

Q
A

Could you suggest a travel itinerary for someone who is interested in all aspects of perfume, from production to sales? I think this would be a European trip, but I could be wrong.

You're on the right scent.

The undisputed perfume capital of the world is Grasse, a flower-drenched, 18th-century town on the French Riviera about 12 miles northwest of Cannes. With more than two dozen perfumeries, the town is the center of the French perfume industry and produces more than three-quarters of the world's fragrances.

It's an appealing place, with a picturesque public square, flower markets and knockout views of the Cote d'Azur. But most people visit for the perfume factories, many of which offer tours, workshops and gift shops. You can follow the process from extraction and distillation to mixing and classifying scents, and even create your own perfume.

To get there from Paris, take the train (about 6½ hours, from \$135 round trip; schedules at www.voyages-sncf.com). Or join a half-day tour with a company such as Executive Transport Service (011-33-4-92-98-06-29, www.executive-transport-service.com; about \$232 per person, based on double occupancy, from Cannes or Antibes). For more information on the region,

check out the Grasse Tourism Office site, www.grasse-riviera.com.

As long as you're in Paris, visit a few exclusive perfume boutiques with a self-described "passionate perfumista."

Neela Vermeire's Perfume Paths walking tours visit boutiques such as Guerlain and Hermes; she'll help you pick out a fragrance based on your preferences and personality.

"You can't choose a perfume unless you're in the right environment. It's like choosing lingerie," she says.

Walks last about four hours and cover five or six houses; cost is about \$218 (shorter tours are available for \$145). She also offers custom tours of Grasse from Paris: Typical trips run three days and include visits to the perfumeries, meals in local restaurants and gallery visits. Details: www.perfumepaths.com.

Today's Q&A comes from the Washington Post.