

The Scenic “Route du Mimosa”

Le soleil en hiver...

Get ready for a real treat! This scenic route offers a sublime landscape with quaint villages, golden blooms, climbing mountaintops, green valleys, and a beautiful coastline. All set to bright skies (hopefully), the deep blue sea, and a backdrop of snow topped mountains. Don't forget that with the Massif du Tanneron in full bloom from January through March, the best way to enjoy this magnificent scenery is by foot. Get out of the car and get exploring! 130km (80 miles) of wonderfulness...

Tips and Tricks

- The best time to visit and see the most blooms is mid-February.
- The best time to hike the Mimosa forests is early-March.
- Not just for the Mimosa, it's a perfect route anytime of the year to visit the area.
- Check the weather before leaving, it is winter after all!
- If you only have one day, start early and do the purple section.
- If you have time for only one village, visit Tanneron.
- To save time, bring a picnic basket rather than eating at a restaurant.
- Pick up some of the local Mimosa flavored specialties and add it to your picnic basket along with some local wine (Rosé of course!).
- Avoid weekends during the school holiday period (February 11-27, 2017) if possible.
- Download and print out [GGG's Route du Mimosa PDF Itinerary](#) guide.
- Download the guide: [Magazine Route du Mimosa](#)
- If you forget to download the guide, stop by any of the local tourist offices.
- Upload [GGG's Route du Mimosa](#) to Google maps on your phone.

Don't be disappointed if some villages have just a sprinkling a Mimosa trees here and there, especially if you arrive early in the Mimosa season. The goal of this route is to explore the villages, the Mimosa is just a wonderful bonus. Take your time to enjoy this beautiful region!

Route du Mimosa Itinerary

Green Section (A) - Mile 1 - Bormes-les-Mimosas (Var)

An excellent and appropriately named beginning to the scenic “Route du Mimosa”. Bormes-les-Mimosa is separated into the lower port town, and the upper medieval village. Make sure to visit the port ([Pradet harbor](#)) first for views of the Iles d'Or, the Cap Bénat and the Cap Nègre before you continue the route upwards.

Counted as the most beautiful floral village in France (Le plus beau village fleuri de France) and the headquarters for the Mimosa plant, the residents added “les Mimosas” to their town name in 1968 in honor of the golden tree. Wander the narrow streets and enjoy the atmosphere. Reportedly, there are no less than 90 Mimosa plant species in the village.

Make sure to walk along the ancient ramparts and the old village center with its Chateau des Seigneurs de Fos. Visit the “[Pépinieres Cavatore](#)” as you leave town and pick up your own Mimosa plant from among the over 150 varieties available (closed lunch and Sunday).

Don't Miss...

- The medieval village dating back to the 12th century
- Fort Bregançon the private retreat of President Charles de Gaulle from 1968 to 2013. Visits are booked through the local tourist office and offer superb views of the surrounding area.
- Gonzalez Botanic Park with 700 rare species (free entry)
- [Chapelle Notre-Dame de Constance](#) - a 40 minute hike (GR90) starting from the [Le château des Seigneurs de Fos](#) at the top of the village. Awesome views up to the chapel.
- [Pépinieres Cavatore](#) nursery specializing in Mimosa
- [Château de Léoube Winery](#) where you can pick up a bottle of fabulous "[Sécrets de Léoube](#)" rosé.
- Nearby are the white sand [beaches](#) of Cabasson, Brégançon, l'Estagnol and Pellegrin.

Events...

- 1/28-29/2017 - [Mimosalia](#) – always the last weekend in January, event showcasing rare and unique plant varieties. Located in the old town center, entry 4€.
- 2/26/2017 - [Corso Fleuri](#) – Flower parade in the old town center.

Green Section (B) - Mile 15km - Rayol-Canadel-sur-Mer (Var)

Imagine the Massif des Maures plunging into the crystal clear waters of the Mediterranean... The beautiful commune of Rayol Canadel is actually composed of the joining of two villages (Le Rayol and Canadel) in 1945 and is situated along the coastal D559. The highlights are not only the plentiful Mimosa blooming in and around the large villas, the gardens of the private estate Domaine du Rayol (considered one of about 30 official "Grand Sites of France"), but also its seaside location and beautiful beachfront with views of L'Ile du Levant and L'Ile de Port-Cros. A popular seaside destination for families since the 1970's.

Don't Miss...

- Family oriented Canabel Beach with its long, wide sandy beach.
- Rustic wild and intimate Rayol Beach at the foot of a protected preservation area.
- "Jardin des Méditerranées" of the Domaine du Rayol 7 hectares (17 acres) of magnificent gardens by landscape artist Gilles Clément (a newer version of "LeNôtre).
- The Pateck round pergola with its amazing panorama.
- The Coastal path of the Domaine Rayol for an easy scenic promenade.
- The "Escaliers Monumentaux" stone steps uniting the village to the otherwise inaccessible beach. Continue on to hike the "Col du Canadel" that begins at the Escaliers Monumentaux and offers superb views of the ocean and the Îles d'Hyères.
- And why not stop by Saint-Tropez to see the jet setters and huge yachts on your way to the next stop, just because you can! Just a 3.5km detour, but parking can sometimes be challenging depending on when you are going.

Events...

- 1/20/2017 and 1/27/2017 (other dates TBD) - L'odyssée des Mimosas - Located at the Jardin des Méditerranées for a world tour of Mediterranean plants.

- Weekends in January and February - Guided walk “Le Rayol through Mimosa” at 3pm or Sunday at 10am. Sign-up and departure at the Tourist Office - 5€/person
- 3/22/2017 - Spring Garden Festival at the Domaine du Rayol
- 8/15/2017 - For those visiting in the summer, there's a fireworks display to celebrate the Allied troops landing on these beaches during World War II to liberate France.

Orange Section (C) - Mile 42km - Sainte Maxime (Var)

Named after a saint (Sainte Maxime of course!), the small village with its many beaches is popular with tourist and families in the summer months. Located on the gulf of Saint-Tropez, it boasts 11km of beautiful beachfront with restaurants, brasseries, and plenty of boutiques to tempt you. Wander around town and you will notice remnants of Art Deco architecture, old tiled roofed homes, and lovely shaded streets. In February Sainte Maxime has its own “Corso du Mimosa” parade with Mimosa floral floats. The local flower garden, Jardin des Myrtes, is a pleasant quiet stop and let the youngins run wild and free.

Don't Miss...

- « Musée de la Tour Carré » specializing in local history
- “Pointe des Sardinaux” – THE perfect place for a picnic on the coast with amazing views. Please just be careful of the site as it is a fragile environment to be respected.
- “Jardin des Myrtes” is a peaceful and beautiful garden with plantings typical of the area. During Jan-March emphasis is made on the Mimosa.
- Grimaud Flea Market / Brocante du Jas des Roberts – about 12km from Saint Maxime off RD14 but well worth the detour for the scope of its offerings. I still regret not buying a shadow box made by sailors long ago to will away the eternal hours at sea. Every Sunday between 7am and 1pm, Parking is available and entry is free of charge.
- Saint Tropez is just around the corner. Why not stop by and walk in Brigitte Bardots footsteps while admiring the humongous luxury yachts in the harbor. If the weather permits (doubtful during Mimosa season), the famous "[Plage de Pampelone](#)" is THE beach for sunbathing.

Events...

- 2/4-5/2017 – Fête du Mimosa / [Corso du Mimosa](#) floral parade
- 3/4/2017 – Provençal Carnival
- 3/5/2017 – Flea Market in the center of town

Orange Section (D) - Mile 59km - Saint-Raphaël 59km (Var)

Near the Roman town of Fréjus with its vestiges and ancient church, the port town of Saint Raphaël is located right on the border of between the Var Department and the Alpes-Maritimes. The immense seaside church “Basilique de Notre Dame de Victoire” built in 1882 is a must see item in Saint Raphaël, as is the Musée d’Archeologie with its displays of rare objects discovered during underwater excursions. Blooming Mimosa can be found growing on the beautiful beaches nearby. There is a full 36 km with 29 separate beaches (of interest for diving and snorkeling), so if you struggle with decision-making this might get quickly complicated. Choose wisely as some of these beaches are of difficult access...

Don't Miss...

- Musée d'Archéologie
- Basilique Notre Dame de la Victoire
- The "Corniche d'Or" (also known as the [Corniche d'Esterel](#)) driving route that borders the coastline from Saint-Raphaël all the way to Cannes ([perfect for motorcycles](#)), a road established long ago by the Romans.
- Treat your sweet tooth at the « Le Palet d'Or » with a Mimosa flavored Macaroon, or stop by « Le Mimosa d'Agay » for chocolate and Mimosa flavored treat.
- If you have the time, the roman vestiges of [Fréjus](#) are worth the 10 minute detour.

Events...

- TBD

Purple Section (E) - Mile 108km - Mandelieu-la-Napoule (Alpes-Maritimes)

The section from here to Tanneron is probably the most scenic part of the "Route du Mimosa". Considered the Mimosa Capital (in competition with Bormes-les-Mimosas) and entrance to the Massif Tanneron, its hills are covered with the largest Mimosa forest in all of Europe. In February there is a Fête du Mimosa, Corsos Fleuris (battle of the flowers), and a nighttime illuminated parade.

The town is best known for the Château de la Napoule, a picturesque fortified castle that sits right on the water. Much of the castle was destroyed during the French Revolution (hélas, just like so many other historical monuments). All that remain of the original structure is the 4th century Roman Tower and the 11th century Saracen Tower. Don't miss the amazing sculpture hanging off the tower, and the carvings along the beach. Now a non-profit for the arts, much of what you see today is the renovation work of a rich American couple who purchased the property in the early 1900's. You can walk along the castle walls and onto the neighboring city beach.

Don't Miss...

- [Château de la Napoule](#) and its [promenade](#)
- The « Tarte Mimosée » from la [Boutique de l'Oasis](#). They also have a reputable gourmet restaurant.
- The Massif Tanneron Mimosa Forest. There are tons of hiking opportunities, just stop by the local tourist office for ideas or try across town towards the Boulevard des Termes. After a few curves, several paths through the forest will appear on your left. Pick one! Particularly beautiful as you gain in elevation towards Tanneron (Crêtes du Tanneron).
- [Chemin des Douaniers](#) and the Châteaux de la Napoule with its public beach.
- Mont San Peyre panoramic view
- Theoule Beach and cliff diving (10 min hike) - only for the young and brave.

Events...

- Fête du Mimosa en février
- 2/19/2017 - [Grand Corso Fleuri](#) held on the beach boardwalk

- 2/15 + 2/22/2017- Saturday evening light parade
- 2/19/2017 – Pyro Symphonic Show (Fireworks set to music) at 19h
- 2/15 through 2/22/2017 - Daily guided walks "Au Pays du Mimosa" (see Tourist Office for more details).

Purple Section (F) - Mile 112km - Tanneron (Alpes-Maritimes)

Located right smack in the middle of the Mimosa Forest at the tiptop of the Massif du Tanneron. Expect amazing views dotted with burst of yellow everywhere. This is the ideal starting points for driving or hiking through the mimosa forests. There are shops to peruse and several nurseries open for you to find out how the budding branches are forced into bloom. If you cannot visit the entire route, this is a great one stop choice.

Don't Miss...

- Permanent exhibit of the tourist office – Tanneron, yesterday and today
- Visit the greenhouses of local Mimosa producers such as [Vial](#) and [Augier](#).
- [Medieval Chapel of Notre Dame de Peygros](#) in Tanneron with many ex-voto plaques. Unfortunately it is rarely open to visit the interior, but the exterior is also impressive.
- The Col de Peygros takes you to the Chapel at [Saint-Cassien-des-bois](#) (5km detour from Tanneron). Dating back to the 12th century, the chapel's square tower with no roof was used by monks during sieges. There is also an abandoned ancient flour mill next to the chapel worth exploring, wild fig trees waiting to be picked, and the river Siagne awaiting you for a peek at its cascade or a very refreshing swim in its waters. Great hiking and VTT area.
- Lac de Saint Sassen – Offering many water activities (weather permitting) and an Aqua Park to keep folks young and old content. The lake is a picturesque large man-made reservoir.

Events...

- 2/5/2017 – Artisanal Market (Sunday only)

Purple Section (G) - Mile 115km - Pégomas (Alpes-Maritimes)

A small town nestled in a valley surrounded by hills full of those lovely trees with yellow fluffy scented puffs that are the celebrity of the day. This is the home of the "Confrérie du Mimosa" created in 1998 to celebrate and educate others about the virtues of Mimosa. There aren't enough reasons to make this town a mandatory stop on the route, but you can wander about town to admire the plentiful blooms and valley views while sampling a brioche with Mimosa cream...that's my plan anyways! Skip it altogether and visit Auribeau-sur-Siagne.

Don't Miss...

- The « Jardin des Mimosas » botanic gardens
- "Eglise Saint Pierre" dating from 1765 with typical Provençal wire cage bell tower
- [Leisure walk along the river Siagne](#) and the Béal canal (built in the 15th century to bring irrigation water to the fields and feed the starving people).
- Visit the [Mimosa greenhouses](#) to learn about the forcing techniques and to pick up a bouquet (or two) for yourself.

- Treat yourself to the “Mimosette”, a brioche filled with a mimosa flavored cream and only sold in Pégomas.
- Skip Pégomas and instead spend a little time in the medieval village of Auribeau-sur-Siagne, lovely even without Mimosa.

Events...

- 2/15 to 2/22/2017 – “Fête du mimosa” (Date to be confirmed but usually the last weekend in January) animated by the “Confrérie du Mimosa” as is the Mimosa Ball.
- 2/28/2017 – « [Bal du Mimosa](#) » dancing with local band, as authentic as it gets...

Purple Section (H) - Mile 130km - Grasse (Alpes-Maritimes)

Your last and most “fragrant” stop of the route. The old town center in Grasse is a collection of large squares, narrow alleys, steep staircases, and 17th and 18th century architecture.

Grasse is known as the fragrance capital of the world for good reason. The flowers necessary for perfume making are all grown in the surrounding mountains, including of course Mimosa. In fact, fragrant Mimosa oils are found in the perfumes “Paris” by Yves Saint-Laurent and “Champs Élysées” by Guerlain. There are three world-famous perfume factories worth visiting: Fragonard, Galimard and Molinard. You can even follow a mini course at one of the factories if you like and mix up your own perfume fragrance! In addition, Grasse is the home of the “Musée International de la Parfumerie” and its “Jardin du Musée” gardens which explore the history of perfume making that dates back to the end of the 18th

Don't Miss...

- The middle age architecture (cathedral, hotel de ville, old perfume factories)
- Musée international de la parfumerie - 3,000 years of perfume history, and a rooftop garden (Fragonard's museum offer a brief version of same but is free).
- Jardin du Musée International de la Parfumerie – heavenly when in bloom.
- Fragonard, Galimard and Molinard Perfume Factories – Free tours (Fragonard is the most popular). You can sign up for a perfume class to make your own at any of the three factories (prices start at around 50€ per person with your perfume creation included). For a beaten off the track class option, try [Guy Bouchara Artisinal](#).
- Notre Dame du Puy's Cathedral – 13th century, houses 3 paintings by Rubens.
- Musée Fragonard – Paintings by Rubens and Fragonard in a very romantic style
- Musée Provençal du Costume et du Bijou – Provençal clothing and jewelry museum.
- Museum of Art and History of Provence

Events...

- Fête du Jasmin – held every August if are visiting outside of Mimosa season.

And that's it! All 140km... Did I forget anything??? Let me know if I did!

Happy Travels,
-Girl Gone Gallic

