teach classes.

The International Music Academy of Montpellier (AIMM) has now been in action for 5 years. AIMM president Frédéric Chaudière holds a diploma in violin making and takes over the National Music Conservatory for his summer school held each year in July.

Around twenty prominent music professors from around the world give a variety of classes. The forty or so students attending this privileged summer school are already accomplished musicians who wish to improved their skills and take advantage of advice from such great professors.

In addition to organising its summer school, AIMM works closely with the Radio France music festival, providing some of its own artists for this world-class annual event.

### Good to know

#### ***The Montpellier Tourist Office offers exclusive visits of local violin-makers' workshops***

Individual tourists can now visit these workshops 3 - 4 times a year as part of the guided tours offered by the Montpellier Tourist Office; groups can book a tour any time during the year (reservations required). These unique visits take guests from the Comédie opera house to the violin-makers' workshops and wind up with a private concert in one of the city's private mansions.



## Culture and the art of living

Montpellier is internationally famous for its strong cultural tradition. Throughout the year, visitors and Montpellier locals can enjoy the best in cultural events, with major festivals, some of Europe's most important museums, national dramatic theatre and a world-class choreographic centre.

### Major festivals in 2008

#### Saperlipopette, voilà enfantillages

"Heavens, what childness!" theatre, music, dance, circus, street arts, arts & crafts, and all the other attractions of live shows are presented to the delight of children and their parents. *May*

#### Printemps des Comédiens

This popular, widely varied festival offers exceptional theatre, circus, and cultural events from around the world. *June*

#### Montpellier International Dance Festival

Since its creation in 1981, Montpellier Dance has been a major festival where the greatest choreographers meet every year. *End of June, mid-July*

#### International Festival of Extreme Sports

The largest gathering of extreme sports in the world! *May*

#### Radio France and Montpellier Music Festival

Around 100 concerts of all styles of music, including lyrical, symphonic, chamber music, recitals, jazz, electronic music, world music and more. *July*

#### International Guitar Festival

Europe's largest festival dedicated to the guitar. *October*

#### Equisud

An exciting equestrian gathering for riders, breeders and horse lovers. *End of October*

#### Mediterranean Film Festival

The largest film festival dedicated to productions from all shores of the Mediterranean arch. *End of October, early November*

### A rich cultural season

All year long, Montpellier's **intense cultural season** can be enjoyed in all forms of live entertainment and craftwork, creating a multi-faceted mosaic in the colours of every imaginable emotion.

Programmes are created for all types of spectators: young and young-at-heart, classic and modern, expressionist and intimate.

In Montpellier, the fantastic show of culture never ends.

### Focus on Stradivarius

A special event will be held in conjunction with the Fabre museum exhibit from July 12 - 30, 2008, giving famous musicians a chance to play the master's instruments during the Radio France Music Festival. This is one event you won't want to miss in 2008!

### Did you know?

Visiting Montpellier lets you discover a place where residents are also the artists of their own city!

### Montpellier Quartier Libre

An exciting event to be enjoyed in October. 3 days of celebration with free shows of all kinds, where Montpellier artists take the stage!

### Stone borders painted by local merchants

Take a walk through the old parts of Montpellier and let your eyes wander over the original artwork. You'll see an original, funny and colourful addition to the city. While you're there, take a look at the **trompe l'œil** optical illusions, an artistic expression that respects the personality of each neighbourhood. You'll find them at Place St. Roch, Rue de la Méditerranée, Place E. Adam and St. Denis.

### New ! Montpellier opens its Villa Médicis.

#### "La Panacée", a site for artists

In Autumn 2010, Montpellier is planning to open the doors of its new artistic complex, dedicated to contemporary art. La Panacée will offer flexible exhibit areas, as well as artist workshops. Work residences will enable French and European artists to come work together in a stimulating place.

## Amazonian greenhouse

### Montpellier takes you on a trip to the Amazon!

*With its new Amazonian greenhouse, open since June 30, Montpellier takes visitors on an instructive adventure into the heart of the Amazon. There they are awaited by a rich and marvellous world, which also happens to be one of the most threatened ecosystems on the planet.*

#### A world to explore

Just imagine! A hot and humid atmosphere, dense vegetation, the cries of birds and the sound of flowing water. You are in the Amazon, and you are heading up the river on foot, from the estuary to the source, across mangrove and dense forest. This is the place to go for a change of scenery and thrills of pleasure.

The only one of its kind, Montpellier's **brand new Amazonian greenhouse** is also the largest tropical greenhouse in France. Come see for yourself.



#### Impressive flora and fauna

At the greenhouse, you'll find caiman, anaconda, tamarin, giant tarantulas, howling monkeys, toucans, piranhas, and more. Over **500 animals** from 61 different species are waiting for you in a vegetation-rich environment with nearly **3,500 plants** from 300 species.

#### All presented in their natural biotope

The discovery tour follows a path that was specifically designed to show animal species from the Amazon forest in their natural habitat.

Get ready for a surprise! Along your journey, you are sure to remember at least one very special moment... it's hot, the air is humid, howling monkeys practice their vocal skills, then **lightning strikes** and the **storm breaks**...**Visitors are invited to take refuge in a cave occupied by a colony of Seba's bats**, where the cycles of day and night are reversed. A rare opportunity to observe a waking sloth and an Armadillo couple passing on their way to find some food.

...then the forest lights up and a flock of exotic birds takes off noisily before your eyes.

Without a doubt, you are indeed in the heart of the Amazon!

The Amazonian greenhouse is both a **fun place** (you don't get an hour-long adventure in the Amazon forest every day, complete with a tropical storm and piranhas) and a **learning tool**. The greenhouse is a great way to teach the public and raise awareness about endangered species and environmental issues.

Pleasure for the senses, heightened imagination, total change of atmosphere. Awareness, cultural discovery.

A **smart leisure outing for the entire family** that will change the way you feel!



**Amazonian greenhouse at the Montpellier Zoological Park**  
**50 avenue d'Agropolis - Tel. +33 (0)4 99 61 45 23 - [www.zoo.montpellier.fr](http://www.zoo.montpellier.fr)**

## Mare Nostrum aquarium

*Ideally situated in the heart of the Odysseum edutainment-shopping complex, right by the Galilée planetarium, the Mare Nostrum aquarium will be inaugurated around the end of 2007. It will provide guests with a way to discover the marine world, in particular the Mediterranean, with a specially designed 3,800 square metre building, and a voluminous 1,750 square metres of visiting space.*

In addition to numerous **spectacular attractions**, special **cultural and educational activities** will be developed to teach all generations about environmental issues related to protecting the aquatic fauna.



At the centre of a brand new site containing 2,300 cubic metres of water, you will enjoy a visit with nature via a sensitive and emotional approach to the marine world, from sub-marine depths to lagoons and beaches, from the Mediterranean Sea to the polar circle, passing through the China Sea and a tropical rainforest.

Mare Nostrum will accompany visitors of all ages along an extraordinary emotion-filled trip. The entire project was designed to immerse visitors in an aquatic universe, from the dreaded seas to the marvels of the tropics.

Visitors can sense what they're in for upon entering the aquarium.

All the sounds in the entry hall are designed to immerse visitors right into the marine universe, with a soundtrack of wind, waves, seagulls and a foghorn. Then the 15-scene tour can begin.

3,500 animals from nearly 300 species bathe in 24 pools, representing a variety of marine landscapes over a total surface of 5,000 m<sup>2</sup> and 1,500 m<sup>2</sup> of pathways.

This brand new addition to the Odysseum edutainment-shopping commercial complex is located right near the Galilée planetarium, across from the future Baltineï's health and fitness spa.

*Opening: December 15, 2007*

*Expected visitors: 450,000 per year*

### **Focus on Odysseum, Montpellier's leisure zone**

At the terminus of tramway line 1, Odysseum is a world dedicated to relaxing. In a space covering around 50 ha, Odysseum is built around a large plaza encircled by the multiplex cinema, Végapolis ice-skating rink, the planetarium and several theme restaurants.

The tramway crosses the plaza, from which a long pedestrian path lined with palm trees, water fountains and lighting effects, leads through the complex. In addition to the aquarium, there will soon be stores, breweries and other restaurants. If you are looking for a good time, make sure Odysseum is on your list!

**Direct access from the A9 motorway  
Odysseum tramway station (terminus)**

## **Bikes, open space and pedestrian zones so nature can continue its course**

*Montpellier offers one of the largest pedestrian zones in Europe. The downtown area is almost entirely closed off to cars, making it an ideal place for people to meander about. Here, you can roam by tramway or by bicycle. Everything has been planned to make getting around easier.*

### **Open space and parks everywhere!**

Architecture joins nature in Montpellier. With its definitely botanical attitude, the thousand-year old city has long cultured its craving for gardens.

Many private estates open their gates to visitors, as do the city's 48 parks and gardens. Highlights include the famous Jardin des Plantes, the oldest botanical garden in Europe, created in 1593, as well as numerous promenade spots in and around the city.

### **Véломagg: bicycle rental at a gentle price**

Based on the Parisian model, a new bicycle rental service opened in Montpellier in June 2007. People can now cruise the area's 150 km of bicycle paths without polluting and without the hassles of parking, as a natural complement to using the tramway.

The rates are 1€ for 4 hours, or 2€ for the entire day. Starting in 2008, the Véломagg service will offer 1,000 bicycles in 50 bike stations spread around Montpellier and the agglomeration area.

### **2 tramway lines to get around town**

The swallow-covered blue line connects the north of the city to the Odysseum terminus. The new flower-power line extends to the outlying towns on the east and west. People need just one ticket to ride these spectacular trams designed by Garouste and Bonetti, both getting around town and riding in a mobile work of art! That's right, the tramway likes to get dressed up, just like the city!



## Special offers for discovering Montpellier

### Special offers on lodging

All year long, many Montpellier hotels provide special promotional offers, such as week-end specials, last-minute deals, free additional nights, and more.

Take a look at [www.ot-montpellier.fr/offrespromotionnelles](http://www.ot-montpellier.fr/offrespromotionnelles) for the latest information. This site is updated regularly, so check back frequently to find the best deals.

### Montpellier City Card

Valid for 24, 48 or 72 hours, for children and adults, the Montpellier City Card helps you discover the town by combining:

- Free entry and discounts in several cultural and tourist sites in the Montpellier agglomeration area, including (starting in 2008) the Fabre museum, city tours and the Amazonian greenhouse.
- Free public transportation.

The Montpellier City Card is sold throughout the year at the Montpellier Tourist Office.

<i>2007 rates:</i>	<u>24 hours</u>	<u>48 hours</u>	<u>72 hours</u>
Adults:	13€	22€	26€
Children:	6.50€	11€	13€

### Guided tours

Montpellier holds many priceless hidden treasures. The Montpellier Tourist Office offers a wide variety of guided tours to help you find them, from general tours of the city centre (Wednesdays, Saturdays, Sundays and daily during the summer) to special theme visits so you can discover the city from new angles. Themes range from the prestigious to the extraordinary, taking you through the ancient medical school, private mansions, luthier workshops, winery tours and more.

*Please check our quarterly programme for more details.*

#### *Information*

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## Getting to and from Montpellier and major sites

### A European metropolis along the Mediterranean seaside

Montpellier is situated in the heart of southern Europe's major capitals, in a privileged location served by all major means of transportation.

#### By plane

You can get to Montpellier directly by plane from Paris (1 hr 10 min.), London (1 hr 45 min.) and Frankfurt (1 hr 30 min.).

The Montpellier International Airport is just 8 minutes from the city centre, with regular shuttle service.

For more information, please check [www.montpellier.aeroport.fr](http://www.montpellier.aeroport.fr)

#### By train

The TGV train station is right downtown, with direct lines to Paris-Gare de Lyon and Charles de Gaulle Airport (3 hrs 15 min.). Lille is 4 hrs 45 min. away, and you can get to Brussels in just 5 hours.

For more information, please check [www.sncf.com](http://www.sncf.com)

#### By car

You can also reach Montpellier by major motorways: A9 to Lyon, Marseille, Toulouse, Spain and Italy; A75 to Paris. For more information, please check [www.asf.fr](http://www.asf.fr)

### There are many great places to go sightseeing within 2 hours of Montpellier.

#### UNESCO World Heritage sites

The colossal walled city of Carcassonne

Pont du Gard, an immense roman aqueduct

Canal du Midi and its many locks

The medieval Gellone Abbey of St Guilhem le Désert

#### Historic and picturesque cities

Nîmes, living Roman history

Sète, jousting on the canal

Aigues-Mortes, the medieval city of Saint Louis

Collioure, capital of Fauvism

#### Protected natural sites

Camargue marshes, with pink flamingos, ranches and wild horses

Cévennes mountains, great by bike or on foot

Pyrénées mountains, discoverable by steam train or at a ski resort!

#### Industrial tourism

Perrier, the little green bottle of water, in Vergèze

Haribo candy in Uzès

Noilly Prat white vermouth in Marseillan

Cosmetic products in Avène les Bains

Roquefort cheese caves

The now-famous Millau viaduct

And don't forget our numerous local vineyards which produce the famous Grès de Montpellier and Côteaux du Languedoc appellations.

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**Good to know:**

*A photo library is available on-line at [www.ot-montpellier.fr](http://www.ot-montpellier.fr)  
Request your access code by filling in the form in our professional area  
(<http://www.ot-montpellier.fr/en/esp-pro>)*