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Avignon prepares for a year of cultural celebrations marking 25 years as European Capital of Culture

The city will host exhibitions, festivals, and culinary events in 2025, highlighting its artistic heritage and regional gastronomy

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Avignon, located in the south of France, is preparing for a year of major cultural celebrations in 2025. The city, known as the City of the Popes, will mark the 25th anniversary of its designation as European Capital of Culture. Throughout the year, Avignon will host a series of events under the banner Terre de Culture 2025. The program includes exhibitions, festivals, special events, and the opening of new museums and artistic venues. Local authorities and cultural organizations are working together to offer both residents and visitors a wide range of cultural experiences.

The city’s historical significance dates back to the 14th century when it served as the seat of the papacy. Its well-preserved medieval walls, the famous Pont d’Avignon, and the imposing Palais des Papes are reminders of its rich past. Today, Avignon is recognized not only for its heritage but also for its vibrant cultural life.

One of the highlights each summer is the Avignon Festival, which will take place from July 5 to July 26 this year. Now in its 79th edition, the festival is one of Europe’s most important theater events. The main stage is set in the Cour d’Honneur of the Palais des Papes, a UNESCO World Heritage site. However, performances extend to about 30 different locations across the city and surrounding areas. These venues range from gymnasiums and cloisters to chapels, gardens, quarries, and churches. More than 120,000 spectators are expected to attend over 400 events including plays, debates, readings, film screenings, and public discussions.

Avignon’s reputation as a center for theater is well established, but its musical offerings are equally diverse. Throughout the year, the city hosts concerts featuring classical music, baroque ensembles, electronic music, jazz, and rock. The local opera house presents new productions regularly. Jazz enthusiasts can visit AJMI (Association for Jazz and Improvised Music), while contemporary music fans can attend festivals such as Id-Ile and Résonance.

Gastronomy also plays a central role in Avignon’s appeal. Many chefs in the city focus on Provençal cuisine using regional products and traditional recipes. Avignon is also recognized as the capital of Côtes-du-Rhône wines. The Rhône Valley has been producing wine since ancient times. Viticulture expanded on the left bank during the papal era in the 14th century and on the right bank in the 17th century under French

rule. The Côtes du Rhône appellation was officially established in 1937 to regulate production standards and quality.

Since 1996, Avignon has served as the capital for this wine region. During the theater festival in July, from 7 p.m. to 11 p.m., local winemakers present new selections of Côtes-du-Rhône and Côtes-du-Rhône Villages wines to festival-goers and visitors. These wines can also be enjoyed at many restaurants and wine bars throughout Avignon.

For those interested in exploring further, several wine routes connect Avignon with other notable destinations such as Vienne near Lyon or Vaison-la-Romaine and Pont du Gard. A visit to Châteauneuf-du-Pape offers an opportunity to discover some of the most renowned vineyards in France.

In 2025, Avignon aims to reinforce its status as a leading destination for culture and gastronomy by bringing together its historical legacy with contemporary creativity and regional flavors. The city expects increased tourism as it showcases its unique blend of art, history, theater, music, food, and wine throughout this special anniversary year.