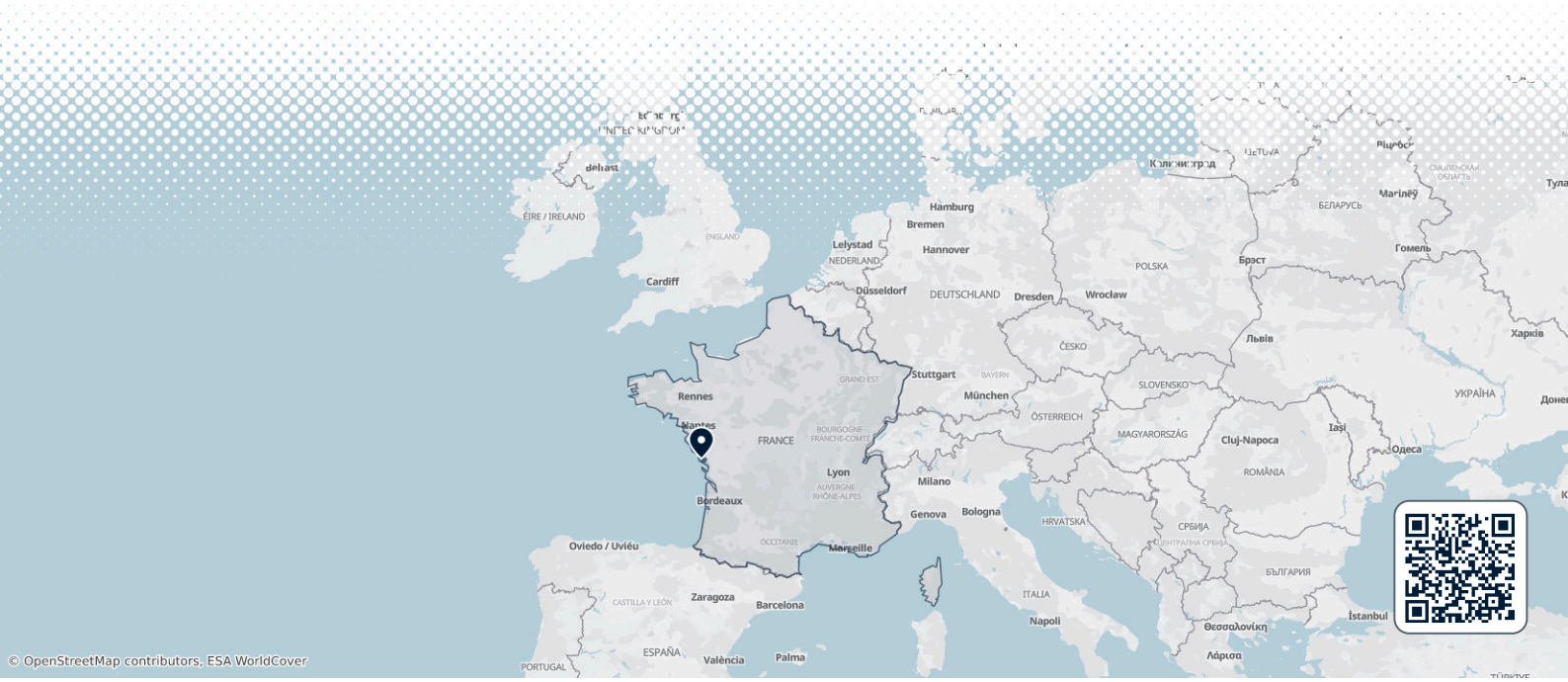


Ile de Re

La Rochelle · France

TRAVEL GUIDE

Tripomatic



Overview

Île de Ré is a flat Atlantic island next to La Rochelle. It is about 30 km long and up to 5 km wide, with ten small villages, salt marshes, oyster farms and long sandy beaches. About 17,700 people live here all year, and the number rises to around 220,000 in summer.

The island suits a slow trip by bike. White houses with green or blue shutters, fields of early potatoes and quiet cycle paths set the mood. Visit for the Vauban fortifications of Saint-Martin-de-Ré, the Phare des Baleines lighthouse and beach days. It works as a day trip from La Rochelle or as a stay of a few nights.

When to visit

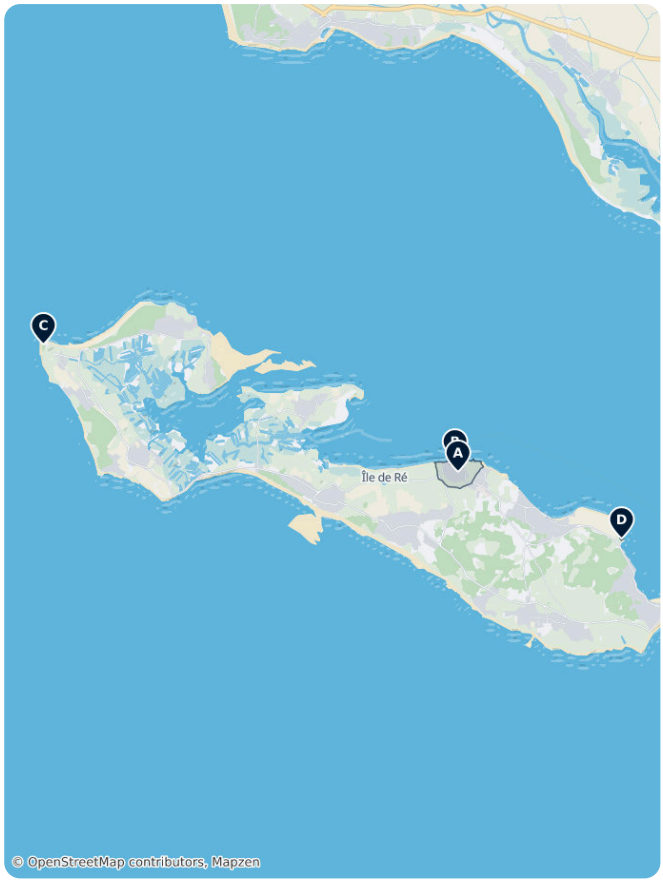
Late spring and early autumn are the best times. Roads and cycle paths are quieter, and the weather is mild. July and August are the warmest and the busiest months. The bridge, car parks and beaches are crowded then, and accommodation costs more. Winter is quiet and wet, and some small businesses close.

MONTH	CONDITIONS	DAY °C avg / max	NIGHT °C avg / min	
January	Poor Poor for cycling	9° / 14° Feels like 5°	5° / -2°	12 rainy days · Dry air
February	Fair Fair for cycling	10° / 15° Feels like 6°	5° / -2°	Dry air
March	Good Good for cycling	13° / 19° Feels like 9°	6° / 1°	Dry air
April	Good Good for cycling	16° / 22° Feels like 12°	9° / 4°	Dry air
May	Good Good for cycling	19° / 26°	12° / 8°	12 rainy days · Dry air
June	Great Great for cycling	22° / 29°	15° / 12°	
July	Great Great for cycling	24° / 31°	17° / 13°	
August	Great Great for cycling	24° / 32°	17° / 14°	
September	Great Great for cycling	22° / 29°	15° / 11°	
October	Good Good for cycling	18° / 24°	12° / 7°	12 rainy days · Dry air
November	Good Good for cycling	13° / 18° Feels like 9°	8° / 2°	13 rainy days · Dry air
December	Poor Poor for cycling	10° / 14° Feels like 6°	5° / -1°	13 rainy days · Dry air

Best months: June, July, August, September

Climate data: NASA POWER + Copernicus ERA5-Land and ERA5 · 1996–2025

Top sights



- Start in Saint-Martin-de-Ré with A La citadelle et l'enceinte de Saint-Martin-de-Ré. The town walls and citadel were built from 1681 on the plans of *Vauban*, and they are part of a UNESCO World Heritage site. You can walk along the ramparts and through the old gates. The citadel itself is a prison and is closed to visitors.
- B Port de Saint-Martin-de-Ré is the centre of the town. The harbour has a lock-gated basin, with cafés and restaurants around the quay.
- C Phare des Baleines stands at the western tip of the island. The lighthouse is 57 m high and has been in service since 1854. A climb of 257 steps leads to a view over the island and the sea, and a small museum is open at the site.
- D Fort de La Prée is a fort from 1625 near the eastern end of the island. It is a good stop on a cycle ride between Rivedoux and La Flotte.
- **Ars-en-Ré** is a village with white houses and a church tower painted in black and white. The tower, part of the 12th-century Saint-Étienne church, once helped sailors to find the coast. The village has the label "Most Beautiful Villages of France".
- **The salt marshes** around Loix and Ars-en-Ré are still worked by salt farmers. The flat marshes are good for a walk or a bike ride, and they attract many birds.
- **La Flotte** is a small harbour village with narrow lanes and a lively market.

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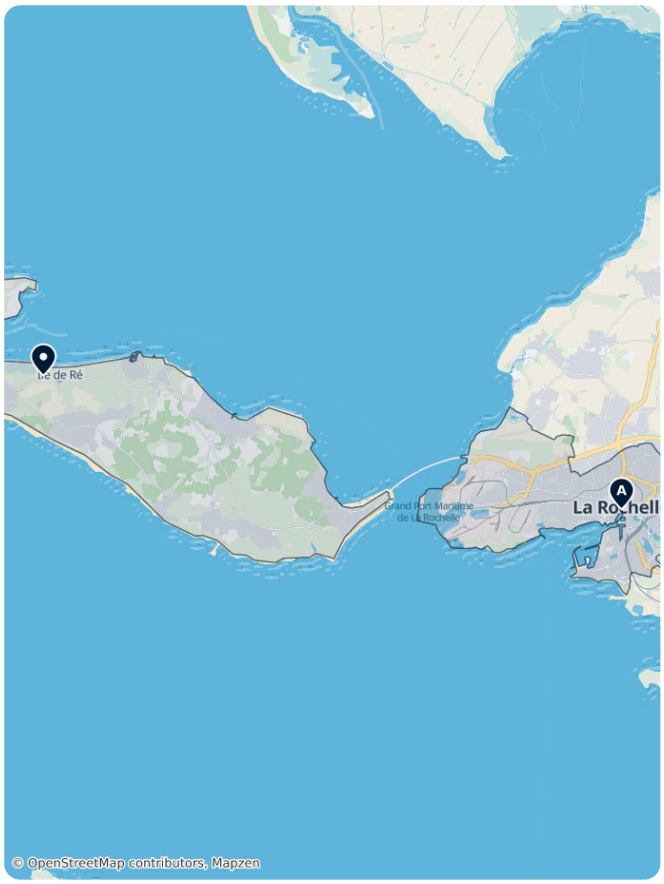
What to experience

- **Cycle between villages**: Follow the cycle paths past salt marshes, villages and fields. A ride from Saint-Martin-de-Ré to the lighthouse is a good full day.
- **Visit a salt marsh**: Walk or cycle through the marshes near Loix and Ars-en-Ré, and see how salt farmers work. The Écomusée du Marais Salant explains the trade.
- **Shop at a village market**: Le Bois-Plage-en-Ré has the largest market on the island, and it runs daily in the season. Ars-en-Ré and La Flotte also have markets.
- **Meet the donkeys in trousers**: Donkeys on the island wear *culottes*, or trousers. They were first used to protect the animals from mosquito bites. Today this is mostly a tradition for visitors.
- **Take the summer boat**: A boat from La Rochelle arrives at the harbour of Saint-Martin-de-Ré. It is a calm way to see the island from the water.

Day trips

Most visitors cross the bridge to the mainland for a day. These places are all outside the island.

- A La Rochelle is about 30 min away by car or bus. It has an old harbour with two medieval towers, an aquarium and many restaurants. A boat also runs from its old harbour to Saint-Martin-de-Ré in summer.
- Rochefort is about 1 hour by car. It is a historic naval town with a rope factory and a ship replica.
- The Marais Poitevin is about 1 hour 15 min by car. It is a large wetland of green canals, where you can take a boat trip.



Where to explore

More places near Île de Ré:

- La Rochelle is the port city across the bridge and the usual gateway to the island.
- Nouvelle-Aquitaine is the wider region, with Atlantic beaches, wine areas and historic towns.

Getting there

- **By air**: The island has no airport. The nearest is La Rochelle airport, about 20 min from Saint-Martin-de-Ré by car. Most visitors fly to Paris or Bordeaux and continue by train.
- **By train**: Take a train to La Rochelle. High-speed trains from Paris take about 3 hours. Book on SNCF Connect.
- **By bus**: Bus line 150 runs all year from La Rochelle station to the ten villages. A single ticket costs €2.50, and you can pay on board by card. Yélo line 3 also runs from La Rochelle station to Rivedoux, Sainte-Marie and Saint-Martin-de-Ré. See the Île de Ré tourist office for timetables.
- **By car**: A 2.9 km bridge links La Rochelle and the island. A toll is charged when you enter the island, and the price depends on the season. Queues are common on busy summer days.
- **By boat**: In summer, boats run from the old harbour in La Rochelle to Saint-Martin-de-Ré. The trip takes about 1 hour.

Getting around

- **Cycling**: The island is almost flat and has more than 100 km of cycle paths. Every village has bike hire, and many places rent electric bikes. Bikes can ride on bus line 150 if you book by 5 pm the day before.
- **Bus**: Line 150 serves all ten villages. In summer, free village shuttles link the villages, beaches and markets. Timetables change with traffic.
- **Taxi**: Taxis are useful for late trips or heavy luggage.
- **On foot**: Each village is small and easy to walk. Distances between villages are best covered by bike or bus.

Getting around on foot & by bike

WALKABILITY

Moderate

Each village is compact and easy to walk, but the villages are far apart.

CYCLING INFRASTRUCTURE

High

The island is almost flat and has more than 100 km of cycle paths.

Driving

- **Is a car worth it?**: Not for a short stay. Bikes and buses reach all the villages, and village centres are small. A car helps if you stay in a remote area or carry a lot of luggage.
- **Bridge**: A toll is charged when you enter the island, and delays are common in busy periods. Leave early in summer.
- **Parking**: Car parks sit at the edge of the busy villages, such as Saint-Martin-de-Ré. Parking in the centre is limited in summer.

Food & drink

The island is known for seafood. Look for oysters from the small farms, often sold in simple oyster huts, and for fresh fish and mussels. Sea salt from the local marshes is a common gift. The early potatoes of Île de Ré have a protected origin label, and many restaurants serve them in spring and early summer.

Village markets are a good place to buy cheese, fruit and picnic food. Many restaurants and shops are small, so book a table in July and August.

What to eat & drink

BREAKFAST

Croissant
Buttery, flaky laminated pastry and a classic French breakfast staple.

LUNCH

Ratatouille
A Provençal stewed vegetable dish of eggplant, zucchini, peppers, and tomatoes.

DINNER

Coq au Vin
Chicken braised slowly in red wine with mushrooms, onions, and lardons.

Beef Bourguignon · Bœuf Bourguignon
Beef stewed in red Burgundy wine with carrots, onions, and mushrooms.

Escargot · Escargots de Bourgogne
Snails cooked in garlic and parsley butter, a classic starter.

SNACKS & STREET FOOD

Baguette
Long, crusty white bread loaf bought fresh daily from the local boulangerie.

Cheese · Fromage
France produces hundreds of cheese varieties, often served as a course before dessert.

SWEETS & DESSERTS

Crepes · Crêpes
Thin pancakes served sweet with sugar or jam, or savory as galettes.

Macarons
Delicate almond meringue sandwich cookies in a range of flavors and colors.

DRINKS

Wine · Vin
France's wine regions, including Bordeaux, Burgundy, and Champagne, are among the world's most renowned.

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Safety & health

Île de Ré is a safe place for visitors. The main risks are petty theft and sun.

- Lock your bike, even for a short stop.
- Keep valuables out of sight when you park a car.
- Check tide times before you walk on the beach or the foreshore.
- Swim only where lifeguards are on duty in summer.
- Use sun protection. The island is open and has little shade.
- Tap water is safe to drink.

History

For centuries the island lived from salt, fish and wine. Salt marshes were built along the coast, and donkeys carried the salt harvest.

In 1627 an English army under the Duke of *Buckingham* landed on the island to help the Protestants in La Rochelle. French forces under *Toiras* held out in the fort of Saint-Martin, and the English left after about three months. Later, in 1681, King Louis XIV had *Vauban* build new walls and a citadel at Saint-Martin-de-Ré. UNESCO listed these fortifications in 2008, together with eleven other Vauban sites.

Until the 20th century the island was reached by boat. A 2.9 km bridge to La Rochelle replaced the ferries in the 1980s and changed the island into a popular holiday place.

Country facts

Quick practical facts for France at a glance:

CURRENCY
EUR €

EMERGENCY
112

ELECTRICITY



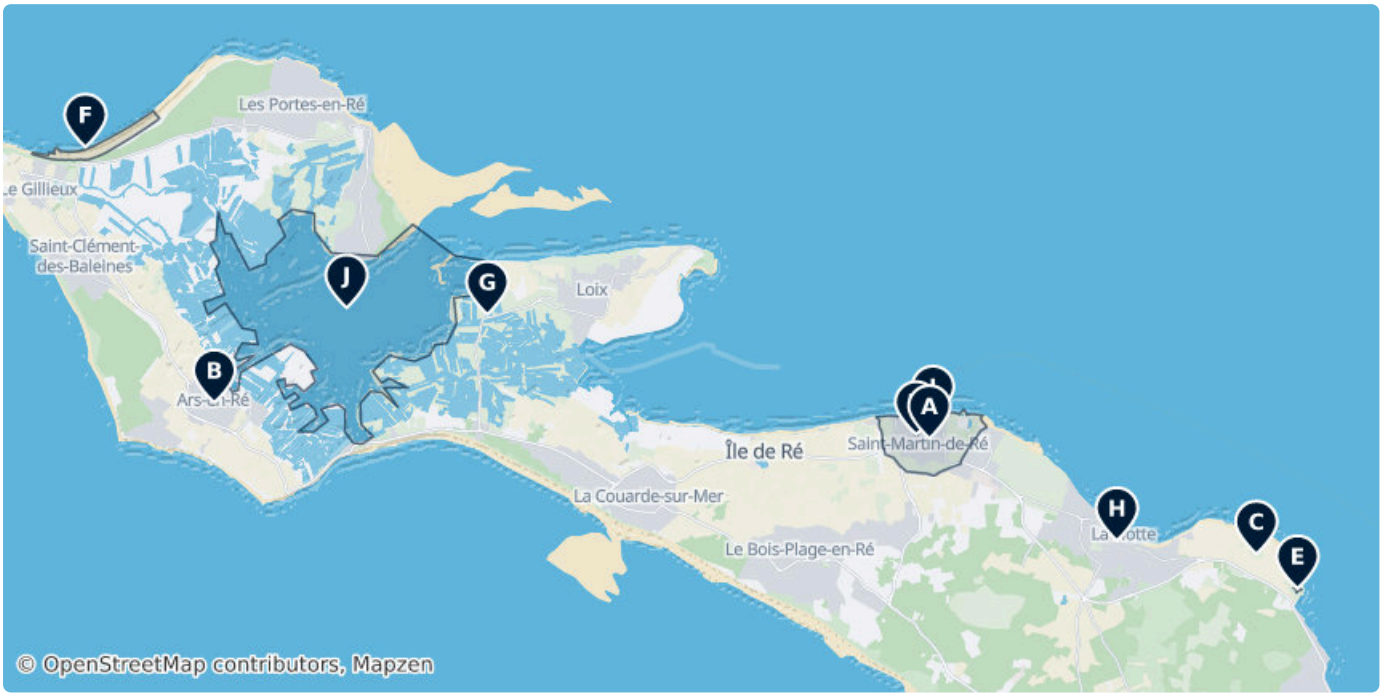
Type C / Type E
230 V · 50 Hz

LANGUAGES
French

TAP WATER
Safe to drink

Île de Ré Essentials

Île de Ré, located off the French Atlantic coast, is characterized by its salt marshes, coastal fortifications, and distinct architecture. This selection covers the UNESCO-listed 17th-century fortifications by Vauban in Saint-Martin-de-Ré and the iconic black-and-white church spire of Ars-en-Ré, which serves as a navigational landmark. The list includes the ruins of the 12th-century Cistercian Châteliers Abbey, the medieval market of La Flotte, and the salt marsh eco-museum, highlighting the island's maritime history and traditional salt production.





A La citadelle et l'enceinte de Saint-Martin-de-Ré

UNESCO World Heritage site designed by Vauban in the 17th century. The star-shaped fortifications include a citadel and over 12 kilometers of walls built to defend the island and its strategic port.

Cours Dechezeau, 17410 Saint-Martin-de-Ré, France (46.20260, -1.36576)



B Église Saint-Étienne

Romanesque and Gothic church featuring a distinctive 40-meter black-and-white painted spire. Historically used as a landmark for sailors, the structure dates back to the 12th century.

Place Carnot, 17590 Ars-en-Ré (46.20776, -1.51552)



C Ancienne abbaye Notre-Dame de Ré, dite des Châteliers

Ruins of a 12th-century Cistercian monastery. Once one of the wealthiest abbeys in the region, the site features remains of the Gothic church destroyed during the Wars of Religion.

La Flotte 17630, France (46.18584, -1.29728)



D Église Saint-Martin

Fortified parish church rebuilt in the 17th and 18th centuries. The bell tower offers panoramic views of the town's UNESCO-listed fortifications and the Atlantic coastline.

4 Rue du Palais, Saint-Martin-de-Ré 17410, France (46.20316, -1.36855)

Mo–Su 10:00–17:00



E Fort de La Prée

Fort de La Prée, built in 1625, is located near the eastern end of the Île de Ré, in France.

Fort la Prée, 17630, France (46.18082, -1.28868)

fort-la-pree.com, +33 5 46 09 73 33

F Plage de la Conche des Baleines

The island's largest sandy beach, stretching from the Phare des Baleines to Les Portes-en-Ré. It is bordered by pine forests and sand dunes on the northwestern coast.

(46.24479, -1.54251)

iledere.com/organiser-activites-et-loisi... , +33 5 46 29 42 02

G Écomusée du Marais Salant

Outdoor museum detailing the history and technique of salt harvesting. It features active salt pans where visitors can observe traditional methods used by local salt workers.

Route de la passe, 17111 Loix (46.22057, -1.45835)

marais-salant.com, +33 5 46 29 06 77

H Marché médiéval

Traditional marketplace in La Flotte featuring a courtyard with covered wooden stalls. Built in a medieval architectural style, it hosts daily vendors selling regional produce and seafood.

22T Rue du Marché, La Flotte 17630, France (46.18779, -1.32650)

I Ernest Cognacq Museum

The Ernest Cognacq Museum is a French regional history museum, located in the city of Saint Martin de Ré, Île de Ré, France.

13 Avenue Victor Bouthillier, Saint-Martin-de-Ré 17410, France (46.20541, -1.36502)

musee-ernest-cognacq.fr, +33 5 46 09 21 22

J Fier d'Ars

An 800-hectare bay and natural reserve comprising salt marshes and mudflats. It is a significant habitat for migratory birds and a center for local oyster cultivation.

France (46.22151, -1.48784)

Best Beaches

The Île de Ré coastline offers a diverse range of Atlantic beaches, from the sheltered shores of La Flotte and Saint-Martin-de-Ré to the wild, surf-heavy waves of the Côte Sauvage. Key features include the iconic white cabins at La Cible, the expansive dunes of the Conche des Baleines near the lighthouse, and unique sandbanks like Banc de Bucheron. Many of these sandy stretches are bordered by maritime pine forests and accessible via the island's extensive cycling network.



A Plage de l'Anse du Fourneau

Large sandbank at the entrance to the Fier d'Ars bay, accessible at low tide for walking and birdwatching.

17880, France (46.23973, -1.47984)

B Plage de la Conche des Baleines

Expansive sandy curve stretching from the Phare des Baleines lighthouse to Les Portes-en-Ré, backed by dunes and the Lizay forest.

(46.24479, -1.54251)

iledere.com/organiser-activites-et-loisi... , +33 5 46 29 42 02

C Plage de Trousse Chemise

Located at the northern tip near Les Portes-en-Ré, this beach is bordered by a pine forest and overlooks the Petit Bûcheron sandbank.

(46.23568, -1.47594)

iledere.com/organiser-activites-et-loisi... , +33 5 46 29 50 56

D La Cible

The primary beach for Saint-Martin-de-Ré, featuring distinctive white changing cabins and views of the Vendée coast.

(Unnamed Road), 17410, France (46.20484, -1.35443)

iledere.com/organiser-activites-et-loisi... , +33 5 46 09 38 90

E Plage de l'Arnerault

Sheltered sandy beach located within walking distance of La Flotte's harbor, protected from prevailing winds.

34 Avenue de la Plage, La Flotte 17630, France (46.18724, -1.31791)

iledere.com/organiser-activites-et-loisi... , +33 5 46 09 60 13

F Plage du Grouin

Crescent-shaped beach at the tip of the Loix peninsula, featuring a small fort and calm waters.

D102, 17111, France (46.22701, -1.41324)

iledere.com/organiser-activites-et-loisirs/sport-et-sensati...

G Plage Gros Jonc

A major beach in Le Bois-Plage-en-Ré with sailing schools and windsurfing facilities set amidst high sand dunes.

(46.25202, -1.48848)

H Les Golandières

Wide sandy stretch in Le Bois-Plage-en-Ré known for its fine sand and views toward the island of Oléron.

(46.17806, -1.39494)

I Plage du Lizay

Wild northern beach bordered by the Lizay forest, frequently used by surfers for its consistent Atlantic swells.

(46.25761, -1.51342)

J Les Grenettes Beach

Rocky and sandy stretch in Sainte-Marie-de-Ré, recognized as one of the island's primary surfing locations.

France (46.16148, -1.36350)

iledere.com/organiser-activites-et-loisi... , +33 5 46 30 21 24

K La Patache

Quiet beach in Les Portes-en-Ré overlooking the Fier d'Ars bay and surrounding salt marshes.

(46.23104, -1.47746)

L Plage de Port Notre-Dame

South-facing beach in Rivedoux-Plage providing views of the Île de Ré bridge and the mainland.

France (46.14460, -1.29573)

M Plage du Martray

Located at the island's narrowest point near Ars-en-Ré, featuring a rocky seabed visible during low tide.

17590, France (46.19794, -1.49183)

N Plage des Prises

Long sandy beach in La Couarde-sur-Mer lined with tamarisk trees, popular for kitesurfing and windsurfing.

(46.19882, -1.45329)

iledere.com/organiser-activites-et-loisi... , +33 5 46 29 82 89

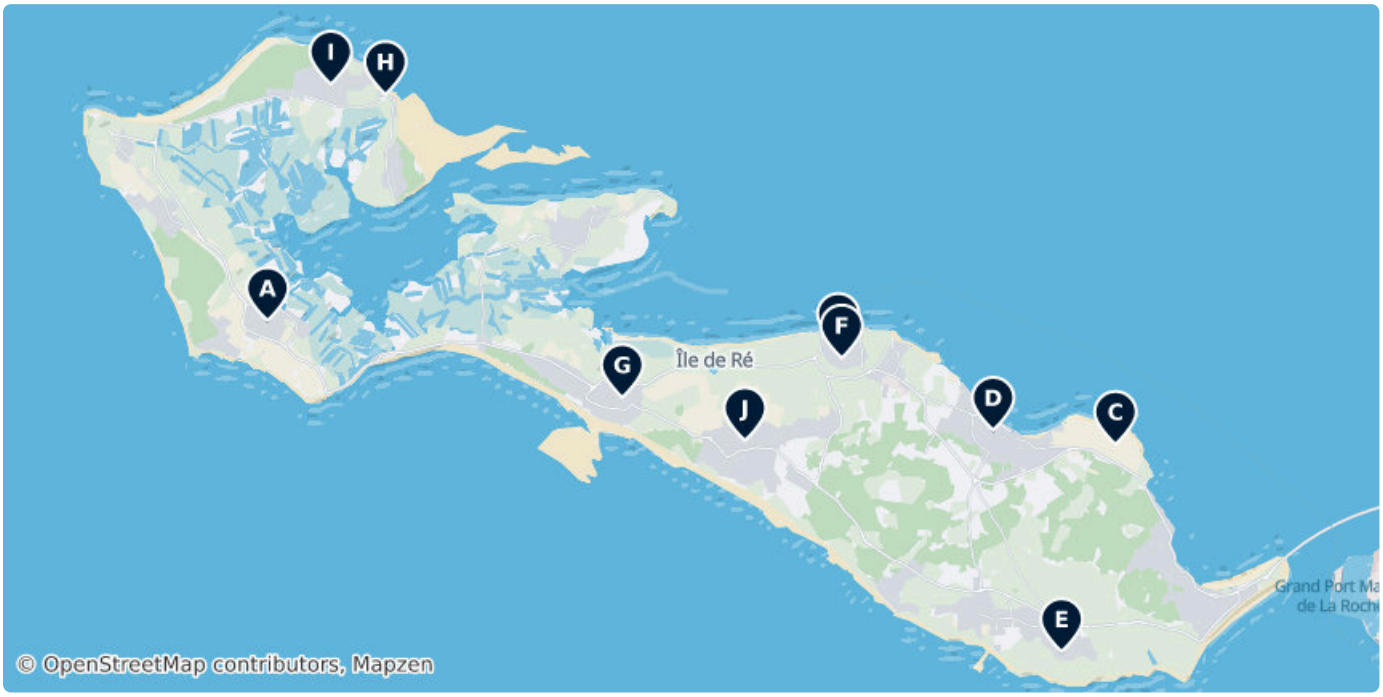
O Plage de la Côte Sauvage

West-facing beach near Saint-Clément-des-Baleines known for its powerful waves and rugged dune landscape.

Rue de l'Ormon, 17590 Le Gillieux, France (46.22377, -1.54688)

Historic Churches of Île de Ré

The religious landscape of Île de Ré is defined by its architectural diversity, from the 12th-century Cistercian ruins of Abbaye des Châteliers to the fortified walls of Église Saint-Martin. Many sites, such as the iconic black-and-white spire of Église Saint-Etienne, historically served as maritime landmarks for sailors. This collection spans Romanesque, Gothic, and 19th-century styles, showcasing the island's spiritual heritage through its village churches, Protestant temples, and coastal chapels.





A Église Saint-Étienne

Features a distinctive 40-meter black-and-white painted steeple used as a landmark for sailors. The building combines 12th-century Romanesque foundations with Gothic architectural elements.

Place Carnot, 17590 Ars-en-Ré (46.20776, -1.51552)



B Église Saint-Martin

A fortified 15th-century church partially destroyed during the Wars of Religion. The bell tower terrace offers views of the Vauban fortifications and the coastline.

4 Rue du Palais, Saint-Martin-de-Ré 17410, France (46.20316, -1.36855)

Mo–Su 10:00–17:00



C Abbaye des Châteliers

These 12th-century Cistercian ruins represent one of the oldest religious sites on the island. The remaining Gothic arches and open-air nave provide insight into medieval monastic life.

La Flotte 17630, France (46.18573, -1.29716)

D Église Paroissiale Sainte-Catherine

Located in the center of La Flotte, this 15th-century parish church features classic regional design and is recognized as a French historic monument.

19 Rue de l'Église, La Flotte 17630, France (46.18824, -1.32869)

+33546092009

E Église Notre-Dame de l'Assomption

A 15th-century Gothic church in Sainte-Marie-de-Ré known for its tall bell tower, which has historically served as a landmark for coastal navigation.

1 Place Eudes d'Aquitaine, Sainte-Marie-de-Ré 17740, France (46.14880, -1.31101)

F Temple Protestant de Saint-Martin-de-Ré

Situated on Place de la République, this stone building serves the island's Protestant community and reflects the region's diverse religious history.

4 Rue du Père Ignace, Saint-Martin-de-Ré 17410, France (46.20112, -1.36766)

G Église Notre-Dame-de-l'Annonciation

A 19th-century church in Le Bois-Plage-en-Ré featuring notable stained glass windows and a traditional regional interior.

1 Rue Pasteur, La Couarde-sur-Mer 17670, France (46.19411, -1.42414)

H Chapelle Notre-Dame des Marins

A small 19th-century chapel in Saint-Clément-des-Baleines traditionally dedicated to the protection of local sailors.

8 Route du Fier, Les Portes-en-Ré 17880, France (46.24804, -1.48514)

I Église Saint-Eutrope

A 19th-century parish church in Saint-Clément-des-Baleines, constructed to replace an earlier structure that was threatened by the sea.

1 Rue de la Cure, Les Portes-en-Ré 17880, France (46.24985, -1.49921)

J Notre Dame-de-Tous-les-Saints

Located in Loix, this 19th-century church was built on the site of a 14th-century chapel and features a distinctive square bell tower.

26 Rue Aristide Briand, Le Bois-Plage-en-Ré 17580, France (46.18641, -1.39258)

DATA SOURCES

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