

INTERNATIONAL FESTIVAL LYON

QUAIS DU POLAR

22nd EDITION APRIL 3 - 5, 2026
PRESENTATION PACK



ABOUT US

The Quais du Polar festival has become **the must-attend crime fiction event in France**. Every year, it takes over the heart of Lyon, occupying iconic venues such as the Palais de la Bourse, Hôtel de Ville, Chapelle de la Trinité, and also the Opéra de Lyon, Musée des Beaux-Arts, and Comédie Odéon. Firmly established in both the French and European cultural landscape, it is recognised by book and publishing professionals as well as the general public.

The festival's success relies on a **strong network of cultural and institutional partners**, whose involvement significantly enhances its reach across Lyon's metropolitan area and the wider region. This collaborative spirit enriches the festival's content and extends its influence beyond its main venues. With **more than 200 events held each year**, the festival offers everything from novels and comics to cinema, TV series, roundtables, author meet-and-greets, a citywide investigation, theatre, exhibitions, and games.

The festival welcomes all audiences: voracious crime readers, amateur detectives, thrill-seeking film fans, curious walkers, and socially conscious citizens. Young or old, alone, with friends, or with family—**everyone has a place at Quais du Polar!**

QUAIS DU POLAR, SINCE 2005:

- * **21** EDITIONS OF THE FESTIVAL
EACH EXPLORING THEMES INTENTIONALLY CONNECTED TO MAJOR CONTEMPORARY ISSUES IN FRANCE AND INTERNATIONALLY
- * **757** AUTHORS WELCOMED TO LYON AND THE METROPOLITAN AREA
- * **1.140M** FESTIVAL-GOERS
- * **60** NATIONALITIES REPRESENTED AMONG GUESTS
- * **185K** PARTICIPANTS IN THE GREAT INVESTIGATION



Grande Librairie, Palais de la Bourse 2025 © Sandrine Thesillat

22nd EDITION: SAVE THE DATE - APRIL 3 – 5, 2026

For its upcoming edition, Quais du Polar will explore the connections between science and crime fiction under the theme: **STORY HUNTERS: SCIENCE AND FICTION.**

From the hard sciences, technology, artificial intelligence, medicine, and history to the social sciences, all these fields fuel both fiction and thought. Crime fiction authors, often guided by facts, investigations, and rigorous research, share with scientists a curiosity for exploration, doubt, and truth. Researchers will be invited to exchange perspectives with writers who examine reality through their own lens. In an era of obscurantism, fake news, and misinformation, crime fiction underscores the importance of evidence, reasoning, and critical thinking.

By bringing together narrative and knowledge, literary investigations and scientific inquiry, Quais du Polar reaffirms the power of stories to illuminate the past, present, and future.

THE CRIME FICTION GENRE

A DISREPUTABLE GENRE

A CONTEMPORARY AND RELEVANT GENRE

The image of crime fiction, or “noir” literature, has evolved considerably in recent years. As the quintessential popular genre, crime fiction is embraced not only by avid readers but also by aficionados of so-called “literary” works and cinema. In France, one in five books published is a crime novel, representing over 3,300 titles across 80 specialised collections, and an average of 16 million copies sold per year.

A CRITICAL LOOK AT THE WORLD

Far from the clichés of trench-coated detectives, crime fiction addresses contemporary social issues and offers a unique lens on the world, featuring authors from all nationalities.

RENOWNED AUTHORS

James Ellroy, Dennis Lehane, Lisa Gardner, David Peace, Michael Connelly, and John Grisham are frequently cited among the greatest contemporary authors. Novels by Fred Vargas, Franck Thilliez, Harlan Coben, and Camilla Läckberg regularly top bestseller charts across all genres.

LYON: THE CITY OF NOIR

Lyon witnessed the birth of cinema with the Lumière brothers, the development of criminal anthropology, scientific investigative methods, and forensic medicine. As the European capital of printing, books, and humanism during the Renaissance, Lyon is a city shaped by popular uprisings and grand political ideals. Today, it is a dynamic metropolis, a centre for culture and art de vivre, recognised as a UNESCO Creative City of Literature since October 2023.

The Quais du Polar festival is proud to revitalise and share this rich cultural heritage between the Saône and Rhône rivers through a modern, unifying event that embraces the world, etching its presence across the vast expanse of a metropolis encompassing 59 municipalities and over 1.4 million inhabitants, making it one of the most attractive cities in Europe.

« Thank you for this edition highlighting James [Ellroy]. He was thrilled by all the events, especially the meeting with students at Lyon 3 University, which he found fabulous.

Thanks again to the professors and students for the warm welcome, the preparation, and the quality of the questions. »

Rivages Publishing House

QUAIS DU POLAR - A CITIZEN FESTIVAL

ACCESS TO CULTURE FOR ALL

FREE ENTRY

By offering free access to all events and conferences, Quais du Polar aims to open the doors to literature and culture for everyone. Since 2016, conferences have also been available to stream live or on demand.



Petite librairie, Hôtel de Ville 2025 © Christine Clarens

REACHING AUDIENCES

WITH LIMITED ACCESS TO CULTURE

Noir Behind Bars: Each year, several authors visit local prisons to strengthen connections between “inside and outside” and to allow inmates to (re) discover the noir genre and crime literature.

Hospital visits: Each year, Quais du Polar initiates and fosters a close collaboration with the cultural services of several hospitals. These projects take the form of workshops with authors, and interactions with patients, medical staff, and visitors.

AN INCLUSIVE EVENT

LES QUAIS SOLIDAIRES

With the support of its partners, Quais du Polar continues to make accessibility for people with disabilities a priority. The continuation of initiatives launched in 2022, along with the introduction of new projects—particularly aimed at people with mental, psychological, or cognitive disabilities as well as those with visual impairments—allowed the festival to accommodate more than 170 people in 2025.

The festival's programming has also been made more accessible, with nine conferences translated into French Sign Language (LSF), a session of the Great Investigation accompanied by an LSF interpreter, and the creation of investigation booklets in braille, large print, and audio formats.

« During the festival, I received thoughtful assistance that allowed me to access everything I wanted to do with ease. I lost my sight completely in 2018, yet I have always attended the festival, including in its early years. [...] I've noticed that in recent years, Quais du Polar has increasingly focused on accessibility for people with disabilities. In 2025, you were outstanding. »

Bruno Ferrat, festival-goer

EDUCATION

EDUCATIONAL INITIATIVES

In 2025, more than 3,300 pupils and students from across the region took part in various educational projects — reading works by guest authors, entering short story competitions, meeting festival guests, taking part in the Great Investigation, and joining translation workshops.

FIGHTING ILLITERACY

Since 2013, in collaboration with the ANLCI (National Agency for the Fight Against Illiteracy), Quais du Polar has organised the Grand Noir Dictation to raise public awareness — among both young and adult audiences — around the issue of illiteracy. Read by acclaimed authors and public figures (Alexandre Astier, Amélie Nothomb, François Rollin, Philippe Manoeuvre, Franck Thilliez, Antoine de Caunes, among others), this event reinforces the idea that crime fiction is a popular, socially engaged genre committed to making reading accessible to all.



Conference translated into French Sign Language, 2025 © Vanessa Ceroni

A KEY EVENT FOR PROFESSIONALS

POLAR CONNECTION

At the heart of the festival, Polar Connection has become a key event on the professional crime fiction calendar. United by a shared passion for the genre, French and international industry professionals come together each year to exchange ideas, foster collaboration, and reflect on emerging trends. In 2025, the event brought together 392 accredited professionals from the book, audiovisual, and digital sectors for 16 dedicated talks and panel discussions, featuring 70 speakers.

TRAINING DAY WITH ENSSIB

Every year, Quais du Polar hosts a training day for teachers, school librarians, and librarians to explore the noir genre. In partnership with the ENSSIB (National Superior School of Information Science and Libraries) and the DRAC Rhône-Alpes (Regional Office for Cultural Affairs), this day aims to educate teachers and librarians about the noir genre and to provide them with tools to incorporate it into their work with both adults and high school students.

A MODEL OF CULTURAL ENGINEERING

Deeply rooted in its local community, Quais du Polar has earned recognition not only in the national but also in the international literary landscape for the excellence of its programming. It has become a benchmark for other literary events, sought after for its expertise. Foreign authors are the festival's finest ambassadors, contributing to its invaluable promotion through their enthusiasm. They play a crucial role not only in promoting the event but also in showcasing the city of Lyon, the literary professionals, the French readership, and our partners.

« A huge thank you for another excellent weekend. Both of our authors left absolutely delighted. Mike Craven, attending for the first time, and his agent David Healey (who himself organises a literary fair in England) were simply blown away! »

L'Archipel Publishing House

A MULTIDISCIPLINARY FESTIVAL

Quais du Polar is committed to breaking down barriers between disciplines, fostering a dialogue between the “noir” genre and other forms of literature (novels, comics, and youth literature), as well as promoting the humanities and other creative fields, including music, cinema, and gastronomy.

Innovative initiatives such as the «bus of experts» provide a platform for authors and professionals from the world of crime fiction, including law enforcement and the judicial system, to share their insights. Unconventional tours, such as Lyon Tourism Office’s “Crimes and Investigations” tour, or the open days at St Cyr-au-Mont-d’Or’s police school and Écully’s forensic department provide unique opportunities to engage with diverse audiences and explore a range of themes.

AN INTERNATIONAL DIMENSION

During Quais du Polar, authors, and professionals from around the globe gather in Lyon to engage in discussions about literature, art, and culture, sharing their unique perspectives on contemporary issues and social questions.

These inspiring encounters fuel our desire to promote French crime fiction and its authors worldwide, driving us to foster exchanges that now enable us to extend the event’s reach and the genre’s influence beyond our borders (South Africa, Germany, Romania, Italy, Canada, China, South Korea, India, and beyond).

« Once again, Quais du Polar — through its organisation, its beauty, its joy, its smooth running, its warm welcome, the professionalism of its teams, and its continually renewed, incredible popular success — has earned the title of best festival in the world.... You give crime fiction its well-deserved recognition »

Sophie Hénaff, author (France)

A FESTIVAL OF DISCOVERIES

Since its inception in 2005, the festival has witnessed the rise of new authors, encouraged the expansion of French crime fiction through international programmes and the Readers’ Choice Award, celebrated diverse writing styles, nurtured the emergence of fresh voices and genres in crime fiction, and supported the development of new publishing houses and collections.

AN ENVIRONMENTALLY RESPONSIBLE EVENT

Quais du Polar is committed to environmental sustainability and has been actively working to reduce its carbon footprint and waste production for years. All service providers and suppliers are local businesses, and the festival prioritises train travel for French and European guests. Printing is minimised, and our signage is made from recycled tarpaulins and PVC-free vinyl, with printing processes that reduce volatile organic compounds by 60%.

A UNIQUE ATMOSPHERE

Despite its renown, the festival has maintained the festive and welcoming atmosphere that has become its hallmark. This atmosphere is consistently praised by professionals (authors, publishers, booksellers, journalists) and festivalgoers alike, who are willing to wait in line in good spirits, often for several hours, to attend the various events. This is largely due to the team’s cheerful determination and dedication, as well as the enthusiasm of the 400 volunteers, some of whom have supported the festival for many years.

« The beauty of the venues, the audience’s passion, the joy of spotting the authors, the debates, and this grand hall filled with books and readers—it never fails to fill me with energy. »

Carole Le Berre, France TV (member of the Polar en Séries Jury SCELf 2025 jury)



Grande librairie, Palais de la Bourse 2025 © Antoine Caruana

LOOKING BACK AT THE PREVIOUS EDITION



Great investigation 2025 © Laura Belli-Riz

THE 2025 EDITION IN NUMBERS

- **127 authors** present in Lyon from April 4 to 6, 2025 (17 nationalities represented)
- More than **100,000+ festivalgoers**
- **Over 15,000 participants** in Quais du Polar' Great Investigation, including **1,468 pupils and students**
- **48%** of festivalgoers reside in the Lyon metropolitan area (33% in Lyon proper), **20%** elsewhere in the Auvergne-Rhône-Alpes region, **22%** in other French regions, and **3%** abroad
- **40%** of the audience were first-time visitors; **60%** had attended at least once before
- More than **32,700 Facebook followers**
- Over **12,600 Instagram followers**
- **127,000+ sessions** and **700,000+ pages viewed** on quaisdupolar.com (March 1 – April 15, 2025)
- **1,500+ active users** and **65,000+ page views** on the Fest app
- **380 press mentions** including print, digital, radio, and TV coverage
- **Around 250 cultural events** across Lyon and the region
- **63 associated towns**
- **146 mobilised venues and institutions** (museums, libraries, theatres, cinemas, schools, prisons, hospitals, etc.) in Lyon, the metropolitan area, and the region
- **More than 75 discussions and roundtables** at the festival's main venues
- **35 film screenings across 12 cinemas** in Lyon and the region, attended by over **3,000 viewers**
- **12 independent bookshops** at the Great Noir Bookshop, **5 second-hand bookshops** at the Little Noir Bookshop, and the Lyon-based Decitre bookshops at the Polar en Poche area: **€400,000 in sales** (excluding tax) and **35,000 books sold**
- About **70 booksellers** from the Lyon metropolitan area and region present throughout the festival
- **450 volunteers** of all ages and backgrounds
- **804 association memberships** in support of the festival
- **3,328 pupils** and students involved in various projects from kindergarten to high school
- **220 institutional, cultural, media, and private partners**
- **392 book and audiovisual professionals** participated in the Polar Connection programme
- **Over 35 journalists** (France, Spain, Belgium, Switzerland, Italy) covering the event
- **485 teachers, librarians, and school librarians** registered for the annual crime literature training day (142 in person + 343 YouTube views as of April 11, 2025)
- Impact on the tourism industry: **1,470 meals** served in **8 restaurants** and approximately **500 hotel nights** booked in 9 Lyon hotels for festival guests, plus a significant increase in the number of tourists in Lyon throughout the weekend of the festival.



**FIND KEY RESOURCES
FROM THE PREVIOUS
EDITION ON OUR WEBSITE**

THEY SUPPORTED US IN 2025

MAIN PARTNERS



OFFICIAL PARTNERS



MEDIA PARTNERS



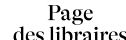
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SUIVEZ-NOUS



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