



An architectural tour

Not far from the French Riviera rich in grand hotels and bourgeois residences, the village of Sainte-Maxime has slowly been transformed into an elegant seaside resort cultivating its own architectural style. Starting in the 1920s, numerous villas were built, particularly by René Darde, the town's emblematic architect active during this period. Their style is characteristic of the Art Deco movement, with its purity and sobriety: geometrically stylized vegetal forms and taut, clean lines for a dynamic, refined impression. We are proud of the fact that this Sainte-Maxime-based architect became a famous figure of neo-regionalism both at home and abroad. His elegant, sober and well-balanced style was widely imitated.

The rediscovery of these buildings sheds light on this interwar period, during which the Provençal identity of the old village mingled with a refined modernity, embodying a certain art of living.

The thematic itineraries here-in presented invite you to explore a little known heritage combining modern, Provençal and Art Deco architectural styles.

The objective of these tours is to share, promote and «sustainably» preserve our common heritage. During the current elaboration of our Local Urban Development Plan outlining the Sainte-Maxime of tomorrow, it is only appropriate that we consider the historic treasures that this plan must help us protect.

Vincent Morisse
Mayor of Sainte-Maxime

Micheline Martel
First Deputy Mayor in charge
of Urban Planning and the Environment

Jehanne Arnaud
Deputy Mayor in charge of Culture

Short glossary

Neo-regionalism

This movement seeks to interpret the local architectural tradition in a refined, simple manner free of clichés.

Eclecticism

Between 1860 and 1920, this movement borrowed from various artistic and architectural styles and periods in order to design one-of-a-kind buildings.

Art Deco

This style triumphed during the interwar period in reaction to the cluttered Art Nouveau style of the 1900s. Present in numerous artistic domains including that of architecture, Art Deco values simplicity, geometrical forms and structural coherency.

Modern Movement

In 1919, the so-called Bauhaus school in Germany announced the metamorphosis of such arts as dance, graphics and architecture. A new movement arose, characterized by pure geometrical lines. Function prevailed over form at a time when industrial development and the appearance of new technologies had a profound effect on society. This movement's architectural influence continues.

Historic monument

Dating from antiquity to modern times, these monuments and edifices total 50,000 in France. Listed at the national or regional level according to their importance, they thereby benefit from legal protection. Sainte-Maxime boasts two historic monuments: the 16th-century «Square Tower» and the gardens of the Villa Bellevue, completed in 1926.

«20th-Century Heritage» label

Awarded by the French Ministry of Culture, this label designates remarkable architectural and urban-planning structures dating from the 20th century.



The tours



1

45 minutes

Changing architecture

This tour highlights the presence of quality architecture having contributed to the tourist development of Sainte-Maxime during the first half of the 20th century. The architectural styles range from the eclecticism of the tail end of the 19th century to the refined, sober style of the 1950s that developed thanks to the use of concrete and new methods of construction.



2

45 minutes

The heart of the village

This tour emphasizes the coexistence in Sainte-Maxime of old houses and modern structures. It is interesting to observe how the Provençal spirit found a unique architectural interpretation in Sainte-Maxime during the 1920s, notably thanks to the projects of René Darde.



3

20 minutes

The development of hotels

This shorter tour takes a look back at the chic atmosphere of those «grand hotels» often situated near the shore. Prestigious establishments initially dedicated to winter tourism, they became increasingly frequented during the summer months and associated with sun bathing, swimming and outdoor sports.



4

Self-guided

Avenue Berthie Albrecht

The urbanization of this elegant avenue, formerly known as the Route d'Italie, gathered pace in the 1920s. The imposing villas lined up facing the sea enjoyed a more open view than they do today. Self-guided tour.

CAREFUL:

Private buildings not open to visitors. Please respect the owners' privacy.



2

An elegant viaduct completed in 1935, the Pont du Préconil spans 50 metres and is made of reinforced concrete. The upper, bow-shaped beam functions by way of compression, while the horizontal roadway serves as a sort of bow string. Imagine the complexity of the formwork necessary for the casting of such a fine structure. This bridge is a rare example of the application of modern construction techniques to a structure dating from the first half of the 20th century.



2^b

Villa la Croisette (as seen from the bridge): Built in 1913, this residence is thought to be the first villa constructed in Sainte-Maxime by René Darde for the canon Piffaut. The western wall's bas-relief representing a quadriga is a none-too-subtle reference to Antiquity, a theme in vogue on the French Riviera at the end of the 19th century. 50 metres after the bridge.



3

Le Splendid Azur: Built between 1952 and 1961 by the Nice-based architect André Déperi, this architectural grouping combining rigour and fluidity has changed little over the past half century. The bridge affords a lovely view of the rotunda, a sort of slender, vertical «prow», as well as the small wave-shaped annexe building.

1



1 Changing architecture

Replacing the Miramar, a dance bar constructed by René Darde in 1922, the casino was inaugurated in 1929 and has remained open to this day. The casino's contemporary clientele includes the high society, the Parisian smart set and officers from the European squadrons moored in the gulf. Unfortunately, this Art Deco structure has been subjected to successive additions, leading to the disappearance of its superb terrace overlooking the sea. Don't miss the bas-relief on the north side (archival photo).



NEXT

To continue this itinerary with Tour 2, «The Heart of the Village», head to Place Pasteur opposite the town hall annexe.

8

Rue de Verdun: these fine town-houses built at the end of the 19th century illustrate «eclecticism», a style popular during this period in numerous seaside resorts. This movement drew inspiration from every architectural style, in order to create one-of-a-kind structures. The residences' apparent classicism is in fact exaggerated. Prominent pediments rub shoulders with decorative friezes, as well as cornices, mouldings and modillions. Amazingly, these constructions come closest to the typical French Riviera-style to be found in Saint-Raphaël, Cannes and Nice.

7

«Le Mauritania», today's «Palais du Soleil»: this residential property, comprising 30 apartments and 3 shops, was designed by the architect André Barbier-Bouvet and completed in 1933. The property developer emphasized its modern conveniences, with the installation of «2 lifts, garbage chutes and central heating», hoping to thereby attract new residents (archival photo).

6

(no photo)
N° 50, the «Béthanie» villa: Count Gustave de Maupassant, father of the famous writer, had this villa built between 1891 and 1893. Guy de Maupassant must have stayed in the «Villa Simone», as it was formerly called, while exploring the Var coast aboard his sailing boat «Le Bel Ami». An account of his littoral travels can be found in his moving work «On the Water, from Saint-Tropez to Monte-Carlo». This villa and its gate were brought up to date in the 1930s.



8



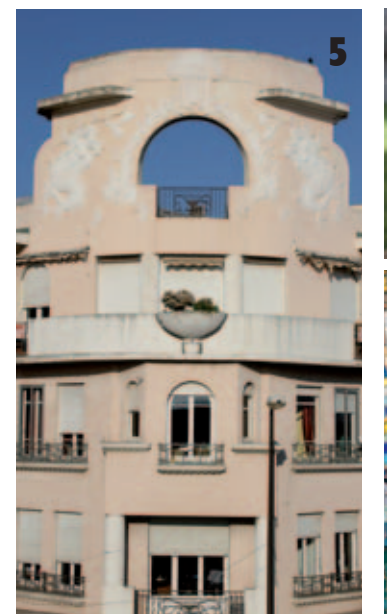
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8



7



5



4

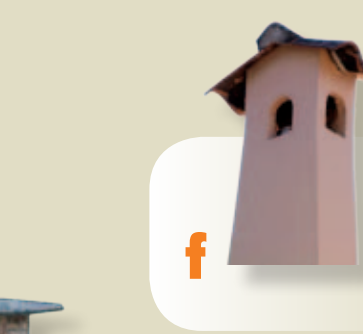




4 Avenue Berthie-Albrecht

Self-guided tour (see other side for overall map)

This self-guided tour can be enjoyed alone or as a family, in the manner of a treasure hunt by attempting to discover the architectural details and motifs proposed below, for a personal appreciation of Sainte-Maxime's urban environment.



René DARDE 1883-1960

Born in Chatou (Yvelines) in 1883, René Darde attended the École Nationale des Beaux Arts («National Fine Arts Academy») in Paris. In 1912, he was hired by the Parisian architects Sauvage and Sarazin to monitor the construction of the Hôtel Beauvallon in Grimaud.

While boarding in Sainte-Maxime, he met Alberte-Marie Santin, whose father owned the plots of land that would allow him to build numerous villas. They were married in 1913.

Intimately involved in local life, he was put in charge, alongside Henri Prost, of establishing Sainte-Maxime's development plan and afterwards became the town's architect-planner.

A lover of automobiles, René Darde created along with Count Edme de Rohan-Chabot the «Paris-Saint-Raphaël» woman's road race. Following the war, he was named Expert Adviser to the Ministry of Reconstruction.

With offices in Saint-Raphaël and Cannes, his sphere of activity extended all along the coast. He designed villas up until his death.

In the single town of Sainte-Maxime, he designed over a hundred structures, including «Le Clos de la Madrague» (1923), the casino (1929) and the hotel «L'Arbois» (1935). He was also active in Giens, in Roquebrune-sur-Argens with the hotel «Le Val d'Esquières» (1932), and in Saint-Raphaël for its casino.

To admire René Darde's work, see No 1, 2b, 10, 12, 13, et 14, 15, 16, 17.



The development of hotels

At the end of the 19th century, the opening up of new communication routes – notably Route Nationale 98 along the sea (today's D559) and the Paris-Lyon-Marseille railway (in 1890) – encouraged the development of winter tourism in Sainte-Maxime.

15 The «Les Palmiers» hotel-restaurant (28 Rue Gabriel Peri) was built in 1927 by René Darde.

16 The former hotel «L'Arbois», inaugurated in the spring of 1934, was designed by René Darde: 5 floors, topped off with a recessed attic home to a panoramic restaurant, «La Tartane». Resolutely modern, L'Arbois echoes the former tourist complex «Latitude 43» created in 1932 by G.-H. Pingusson and located on the opposite side of the Gulf of Saint-Tropez.

Requisitioned as a hospital during the Second World War, L'Arbois is today a residential building.

17 The «Grand Hôtel» was built around 1890 by «La Compagnie des Terrains du Littoral», then purchased in 1895 by Henri Saudan, a Swiss-born maître d'hôtel. This dynamic entrepreneur carried out numerous modifications and extensions. In 1930, he commissioned René Darde to construct a seaside restaurant attached to the Grand Hôtel. This restaurant has since been replaced by a discotheque, «Le Saint-Hilaire», and a pizzeria, «La Terrasse de la Mer».

During the Second World War, the Grand Hôtel was successively requisitioned by the Italian, German and Franco-American armies. It is today a residential building.

ANSWERS

- a No 35 ;
- b, j No 40 ;
- c No 94 ;
- d, k No 37 ;
- e, i, n No 50 ;
- f No 79 ;
- g, i, m No 87 La Pautrière ;
- h No 55 ;
- o No 79 La Fourmigue ;



9

Place Pasteur (9a): the former town hall of Sainte-Maxime was designed by René Tomenotti and built during the mandate of Siméon Fabre, mayor from 1928 to 1935. This lovely building livens up the square, despite its somewhat mannered style typical of the period. It currently serves as the town hall annexe.

The square presents certain interesting aspects. The façade at n° 4 (9b) is enlivened by slightly protruding window ledges whose curve is underlined by four horizontal rows of bricks. The entryway's semicircular arch is also emphasized, as is the more discreet entrance of n° 10 (9c). In the same spirit, the building at n° 9 (9d) offers a few refined details to the right of the doors and windows, as well as delicate corbelling overhanging a corner planter. This house was built in 1935 by the architect Abel Delcourt on the former site of a barn.

2 The old village



10

On Place Colbert, one can't help but admire this lovely building by René Darde, built in 1925. It was known as the «Olivier House» after its owner, a wine merchant who installed his warehouse and shop on the ground floor. The first floor includes two large loggias with columns. The building has been modified with the addition of a second floor.

11

Place des Sarazins: at n° 3 can be found a unique building built around 1930, on the former site of an inn that collapsed in 1923. Be sure to admire its cubist bow windows, a modern interpretation of this classic feature. The original tubular parapets further emphasize the building's one-of-a-kind design.

12

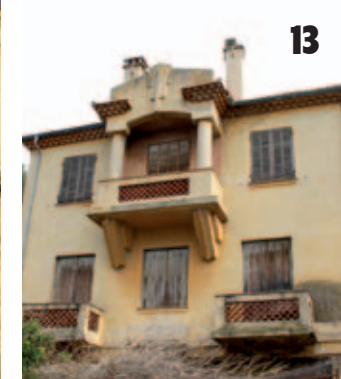
16 Rue Paul Bert dates from 1926 Here, René Darde successfully stacked up simple forms in the manner of a construction game to create a beautiful example of Art Deco perfectly integrated into the village: wrought iron railings, friezes and mosaic motifs. It is interesting to compare this building to n° 10, with its more banal and pastiche style.

13

Villa Aimée: Built in 1932, this residence attributed to Henri Pommier doesn't lack examples of formal daring. The monumental pediment crowning the main façade evokes the radiator grill of the cars so beloved by the architects of the time, while the design of the «génoise» eaves calls to mind the roof of a pagoda. Observe the detail work of the chimneys, balcony, fence and gate. (20th-Century Heritage label)

14

The parish church of Sainte-Maxime was built at the end of the 18th century to replace an older edifice that had become too cramped. In 1938, it was restored by the architect René Darde, who also added on a new wing as well as a gallery.



Off the itinerary, but not to be missed:

The park of the Bellevue Villa

Facing the sea in La Nartelle, the park was listed a historic monument in 2005 (20th-Century Heritage label).

Constructed between 1925 and 1926 by the architect Léon Bailly, the park is structured around two sea-garden axes. The entire grounds follow a promenade rising via a series of ramps adorned with pergolas all the way up to the water tower-belvedere. The park stands out for its use of an exclusive material, reinforced concrete, for which the villa's company-director owner, Mr Limousin, was the promoter. Combining regionalism and modernity, the villa resembles

a factory seen from the rear. The roof is that of a hangar, with vaults of reinforced concrete. To visit, contact the Tourist Office Tel: +33 (0)4 94 55 75 55

