

Soap Tour In Provence

While you are planning your Provence Vacation one place that you will not want to miss is a tour to Marius Fabre Soap Factory, Soap Museum and Our Shop. Marius Fabre started up in the garden shed, where he set up two cauldrons and a few moulds. At that time, Salon-de-Provence was an extremely prosperous city, thanks to the commerce of oil, soap and coffee. The abundance of raw materials in Provence (olive oil in the Alpilles, soda and salt in the Camargue and oils (coco-nut and palm) coming in from the colonies via the port of Marseilles) had made possible the development of the soap-making industry

The Famous Savon (soap) de Marseille

by Magnus Kilian

The tradition lives on

You cannot help but see it everywhere while visiting Provence –in the markets, small boutiques, on the shelves at local grocery stores...Like so many aspects of Provence life, it's use goes back hundreds of years yet it continues to live on.

Marseille soap or *Savon de Marseille* is a traditional soap made from vegetable oils that has been made around Marseille, France, for about 600 years, the first documented soapmaker in the area being recorded in about 1370. By 1688, *Louis XIV* introduced regulations (*Edict of Colbert*) limiting the use of the name *savon de Marseille* to soaps made in and around the Marseille area, and only from olive oil. Today this law still applies, although the regulations now allow other vegetable oils to be used.

How it is made

Traditionally, the soap is made by mixing sea water from the [Mediterranean Sea](#), olive oil, and the alkaline chemicals soda ash (sodium carbonate) and lye (sodium hydroxide) together in

a large cauldron (usually making about 8 tons). This mixture is then heated for several days, stirred constantly. The mixture is then allowed to sit and, once ready, it is poured into a mold, and allowed to set slightly. Whilst still soft, it is cut into bars and stamped, and left to completely harden. The whole process can take up to a month from the start before the soap is ready to use.

Recommended by Dermatologists worldwide

Marseille Soap is traditionally green or white. The original green soap is made with at least 50% olive oil, while the white soap is made with palm oil. Savon de Marseille is recommended by dermatologists worldwide for dry skin conditions and other ailments. Its purity and incredible moisturizing properties make it ideal for sensitive skin. In France it has been trusted for generations to clean everything, from linen to little faces.

A Visit to Marius Fabre in Salon-de-Provence

[Marius Fabre](#) is one of the few remaining factories and is located in Salon-de-Provence. A tour is highly recommended. The factory has a gift shop (naturellement!) and is small and individual enough to learn about the complex manufacturing process.

Having said that, Savon de Marseille is of course also available, at very reasonable prices, in every supermarket and grocery shop. Many aromas, shapes and sizes are on offer. An ideal take-home-as-gifts-for-friends item.

Visit www.marius-fabre.fr to learn more or [Tours In Provence](#)