

TRAVEL

European cruise stops in three countries

A trip on the Regent Seven Seas Explorer includes stops for excursions in Spain, France and Italy.

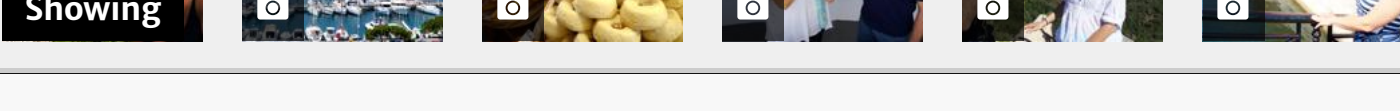
By Mike Fisher Special to the Star
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Mike Fisher
Basilica de la Sagrada Família by architect Antoni Gaudi provides a dramatic backdrop for a photo in Barcelona, Spain.



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The Regent Seven Seas Explorer offers unlimited shore excursions, usually guided, most often for a half-day. They're a chance to leave the ship and enter new adventures. We discovered parts of Spain, France and Italy this way. There are multiple excursions in each port. Check out these places and learn what's in store, onshore:

Barcelona, Spain: Spanish architect Antoni Gaudi transformed the city, as well as modernist architecture. His most famous work is Basilica de la Sagrada Família (Church of the Holy Family), a city icon that towers over the skyline. It was started in 1882, made a consecrated temple in 2010 and is still under construction. Church of Colonia Guell is another Gaudi landmark, in Santa Coloma de Cervello, a village with fanciful artwork that had originally been built to house industrial workers. Both are covered during the five-hour Gaudi's Barcelona tour. Details: barcelonaturisme.com

Toulon, France: This large military harbour on the Mediterranean coast in southern France is home to a naval base, as well as sailboats and yachts you can see from the Explorer when docked. You can wander into the old town's historic centre, where there are fountains and scenic squares in which to take a breather. Some of the squares have recently been restored. There's a market every morning featuring local products at the pedestrian area known as Cours Lafayette. Details: toulontourisme.com/en

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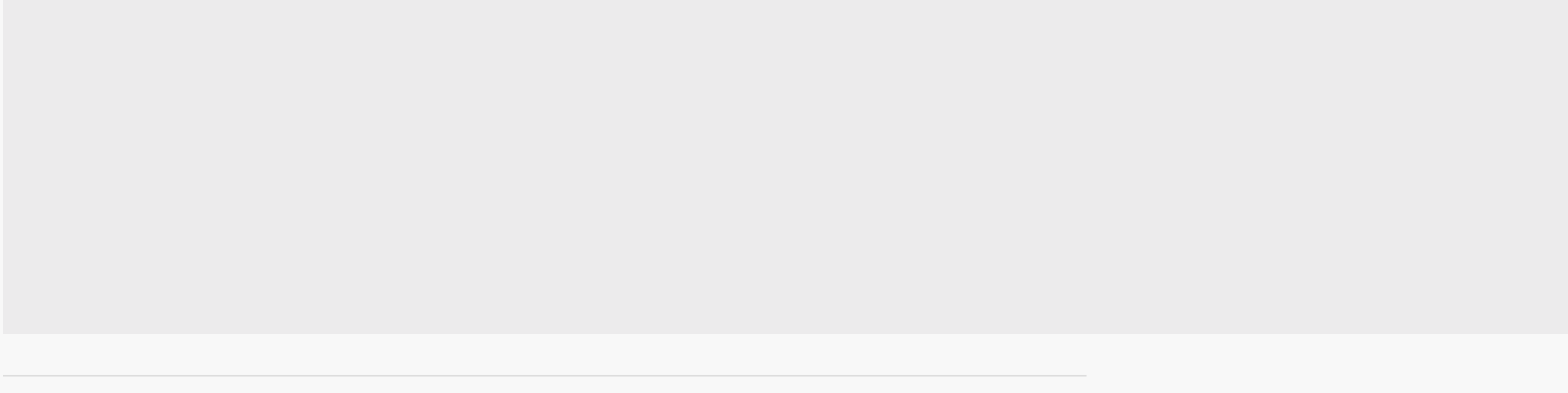
Cassis, France: Starting at the port of Toulon, it takes about 90 minutes to drive along a coastal road before reaching the fishing village of Cassis. While there's a beach, the main activities are eating and drinking at the many restaurants, shopping for fruit, breads and pastries, and people watching, as visitors stroll along the harbour front. You can get fresh seafood dishes, including bouillabaisse. Details: ot-cassis.com/en/

Sardinia, Italy: The Explorer docks at Olbia on the northeastern coast of the mountainous island of Sardinia. It's about a one-hour drive to Barchidda, home to the Regional Museum of Wine. Love wine and everything about it? This may be for you. We saw various machines used by wine craftsman and sampled a Vigne Deriu (red) and a Sinfonia Gallurese (white), each costing about \$11 to buy. Then we visited a small tavern in the nearby village of Telti. Details: italia.it/en/discover-italy/sardinia.html

Grimaud, France: Anchored just off Saint-Tropez, you take a tender (small craft) to get to shore and a quick scenic drive to this medieval village in the Maures mountains. The ruins of an 11th-century chateau provide a high scenic viewpoint — after a bit of a moderate hike — that's great for photographers. The village is fun to explore on foot, with narrow stone pathways and centuries-old houses. If you want to browse contemporary art, visit the cool Galerie Paul Janssen. Details: us.france.fr

Port Grimaud, France: Cars are restricted in this small city about 15 minutes from Grimaud, so you can pretty much walk everywhere. It's like a little Venice, as a series of canals link rows of expensive, colourful houses. Powerboats, sailboats and yachts are docked outside. It seems almost everyone, including us, takes a short, scenic boat tour for a view from the water. Otherwise, browse among plenty of knick-knack shops, restaurants, and candy and ice cream shops. Details: us.france.fr

Mike Fisher was hosted by Regent Seven Seas Cruises, which didn't review or approve this story.



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