



Lille in 1,000 words

Lille, capital of France's Nord-Pas de Calais region, is extremely well-positioned in Europe, located 80 minutes from London, 60 minutes from Paris, and 38 minutes from Brussels by train. The city is at the heart of a European crossroads, both culturally and geographically.

Reaching Lille from international destinations is incredibly easy, with two airports located less than an hour from the city center: Lille-Lesquin (20 minutes) and Paris' Charles de Gaulle (50 minutes by train). The one problem with coming to Lille is that the city seems to captivate and enchant visitors and they find it hard to leave.

Trade and commerce have been defining parts of the city's economy from its beginnings. And in the 16th century, Lille became known for its manufacturing. Today, Lille is a large and important industrial capital, recognized and respected on an international level. The Greater Lille area's economy is boosted thanks to the presence of five competitive clusters in the fields of nutrition health and longevity, transportation, commerce, textiles, and domestic materials.

In the 1960s, Lille began an impressive process of transformation and renovation, turning the city into the innovative, surprising and energetic place that it is today. Former mills, brasseries, and factories have been renovated and today act as symbols of Lille's past, illustrating the city's innovative and creative spirit.

Innovation and creativity seem only natural in a city where 36 percent of the population is under 25 years old. The youngest metropolitan area in France, Lille is energetic, imaginative and modern. And of course, having the youngest population in France means having plenty of outlets for fun. Regardless of the season, festivals and cultural celebrations abound. From the annual flea and antique market in September that overtakes Lille for one weekend to carnivals, concerts or simply sharing a cold beer with friends, there is no shortage of ways to be entertained. Here in Lille, you'll find unpretentious people who welcome you with open arms, and a touch of classic French elegance.

Lille's countless cultural and artistic initiatives are ambitious and forward thinking, leaving no doubt that the city is far from being uninspired and locked in tradition! Voted European capital of culture in 2004, the city came alive and experienced a surge of creative energy, inspiring the launch of Lille 3000, an eclectic cultural celebration organized by the Lille 2004 team every two years. Lille 3000 explores different cultures through a wide variety of contemporary art forms and exhibits, aspiring to reach the widest audience possible. Lille 3000 was first launched on October 14th, 2006 with the theme "Bombayers de Lille," which celebrated India. For three months, the city and region held 450 events, from music, cinema, and theater to dance, exhibitions, and diverse gatherings, attracting over 1 million visitors. And on March 14th, 2009, Lille 3000 opened "Europe XXL." In homage of the 20th anniversary of the fall of the Berlin Wall, the 3-month long event devoted its festivities to the countries of Central and Eastern Europe, with roughly 500 events and 50 exhibits.

Sustainable development is a top priority in Lille, as witnessed by the city's businesses having the lowest carbon footprint in Europe. In November 2008, a study was carried out by Ernst & Young and released by the Lille Metropole Development Agency, finding Lille's businesses to have the lowest CO2 emissions out of the following cities: Brussels, Paris, Amsterdam, London and Cologne.

Sustainable development is not only a priority in Greater Lille, but also the Nord-Pas de Calais region, where taking responsibility for the environment is seen as a crucial key to a healthy future. A region known for its industrialization—both a source of wealth and of environmental concerns—has seen both man and nature suffer because of years of unsustainable development. The Nord-Pas de Calais has had to be particularly creative and motivated to move in a direction favoring sustainable development, as industrial work defines the region. Encouraging economic development, without compromising the health of the environment is now the main concern.

The Nord-Pas de Calais' commitment to sustainable development became evident years ago, as the region created France's first regional natural park. Further projects in the field of sustainable development include: ethical banking, regionally managed international cooperation policies, rail development, (including a competitive cluster dedicated to rail transport), renovation of abandoned industrial sites, and construction according to high environmental quality standards. Today the region's expertise and knowledge in the field of sustainable development is uncontested.

Since 2000, the region has used strategies to favor sustainable development. And with the goal of making sustainable development a top-priority, the region has helped local companies, universities, organizations, etc. to adopt and follow sustainable development principles, and to make sustainable development a popular and accepted idea by all. In January 2004, the region became the first in France to adopt the "Agenda 21."

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On December 10th, 2008, the Lille Convention Bureau became the first European convention bureau to become an accredited DMO (Destination Marketing Organization) by the DMAI (Destination Marketing Association International). This internationally-recognized accreditation (DMAP) is awarded to tourist offices and convention bureaus meeting specific standards concerning structure, financing, marketing and promotional tools, with the ultimate goal of being able to self-evaluate and to offer clients top-notch service.

The Destination Marketing Accreditation Program evaluates the professional credibility of a destination so that it may become the most respected and competitive in its field. Being certified DMAP means having a system of defined standards and assessment means, and the trust of its clients and future clients. Today, the DMAP is the only existing accreditation program for tourist offices and convention bureaus.