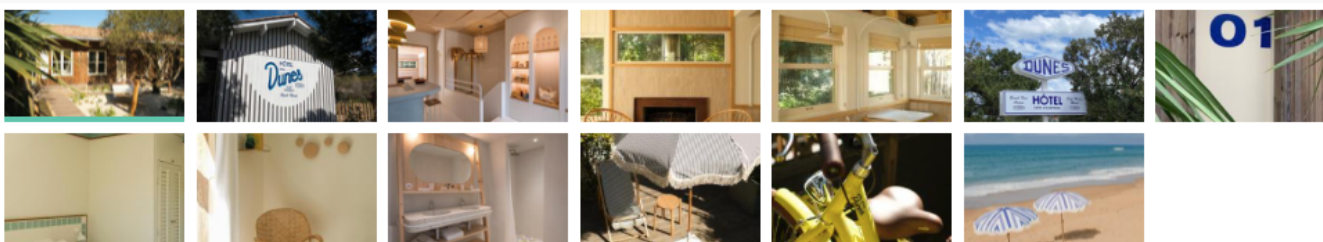


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Hôtel des Dunes Cap-Ferret, Aquitaine, France



9/10

Telegraph expert rating

" This peaceful beach-house-style boutique might have been the first hotel to open in Cap Ferret in 1969, but there are no cobwebs here. Driven by eco-thinking, it's been transformed into a pared-back luxury cocoon, complete with 13 designer rooms, sauna, sandy garden and yoga deck. "

Telegraph Review



By Nicola Williams, DESTINATION EXPERT

9/10

Location

The hotel is wedged between a main road running the length of Cap Ferret and wild pine forests sloping onto the sea. The sandy path to Plage de la Dune – a stretch of pristine near-white sand – is right behind the hotel. Hit the waves after a peaceful five-minute stroll, or pick up the Sentier de l'Abécédaire forest trail to access more beaches along the less tame side of the cape – though watch out for dangerous currents.

Cap Ferret's iconic lighthouse (258 steps to the top) is 10 minutes on foot, while it's 20 minutes to Jetée Bélisaire. Boats depart from this jetty to Europe's biggest sand dune, Dune du Pilat. You can also take a half an hour's boat ride to Arcachon, which sits across the bay. At this commune, you're 50 minutes away from Bordeaux's Gare St-Jean, which is connected by tram to Bordeaux Airport.

10/10

Style and Character

At Hôtel des Dunes, you'd be forgiven for thinking you can tumble out of bed directly onto Cap Ferret's powder-soft pale caramel sands – such is the laidback vibe of this effortlessly cool boutique hotel. Hotel owner Karine Tiphagne Hecquet and her husband Jean-Philippe summered in Cap Ferret, where he had surfed growing up, for 25-odd years before buying the 1969 hotel.

Since then, they've transformed it into a luxurious surf lodge, where Californian 1950s motel meets Cap Ferret beach chic. The décor is by local interior architect Delphine Carrère, with much of it crafted by artisans of the region. This includes custom-made furniture, surf-themed artworks and vintage lettering, which was hand-painted on the wooden façade by Hossegor local Sara Pasternak. Karine herself spent years scouring flea markets and antique fairs to source old black and white postcards of the Cap Ferret of yesteryear and ocean-themed ceramics.



9/10

Service and Facilities

The attention to detail makes the heart sing: the banana-yellow bicycles (classic or electric); the 'after-beach yard' where guests can shower and stow surfboards; the sauna to warm the cockles after frisky sea swims.

Deckchairs and a hammock beneath trees in the sandy hotel garden do overlook a road, but it's only really busy in July and August and the hotel's Zen landscaping compensates. Yoga classes are held on a walled patio with wood-deck flooring and plenty of sun. Reception staff are proudly local and keen to share their insider tips on Cap Ferret's best boutiques, bars, restaurants and beaches. They can organise almost any activity: surfing, stand-up paddle boarding, sailing, an oyster-farm tour, a speedboat to the Dunede Pilat or a slow sail in a traditional *pinasse* (wooden sailing boats typical to the Arcachon Bay).

- ✓ Parking
- ✓ Sauna
- ✓ Wi-Fi

9/10

Rooms

The hotel has 13 rooms, most with a balcony or private outdoor space. Two suites enjoy a sizeable patio with a sun-lounger twin set, a parasol and a table and chairs. All-white rooms have playful pops of yellow, sand and aqua-blue. While few designers would dare go for a faux ceramic-tiled headboard, much less pair it with blush-pink cushions and a bright floral throw, the one behind this hotel does – to stunning effect.

Kudos for the wicker Le Corbusier chairs, handmade by fifth-generation weaver Pascal Raffier for the hotel. The ocean-themed artworks by different local artists include story-book-style beach scenes by painter Jean-François Dareths, as well as pieces by surf photographer Sylvain Casenave. However, don't expect a television – patchy Wi-Fi, a vintage-styled speaker, a yoga mat, a hand-picked selection of books and a minibar packed with organic, plastic-free drinks and local snacks (Aquitaine peanuts – who knew?), create a soothing, off-the-grid vibe. The bathrooms sport decently sized Italian rain showers, mosaic-tiled floors and polished concrete basins. Pine seeds foraged in the cape's thick forests are used to make sustainable bath products by eco-brand Océopin.

8/10

Food and Drink

Zero-waste breakfasts – a buffet of locally smoked trout, cheese, ham and pastries or an à la carte option depending on the season and number of guests – are served in the mirrored dining room or alfresco on the terrace. The hotel doesn't serve dinner, but if you want lunch or a sunset apéritif you can order a picnic hamper at reception, though this must be done the evening before.

A short walk away, La Mayzou – a Gascon name for maison or home – offers shared plates that are as heart-warming as the restaurant's name suggests. Creative chef Juliette Lacroix-Wasover spent several years running a restaurant in Bali before returning home to Cap Ferret, and her inventive cuisine fuses world flavours with local produce.



8/10

Value for Money

Double rooms from €200 (£170) in low season; and from €350 (£299) in high. Breakfast is excluded and costs €19 (£16).

Access for guests with disabilities?

One room is wheelchair accessible.

Family-Friendly?

Leave the children at home. This is an utterly divine destination for couples.

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