



Find out why historic Lyon was crowned one of the first European Capitals of Smart Tourism with **Karyn Noble**

When Unesco recognised a proportion of Lyon's neighbourhoods as World Heritage sites in 1998, there was a marked increase in tourism. In 2019, Lyon (along with Helsinki in Finland) became one of the first cities to be selected from 38

contenders as a European Smart Tourism Capital, part of a new, EU-wide annual competition. But what does this award mean for the average visitor to the Auvergne-Rhône-Alpes capital?

For a city to be considered a Smart Tourism Capital, it needs to demonstrate outstanding achievements in four categories:

accessibility, sustainability, digitalisation, and cultural heritage and creativity. I took my first trip to Lyon in 20 years to see what the fuss was about.

Gastronomic giant

There's no disputing that a key part of Lyon's cultural heritage is its gastronomy; in



particular, its *bouchons*. Sipping a *communard* (Lyon's version of kir, but based around Beaujolais and crème de cassis), I marvel at the hefty slabs of lardons on my *salade Lyonnaise* – and the serving that's rather massive for a starter – at Les Culottes Longues, where the chef has been here for 35 years.

This is not unusual for a certified *bouchon* (there are 25 *bouchons* in Lyon since the certification launched in 2012), traditional restaurants where

Left:
A classic view of Lyon

Above:
The Confluence is a new and eco-friendly district

there's a guarantee of ambience, quality and good value. Les Toques Blanches Lyonnaises (*toques-blanches-lyonnaises.com*) is also a significant force in Lyon's dining scene, formed in 1936 to both defend and promote the city's gastronomy, now boasting 4,000 restaurants.

But this food legacy meets the future in an astounding way, as I step into the Cité Internationale de la Gastronomie, which opened on 19 October in the Grand Hôtel Dieu: the largest

ever restoration project of a French historical monument to date. At once, as a food lover, I'm aware I could spend hours absorbed here, whether that be educating myself in greater depth about chef Paul Bocuse, watching French films or playing nutritional games (I'm not ashamed to say that the pastel children's kitchen with interactive cooking station and cartoon chef is my favourite spot). It manages to hit the mark of honouring the former



The sensors of the white autonomous vehicle soon enough detect my presence and a siren starts blaring

hospital's past while introducing digital innovation to educate the next generation.

Passage of time

"The idea is to share our heritage with the public but also preserve the quality of life of the people living here. The *traboules* are so specific. You can find these things only in Lyon. If you go through Lyon, of course, it's beautiful but you will miss something typical of the city if you don't see them."

I'm on a guided tour through the *Longue Traboule*, one of

45 hidden passageways in the Vieux-Lyon and Croix-Rousse districts that are accessible to the public but, as the name would suggest, this is the longest. It winds its way through four different buildings and courtyards and links Rue Saint-Jean with Rue de Boeuf. Under the terms of an agreement signed by the owners and the local authorities, the former undertake the opening of the *traboule* during the day and the latter to keep it clean.

Professional guides have strict practices to follow to remind

Above:

The Orange Cube in La Confluence, nicknamed 'La Mimolette' after the cheese!

Right:

Discover the fascinating *traboules*

Right:

Le Vaporetto, an easy and eco-friendly way of getting around Lyon



groups how to behave while visiting the *traboules*, but for eight months between spring and autumn, the public can also call on the red-shirted Lyon City Helpers who are often to be



found at *traboules*' entrances. These helpers are a mobile group of 10 volunteers aged between 20 and 25 years who carry out surveys of visitors in the old town to improve the

experience and also to offer awareness of how to respect the quality of life of *traboule* inhabitants. Visitors can also download a free *traboules* app to self-guide themselves through the area.

Eco-friendly fun

I take an e-bike through La Confluence district, a new, eco-friendly neighbourhood between the Saône and the Rhône rivers, and suddenly find myself in a head-to-head encounter with one of the city's two Navly vehicles.

Navly is Lyon's free electric and driverless shuttle service that's been transporting curious passengers around a 1.3km section of the district since 2016. "Keep cycling, something will happen," smirks my Lyon Bike Tour guide. The sensors of the white autonomous vehicle soon enough detect my presence and a siren starts blaring until I edge my bike out of its way.

My next stop is at Maison de la Confluence, an information centre dedicated to answering the public's questions about the area and keeping them up to date with the project of turning this area of former marshland into a unique urban environment.

Inside, as I squint through the afternoon sun at a small-scale model of the area, I learn that by 2025 the aim is to have



3 brilliant BOUCHONS

Some more top Lyonnais restaurants to visit, all awarded the Label Bouchons Lyonnais

LE POËLON D'OR

In Lyon's historic Ainay district, this traditional restaurant started life as a wine bar in the 1860s, converting to an eatery in the interwar period. As well as all the *bouchon* favourites like *quenelles* and *cervelles des canuts*, there's a fantastically extensive dessert and wine menu.

Dinner menus from €27

Tel: 0033 (0)4 78 37 65 60

lepoelondor-restaurant.fr

LES FINES GUELES

After working as assistant director to Lyon legend Paul Bocuse, Joël Salzi opened his own esteemed restaurant in Vieux Lyon. It offers unpretentious, hearty fare and you're made to feel very welcome.

Dinner menus from €29.50

Tel: 0033 (0)4 78 28 99 14

fines-gueules.fr

LA MÈRE LÉA

For traditional *bouchon* treats in a more contemporary setting, look no further than 'Mother Léa', known as La Voûte chez Léa until 2019. New for 2020 is the special Retour de Marché menu every Sunday, featuring fresh, local produce from the nearby Marché Saint-Antoine.

Dinner menus from €31.50

Tel: 0033 (0)4 78 42 01 33

lamerelea.com



A traditional *salade Lyonnaise*



around 16,000 inhabitants and 25,000 employees in the district, where they hope to achieve a zero-carbon footprint.

Apart from the noble ambition of having energy-saving housing and offices here, visitors will note the carefully planned transport links and ease of getting around. The A6/A7 motorway that borders La Confluence previously had traffic of 100,000 vehicles a day but with the speed limit reduced

to 50km/h and priority given to cyclists and pedestrians, the transformation to 'urban boulevard' is significant. The deliberate design of public spaces also make nature available to everyone: aquatic gardens, lime trees and alders in abundance.

Accessibility is key

Frequent visitors to Lyon will have already noted the promotion of environmentally

Above:

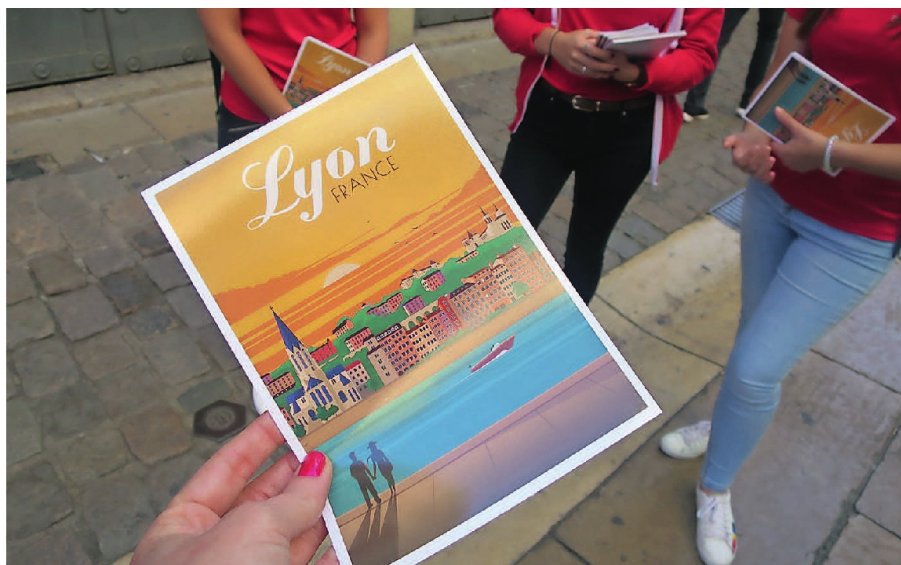
La Confluence is on the banks of the Saône; get to know Lyon on a bike tour; Lyon's friendly City Helpers

friendly and responsible transport, such as the Vélo'v bike rental system and the Vaporetto river shuttle, achievements officially recognised when Lyon won the European Commission's Access City Award in 2018, acknowledgement of the city's €97 million investment between 2008 and 2020 in public transport accessibility.

Now, a start-up called Mobee Travel has partnered with

OnlyLyon Tourism to promote accessibility for disabled travellers in more than 30 hotels and restaurants. There are also plans for visitors to receive geo-located tourist information direct to their smartphones to help reduce city congestion.

Lyon has always been one of France's most exciting cities, but these developments mean travellers will be able to get so much more out of their visit. It's the perfect example of how a historic destination can use futuristic technology to its advantage, cementing its place as one of Europe's smartest holiday hotspots. 📍



Above: Be sure to pick up a guidebook from the City Helpers

Francofile

See what makes Lyon a bright spark in the smart tourism world

GETTING THERE

By air: Fly direct to Lyon from London Heathrow with British Airways in 1hr 40min from £72. Easyjet has direct flights from Gatwick, Luton, Stansted from around £46 return. Flybe, Easyjet and Jet2 fly direct from Manchester (2 hours), from around £60 return.

By train: From Paris' Gare de Lyon, it's just under two hours by TGV to Lyon, from £22 one-way (oui.sncf).

GETTING AROUND

The city has an extensive public transport system (tcl.fr) with metro, bus, tramway, trolleybus and funicular systems.

The Lyon City Card (en.lyoncitycard.com; 1/2/3/4 days €22.90 /€31.90/€40.90/€49.90) offers access to 23 museums, public transport (including the airport shuttle), a guided tour (in four languages) and various discounts.

WHERE TO STAY

Hôtel de l'Abbaye

Tel: 0033 (0)4 78 05 60 40
hotelabbayelyon.com

This former Ainay presbytery was converted to a four-star boutique hotel in July 2019. Choose from 20 rooms with decor that combines family heirlooms and contemporary designs. Doubles from €140.



TOURIST INFORMATION: www.lyonfrance.com;

Tel: 00 33 (0)4 72 77 69 69

Département: Rhône (69)

WHERE TO EAT

Les Culottes Longues

Tel: 0033 (0)4 78 37 13 00
les-culottes-longues.wysifeed.fr

Traditional and hearty bouchon fare in a welcoming setting. Mains from €24.

L'Atelier des Augustins

Tel: 0033 (0)4 72 00 88 01
latelierdesaugustins.com
Refined French cuisine with creative flair. Bread is even matched with each course. Set lunch menus start from €25 for two courses.

WHERE TO VISIT

Cité Internationale de la Gastronomie

citegastronomielyon.fr

Where art meets gastronomy in the extraordinarily renovated Grand Hôtel Dieu.

