

Collioure

What is there not to like about like about this picture perfect, iconic seaside town, that combines History, Art, Food and beaches? Located 25Km from the Spanish border on the 'Vermeille Coast. Originally two villages, separated by the river Douy, it was used by the Phoenicians and Greeks, as a trading post, and later occupied by the



Romans, Barbarians, Arabs, and the Spanish, before becoming French in 1659 in the Treaty of the Pyrenees. The current Castle was built by the Knights Templar in the 12th Century, but there are records of a castle at "Castrum Caucoliberi" as early as 673, during the Visigoth ascendancy.

When not busy being conquered, the villagers made a living fishing and salting anchovies. Even today the town makes a very healthy income from exporting its renowned anchovies. Collioures has also been awarded the "site remarquable du gout" or "award of culinary excellence", so it's worth trying out one of the many restaurants.



Apart from the 3 beaches that back onto the town, not to be missed, is the Church of Notre-Dame-des-Anges, with its massive carved wooden altarpiece covered in gold leaf. The churches tower is in fact the old lighthouse. Also worth a visit is the Royal Castle, which was once the residence of the Kings of Majorca. Or you can take a stroll through " La More" which is the original old fishing village, with its winding

cobbled street. The Museum of Modern Art (Musee Peske) is also worth a visit, along with numerous galleries, and exhibitions

Another way of exploring the town, is to walk the "path of fauvism" which takes you around 20 places where Matisse and Derain painted. At each location there's a copy of the painting that you can compare against the actual view.

In 1905 the artist Henri Matisse, arrived in the town on holiday, and was stunned by the amazing colours, and light caused by the sunlight reflecting off the Mediterranean. Its because of this light the town has become a favourite spot for artists including, Picasso, Dufy, Marquet who have all painted here. It is said that Collioure's church is one of the most painted locations in France. Even today the town has over 30 artists living and working there.

Parking in the town, is very difficult, if not impossible, try and park in the car park at the back of the castle, or streets on the hill on the south side of the town. Alternatively there is a park and ride service from the edge of the town, and on market days (Wednesday & Saturday) this really is the best way into the town.

