



In the vaults beneath Chancery Lane, London, you can pick up anything from tableware to a full-sized silver throne.

The London Silver Vaults

Beneath Chancery Lane, a most extravagant shopping experience awaits. In the repurposed vaults of The Chancery Lane Safe Deposit, over 40 vendors ply their wares: the world's largest collection of fine antique silver available for sale.

The vaults were originally created in 1876 for the sole purpose of renting out strong rooms to house valuable jewelry and

documents. But it wasn't long before the vaults transitioned into a secure premises for silver dealers. One eccentric customer stored just a farthing (a quarter of a penny) in the vault, racking up a bill of £100 over the years—a princely sum at the time. During the London Blitz in World War II,

the original building was leveled, but the vaults below remained unscathed.

These days, the vaults are a popular visit for curious window shoppers and for patrons on the lookout for anything from a silver spoon to a full-sized silver throne. After you've worked up an appetite, you can pop down the street to the Knights Templar for some traditional ale and pub food, in a repurposed Georgian bank with its original features. See: Silvervaultslondon.com.

*The world's
largest collection
of antique silver."*

The Savvy Traveler's Corner



Bikes, Beaches and Oysters on France's Secret Island

Barbara Diggs

France has no shortage of elegant beach towns, but none transports you to a more graceful time and place than the island of Île de Ré.

Floating in an ocean of clear blue-green water on France's southwestern coast, this little-known island is a world of scrubby pine trees and golden shores. Small stone villages dot the landscape, with green-shuttered whitewashed houses and cobblestone lanes lined with pink hollyhocks.

Residents go to the market with wicker baskets swinging from their arms...sip glasses of rosé at lunch...bike everywhere...and wear espadrilles. Simply put, Île de Ré is about living the beautiful life in impeccably understated French style. And when you're on the island, you live it too.

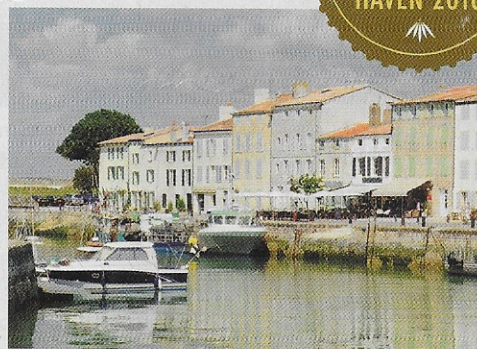
As you ride, keep an eye out for elongated tin huts (*cabanes*) along the route that offer *huîtres dégustation* (oyster tastings). Fresh and delicious raw oysters are sold for about \$9 a dozen. If you're not into oysters, most *cabanes* also offer seafood of every stripe, straight from the Atlantic.

Naturally, the island's wide sandy beaches are a main attraction, particularly Le-Bois-Plage-en-Ré on the island's southern coast and the more isolated western beaches near the *Phare des Baleines* (Lighthouse of Whales). But even if you never set foot on sand, you'll still be plenty engaged by the island's villages.

My favorite is Ars-en-Ré, officially one of the 151 "most

beautiful villages in France" according to *Les Plus Beaux Villages de France* association. This village, with its tiny harbor and unique 12th-century church with a black-tipped bell tower, encapsulates all the island's grace and beauty.

For the full "beautiful life" effect in Île de Ré, I'd recommend renting a house. Check Myhomein-ilede.com, where rates for a 2- or 3-bedroom place start at \$500 per week in off-season. Alternatively, consider staying at the Le Hotel Galion, a pretty port-side hotel in the island's stunning capital, St. Martin-en-Ré (\$100 a night, off-season). Île de Ré is a three-hour train ride from Paris, plus a 30-minute taxi ride from the closest mainland town, La Rochelle.



Saint-Martin-de-Ré is one of the 10 villages for you to explore on Île de Ré.

