



*Solo female travel blog*

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## 12 Best Things To Do in Cote d'Argent

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The Cote d'Argent is a 230-kilometre stretch of pure sandy beach – the longest (and damn sight finest) in Europe. It sits in the southwest corner of France on the Atlantic coast famous for surfing, holidaying, outdoor activities and eating. Locals will tell you that Napoleon loved it here and was the one to initiate building its seaside resorts. Located south from Bordeaux, head down into French Basque Country where you'll find sandy but raw coastline, with beaches backed by sand dunes and huge pine forests.

Here's my guide to the 12 best things to do in Cote d'Argent.

## 12 Best Things To Do in Cote d'Argent

### 1. Base yourself in Moliets-et-Maa



Summer France, La Clairiere aux Chevreuils

For a week's holiday to this gorgeous area of France, one of the best things to do in Cote d'Argent is to base yourself in Moliets-et-Maa. An hour and a half from Bordeaux and under an hour from Biarritz airport, it's well positioned for city adventures, but offers just the opposite – sleepy surf-town life.

Moliets is an 80s-built holiday town north of Biarritz. Don't let the date put you off. It's a set of villages, or clusters of villas, that have been designed around the golf course with winding roads through the pine forests. The villas are built in modern Landais style, and are private and peaceful. In fact, peace and calm pretty much sums up Moliets.

I stayed in the La Clairiere aux Chevreuils 'village' where each residence has a private swimming pool, terrace, garden and dining spaces, indoor and out, perfect for entertaining. Or not. Each day I started with a swim looking out over the serene landscape and came back at the end of the day to fling open the bedroom doors and sleep. The accommodation is fully kitted out with everything you need and is

decorated tastefully to make it feel like a luxury home. It's just an incredibly relaxed place and a good jumping point for all of the nearby adventure and sports.

### **How to do it:**

While Biarritz is your glamorous, weekend-break destination, Moliets is the week-long, chilled spot for your rural French holiday. You don't have to stay a week, though, as bookings are completely flexible. But that's not the best thing, the price is.

Summer France premium villas cost £100 pp for a week in a 3-bedroom villa, sleeping up to 8 people (£801 total), in May.

Or from £235.50 pp for a week in a 4-bedroom villa, sleeping up to 10 people (£2,355 total), in August.

**You can check prices and book here.**

**Travel tip:** Fruit and veg markets happen on Tuesdays and Thursdays in the Moliets central square, a winery sells local wine, and offers tastings, there are patisseries and local shops sell local products and barbecue essentials to cook up a feast at home. There is also something very nostalgic at seeing rotisserie chickens spinning outside small shop fronts on your bike home from the beach.

## **2. Hire a bike to get around**





Wine tasting is a bit easier when you don't have a car to look after.

First thing's first when staying in Moliets-et-Maa and the flat countryside of Landes – get yourself a bike.

Biking is the way to get around here, with forest trails leading the 2km to the beach or to the strip of restaurants, coffee shops, bars and shops on Avenue de l'Océan. It's a natural area, not built up and honestly I was surprised at the hipster cafes – try **AmaZone** – beach bars and quality of restaurants that look so unassuming as you pull up.

Also, you can wine all you like at restaurants or do an extended tasting at the Tursan vineyards (see below) and meander home on the quiet roads by bike with no problem.

### **How to do it:**

The Cote d'Argent features on the epically named **Velodysee** – a cycling route travelling from Brittany along the Atlantic to the Basque Coast – so you're in the right land if cycling is your thing.

You can hire a bike from **Velos du Golf**.

### 3. Explore Southwest France's Surf Scene



Surfers-Huchet-Moliets © S.Amelinck

Surfing: The reason I came to this wonderful coast line. The waves during the summer months around Moliets-et-Maa are small – perfect for learners and intermediates.

Surfing all down this coast is famous. 25km down the road is the town of Hossegor, an internationally renowned surf spot that's famous for La Nord break and tube wave La Graviere, where World Surf League competitions take place. Waves get big here. By this point you've entered the Basque Coast and surfing happens along its 35km length. Further south from Hossegor is the stunning ancient city of Bayonne and the Anglet coast area for more good waves, surf schools and beach bars. It's unfussy beach life here, until you get down to Biarritz with its two surfing beaches and classy surf scene.



Surfing on La Cote des Basques

### **How to do it:**

There are more surf schools than you can imagine but I'd recommend **Ecole de Surf du Golf**. This one runs down on the slightly farther, wilder beach Plage des Chenes Lieges. It's the only surf school to play in the area, so there's no fighting for waves. The beach is part of a nature reserve and is a raw beaut – my landmark was a battered piece of old drift wood, the only spot on the shore.

**Travel tip if you don't want to surf:** Let's not forget about beach life as well. You don't need a surfboard to enjoy the waves – try stand-up paddle boarding (SUP), boogie boarding or just old-school sea swimming in the many life-guarded swim zones.

## **4. Go wine tasting at Tursan**





Trying the local wine (or spirit, even) wherever you're on holiday is a must in my books. Some of my fondest French memories are of sipping €2 local orange-coloured rose in a remote village square waiting for shops to reopen after the long lunch hours, or ordering carafe upon carafe extra of red, not having to worry about the cost but willing evening meals to go on forever. So I was delighted to find out about Tursan and the rustic barn nearby village Messanges for wine tasting. La Cave des Vignerons de Tursan has been in Landes since 1958, but the first evidence of winemaking dates back to the 12th Century. Produced are AOP Tursan wines, IGP Landes and Chalosse, and a very unique wine grown in the sand.

### **How to do it:**

You can do wine tasting at **La Cave des Vignerons de Tursan**. I tried three white wines, three reds, three rosés and two dessert wines. A very merry mood-maker before heading off to dinner.

## 5. Try a round of golf



Image Golf Moliets

Now golf really isn't my thing, though I am finding it harder and harder to avoid. However, I do like a good lunch and a drink in a nice setting. And I don't mind swiping at a few balls on the driving range to earn the lunch. Luckily, the Moliets-et-Maa lets holidayers do just this, offering free lessons as an introduction to golf on Saturdays. It's not a stuffy golf club and there is a complete mix of players around.

### How to do it:

**Golf Moliets** has an 18-hole and 9-hole course with a nice mix of holes in the forest and alongside the ocean. In the area there are 18 golf courses between Bordeaux and Spain's San Sebastian for those keen into the sport.

## 6. Stretch your limbs with some yoga





By the time you've biked and hiked and golfed and surfed and swam, your limbs are probably in need of a shake out – or at least a good stretch; mine were. Which is what makes yoga one of the best things to do in the beautiful setting on the Cote d'Argent.

### **How to do it:**

You can pretty much yoga however you want to – yoga on the beach, yoga in your garden – I took a private session outside on the deck of my villa with Laetitia Lacaze from **Yoga-Nature** to stretch out some surfing stiffness and take a beat.

## **7. Explore Hossegor's cobblestone streets**



Photo credit J.P. Plantey

Where to start exploring in an area rich in beautiful beaches, towns and culture? I mentioned Hossegor above for the surf, but it should also be top of the list for visiting as a town. Cobblestone streets home traditional boulangeries, modern health food cafes, seafood restaurants, ice cream parlours and chocolateries. Apparently chocolate is famous in Hossegor, but I'd perhaps just say that food in general is excellent here and would be my first tip for foodies in this area.

Hossegor Market is one of the best French markets in my memory, selling baskets, clothes, jewellery and most other things regional you'd like. Even better, this outdoor square leads to an inner food market (see below).

Hossegor has a great atmosphere, buzzing with surfing stoke but also the town balances well being beachy chilled with a sophisticated edge. High end fashion shops like Maje, are flanked by surf brands Rip Curl and Billabong.

### **How to do it:**

Trains and buses run between Hossegor and Moliets, though it's still rural France and the transport isn't regular. If you're feeling active, Moliets to Hossegor is 25kms to bike.

## **8. See the glitz of Biarritz (couldn't resist the rhyme)**



Beach Cote des Basques, Biarritz

Biarritz, I'm sure, needs no long description and is no doubt already on your list of things to do whilst on the Cote d'Argent. It's actually just off the Cote d'Argent and starts the Cote des Basques, the city's Port Vieux and dramatic cliffs cutting up the long stretch of sand.

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Spectacularly beautiful, Biarritz sits on cliffs overhanging the clearest blue water dotted with surfers and swimmers. It was less expensive and showy than I was imagining it to be, with a fantastic eating and drinking scene, beach life to boot and a people watching haven. Two coast lines sprawl out from the centre, both surfy, with a mini beach in the centre which was super busy but good to get into the topless sunbathing and swimming groove, surrounded by French bathers.

### **How to do it:**

As mentioned above, there is a train that runs to Biarritz. Otherwise, hiring a car for a day or two is a good option for exploring.

It's certainly possible to cycle from Moliets down to Biarritz if you're a keen cyclist, with 2-3 hours riding each way, but that would be your day's activity.



## 9. Don't miss medieval Bayonne



Photo by Tom Sekula on Unsplash

Bayonne is somewhere I almost missed but I'm so glad I didn't. It's a medieval city in the Pyrenees-Atlantiques, where the ocean and mountains converge. It is at the exact point where the Nive and Adour rivers meet, making for a beautiful setting separating Grand and Petit Bayonne. Narrow streets characterise the old town, with its Gothic-style cathedral and Château Vieux castle. It's quiet, almost sleepy, after the hubbub of Hossegor and Biarritz but on each long street you'll likely stumble upon a packed bar or tempting restaurant.

## 10. Day trip south of Biarritz





Grande Plage, Biarritz

The coastline sightseeing opportunities beyond Biarritz are seemingly endless.

South of Biarritz is Saint-Jean-de-Luz, a fishing town at the mouth of the Nivelle river that homes the Saint-Jean-Baptiste Church, where Louis XIV married Marie-Therese of Spain in 1660.

Or venture over the France-Spain border to the ultra cool San Sebastian that's recently become a hotspot for weekends away of eating and drinking well.

But where to stop? I went out with the rough plan to surf along the coast that turned out to be the perfect way to explore the beaches and towns from Moliets south.

### **How to do it:**

Hire a car and take a day trip or two from your tranquil base at Moliets along the coastline south of Biarritz.

## **11. Eat all of the French food**



I'll assume that everyone is like me and takes a holiday to mean eating session after eating session. Between the surrounding regions of Bordeaux, Basque Country and Gascony you're pretty much all set for fine food and wine, which is what makes the food one of the best things to do in Cote d'Argent.

Local supermarkets sell Moules Mariniere, garlic snails and other delicacies to heat and serve up in your villa for dinner al fresco. There seemed to be a wonderful selection of sheep and soft goats cheese in every deli I visited – which was a lot – and fresh fruit and veg markets were hard to miss.

It's perhaps a controversial thing to promote, but the foie gras from the region is simply sensational.

### **How to do it:**

Two restaurants in Moliets are a must-eat; **Le Grill de l'Ocean** for ceviche, the most impressive grilled vegetable carpaccio, linguine aux fruits de mer, barbecued fish of the day and duck breast served with chips. Or just do the fabulous set menu for €28.

Second is the **Snack de la Plage** on the dunes overlooking Messanges Beach. You can't get a better location for a restaurant and the food is much more than café food. The setting is rustic, but you know it's the place to be on a beautiful evening for sundown. Locals are sipping wine looking over the shimmering sea with surfers, perhaps their children, catching waves into the twilight hours.

## 12. Hit up Hossegor's inner food market



We can't forget the Basque culture when it comes to food, and for the best pure Basque food experience, head into Hossegor's inner food market. Tables litter the roofless market with busy waiters dashing round taking beer and wine orders.

### **How to do it:**

The food is up to you as you pick your stand from the many that line the walls of the market place and do your best ordering under the crazy market circumstances. The best things I ate were totally mis-communicated mistakes (or perhaps they were looking after me?!) so don't get panicked if you're not good at the chaotic market chat and can't take the pressure ordering rapid-fire in another language. We're talking cold meats, Pintxos – Basque tapas – the most taste-intensive stew I might have ever tried (I think named Axoa) and patatas bravas with added meat and offal. No word but 'sublime' could sum up this eating experience.

I best stop now as I'm already looking at flights back here for Autumn. In short, eat lots – discover more food & water holes and let me know – relax in Moliets, bike your way around, and get in the ocean daily to unwind.

**So, that's my guide to the 12 best things to do in Cote d'Argent. Got any questions? Let me know in the comments below.**

*This guide to the best things to do in Cote d'Argent was written for Indiana Jo by Katie Bamber. Katie is a freelance adventure sports and travel writer. Happiest on the water, snow or on a bike her pieces bring an element of action as well as enthusiasm for new places and cultures.*

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France

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*Katie visited Moliets-et-Maa courtesy of **Summer France**.*