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# PEBBLES

YOUR TRAVEL GUIDE TO THE FRENCH RIVIERA

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**Deliver a five star service to guests**



**Work with owners who care & understand our philosophy**



**Pebbles is committed to...**



**Help guests build precious memories to last a lifetime**



**Building a talented team who care**

# Editor's Letter

## Welcome to the 5th edition of the Pebbles Guide

This year has been another exciting year of expansion. In France, we've grown the team across the three Nice offices taking on five more full time members of staff. The dedicated Pebbles Reps and the new maintenance department aim keep everything as ship shape as possible for our guests' precious time with us.



At Pebbles, we pride ourselves on being the first to take a different approach so in January 2014, we took the unusual step of opening a high street agency in the market town of Glossop, in the UK.

Situated on the edge of the beautiful Peak District and with good links into Manchester, we decided the location would be perfect to start generating an interest in Pebbles with the local community, businesses and day-visitors.

We've slightly re-structured Pebbles and grown the UK office team from three to a whopping nine team members. Our expanded UK team take care of email, phone and off the street enquiries.

As I'm sure you can imagine, there are no shortage of volunteers to make the trip over to Nice and firm friendships are springing up between the French

and UK offices as horseradish, jaffa cakes and other UK contraband is changing hands.

It is also an exciting time for property sales. With more favourable terms on CGT for sellers (see our investment pages) the property market is certainly picking up from previous years. We've made a lot of changes to our website and the word has spread quickly that Pebbles is all that is now needed whether you are a guest, an Investor, an Owner or a Seller.

The end of 2013 saw the final unveiling of the Coulée Verte. For the last ten years Nice has hugely improved the infrastructure and quality of life of tourists and residents alike. Nice is now the proud benefactor of a new tram network, the velo bleu, the auto bleu and now the coulée verte, officially known as the Promenade de Paillon, covering 12 hectares and 1.2 kilometres right through the heart of Nice.

For most of our guests it will be their first introduction to Nice after seeing the Promenade des Anglais and shimmering blue sea on their way in from the airport. It's a great first impression, and one that we hope sets the scene for their holiday and many more to come on the French Riviera. Enjoy!

*Happy Holidays,*

*Gayle*

*...and the entire Pebbles' team*



**W**elcome over 15,000 guests a year into our holiday rental properties in Nice and the French Riviera. We offer guests a concierge service, welcome baskets and toiletries packages, complimentary beach towels and their own Pebbles Guide. Not forgetting to mention personal meet and greets, a complimentary luggage store, office facilities for faxing and printing, and

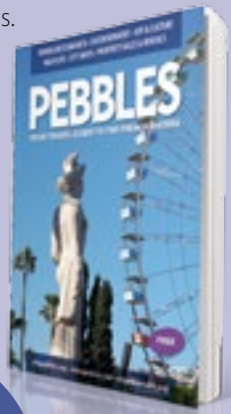
the security of a point of contact to deal with the unexpected.



Pebbles is proud to...

**G**ive something back to our guests and the local community by offering a complimentary copy of our Pebbles Guide across outlets on the French Riviera including the supermarket chain Monoprix and selected tourist offices.

**Need a copy?**  
You can also pick up a copy of our Guide outside our office in Nice.



**H**elp buyers and sellers with their property transaction. We have a track record with investment purchasers of where to buy and how to furnish to achieve the best rental return possible. We have a proven record with sellers to find investment or second home owner buyers, and we can often complete the transaction with all the bookings intact so both the buyer and seller have no downtime on their investment.

**O**ffer our owners a complete management service including keeping their properties well maintained, dealing with all repairs, forwarding mail and acting as key holder. All whilst achieving a high net annual return.

Our owners can be assured that their property and any monies held are insured and safe at all times.



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## The Pebbles Guide

20 & 23 rue Gioffredo, 06000 Nice, France

☎ **04.97.20.27.30**

[info@nicepebbles.com](mailto:info@nicepebbles.com)

Published by Nice Pebbles SARL

### Editor

Gayle Roberts - [gayle@nicepebbles.com](mailto:gayle@nicepebbles.com)

### Art Director

Paul Harwood - [paul@liquid-design.com](mailto:paul@liquid-design.com)

### Advertising Sales

[guide@nicepebbles.com](mailto:guide@nicepebbles.com)

### Contributing Writers

Gayle Roberts                      Tristan Rutherford

Kathryn Tomasetti                Laura Bradbury

Alice Colyer                        Beverley Roberts

David Robinson                  Jen Nicholson

### Contributing Photographers

Cover Photo by our very own Tina Fortunov.

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***Pebbles is recognised by leading travel guides, and is the only apartment rental company listed in Lonely Planet, Fodor's, TimeOut, Footprint and Frommer's.***

Avoid airport check-ins, cramped seats, long transfers and relax by rail to the heart of your destination, travelling to Europe by rail really is the smart way to go



**Convenience:** You can travel from city centre to city centre by train, without the hassle of airport transfers. Just hop off the train, drop off your luggage and head out exploring.

**Choice:** Europe's vast rail network serves 1000s of destinations. Where will you go next? Travel to the Continent from London, Ebbsfleet or Ashford International.

**Time:** Taking the train in Europe can be just as quick – if not quicker – than flying. There's no need to check in hours in advance or lose time waiting in a queue. Simply board the train before the stated boarding time and make yourself at ease. On overnight trains, you can cross whole countries while you sleep in comfort, saving time and hotel bills



**Environment:** Travel with a clear conscience: it's greener to go by train. Travelling by train uses less energy and generates lower emissions than going by air or car.

**Comfort:** Seats on European trains are really spacious, with plenty of leg room for you to stretch out and relax. The aisles are wide and offer you the chance to walk about.

**Reliability:** Regular, punctual train services make getting around Europe pleasant and hassle-free.

**Scenery:** The scenery from European trains can be stunning. Look out the window and you can enjoy an ever-changing, endlessly entertaining variety of towns, countryside and jaw-dropping landscapes.

Fares from **London to Nice start from just £119** return and from **Paris to Nice from as little as £22** with Prem fares. To secure the best fares, book early. Eurostar tickets can now be booked up to 6 months in advance for InterCapital routes and services within France can be booking from 90 days in advance.

Exploring the Côte d'Azur from your Pebbles Rentals apartment couldn't be easier when you take the train. Just along from Nice on the Côte d'Azur, **Monaco** packs a lot into a small space. And you don't need to be a high roller to enjoy it tickets from Nice to Monaco start from just £3. Wander around the beautiful medieval old town, visit impressive museums, explore lush gardens – or simply soak up the glamorous atmosphere. Of course, you have to visit the legendary Monte Carlo Casino at least once. And, who knows, your number might just come up!



**Cannes** still treats visitors to much of the glitz and glamour of its 50s heyday. Endless sandy beaches, luxurious hotels, and palatial villas all sit under deep blue Mediterranean skies, while chic boutiques, smart shops and excellent restaurants are just a stroll away down La Croisette promenade. There's culture too at the Castre Museum and a taste of paradise a short boat ride away on St Marguerite Island – home to the Man in the Iron Mask. Fares from Nice start from £6.

Pre book your tickets at [www.voyages-sncf.com](http://www.voyages-sncf.com) from the comfort of home and your Adventure can begin the minute you arrive.

*Travelling by train is the way forward. Experience it for yourself and you'll wonder why you ever went any other way.*

# What's On

## June 2014

The town of Menton opens the doors of its beautiful subtropical gardens for the *Mois des Jardins*. The micro-climate in Menton makes its gardens unique and especially popular with visitors. If you're here on the 21st, you'll experience the annual *Fête de la Musique*, that takes place in towns and cities all over France. In Nice you'll see plenty of free concerts in the streets and bars, especially in the Old Town of Nice where the acts compete in the street to attract the largest audience. The *Ironman* competition makes its annual visit to Nice on the 29th, attracting hordes of competitors & spectators alike. This gruelling triathlon features a 3.8km swim and 180 km bike ride, followed by a marathon, all under the blazing Niçois sun.

## July 2014

Music lovers flock to the Cote d'Azur in July to enjoy performances from world renowned acts. The *Nice Jazz Festival* takes place 8th – 12th in the Place Massena and the Theatre de Verdure. Those still longing for more should head along the coast to Juan les Pins for *Jazz à Juan* to enjoy concerts in a beautiful setting by the sea. If you're here for the 14th July, *Bastille Day*, head to the beach for a spectacular fireworks display; every large town will have its own. Shopaholics will want to take advantage of the *summer sales*, from mid-July to mid-August.



## August 2014

Over the months of July and August, Cannes sparkles with its *Festival Pyrotechnique*, a firework competition in which countries battle it out to have the best display. Just to the north of Cannes you can also enjoy some swing and jazz concerts at the *Jazz à Domergue*. In Haut-de-Cagnes, the medieval Festival, *La Fête Médiévale de Cagnes*, celebrates its history with authentic costumes, jousting tournaments and numerous stalls and exhibitions. Tickets for this festival are available at the Haut-de-Cagnes Tourist Information Office. The *Fete de la Sainte Claire* takes over St Paul de Vence from the 10th – 12th August with two days and three nights of festivities ending with a dazzling firework display. Back in Nice, the *Concerts du Cloître* make the perfect relaxing ending to a hot summer

day and are worth the trip up to Cimiez, running from the 19th into the middle of August. Lovers of classical music should also head over to Menton for The *Festival de Musique* running for the first two weeks of the month, which includes some outdoor concerts overlooking the sea.

## September 2014

The *Monaco Yacht Show* and the *Festival de la Plaisance*, Cannes' International Boat and Yacht Show, attracts



yacht enthusiasts to the Riviera to marvel at the luxurious yachts on display. You can catch some of the most extravagant boats around, from all corners of the world, maybe even tempting you to buy a slice of the Riviera high life! In Nice too, the spotlight is on the port where the annual *Fête du Port* takes place. Join in the festivities including local chefs showing off their talents, sample the various local drinks and enjoy music and fireworks. For the more active among us, the *International Nice Triathlon* also takes place this month.

## October 2014

The *MIPCOM* is held in Cannes. It's an annual get together for the entertainment industry to buy and sell hit TV shows to other countries. You never know who you might see outside the Palais des Festivals! *Halloween* isn't widely celebrated in France, though you can join in the fun with the expats at several of the bars and some shops in the Nice Old Town offer sweets to children in costume.

## November 2014

The *Nice-Cannes marathon* takes place on the 9th. The brave athletes complete a demanding (albeit scenic) 42km race starting on the Promenade des Anglais and crossing the finish line on the Croisette in Cannes. In Cagnes-sur-Mer there is the 23rd *Salon du Palais Gourmand* were you can sample different wines and specialities from across France. In Nice the annual *C'est pas classique* weekend allows you to enjoy classical music for free in the Acropolis.



## December 2014

With its 300 days of sunshine a year, the French Riviera may not be the obvious Christmas destination; however, there's no shortage of festivities. **Christmas markets** spring up in most towns and villages on the Riviera throughout the month, the perfect setting to enjoy mulled wine or freshly made crêpes smothered with Nutella. In Nice, an ice rink opens in Place Masséna along with a large Ferris wheel to enjoy the views over Nice. If you're dreaming of a white Christmas, hit the slopes at Isola 2000, Auron or Valberg. The **torch lit descents** on the 24th provide a film-worthy setting for a real French Christmas. For New Years Eve several of the coastal towns offer a fireworks display to mark the beginning of 2015.



## January 2015

**Epiphany** may mark the end of the festive season, but it's the perfect reason to indulge in the **galette des rois**, traditionally eaten at this time of year. On the 1st many of the coastal towns have the annual **Bain de Nouvel An** where brave people take their first swim of the year. The **Midem music festival** in Cannes introduces new artists to the European market, while the **NRJ music awards** attract more established acts to the Croisette. Still in Cannes, hit the **shopping festival**, where big names show off their new collections, or better yet, head to the shops for designer labels at discounted prices; **the winter sales** run from mid-January to mid-February. Monaco has its annual **International Circus Festival**, thanks to the previous prince having a life-long fascination with the circus. January is also the perfect month to hit the slopes and several **ski resorts** including Auron and Isola 2000 are easily accessible from coastal towns. Catch the bus for €9 to Isola 2000 from Nice.

## February 2015

February brings thousands of visitors to the Cote d'Azur for the annual festivals. The **Nice Carnival**



is one of the highlights of the Niçois calendar and includes three weeks of parades, flowers and fireworks. If you head westwards along the coast you can enjoy the **Fete du Mimosa** in Mandelieu La Napoule, where there are parades and they elect a **Queen of Mimosa**. For board game enthusiasts

there is the **Festival des Jeux** where you can enjoy many games that are not in the shops yet, as well as classics such as the Chess championships.

## March 2015

The **Foire Internationale de Nice** is an exhibition unlike any other, held annually in the spring. You'll find innovative furniture and home improvement ideas along with beauty products and massage. In Monaco, choose between the **Monaco marathon** and the less strenuous **Monte Carlo Spring Arts Festival** where you can enjoy music, theatre and more, with a speciality of Opera performances in the beautiful Salle Garnier. Across in Menton, the **Fête du Citron** is well worth a visit. Menton is well known for its exceptional lemons and in 1929 a local hotelier held a lemon and flower festival in the hotel gardens. It was such a success that in 1934 the Fête du Citron was officially born, this year marking the 80th Annual event.



## April 2015

Tennis fans shouldn't miss the **ATP Masters Series** in Monte Carlo, a popular stop on the Masters tour for many of the top players in preparation for the French Open. Lucky spectators can watch Rafael Nadal or Roger Federer battle it out for the title at the Monte Carlo country club, so be sure to book your tickets in advance. Sailing fans look out for the **Régates de la Baie des Anges**, a weekend of sailing races in Nice's bay, organised by local sailing clubs. The **Antibes Yacht Show** showcases over 120 yachts and 190 exhibitors.



## May 2015

Action-packed May is one of the busiest months of the year on the Riviera. Jet-setters and celebrities hit the coast for the 68th **Cannes Film Festival** which takes centre stage from the 15th – 26th. In Monaco another highlight in the Riviera's calendar, the **Grand Prix**, comes to town. The week prior also boasts the **Historic Grand-Prix**, the golden era of motoring. If you're looking for a little less glitz and glamour, the **Fêtes de Mai** are held every Sunday throughout May in the gardens and amphitheatre of Cimiez, Nice, featuring music, picnics and festivities.

# Nice

Vibrant Nice has so much going on – the beach and sparkling Mediterranean, the shops, the markets, the restaurants, the parks and the museums – there really is something for everyone! What's more, with its abundance of transport links, it's the ideal base for exploring other towns and villages on the Côte d'Azur.

## Things to see and do...

### The Beach and Promenade des Anglais

The pebbled beach is a mixture of private and public spots. For a beach holiday to remember, head to one of the private beaches. Our favourites are

**Castel** **B7** or the **Beau Rivage Beach Club**. **B7**

**The Blue Beach** **B7** further down the Promenade, is also good as a cheaper alternative. A day at the beach club will cost around €25 per person in peak season.

The public beaches are well-maintained with flushing toilets, showers and a lifeguard.

Paddle boats, water-skiing, wind-surfing and paragliding are all on offer from the beach front. The pebbly beach in Nice may not be for everyone, and those desperately seeking a sandy beach should head to Antibes, Cannes, or Juan-les-Pins.

All walks of life parade along the Promenade, and it's great for a stroll in the early morning or the evening. For the more energetic hiring a bike or skates, or taking a jog on the Promenade, are a must. Reaching the Port or going past the airport to Cagnes, and even beyond, are options for the skaters, cyclists and (very fit) joggers amongst you.

### Open Top Tourist Bus: Le Grand Bus Tour **B7**

**Directions:** *The main stop is where the Promenade des Anglais merges with Quai des Etats-Unis. Look for the Beau Rivage Beach Club.*

Departing from the Promenade des Anglais, with stops at the Port, Cap de Nice and Cimiez Hill (for the Chagall and Matisse museums), the bus can be a good way to get your bearings around the city. The full route takes an hour and a half, and you can hire headphones with English commentary. At around €20 a person for a day ticket this is expensive, but a good way to pack a lot in, especially if you want to visit the two museums. A two day pass is also available for €23, and the good news is for children (4–11 years old) a one or two day pass costs just €5. [www.nicegrandtour.com](http://www.nicegrandtour.com)

### The Tourist Train **B7**

**Directions:** *Next to Le Grand Bus Tour (see above).*

Good if you are with small children, or for those who prefer not to walk too far. The little train cruises around the Old Town and up to the Château Hill. You can stop off at the Château for as long as you wish and take another train down when you are ready. It takes around 45 minutes for the round trip

and costs around €8 for adults and €4 for the under 9 year olds.


[www.trainstouristiquesdenice.com](http://www.trainstouristiquesdenice.com)

### MobilBoard

**Directions:** Head to 2 rue Halévy  to start the tour or to the Tourist Office on the Promenade for more information.

Slide and ride is the modern way to take a two-hour Segway tour of the city with English commentary and photo stops. The tour costs €45 per person. There is also a shorter tour if time or budget are limited. Tours run every two hours.

### Château Hill

**Directions:** Walk along the Promenade des Anglais towards the Port. Look for the Hotel Suisse. The steps to the Château are next door.  There is also an elevator, open from 10am to 7pm, for around €1.

There is actually very little left to see of the Château itself, and it is no longer this that attracts visitors up to the top of this 92-metre high hill. The landscaped park of the Colline du Château is now more famous for the spectacular view of the sun-drenched rooftops, gleaming yachts bobbing gently at anchor and the never-ending sweep of the Promenade des Anglais. Don't forget your camera!

Worth a look here are the Roman ruins of two cathedrals, the mosaics, the dramatic artificial waterfall, the Bellenda Tour, the Cimetière du Château and a Jewish cemetery: hailed as one of the most beautiful resting grounds in the world.

With plenty of running around space, a play area and some cafés, selling drinks, snacks and ice creams, the Château is a great spot for children. The park closes at 8pm in summer and around 7pm in winter.

### St Nicholas Russian Orthodox Church

**Directions:** boulevard du Tzarévitch. A ten minute walk from Nice train station (off map).

Inaugurated in 1912, this ornate cathedral is considered to be one of the most beautiful outside of Russia. It was built by Tsar Nicholas II in the early 1900s for the community of wealthy Russians who resided here in winter. Not all Russians saw him as a hero however, and not long afterwards he was assassinated. It is generally open from 9am–5.30pm with a lunch break between noon and 2.30pm. Entry is around €3. There is an English information leaflet which is given out on entry.

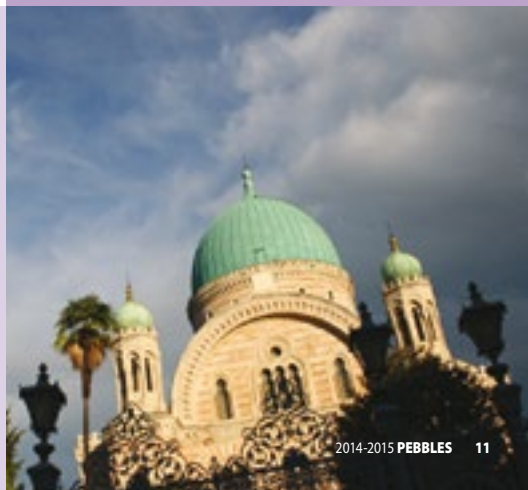


### Palais Lascaris

**Directions:** rue Droite Vieux Nice. 

Almost hidden in the winding streets of Vieux Nice, on rue Droite, is the fading beauty of the small Palais Lascaris which dates back to the 18th century. It is probably best appreciated after you have been inside. The Baroque palace, which is now a museum, houses a large collection of antiques, including a recreation of a 19th century French pharmacy. It was the residency of the Lascaris-Vintimille family and remained their home until the French Revolution. The vaulted ceilings of the room are decorated with frescoes depicting mythological themes, and the furniture and Flemish tapestries are reminiscent of a bygone era.

It will only take 20 minutes to an hour to walk around as it is small and there is not a lot of information offered about the history. We wouldn't advise a special trip for this, but, since entry is free, it is worth just popping in as you explore the Old Town. If you are very interested in the history and antiques, guided tours are offered for around €5. These operate on Wednesday, Friday and Saturday at 3pm, but check as English tours are not guaranteed. The Palais is open from 10am–6pm every day except Tuesday and some Bank Holidays.  
[www.palais-lascaris-nice.org](http://www.palais-lascaris-nice.org)



# Entertainment



## Casino Ruhl & Casino Palais de la Méditerranée

Monaco might have the reputation, but not the monopoly on the playboy lifestyle. If you want a taste of the high life, without the travel and excessive prices, head to Nice's own casinos on the Promenade des Anglais. **D7** You will need a passport and smart clothes to enter. Once inside you can enjoy the cabaret, play the machines and sip cocktails until dawn. [www.lucienbarriere.com](http://www.lucienbarriere.com) and [www.casinomediterranee.com](http://www.casinomediterranee.com)

## The Cinema: Films shown in English

Generally films here are only released a few weeks later than in the UK. There are two cinemas in Nice which have version originale showings: look for VO on the billboards. **The Mercury (16 Place Garibaldi)** is just off the Old Town, **I4** and the **Rialto (4 rue Rivoli)** **I3** is near the Hotel Negresco. Showings start at around 8pm. For further details of films and times go to [www.cote.azur.fr/cinema.htm?ville=Nice](http://www.cote.azur.fr/cinema.htm?ville=Nice)

## The Opéra de Nice

**☎ 04.92.17.40.00**

Located at 4 rue St-François-de-Paule, **I7** tickets can be difficult to come by with people paying over €100 for the best seats. To avoid disappointment, it's best to book tickets as far in advance as possible. The box office is open 10am–6pm every day except Sun. For details of upcoming performances see [www.opera-nice.org](http://www.opera-nice.org)



## The Théâtre National de Nice

**☎ 04.93.13.79.60**

The esteemed Théâtre de Nice **H4** has a well-deserved reputation. The information desk is located opposite the Musée d'Art Moderne et d'Art Contemporain, near Place Garibaldi, **H4** and is open each afternoon except Sunday and Monday until 7pm. Ticket prices vary, and you can expect to pay anything from €10 to €50 for a ticket. To see all listings go to [www.tnn.fr](http://www.tnn.fr)

## The Acropolis Exhibition Centre

**☎ 04.93.92.83.00**

As well as hosting a wide variety of shows and concerts there are also exhibitions and trade shows that may be of interest. You can find out more on their website [www.nice-acropolis.com](http://www.nice-acropolis.com) or at the information desk at 1 Esplanade du Président Kennedy. **I8**

## Palais Nikaïa

**☎ 08.92.39.08.00**

This stadium, and its adjoining park on the Route de Grenoble (off map), hosts some big name acts including Coldplay, Elton John, Lady Gaga and Madonna. Tickets for some acts can be easier to come by than in the acts' home country. A concert is a great excuse for another trip to Nice.

If you want to see what's on, or to buy tickets, go to FNAC or Virgin on Jean Médecin high street. To see the forthcoming line-up go to [www.nikaia.fr](http://www.nikaia.fr)

# Getting Around

## Buses

Thanks to **SYMITAM**, there is now one ticket for all the local buses and trams throughout the region. Tickets cost just €1 for a single ride of any distance (though there are some exceptions like the airport shuttle). Validate your tickets in the yellow ticket machines after boarding.

Nice, St-Laurent-du-Var, Cagnes-sur-Mer, Villefranche-sur-Mer and St-Jean-Cap-Ferrat routes are managed by **Ligne d'Azur**. The routes and comprehensive information can be found at [www.lignedazur.com](http://www.lignedazur.com)

Cannes and Mandelieu-la-Napoule are managed by **Bus Azur**. The routes and further information can be found on their website (in French only) [www.busazur.com](http://www.busazur.com)

Antibes, Juan-les-Pins, Vallauris, Golfe Juan, Biot and St-Paul-de-Vence are all served by **Envibus**. The routes and further information can be found at [www.envibus.com](http://www.envibus.com)

**RCA (Rapides Cote d'Azur)** covers Grasse through to Menton with their express limited stop routes between towns, mainly with Nice as the central core. The routes and comprehensive information can be found on their website (in French only) [www.rca.tm.fr](http://www.rca.tm.fr)

The French Riviera bus service is run by TAM. For their timetables (in French only) go to [www.cg06.fr/fr/servir-les-habitants/deplacements/transport-collectifs/lignes-et-horaires/lignes-et-horaires/](http://www.cg06.fr/fr/servir-les-habitants/deplacements/transport-collectifs/lignes-et-horaires/lignes-et-horaires/)

You buy your €1 tickets for any one-way trip on the bus and validate it in the yellow machines on board.

Popular routes are: 100 Nice–Monaco, 110 Nice–Menton, 200 Nice–Cannes and 600 Nice–Grasse

The €1 ticket is a great deal, but, be warned, the buses are often busy and the train is generally much faster.

## Trains

The regional trains are controlled by TER and information about the services can be found at [www.ter-sncf.com](http://www.ter-sncf.com). The national service is run by SNCF and information can be found at [www.sncf.fr](http://www.sncf.fr)

For the fast, efficient TGV service, that has links around France and to most of Europe, go to [www.tgv.fr](http://www.tgv.fr)

## Cycling

Guests who are based in Nice and want to take advantage of the free and cheap bikes on offer should head to the one-time automated telephone registration points armed with a credit card and mobile phone. You use your phone to dial the number given on the machines and then enter your card details to authorise Vélo Bleu to debit your account for use of the bike and also 150 euros should you fail to return it. Once registered, you can use the bikes for up to half an hour for free, then €1 per day, €5 per week, or €10 per month. The Nice map on page 23 shows the central bike stands, you can get started from any of these stands and then collect and drop off the bikes as you wish. [www.velobleu.org](http://www.velobleu.org)



## Trams

At just €1 a journey, the tram is a welcome addition to the city of Nice. You should buy your ticket before travelling and validate it in the yellow machines once you get on. Currently there is only one line which runs from Las Planas to Pont Michel. Relevant stops with map references:

### From Las Planas

Libération (for the market)

Gare Thiers (train station) **D2**

Jean Médecin (high street shopping) **E4**

Masséna (Place Masséna) **E5**

Opéra Vieille Ville (Old Town) **F6**

Cathédrale Vieille Ville (Old Town) **G5**

Garibaldi (Place Garibaldi) **I4**

Acropolis (Exhibition Centre) **J1**

Palais des Expositions (Exhibition Centre) – off map

To Pont Michel  
[tramway.nice.fr](http://tramway.nice.fr)



## Nights Out

Nice enjoys a lively bar and club scene for all ages, and most of the nightlife centres around the Cours Saleya and the Old Town. Many bars will offer happy hours until 9pm, and several have live music of varying quality. There are, of course, many other bars and nightclubs around town too.

Everyone wants to soak up the atmosphere of the Cours Saleya and enjoy the pavement terraces outside. Two of our favourites are **Blast American Bar and Restaurant** (8 Place Charles Félix) and **Akathor** (32 Cours Saleya). Blast is the more upmarket of the two with an open-air cocktail bar, great terrace with lounge furniture, fresh modern décor and well-maintained wash rooms, not forgetting to mention their extensive Tex-Mex style food and their legendary pancakes. Akathor is more spit and sawdust, but the outside terrace somehow has us migrating there in the height of summer. Both bars have live music (sometimes good, sometimes not), but both are always atmospheric.

If you head away from the Cours Saleya you will find the **Snug and Cellar Irish Bar** (22 rue Droite) on the corner of rue Droite and rue Rossetti. Our guests often tell us that they have spent many a night there during their stay with us. The friendly and efficient staff, a generous happy hour from 8pm–10pm, and the gastro-pub style food on offer are probably the main reasons the Snug is the favourite haunt



of most of our team and many of our owners and regular guests.

While the Snug remains our favourite, there are several other good Irish bars in Nice. **Ma Nolan's** (2 rue St-François-de-Paule and 5 Quai des Deux Emmanuels) is possibly the slickest of them all and is the place to go for live sporting events and a weekly pub quiz, as well as to enjoy their outdoor terraces. We also like the very friendly **Paddy's Irish Pub** (40 rue Droite).

If you are looking for jazz with class, head to **Shapko Bar** (5 rue Rossetti), **Cave Wilson** (16 rue Gubernatis), or **The Wine Room** (1 Descente du Marché). We are also fans of the champagne bar, **L'Effervescence** (10 rue de la Loge), tucked away behind Place Centrale in the Old Town.

Finally, for the party animals amongst you who fancy a wild night out dancing on tables (yes, really), the place to be is **Wayne's** (13 rue de la Préfecture). It's an institution in Nice and some of our younger guests won't go anywhere else on a Friday and Saturday night. Another trendy hotspot for a more refined night out is **Gossip Bar** (7 rue Bonaparte). With an in-house DJ Wednesday to Saturday, this is the perfect place to unwind and catch up on all the gossip!



There are also several wine bars that serve good complimentary food alongside their tipples. Customers can also just browse and buy their wines by the bottle or case. The most well-known ones, offering exceptional bottles at reasonable prices, are **La Part des Anges** (17 rue Gubernatis) and **Vinivore** (32 avenue de la République). We've recently discovered the newly-opened **Cave 35** (35 rue de la Buffa) which has a great mixed crowd and friendly service, and our local favourite is **Palao Bistro** (14 rue Defly) on the corner of **rue Giofreddo** and **rue Defly**. For a truly Niçois experience head to the **Cave de la Tour** (3 rue de la Tour); the owner is a real character and their lunchtime dish of the day is always a great example of hearty Niçois cuisine.

For hazy summer nights it is hard to beat the beach bars, such as the **Beau Rivage Beach Club** or the **Hi Beach**, where you can sip wine or cocktails and listen to the lapping of the waves. Chilled rosé is a must in Nice, particularly in the summer. If you are feeling plush, sipping cocktails at the top floor bar of **Le Meridian Hotel** (1 Promenade des Anglais) or the **Grand Hotel Aston** (12 avenue Félix Faure) can be a real holiday treat.

## The Cannon Man

It's your first day in Nice and you are sipping a cold drink on the Cours Saleya waiting for your lunch to arrive. Then BOOM! You jump out of your skin when everyone around you remains unperturbed. Don't worry, it happens to all of us – for the uninitiated, this is the century old tradition of the Nice Cannon and a reminder to every self-respecting Nicois.

The 'Lou Canoun de Miejour' (as it is called in Nicois) remains a true tradition for Nice dating back to 1861 to 1866 when Sir Thomas Coventry-More, a British army colonel, came to his house in Nice to enjoy the Riviera sunshine. His wife would go for a walk every morning, but because she was a great gossiper and did not carry a watch he had great troubles getting her to return home in order to eat lunch. He devised a novel idea to remind her of the time - he proposed to the Mayor of Nice that a cannon be fired every day, and being a former Colonel, he said he'd even provide the cannon.

The deal was done, but after several years of this daily ritual, Sir Coventry left - taking his cannon with him. The people of Nice complained as they found this signal perfect to synchronize clocks all over the city. So on the 19th November 1875 the municipality decreed that the cannon be fired every day.



Over a hundred and fifty years later, the "cannon" itself has been replaced with a special firework that explodes 3 seconds after it is fired from the beautiful Colline du Chateau.. For the past 18 years, Philippe Arnello, without fail takes the drive to the top of the hill to do his civil duty. Our very own Pebbles, Tina and Alice, went to meet him to find out more. Alice, got more than she bargained for when the lovely Philippe Arnello talked her through the tradition, AND let her light the fuse.

## The Cannon Cache

- ◆ Philippe Arnello has only missed firing the fireworks twice, both times due to traffic.
- ◆ Every 1st April he deliberately fires it at the wrong time, as a little April Fools for the people of Nice.
- ◆ The Cannon started its life on the terrace of the Chauvin Hotel (now rue Chauvin), then was moved to the Opera House before its final move to the Colline du Chateau.
- ◆ Monsieur Arnello Philippe has no intention of quitting anytime soon. He enjoys the idea that he is reminding the people of Nice that it is lunchtime.
- ◆ Alice's heart is racing some 50 minutes after lighting the fuse. Whether this is the bang of the fuse or her encounter with this dishy Frenchman, we'll let you decide...



# Nice Museums

The good news is that the majority of Nice's museums are free, and even those that you have to pay for are free on the first Sunday of the month! Some museums are closed on Mondays, others on Tuesdays. Usual opening hours are from 10am–6pm in the summer and from 10am–5pm in the winter. We would recommend visiting one, where they will provide information about all the others, and then planning your itinerary from there. Art history guides can also enhance your enjoyment of the museums.



## The Museum of Modern & Contemporary Art (MAMAC)

Promenade des Arts. **H4**

☎ **04.97.13.42.01**

[www.mamac-nice.org](http://www.mamac-nice.org)

**Directions:** Head to Place Garibaldi and you can't miss it: it's behind Monoprix.

This hosts classics from the 1960s and 1970s. Works by Andy Warhol, Yves Klein, Niki de Saint Phalle, Alexander Calder and Jean-Pierre Reynaud are all featured. One room is devoted entirely to Klein and his famous shade of blue. For a great view follow the glass and steel bridges, which link the four marble towers, all the way up to the roof-top garden and terrace.

Open 10am–6pm daily except Monday. Closed some Bank Holidays. Entry is free. A guided English tour is by appointment only and at an extra fee, but we don't think you'll need one.

## The Matisse Museum

164 avenue des Arènes de Cimiez (off map).

☎ **04.93.81.08.08**

[www.musee-matisse-nice.org](http://www.musee-matisse-nice.org)

**Directions:** Head up the hill through Cimiez (off map). Unless you are an avid walker, we recommend taking bus number 15, 17 or 22 from rue Giofreddo, just off Place Masséna. It is about a 15 minute



*journey, and the stop to get off at is Arènes-Matisse. For those with a car there is parking, just behind the museum, in front of the monastery.*

The museum boasts a huge collection of engravings, drawings and cut-outs spanning Matisse's entire career, but concentrating on the period, from 1917 to 1954, when he settled in Nice. The setting of the museum is impressive: in a recently renovated Genoese villa in the heart of an olive grove.

Open 10am–6pm daily except Tuesday. Closed some Bank Holidays. Entry is free.

**Tip:** The park surrounding the museum is a pleasant and popular spot often used by locals for picnics.

## The National Bible Museum of Marc Chagall

avenue du Doctor Ménard (off map).

☎ **04.93.53.87.20.**

[www.musee-chagall.fr](http://www.musee-chagall.fr)

**Directions:** Head up the hill through Cimiez. For those who prefer not to walk too far, take buses 15 or 22 from rue Giofreddo, just off Place Masséna. It is about a ten minute journey, and the stop to get off at is Musée Chagall.

This houses the work of the Russian-born graphic artist. It is one of the 33 national heritage museums in France. After the Second World War Chagall settled in Vence and, between 1954 and 1967,

painted 17 large religious-themed murals, all of which are on display here with several other sculptures, sketches and mosaics. The Chagall museum is well worth a visit and is best explored with a book on his work or a little museum guide.

*Open 10am–6pm (May to Oct) and 10am–5pm (Nov to Apr). Closed Tues. and some Bank Holidays. Entry fee varies from €7.50 to €10 depending on what's on.*

### The Museum of Archaeology

160 avenue des Arènes-de-Cimiez (off map).

☎ **04.93.81.59.57**

[www.musee-archeologique-nice.org](http://www.musee-archeologique-nice.org)

**Directions:** Head up the hill through Cimiez. Unless you are an avid walker, we recommend taking bus number 15, 17 or 22 from rue Giofreddo, just off Place Masséna. It is about a 15 minute journey, and the stop to get off at is Arènes-Matisse. For those with a car there is parking, just behind the museum, in front of the monastery.

This museum displays all the finds and details of Nice's history up to the middle ages. The public baths and the amphitheatre can both be visited here. This is worth a stop off if you are visiting the Matisse museum, but we do not think it is worth a special trip. There is very little information in English so your French knowledge of archaeological finds will need to be quite good.

*Open 10am–6pm daily except Tuesday. Closed some Bank Holidays. Entry is free.*

### Masséna Museum

65 rue de France. ☎

☎ **04.97.43.34.45**

**Directions:** Walk along the Promenade up to the Hotel Negresco. The address is misleading, rue de France is one street behind the Promenade, but you can also use the entrance on the Promenade which is much easier to find.

Set in a 19th century Italian-influenced villa, here you can see exhibits, sculptures and religious works, as well as ancient artwork by Niçois primitives.

*Open 10am–6pm every day except Tuesday. Closed some Bank Holidays. Entry is free.*

### The Fine Arts Museum (Musée de Beaux Arts)

33 avenue des Baumettes (off map).

☎ **04.92.15.28.28**

[www.musee-beaux-arts-nice.org](http://www.musee-beaux-arts-nice.org)

**Directions:** West of Nice. Follow the Promenade des Anglais towards the airport. Head inland when you reach Hotel Elysée Palace. Alternatively take bus 38 from rue Alberti.

In a beautiful villa, with sumptuous grounds, there are over 6,000 works from the 17th to 20th centuries: including Flemish paintings of the 17th century, Impressionists, Post-Impressionists, and some works by Picasso, Monet and Jules Cheret. The collections stem from those sent by Napoleon III after Nice joined France in 1860.

*Open 10am–6pm daily except Monday. Closed some Bank Holidays. Entry is free.*

## Théâtre de la Photographie et de l'Image

27 boulevard Dubouchage. 📍

☎ 04.97.13.42.20

[www.tpi-nice.org](http://www.tpi-nice.org)

**Directions:** Head to avenue Jean Médicin, just off Place Masséna, and then walk north until you reach boulevard Dubouchage.

In this restored theatre house you can find an interesting display of modern photography and imagery.

Open 10am–6pm. Closed on Monday and some Bank Holidays. Entry is free.



## Museum of Asian Arts

405 Promenade des Anglais (off map).

☎ 04.92.29.37.00

[www.arts-asiatiques.com](http://www.arts-asiatiques.com)

**Directions:** Walk (or cycle) along the Promenade almost to the airport. You will see Parc Phoenix on the other side of the road: the museum is in here. Alternatively, you can take bus number 59 or 70 from the stop on the corner of Jean Médicin and rue de l'Hôtel des Postes. The stop to get off at is Arénas.

This museum is quite a surprise, and the verdant, peaceful setting is an added bonus. Set on a lake in Parc Phoenix, this small museum houses beautiful pieces of art from Japan, China and Cambodia. The pieces on display are a mix of contemporary and traditional works.

Open 10am–6pm (May to mid-Oct), 10am–5pm (mid-Oct–Apr). Closed Tuesday and some Bank Holidays. Entry is free, but you will have to pay €10 to experience a tea ceremony or other performances.

## Palaeontology Museum

25 boulevard Carnot. 📍

☎ 04.93.55.59.93

[www.musee-terra-amata.org](http://www.musee-terra-amata.org)

**Directions:** Walk to the far side of the Port and then take boulevard Stalingrad followed by boulevard Carnot (off map).

This small museum is a prehistoric site, which was discovered in 1966, and dates back some 400,000 years. Protected in part by the sea, it has been preserved and can now teach us about prehistoric travelling hunters. This will mainly interest those who have a passion for archaeological finds and also a good grasp of French: otherwise the stone age relics are a little baffling.

Open 10am–6pm. Closed Monday and some Bank Holidays. Entry is free.



## Museum of Natural History

60 boulevard Risso.

☎ 04.97.13.46.80

[www.mhnnice.org](http://www.mhnnice.org)

**Directions:** From Place Masséna, walk down avenue Felix Faure. 📍

This is the oldest museum in Nice and it is small, but very family friendly. It was set up to raise awareness of the importance of protecting the environment. You can see display cabinets of birds, fungi, vertebrates and invertebrates as well as some temporary exhibits. It's not the most impressive of museums, but can hold the interest of young children, especially on a rainy day. And best of all it's free!

Open 10am–6pm every day except Monday. Closed some Bank Holidays. Entry is free.

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# Ateliers Naturels

However innovative the world around us becomes, we can never deny that getting back to basics calms, nurtures and just has a simple feel good factor. Take that holiday chill factor a stage further with a visit to one of these exciting new workshops enterprises which have just opened their doors for trade.

## La Petite Lumière

When I met with Anita Petrova, it's simply clear that she is passionate about candles. She waxes lyrical on their various attributes from the ambience and warmth they create, the way we still use them to celebrate and the effects they can have on our well-being. One of her favourite products is the beautifully gold beeswax candle for its delicate natural scent similar to honey.



Originally from Bulgaria, from an early age she remembers staying up for hours after dark, with her parents acting out stories with hand shadow puppets, a candle light flickering in the background. *"Fairy tale stories, enchanted castles and beautiful princesses... Yes those were the best times"*. At some point, she discovered how to make her own candles, and in April 2014 she unveiled her new exciting candle shop – her dream come true.

A family business with her sister-in-law, La Petite Lumière has an amazingly cute interactive flair. Every day throughout summer visitors to the central Old Town shop can watch as they hand-carve exquisite candles and visitors can ask for candles in colours and sizes of their choosing to be made on the premises.

There are also workshops where you can make candles of your own design. Ask inside for details.



**La Petite Lumière**, 1 rue de Collet, Old Town, Nice. Open 10am – 7.30pm. July, July & August 9.30am – 9.30 pm.

# My Beautiful Provençal Kitchen

Olive oil in shades of green and gold, freshly picked vegetables, wild mountain herbs and fruits dripping with juice make the southern French diet one of the healthiest in the world. But there is more than one way to benefit from the region's sun-soaked local produce.

Starting this summer, the cooking school **Les Petits Farcis** is offering cooking and beauty workshops that teach participants how to nourish their bodies from within as well as without.



**Vanessa Gheorghiu**, leads the workshops along with Petits Farcis owner **Rosa Jackson**. The workshops are based upon the ancient Indian healing system of Ayurveda, also known as "the art of longevity".

I met with Vanessa to sample the workshop firsthand. As a certified practitioner, Vanessa is well versed in the medicinal properties of each plant, from the potent healing potential of *herbes de Provence* to the purifying powers of cucumber. *"Ayurveda makes very little distinction between food and medicine and considers body, mind and soul as a whole; what nourishes one will nourish the other. It teaches us to steer away from all man-made ingredients and learn to trust the astonishing power of nature to bring us health and beauty."*

In practice, this means trading expensive beauty products for cleansers, scrubs, masks and lotions that can all be made in minutes with natural



ingredients. Whether they become a lifestyle choice or an occasional indulgence, these preparations bring immediate benefits that have as much to do with the pleasure of making them as to their exceptional qualities.

The class begins with a cleansing juice made with seasonal fruits and vegetables. While putting together a light three-course meal focusing on local produce, edible flowers and cheeses, I am taught how to use some of the same ingredients in the preparation of beauty treatments.

*"It's about refining the senses and enjoying subtle things to the fullest,"* Vanessa tells me. *"Often we use too many ingredients and overload our senses."* The ancestor of what today we know as cold cream, for instance, was made simply of ghee (clarified butter) and floral water, creating a deeply moisturizing cream with a cooling quality.

What I learn most from the workshop was the strong message that beauty comes from within, and that tapping into nature's resources brings out your own natural radiance. As Vanessa so elegantly phrases it *"Ingredients that come from nature may be inexpensive but they are the ultimate luxury. They are our birthright."*

By **Gayle Roberts**



**My Beautiful Provençal Kitchen** workshops will be held from 11am to 2pm on June 11, July 25, August 13, September 12 & October 7, 2014, and on request for at least four people. Cost per person is 80 euros, which includes lunch and beauty preparations to take away. To book, please visit [www.petitsfarcis.com](http://www.petitsfarcis.com) or write to [rosa@rosajackson.com](mailto:rosa@rosajackson.com)



## Shopping

**N**ice is a great place to shop all year round and is normally thought of when seeking only high-priced designer clothes, but the large number of boutiques and wide range of choice promises something for everyone regardless of their style or budget.

The annual sales in July and January are a great time to pick up a bargain. Sales are a big event in Nice and some real deals can be found, especially in the expensive shops. The sales last for around six weeks, and the official dates are set by the French government. Look for the 'soldes' signs on shop windows.

The central hub of the shopping district centres on avenue Jean Médecin. Here you can find the usual high street names of **Zara**, **H&M**, **Morgan**, **Etam**, **Virgin** and **FNAC** along with the very popular perfume and make up chain, **Sephora**. Midway along Jean Médecin is the Étoile Shopping Mall where you can buy sportswear, fashion, homeware, and jewellery. Dads will find the ever popular **Tie Rack**, Mums stunning lingerie from **Aubade**, and for teenage girls **Claire's accessories**.

Other shops you should discover here are **Maison du Monde**: a favourite for home deco, **Nature & Découvertes**: great unusual gifts, and **BCBG Max Azria**: stunning clothes to take home and wow your friends with.

Turning off Jean Médecin onto rue Masséna will bring you even more high street chains such as **Darjeeling**, **Blanc Bleu**, **Footlocker** and **MAC**, all surrounded by lots of other reasonably priced boutiques and shoe shops. The t-shirt shop, **Petit Bateau**, is well worth a look and women will love **Arrato**, a little further down, for its low-cost fashion jewellery. Take a ticket if you want to purchase anything, and then wait to be served. This bustling shopping area also has many cafés and restaurants to stop at should you fancy a bite to eat and do a spot of people watching.



At the top of Place Masséna is a four-storey branch of **Galleries Lafayette**: the French equivalent of Selfridges and Harvey Nichols. If you have an appetite for designer fashion then head to rue de la Liberté, just off Place Magenta. Here you can easily spend a whole day in the twenty or so upmarket chains such as **Scapa**, **Guess**, **G-Star** and **Tara Jarmon**. The well-regarded French chain **Arche** is also found here which sells good quality boots and shoes, tailored towards walking not topling.

For the very best, such as **Armani**, **Façonnable** and **Chanel**, head for rue Paradis and avenue de Suède, and avenue de Verdun (running parallel to rue de la Liberté) for other famous designers like **Hermes**, **Longchamp** and **Escada**. Designer jewellery, **Cartier**, **Mont Blanc**, **Bijoux Burma**, **Ferret** and **Barichella**, are all here as well.

For designer labels at bargain prices search out a depot de vente: a shop that specialises in second-hand clothes in excellent condition. Head for **Andrea T** on rue Blacas and **Renaissance Vidini** on rue Congres. Also watch out for the ladies vintage clothes shop, **Caprice** on rue Droite, Old Town, the mens retro clothes and home décor shop, **Le Chéri de Caprice** on rue Martin Seytour as well as new arrivals opening soon at the top of rue Cassini just off Place Garibaldi.



If you're after individualism and gifts, then the winding streets of the Old Town is where to obtain modern art, classic paintings, period furnishings, garments of every cloth from leather to lace, hats, shoes, herbs, spices, olive oil and toiletries.

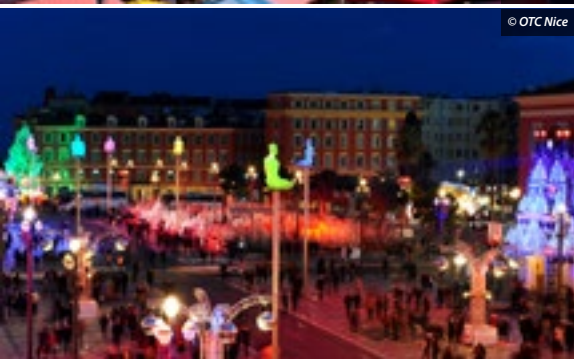
You can pick up some of the finest fresh produce and fresh flowers on the Cours Saleya every morning except Monday. Monday gives way to a large antiques market that lasts all day until about 5:30pm. From June to September you can spend the summer evenings strolling around the Cours Saleya when the local food and flower market is replaced by stalls selling jewellery, artwork, bags and local crafts which can be purchased until around midnight.

If you fancy sampling the local fare the fish market at the end of these streets, at Place St-François, offers fish aplenty every day except Monday.

Late November sees the arrival of the Christmas market (Le Marché de Noël) which is set up on Place Masséna. Adults can browse the numerous wooden chalets that act as the temporary shop fronts selling traditional gifts for all the family, while the children enjoy the winter wonderlands, ice skating, giant ferris wheel, trampolines and fun houses. You may even be tempted to grab a glass of freshly made mulled wine while your little ones soak up the seasonal atmosphere, and who could blame you!



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Credits photos: Alliance Française de Nice, Ville de Nice, Grand Hôtel, Angèle Lagarde, J. Senguen, Institut Français de Nice



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## Parc Phoenix

**P**arc Phoenix has been a godsend for us and our two boys. Parking is easy, the entrance fee cheap and once inside their boundless energy can be unleashed safely. It is so much more than a park. I think we have visited over twenty times and not been bored.

It is home to some of the largest botanical gardens in Europe, an array of birds from around the world, centuries old fauna and some adorable – and not so adorable – animals and wildlife. There's a playground, small petting zoo, aquarium as well as the famous 'Green Pyramid' greenhouses and Asian Arts Museum both of which will shelter you from any unexpected downpours.



At the entrance to the Parc, on your left is the Asian Arts Museum. I have to confess, I haven't made it inside yet, but I'm told you can find varied collections on Buddhism, Neolithic artefacts, Japanese drawings, intricately carved sculpture from India and archaeological information on Cambodia.

On Saturdays the museum provides origami classes for young and old, on Sundays there is a traditional Japanese tea ceremony. Be sure to book in advance as there is very limited space. Entrance fee to the park includes access to the Museum.

Our first stop is feeding (sorry, looking) at the ducks. There are clear signs not to feed the ducks yet everyone seems to do it, and we're no exception. All the children and the ducks seem to enjoy the event, so no-one seems to really mind.

If we have timed our entrance well, the next stop is the fountains to music show which plays every couple of hours. I'm sure it has a proper name, but it's where spurts of water dance in the air to a played recording that splutters out of the speakers dotted around the small amphitheatre. Not worth a planned visit, but worth a pit stop if you have children with you.

As you then amble up the entrance path to the main park, you pass turtles, guinea pigs, hens and cockerels (roaming free and not afraid to peck), wallabies (aka baby kangaroos to my boys) and small goats. Then there is a huge fountain before you enter the park itself.

The park is a couple of acres of green lawn to rival that of the Grand Stade de Nice, and visitors' picnic and play in clusters all over it. There's a decent snack bar with tables and chairs and toilets. Sometimes there are events here from dancing with dragons to inflatables but we've always been pleasantly surprised by their presence rather than learning about their presence from any advance publicity.

If the sun is too hot, or rain stops play, you can head to the tropical greenhouse. This is home to a respectable aquarium and terrarium of insect and arachnids. There are pink flamingoes and koi carp fish as well as giant tortoises and all manner of evergreens, small huts and walkways.

On the other side of the park there are paths and small exhibitions, sculptures, an owl sanctuary, an aviary of rainbow hued parrots and a large children's play area with the usual climbing toys and apparatus.

At a cost of only 2 euros per adult and children's entry being free, it isn't going to be a drain on your holiday funds.

An enjoyable venue rain or shine. We love this place for its authenticity, natural beauty and convenience. It's hard to imagine you're sitting within a man-made park within a city full of bustling tourists.



### Parc Phoenix

405 Promenade des Anglais, 06200 Nice

☎ +33 (0) 4 92 29 77 00

[www.parcphoenix.org](http://www.parcphoenix.org)

#### How to get here from Nice Centre:

##### BY CAR

If travelling from the centre of Nice (e.g. the train station), head southwest on Avenue Thiers towards Rue de Belgique. Continue onto Rue Châteauneuf, take the ramp to Aéroport Nice-Côte d'Azur/Antibes. Join the Voie Mathis/Voie Pierre/Voie Rapide. Take the ramp to Les Bosquets. Turn left onto Avenue Raymond Féraud, then turn right onto Promenade des Anglais/M6098. Parc Phoenix is on your right.

If travelling from Vieille Ville/Port; from Quai des États-Unis/Ribaudou Miejour/M6098. Continue along the Promenade des Anglais, and close to the airport you will be reaching Parc Phoenix on your right.

##### BUS ROUTES

**23: Bella Vista** – Centre Administratif, Arénas.

**9/10: Nice La Plaine** – Saint-Laurent-du-Var, Arénas.



## Picnic Parks

**W**orld-renowned for its coastline, it is easy to forget that the French Riviera is also home to some beautiful open green spaces. Truth be told, you really can't go wrong with a picnic anywhere in Nice's numerous parks, and even the benches scattered around the squares offer views of the town's magnificent architecture. Grab a baguette, some wine, cheese, and whatever else strikes your fancy, and enjoy one of the most satisfying and cheap days out around.

Nice's numerous parks are a haven for picnic-goers all year round. Weekends, holidays, and peak summer months may mean you have to look hard for a space, but if you're in the know, you can find some great hideaways. Here are our team's insider tips to park paradise. Further information and detailed directions can be found in the ABOUT section of the [nicepebbles.com](http://nicepebbles.com) website.

### **1** d'Estienne d'Orves l'avenue d'Estienne d'Orves

*It's Tina's picnic pick because...*

I discovered this eighteen hectare park when a friend of mine took me there three years ago. It's now where I meet up with several friends every few months and we take a table, all our children, a huge picnic and we play, laugh and even sing from time to time. They say the best things in life are free, and here I have some amazing memories of fun and hazy days.

It is not crowded, not many people know about this fantastic place and I'm not quite sure I should be sharing! You are still in town, but just walking uphill



for fifteen minutes, the air changes completely. You can enjoy magnificent views while having your picnic and the children are safe

## 2 Parc Castel des Deux Rois Corniche André de Joly

*It's Gayle's picnic park because...*

This is a huge open space with plenty of room for our young boys to zoom around without causing (much) damage to themselves or others. The air is fresh (except for around the petting zoo), lawn and trees are plentiful and the children's play area is not just big, but also set below raised lawn so parents dot around the perimeter keeping tabs from a distance. There's a snack kiosk, toilets and car-park for when the heat makes the walk up the hill a little tough and a car ride is preferable. We have spent many a day here with friends at a picnic table or just with a blanket and even once done yoga here. At the bottom of the hill is one of the best greengrocers in Nice and we tend to buy fruit from here on the way up and stop at the next door café on the way down.

*It's Flora's pick because...*

I love to read under the palm trees and from the park I often hike up to the Mont Boron. The view of the sea and boats is amazing, I've seen a lot of people practise yoga here and I can see why. It is also ideal for families with children with a huge platform to enjoy biking and roller etc.



## 3 Colline du Chateau Rue des Ponchettes & Rue de Foresta

*It's Alice's picnic pick because...*

In the hot days of summer I go to this park to escape the crowds on the beach. I start by climbing the stairs from Place Rossetti, making my way towards the waterfalls and the many view-points overlooking Nice. Upon reaching the top there are plenty of places to spread out a blanket and enjoy a home-made picnic with fresh ingredients bought at the Cours Saleya market and boulangeries of the Old Town. After enjoying lunch you can find a shady spot on the grass under a tree to read a book and partake in the traditional Mediterranean pastime of the sieste. Mid-afternoon is the perfect time to play a game of petanque on one of the many sandy pitches, before ending the afternoon by watching the sun going down at the look-out near the base of the hill.



## 4 Jardin des Arenes de Cimiez

184 av des Arènes de Cimiez

*It's Ellie's picnic pick because...*

Sitting under the olive trees I really feel like I am out in the countryside. The red façade of the Matisse museum also makes for a great backdrop, contrasting nicely with the blue sky behind. I often go up during the Fêtes du Mai (a traditional Niçois festival every Sunday in May) to eat a pan bagnat in the sun and watch the performances by people in traditional dress. It's also well worth visiting the gardens of the monastery next door to admire the rose garden and enjoy the impressive views down to the Mediterranean.



## 5 Parc Vigier

Boulevard Franck Pilatte

*It's Emily's pick because...*

Small but sweet, this little park situated right next to Coco Beach in the Port area of Nice is my first stop on a sunny Sunday morning. Set just back from the road this park is my favourite due to its position, a stone's throw away from a cooling dip in the Med. I start with a relaxing session of yoga under the trees followed by picking up a Pan Bagnet for breakfast from a true local secret, the modest kiosk, La Gratta. They are enormous, freshly made every day and cheap! After this it's time to jump off the rocks at Coco beach into the sea! This is my precious Sunday morning ritual and it never fails at freeing my mind.



## 6 Sentier du Canal de Gairaut

Avenue de Rimiez

*Its Ioana's picnic pick because...*

Ok the name does not sound fantastic and it may be a bit far out, but this place is absolutely amazing! Since this is on top of a hill you have sea views and rooftop views combined. I love it because it's calm, there are no cars and there's fresh air. This is my escape out of busy Nice and when I go jogging here at the weekend it feels like I am in the countryside. You jog along the full 1750m length of the "canal" and back again. Whilst there is no play area as such, kids run around and play along the side of the canal (the water is only a few centimetres deep so no danger really). Try it out to jog like a local, when you might tire of the crowds along the Promenade des Anglais, or to see Nice from a different perspective.



© OTC Nice

# The Perfect Picnic

**W**hat better way to sample the region's delicacies than an old-fashioned picnic? Spread the blanket and sit still long enough to relish details you've never before noticed. As a non-harried diner, we bet you find yourself falling in love with the subtlety of the flora and fauna that surround you, and start to breathe more deeply as you take in the wonders that unfold from the dramatic first morning light, through to the gentle hum of laughing children to incredible sunsets.

## The perfect picnic...

- Fresh French bread.
- Charcuterie and cheeses.
- A fancy side dish – try fennel & red onion coleslaw
- Pate – try Pear, Roquefort and Rosemary pate and of course a Nicoise salad – try this version inspired by the classic.
- Drinks – refreshing Grapefruit Mimosa – pack fresh grapefruit juice and a chilled bottle of fizz or a Summer Fruit white wine sangria made with raspberries, strawberries, nectarines and a crisp fruity white wine.

## Fennel and Red Onion Coleslaw – serves 4

- ½ red cabbage – shredded
- 2 medium carrots coarsely grated
- 1 fennel bulb quartered and shredded
- 1 small finely sliced red onion
- 50g Mayonnaise
- Salt and pepper to season

**Method:** Place all the vegetables in a bowl and toss well. Add mayonnaise, black pepper and a little salt and stir together gently.

## Pear and Roquefort Pate

- 250g Roquefort cheese
- 1 tablespoon creme fraiche
- 2 large pears, peeled, cored and finely chopped
- Salt and fresh ground black pepper

**Method:** Put the blue cheese into a bowl and lightly crush or mash it. Add creme fraiche, salt and black pepper to taste and mix to a coarse paste. Fold in the pears. Ready to serve.

To make a galette with this pate take a piece of rolled out puff pastry. Mark a border all round approximately two centimetres from the edge, taking care not to cut all the way through the pastry. Spread the pate in the centre and bake for



Nicoise

approximately 15 minutes. You can also spread this onto rolled out puff pastry and bake for around 15 minutes at 150 degrees.

## Inspired by the classic Nicoise salad:

- 4 boiled eggs quartered
- A small Cos lettuce
- 70g pitted black olives
- 8 large tomatoes chopped into chunks
- 1 small red onion finely sliced
- Salted anchovies
- Handful of green beans

## For the dressing:

- 1 red chilli deseeded and sliced
- 1 teaspoon of wholegrain mustard
- 150 ml of olive oil
- Zest and juice of 1 lemon
- Generous handful of lemon thyme, tarragon, chives – finely chopped
- 150 ml of olive oil
- 4 cloves of garlic, peeled and crushed
- Salt and pepper to season

**Method:** Blanch the green beans in salted water until they are still firm but bend slightly. Boil the eggs until they are just set – 4 to 5 mins, drop them into cold water to prevent them cooking further.

Chop the tomatoes and finely shred the lettuce. Place in a large bowl together with the finely sliced red onion and olives.

In a small jug mix together the mustard, the lemon juice and zest. Add the crushed garlic, herbs and chilli and slowly pour in the oil. Mix thoroughly or if using a jar with a lid give it a quick shake.

Add the anchovies to the salad and drizzle on the dressing. Season and serve (or pack up and picnic!)

*Recipe by Laura Bradbury*



**A**ntibes and Juan-les-Pins combine so many facets; it's really not hard to see why people the world over are drawn here. Live it up in Juan-les-Pins, wander the atmospheric streets of Antibes' Old Town, or relax completely in one of the coves on the refined Cap d'Antibes: the choice is yours!

## Things to see and do

### Beaches

Sandy beaches are a rare find along the French Riviera so it's good to know about the three small public beaches in Antibes, all of them ideal for families on a budget. The first, **La Gravette**, is a gentle cove just steps away from the ancient ramparts of the Old Town and the Port. Particularly popular in high season, it's a lovely place to while away an afternoon at any time of the year. Follow the ramparts and you'll pass a small sandy beach, **Le Ponteil**, before arriving at Antibes' largest public beach, **Le Salis**, at the start of the Cap d'Antibes.

Juan-les-Pins has the advantage of having one of the longest sandy beaches on the Riviera. On the part that stretches along the boulevard du Littoral you'll find all the private beaches, our favourite being the classy **Bijou Plage**, where a full day will cost you around €14. For the public beaches visitors will have to head further down towards the Cap d'Antibes.

### Cap d'Antibes

The Cap d'Antibes, the exclusive peninsula between Antibes and Juan-Les-Pins, is a quiet haven from the hustle and bustle of the town. There are several quiet little pebbled coves, perfect for sunbathing or picnics. Walkers or cyclists will love the scenic path around the Cap, finishing in Juan-Les-Pins. This is also the perfect spot for scuba diving or snorkelling.

### The Safranier Area

When wandering through the Old Town in Antibes don't miss the area known as the Commune Libre de Safranier in the streets around rue du Safranier. With its own mayor, this part of town is very community focused; local residents organise several traditional fêtes throughout the year including the quirky square boules competition on the 14th July and a wine harvest festival in September. Even if there's no festival on while you're there the quiet traditional streets, with their shuttered houses and cascading window boxes, are a great place for a stroll away from the crowds.

## Jazz Festival

If you're anywhere near Juan-les-Pins in July make sure not to miss out on the incredible Jazz Festival. It's been running for over 50 years and has attracted celebrated artists such as Charles Mingus, Ray Charles, Dizzy Gillespie and BB King to name but a few. This year the festival runs from the 11th–20th July. For further details go to [www.jazzajuan.com](http://www.jazzajuan.com)



Antibes

## Voiles d'Antibes

This regatta, featuring vintage and classic yachts as well as more modern sailboats, marks the start of the season for many of those on the pro circuit. Throughout the competition, which normally takes place in the first week of June, there are various events, including live music, organised in the port of Antibes and the Old Town. For more information go to [www.voilesdantibes.com](http://www.voilesdantibes.com)



## Marineland and Aquasplash

Marineland, famous for its 30 metre shark tunnel and breath-taking dolphin and orca shows, offers close contact with sea lions, giant turtles and other marine wildlife. New this year visitors can observe two young polar bears in their custom made Arctic enclosure.

Aquasplash (open June-Sept) is a great place to cool off with a whole array of water slides and the newly installed Pirate Island. A combined two-day pass for these two parks costs €52 per adult and €41 per child. For a two-day pass which also includes access to Adventure Golf and the Wild West Farm it costs €62 per adult and €51 per child.

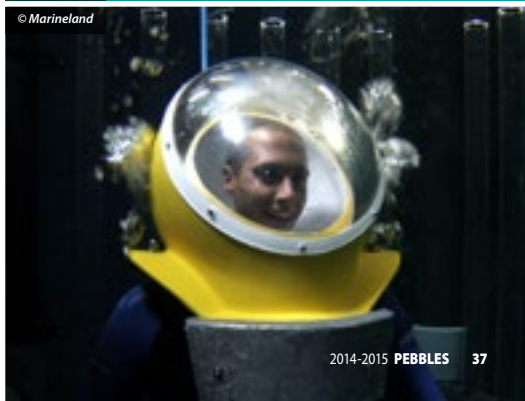


© Marineland

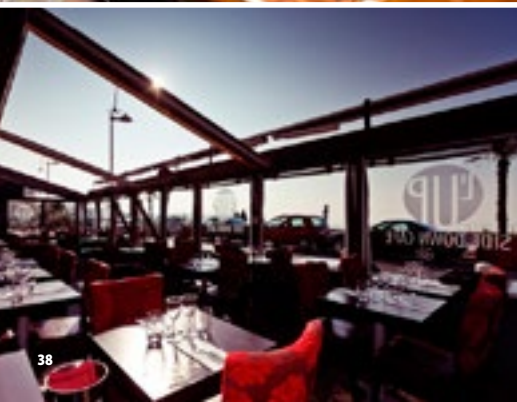
## Le Petit Train

The Petit Train Touristique is a great way to see the Antibes area, especially if you are travelling with children. The train departs from near the carousel on rue de la République and weaves around the streets of the Old Town before crossing the Cap d'Antibes and finishing up in Juan-les-Pins.

The commentary, in French or English, provides historical and cultural details about the buildings and sights you pass. It operates between April and October and costs around €8 for adults and €4 for kids.



© Marineland



## Nightlife

### Antibes

With its lively international community, Antibes has a variety of great places to go out at night.

Those looking for a unique experience should head to the **Absinthe Bar** (*25 Cours Masséna*). The passionate owners will happily tell you the history of this traditional drink and show the uninitiated how to use the various bits of equipment involved in drinking it. With the piano and occasional distribution of random hats, there's always a great atmosphere and it's hard not to have a good night!

For a more international crowd the **Hop Store** (*boulevard Aguilon*) is the place to go. With a terrace outside, and live music inside, there is always a buzz here. Similarly the lively **Blue Lady** (*rue Lacan*) tends to attract a real mix of nationalities, many of whom work on the yachts docked nearby.

While Antibes' nightlife keeps going year-round Juan-les-Pins really comes alive in the summer. For the ultimate holiday feel try one of the spectacular cocktails or ice creams at the local institution **Pam Pam** (*137 bld du Président Wilson*). It may not be the cheapest place in town, but we love the tropical decoration, and the Brazilian music and dancers ensure that the party carries on late into the night. Just across the road is **Le Crystal**, the perfect people watching spot with its huge terrace.


### Juan Les Pins

Famous for its nightlife as well as its sandy beaches, why not combine the two and finish up your day in the sun on the seafront at the chic open air **L'Up Side Café** (*2 Bld Édouard Baudoin*). What could be better than sipping a cocktail as the sun sets during its early evening happy hour?

In the heart of Juan Les Pins **La Reserve** (*Avenue George Gallice*) is the perfect place to go before hitting the clubs. With its reasonable priced drinks, Safari themed décor and friendly waiters this bar will certainly not disappoint. Just a short stroll away is **Kiss Club** (*5 avenue George Gallice*). If you feel like dancing the night away then this is the perfect place. Whilst it is a small club it has great music and an even better atmosphere, dress up smart and party into the early hours of the morning!

## Museums in Antibes

### Le Fort Carré

ave du 11 Novembre. 

 04.97.23.11.11

[www.antibes-juanlespins.com/les-musees/du-fort-carre](http://www.antibes-juanlespins.com/les-musees/du-fort-carre)

**Directions:** Walk around to the far side of the port and then up the hill to the fort. For those who prefer not to walk too far you can take bus number 13 from avenue de Verdun.

This 16th century fortress dominates the town of Antibes and characterises the coastline. It was built during the reign of Henry II of France to protect the border between France and the separate Comté de Nice. On a clear day the Fort Carré is visible from Nice. The fortress is surrounded by parkland from which visitors can enjoy beautiful views.

*Opening hours vary throughout the year, for the latest details visit the website. Closed Sundays, Mondays and some Bank Holidays. Entry is €3 for adults, €1.50 for students and seniors, and free for under 18s.*

### Villa Eilenroc

avenue Mrs Beaumont (off map).

 04.93.67.74.33

[www.antibes-juanlespins.com/les-autres-lieux-culturels/la-villa-eilenroc](http://www.antibes-juanlespins.com/les-autres-lieux-culturels/la-villa-eilenroc)

**Directions:** Take bus number 2 from the Gare Routière in Antibes; get off at 'Fontaine' and then walk down Ave Mrs Beaumont until you reach the gate of the villa.

This elegant neoclassical villa was left to the town of Antibes by Mrs Beaumont on the proviso that the council open the gardens to the public and that the heritage of the building is respected. Set in eleven

hectares of grounds, visitors can make the most of the rose garden, olive grove, newly opened scented garden and stunning views, as well as the villa itself.

*Open Wed and Sat 1pm–4pm (Oct–Mar), Wed and Sat 10am–5pm (Apr–June), Wed and Sat 3pm–7pm (Jul–Sept). Entry is free Oct–Mar, otherwise it costs €2 per adult (under 12s go free).*

### Musée Picasso

Château Grimaldi/Place Mariéjol. 

 04.92.90.54.20.

[www.antibes-juanlespins.com/les-musees/picasso](http://www.antibes-juanlespins.com/les-musees/picasso)

**Directions:** From the Gare Routière head towards the sea and ramparts. The museum is inside the Château Grimaldi.

This airy seaside château is home to more than 50 of Picasso's paintings, drawing and objects, mainly from the 1940s when he rented a studio here.

The most famous work on display is the huge *La Joie de Vivre*, depicting flute players, a voluptuous dancing woman and delighted prancing animals. The rest of the collection is colourful, bursting with imagination and often humorous, so it may just hold the children's interest too. You'll also find works by Nicolas de Staël, Ernst and Miró, and visitors have access to the terrace garden.





### **Villa Thuret**

90 Chemin Raymond (off map).

☎ **04.97.21.25.00**

[www.sophia.inra.fr/jardin\\_thuret](http://www.sophia.inra.fr/jardin_thuret)

**Directions:** Take bus number 2 from the Gare Routière in Antibes and get off at 'Chemin de la Salis'. Walk down the boulevard du Cap until you reach Chemin Raymond on your right.

Gustave Thuret was a botanist who fell in love with the rugged Cap d'Antibes and turned the grounds around his villa into a botanical garden. The garden was later taken over by the state, and is now home to over 1600 species of plants from all over the world. They flourish in the Riviera's mild climate, and visitors will be drawn in by the sights and smells as they wander around.

Open 8am–6pm summer, 8.30am–5.30pm winter.

Closed weekends and Bank Holidays. Entry is free.

### **Musée Archéologique**

Bastion St André (off map).

☎ **04.93.95.85.98**

[www.antibes-juanlespins.com/les-musees/darcheologie](http://www.antibes-juanlespins.com/les-musees/darcheologie)

**Directions:** Walk south along the ramparts on Promenade Admiral de Grasse. The museum is next door to a restaurant called Le Bastion.

Squeezed into the ramparts is one of the many fortifications built under Louis XIV. Representing some 4000 years of history, this small museum exhibits some interesting excavations from the area including shipwreck salvages and a bread oven. There is also a well-presented model of Antibes prior to some of the ramparts being torn down in the 19th century to accommodate the city's growth.

Open 10am–1pm, 2pm–5pm (mid-Sept to mid-June) and 10am–12pm, 2pm–6pm (mid-June to mid-Sept). Closed Mondays and Bank Holidays. Entry is €3 for adults, €1.50 for students and seniors, and free for under 18 year olds.

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D704

D6007

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D35

Avenue Philippe Rochat

Trains Station

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D6007

D6098

D35

D6107

D6007

JUAN LES PINS

ANTIBES

CAP D'ANTIBES

1 km  
1 mile

250m  
250yd

PORT VAUBAN

VIEUX PORT

VIEIL ANTIBES

ANTIBES

Musée Archéologique

Le Ponteil

Les Ramparts

Plage de la Gravette

Chantier Naval Opéra

Fort Carré

Avenue du 11 Novembre

Avenue de Nice

Avenue Jules Gœc

Chemin du Puy

Ave Château de l'Espée

Ave de la Libération

Avenue Sadi Carnot

Avenue de Verdun

Boulevard d'Aguillon

Avenue Thiers

Avenue Gambetta

Avenue Robert Scribeau

Avenue Pasteur

Ave Aristide Briand

Boulevard Chanoël

Boulevard du Président Wilson

Bld Marechal Foch

Boulevard Albat 1er

Avenue Sazan

Ave des Dames blanches

Avenue Scribeau

Ave de Fersen

Ave du 24 Août

Boulevard Vandenberg

Avenue Reale

Ave Saint Donatien

Bld Leclerc

Ave Mazzière

Avenue des Chênes

Ave Bosquet

Chemin de Guérande

Ave des sables

Bld Janssès XVIIe

Rue d'Alger

Rue de la Libertation

Rue Sadi Carnot

Avenue Scribeau

Avenue Pasteur

Ave Aristide Briand

Boulevard Chanoël

Boulevard du Président Wilson

Bld Marechal Foch

Rue Sadi Carnot

Avenue Sadi Carnot

Avenue Pasteur

Ave Aristide Briand

Boulevard Chanoël

Boulevard du Président Wilson

Bld Marechal Foch

Boulevard Albat 1er

Avenue Reale

Ave Saint Donatien

Bld Leclerc

Ave Mazzière

Avenue des Chênes

Ave Bosquet

Chemin de Guérande

Ave des sables

Bld Janssès XVIIe

Rue d'Alger

Rue de la Libertation

Rue Sadi Carnot

Avenue Sadi Carnot

Avenue Pasteur

Ave Aristide Briand

Boulevard Chanoël

Boulevard du Président Wilson

Bld Marechal Foch

Boulevard Albat 1er

Avenue Reale

Ave Saint Donatien

Bld Leclerc

Ave Mazzière

Avenue des Chênes

Ave Bosquet

Chemin de Guérande

Ave des sables

Bld Janssès XVIIe

Rue d'Alger

Rue de la Libertation

Rue Sadi Carnot

Avenue Sadi Carnot

Avenue Pasteur

Ave Aristide Briand

Boulevard Chanoël

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# Shopping in Antibes

The old quarter of Antibes is a popular place to start your shopping if you are looking for small independent shops selling specialist products.

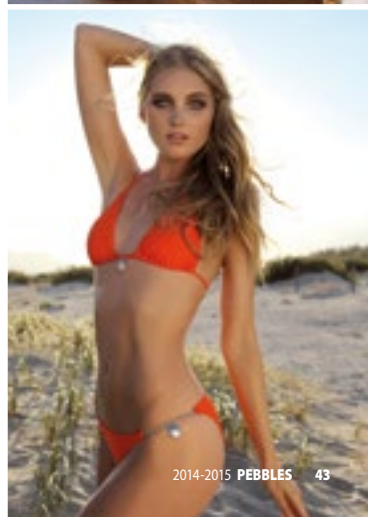
Starting at Place de Gaulle and walking along rue de la République you will find several specialty food boutiques and art galleries tucked away in discreet alleyways. Definitely worth a visit is **Christian Cottard**, a master confectioner and chocolate maker in Antibes, who worked for the most famous restaurants before setting up shop, on the rue de la République, in the heart of the old town.

The streets surrounding rue de la République, such as rue Thuret, are great for picking up a few gifts. Covering a relatively small area, it's an enjoyable and non-taxing area to browse and you are sure to find something that catches your eye. Don't miss rue James Close where you'll find gadgets, clothes, gifts and toys. This is the best area for securing an individual piece of homeware from candles to handmade furniture. A visit to Antibes is not complete without a trip to the Provençal market. The market is situated on the Cours Masséna and is open every morning, except Monday, until around 1pm. Local producers from the surrounding villages sell fresh fruits and vegetables, along with meat, cheese, herbs and spices. Buy a portion of hot socca (the Niçois chickpea pancake) to nibble on while you browse.

If you take a stroll along the ramparts on a summer evening you'll come across a small market selling jewellery and artwork. Local artists also sell their work on the Cours Masséna on a Sunday afternoon.

If Antibes shopping leaves you wanting more it's worth going slightly further afield: to Juan-les-Pins. Here there are plenty of small, hip, fashion boutiques that cover all price ranges. Head over to boulevard Baudoin for an eclectic mix of all things girly. There you will find **Rosanita**, who offers original designs, a multitude of trendy jewellery, clothes and shoes, or for the more daring step into **Architecture** and release the rock chick rebel in you.

Juan-les-Pins is especially great for picking the latest bikinis, sarongs and beach and summer wear. Visit the boutique of the south of France's most famous designer swimwear brand, **Pain de Sucre** (*boulevard Baudoin*), or float past **Flower Sea & Sun** (*rue Georges Clémenceau*) or **Tabou** (*boulevard Wilson*) who offers lingerie and swimwear from labels such as Just Cavalli, Moschino and Cotton Club. Just a few streets back from the main strip you will find another great street called avenue Guy de Maupassant that has a wide variety of shops for all the family. Step into **Adel Sand** and be tempted by the wonderful array of mens and womens shoes; we dare you not to step out in a new pair! If a tippie or two is top of your list head for **Résidence l'Eden** (*boulevard Raymond Poincaré*) where they have a large selection of wine all chosen by a Maître-Sommelier. If beachfront shopping is all your weary feet will allow you then you will find a host of shops stocking novelty gifts and seaside goodies.



Antibes



## Perched Villages

### Eze

**Access:** From Nice take bus number 82 or 112. Alternatively, take the train to Eze-sur-Mer and take bus 83 up the hill.

A picture postcard perfect little town perched on a rock 427 metres above sea level. Steep winding streets lined with Provencal boutiques will bring you to the summit of the town. It's worth the walk for the serene tropical plant and cactus garden (Jardin Exotique) at the top, complete with statues and a small man-made waterfall. Take a picnic and relax at the top looking out at sun-drenched rooftops and the dazzling Mediterranean below.

As a special treat dine at **La Chèvre d'Or** (reservations essential), or just pop in for a drink. The nucleus of the village, this unique hotel (complete with gastronomic restaurant), is a landmark in its own right, and more than worthy of its two Michelin stars.

Perfume enthusiasts will enjoy visiting the **Fragonard Factory** where the friendly staff will show you around for free. For the active among you, the rugged Nietzsche Path, which links Eze village to Eze-sur-Mer down below, is a great walk. From personal experience, we would recommend walking down rather than up though, especially when it's warm!

**Tip:** Eze gets its fair share of tourists, particularly in the high season when coach loads of visitors arrive. To see it at its best, try to go early in the day.

### Haut-de-Cagnes

**Access:** Take the train or bus to Cagnes-sur-Mer. From the central bus station there is a regular free shuttle (number 44) to transport those who don't fancy the uphill walk to the village.

Just four kilometres from the coast, Haut-de-Cagnes is one of the easiest hilltop villages to access, yet it remains refreshingly untouched by mass tourism. Dominated by the medieval Château Musée Grimaldi, it's a real pleasure just to meander slowly around the quiet cobbled streets, drinking in the history.

Renoir lived here from 1903 to his death in 1919, and his house and studio just down below have since been transformed into a museum set in stunning grounds with mature olive, palm, and orange trees. The museum is currently closed for renovations until the summer of 2013, but, in the meantime, the collection of 12 paintings is on show at the Château.

Haut-de-Cagnes



## Roquebrune

**Access:** Take the train to *Roquebrune-Cap-Martin* or bus number 100 from Nice.

A handsome village which rises above the Cap Martin peninsula, and an ideal starting point for a walk or hike, Roquebrune is divided into an Old Town and a New Town. The medieval Old Town is dotted with little squares and fountains, narrow stone streets and vaulted passageways, making it a delightful place to wander around.

The area is famous for its 1000-year-old Olive Tree, with visible roots that stretch over 20 metres, and also for its 10th century Château that hosts a decent museum. If you fancy trying some really traditional French food nearby, head to **Au Grand Inquisiteur**.

The Promenade Corbusier walk around Cap Martin is highly recommended; the dramatic scenery of pine trees, white rocks and the bright blue sea just can't be beaten, and it offers a whole new perspective on Monaco as you go round the southern tip.

## Mougins

**Access:** Take the train to *Cannes* and then bus number 600 from *Place Vauban*. Get off at the stop 'Mougins La Crémaillère' and walk up the hill to the village. Alternatively, take the train to *Mouans-Sartoux* and then bus number 650 or a taxi up to the village. Journey time about 1 hour 30 minutes.

Some 260 metres above sea level and surrounded by the Valmasque forest, Mougins, with its characteristic stone houses and 360 degree views of the Côte d'Azur, is a stunning village to visit.

The village is famous for its gastronomy; several well-known chefs including Alain Ducasse have spent part of their careers here, and the village's association with all things culinary culminates in the food festival (**Les Etoiles de Mougins**) which takes place in September. For an upmarket spot to have lunch the foodies amongst you should look no further than **La Place de Mougins** (reservations recommended).

The village's history also has many ties to art – this is where Picasso spent his last years – and the small Photography Museum exhibits several portraits of Picasso amongst others. While you're here, make sure not to miss out on the stylish, newly-opened Museum of Classical Art with its remarkable private collection of over 700 ancient, neoclassical and modern works of art.



Roquebrune



Mougins





## Riviera Museums

### Monaco

#### Musée Océanographique

avenue St-Martin

☎ 03.77.93.15.36.00

[www.oceano.mc](http://www.oceano.mc)

**Directions:** From Place du Palais, follow well-marked signs to take you around a few small winding streets to the museum. Look for the yellow submarine outside.

Perhaps our favourite Monaco tourist attraction, the Oceanographic Museum is impressive, informative and fun. Founded by Prince Albert I, a keen oceanographer, it has a floor dedicated to his adventures and finds: both at sea and from his laboratory-style yacht on Monaco's harbour. You can see maps of the ocean floor, weird specimens preserved in dodgy looking liquids, and explorer yachts and diving suits from eras gone by. The main attractions are the fantastic whale skeleton hanging from the ceiling and the shark tank in the aquarium. The aquarium is one of the best in the world with hundreds of beautiful species of coral reefs and tropical fish from around the world.

Open 10am–6pm (Oct–Mar), 9.30am–7pm (Apr–June), 9.30am–7.30pm (July–Aug).  
Adults €13, concessions €6.50

### Cannes

#### Musée de la Castre

Le Suquet

☎ 04.93.38.55.26

**Directions:** From the Gare Routière, head towards Le Suquet. The museum is inside the Castle.

Built by Iles de Lérins monks, this small museum is the token cultural attraction of Cannes. You can see Impressionist paintings, interesting pictures of old Cannes and some archeology displays. The best bit though is climbing the tower in the museum for breathtaking views.

Open 10am–1pm, 2–5pm (Tue–Sun).  
Adults €3, students/children free.

Oceanographic Museum



## Cagnes-sur-Mer

### Musée Renoir

Chemin des Collettes, Haut-de-Cagnes

☎ 04.93.20.61.07

**Directions:** Take the free shuttle from the centre of Cagnes to Haut-de-Cagnes to the last stop.

Fans of Pierre-Auguste Renoir may wish to visit the home where he spent the last twelve years of his life in Haut-de-Cagnes. The Domaine des Collettes is a beautiful house surrounded by orange and olive groves. It was designed by Renoir to his own specifications so the outlooks from the windows are practically canvasses themselves. The house is wonderfully preserved and carefully arranged as though Renoir has just stepped out for coffee. Eleven original paintings and most of his sculpture, preparatory sketches, lithographs, and photographs can be viewed here as well as his personal possessions. There are also several tributes to him by his closest friends including Albert Andre and Richard Guido.

Open 10am–noon, 2–6pm (July–Sept),  
10am–12.30pm, 2–5pm (Oct–June). Closed Tue.  
Adults €4, 18–25s €2, children free.

### Château-Musée Grimaldi

Place Grimaldi

☎ 04.92.02.47.30

**Directions:** Take the free shuttle from the centre of Cagnes to Haut-de-Cagnes and get off at the last stop.

Built by the Grimaldi family in 1309, this palace came into its own when Jean Henri transformed it in 1620. It now houses a mix of museums including a huge wooden oil mill, a Renaissance courtyard, and a permanent collection of modern Mediterranean paintings, frescoes and portraits, including some of Suzy Solidor: the French actress and singer. Our favourite sight here is the more than 200-year-old pepper tree. Spectacular!

Open 10am–noon, 2–5pm Mon, Wed–Sun.  
Adults €4, 18–25 €2, children free.



## Saint-Paul-de-Vence

### Fondation Maeght

Colline des Gardettes

☎ 04.93.32.81.63

[www.fondation-maeght.com](http://www.fondation-maeght.com)

**Directions:** A 10 minute walk from St-Paul-de-Vence. Free parking.

Thanks to the art dealers Aimé and Marguerite Maeght, the French Riviera is home to one of the world's finest modern and contemporary art museums. The superbly designed building and well-kept gardens attract some 250,000 visitors a year for the temporary and permanent exhibitions, which include works by Matisse, Miró and Chagall.

Open 10am–7pm (July–Sept) 10am–6pm (Oct–June)  
daily. Adults €11, students €9, children free

## Grasse

### Musée International de la Parfumerie

8 Place du Cours

☎ 04.97.05.58.00

[www.museesdegrasse.com](http://www.museesdegrasse.com)

**Directions:** From the Gare Routière, walk along rue Admiral de Grasse to Place du Cours.

Re-opened in 2008 after an €11 million renovation, this museum built into the ramparts traces the 4000-year history of perfume and its production. It is enjoyable even if you are not a perfume fan, and more substantial than any of the perfume house museums. As well as the expected bottles and cosmetics, you can also smell scents as you tour. The highlight is the gorgeous-smelling greenhouse and gardens. Here you are likely to smell and touch rare plants for the first time. Amongst the roses you will find more unusual plants and flowers including Ylang-ylang, clary sage, patchouli, vanilla orchid, bergamot, cinnamon tree, cardamom and tuberose.

Open 10am–7pm Mon–Fri, Sun, 10am–9pm Sat  
(May–Sept); 11am–6pm Mon, Wed–Sun (Oct–April).  
Closed 25 Dec, 1 Jan, 1 May, 8–20 Nov.  
Adults €11, students €9, children free.



## Beyond Nice: From Grasse to Menton

There are scores of different places to visit along the French Riviera, each with its own unique attractions and style. These pages will give you a flavour of what is on offer, as well as basic transport information.

Since the majority of our apartments are located in Nice, and it's the regional core for transport links, the transport section presumes your base is Nice.

The walks around Cap Ferrat, Cap d'Antibes and Cap Martin are stunning. St-Paul-de-Vence has strong artistic ties. For a day lazing on the sand it's hard to beat Golfe Juan or Cap Ferrat, and for glitz and

glamour there's nowhere like Cannes or Monaco.

We have more comprehensive information on all the towns along the French Riviera, including transport links, on our websites [www.nicepebbles.com](http://www.nicepebbles.com) and [www.rivierapebbles.com](http://www.rivierapebbles.com). Also guidebooks can really enhance your stay and we would recommend purchasing one if you have not done so already.

### Grasse

**Bus:** 500 (every 40 minutes). Journey time 1 hour.

**Train:** (every hour). Journey time 1 hour 15 minutes.

Grasse is the perfume centre of the world. Visit **Fragonard** (20 bld Fragonard, [www.fragonard.com](http://www.fragonard.com)), **Molinard** (60 bld Victor Hugo, [www.molinard.com](http://www.molinard.com)), and **Galimard** (73 rte de Cannes, [www.galimard.com](http://www.galimard.com)), the perfumeries still in operation today; free guided tours in English are offered around their museums, and you can even make your own unique scent to take home. Built into the ramparts, the **International Perfume Museum** (2 bld du Jeu de Ballon, [www.mussedegrasse.com](http://www.mussedegrasse.com)), with its gorgeous-smelling greenhouse and gardens, traces

the 4000-year history of perfume and its production.

The Old Town is a warren of narrow shaded streets; the central hub being the tree-lined Place aux Aires with its tiered fountain and arcade of shops. There is also a flower and local food market here every Saturday.

On the outskirts of Grasse you'll find the **Parc Communal de la Corniche** with magnificent views. The **Jardin de la Princesse Pauline** (avenue Reine Jeanne) is also recommended; here you can sit and breathe in the mountain air and gaze over the Esterel Mountains, all the way out to the sea.

## Cannes

**Bus:** 200 (4 per hour). Journey time 1 hour 50 mins

**Train:** (about 4 per hr). Journey time 40 mins.

The Croisette embodies all that people imagine the Riviera high life to be; with the golden sandy beach on one side and designer shops and luxury cars on the other. The blue chairs lining this two kilometre stretch are ideal for people watching.

The rue d'Antibes offers more down-to-earth shopping options, and for local produce don't miss the **Forville Provençal Market (rue Marche)**, one of the best markets on the Riviera, open every morning except Monday.

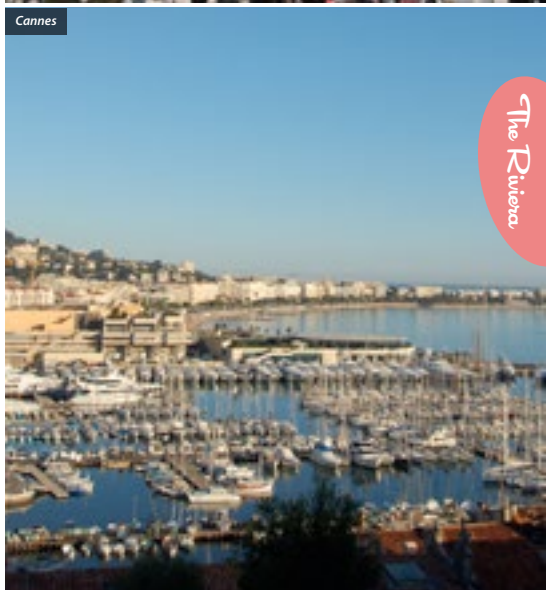
At the western end of the Croisette is the **Palais de Festivals ([www.palaisfestivals.com](http://www.palaisfestivals.com))**; exhibitions are held year round here, but it really comes to life in May when world famous film stars make their way up the red carpet for the International Film Festival.

No first time visitor should leave Cannes without seeing the city's Old Town **Le Suquet**. This picturesque neighbourhood is perched on a hill facing the sea and those who make it all the way up will be rewarded with a breath-taking view of the bay below.

At the foot of Le Suquet is the **Vieux Port**, where super yachts and weathered fishing boats bob side by side. From here you can take a boat to the exquisite **Lérins Islands ([www.cannes.com](http://www.cannes.com))**, a world away from flashy Cannes.



Cannes



The Riviera

Golfe-Juan



## Golfe-Juan and Vallauris

**Bus:** 200 (about 3-4 per hr). Journey time 1 hr 20 mins.

**Train:** (2 per hour). Journey time 40 minutes.

Boasting two marinas and beaches of fine sand, Golfe-Juan is arguably the best beach resort along the French Riviera. The curved bay is sheltered from the wind: something which bathers and swimmers take advantage of year round.

Just inland, Vallauris is Golfe-Juan's twin city where you can buy, make and admire ceramics, and also view the frescoes painted in the chapel by Picasso.



For apartments in  
Cannes & Golfe-Juan:

**RIVIERAPEBBLES.COM**

## Biot

**Bus:** 200 (3-4 per hour). Journey time 1 hour.

**Train:** (2 per hour). Journey time 30 minutes. Bus number 10 runs from the station up to the village for those who don't fancy the walk.

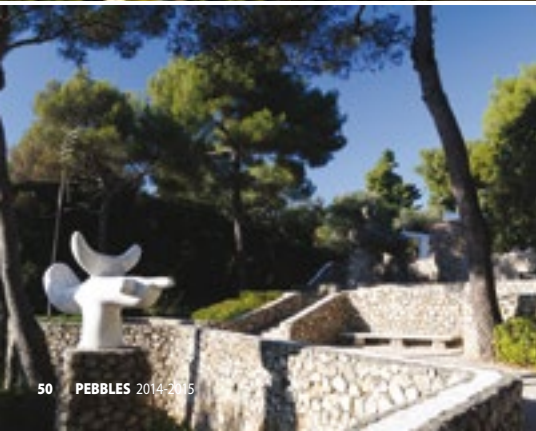
A pretty medieval village perched high on the hills behind Antibes, Biot is known for its glass and pottery making. Visitors flock to the **Verrerie de Biot** (5 *chemin Combes*, [www.verrieriebiot.com](http://www.verrieriebiot.com)) to see years of family tradition in glass making and pick up some souvenirs.

The village itself has plenty of arts and crafts on offer; children and adults alike will love trying their hand at painting their own ceramics at the **Tasse de Couleur** (9 *rue du Portugal*, [www.latassedecouleur.com](http://www.latassedecouleur.com)). Biot is also home to some great restaurants which are perfect for a leisurely lunch.

Before heading home, be warned, the kids may beg you to stop off at **Marineland** (306 *av Mozart*, [www.marineland.fr](http://www.marineland.fr)), just minutes away from the bus and train stops.



St-Paul-de-Vence photos: Kathryn Tomasetti



## St-Paul-de-Vence

**Bus:** 400 (every 50 minutes). Journey time 1 hour.

Well known for its rocky setting in the middle of impressive hillsides, Saint-Paul is a highly popular tourist spot and a regular haunt for art and culture enthusiasts. Saint-Paul was once a rendezvous point for the poets Jacques Prevert and Jean Cocteau, as well as artists like Braque, Derain, Dufy, Matisse and Picasso.

The acclaimed hotel **La Colombe d'Or** (*Place du General de gaulle*, [www.la-colombe-dor.com](http://www.la-colombe-dor.com)), with its famous adjoining restaurant, was built after World War I. Struggling artists such as Miro, Leger and Lurcat settled their hotel and supper bills by leaving one of their canvasses. As a result, this exclusive abode is as much a museum of art as a hotel and restaurant.

Art aficionados should definitely pay a visit to the nearby **Fondation Maeght** (623 *Chemin des Gardettes*, [www.fondation-maeght.com](http://www.fondation-maeght.com)) which, thanks to art dealers Aimé and Marguerite Maeght, is home to one of the world's finest modern and contemporary art museums. The superbly designed building and well-kept gardens house both permanent and temporary exhibitions including pieces by Matisse, Miró and Chagall.

## Cros-de-Cagnes

**Bus:** 200, 217, 400 or 500. Journey time 40 mins.

**Train:** (2 per hour). Journey time 15 minutes.

This is a seafront town with a fisherman's port and a wide palm tree-lined promenade. You can cycle along the cycle path between Nice and Cros-de-Cagnes in approximately 30 minutes, which is, for the most part, a very safe and pleasant ride.

With a shingle and pebble beach this is a less crowded option for beach lovers. Cros-de-Cagnes is also a little town brimming with restaurants, several of which, including the Michelin starred **Bistrot de la Marine** (96 Promenade de la Plage, [www.bistrotdelamarine.com](http://www.bistrotdelamarine.com)), have terraces with sea views (see page 67).



## Villefranche

**Bus:** 100 (3-4 per hour) Journey time 15 minutes.

**Train:** (2 per hour) Journey time 10 minutes.

The simply stunning, self-contained bay of Villefranche holds a traditional little village inhabited by local fishermen as well as a few celebrities. Enjoy ambling around the uneven winding streets shaded by the pastel Provençal buildings which date back to the 12th and 13th century. Peek inside the tiny boutiques for treasures to take home. You might also like to visit the soap factory at **La Savonnerie** (10 Av Sadi Carnot, [www.terres-dorees.com](http://www.terres-dorees.com))

The seafront of this pretty village is lined with restaurants and brasseries. If you are planning a day trip at the weekend try to arrive early: on Saturday mornings there is a small Provençal market and on Sunday mornings an antiques and bric-a-brac market.



For apartments in Biot, St-Paul-de-Vence, Cros-de-Cagnes & Villefranche:  
**RIVIERAPEBBLES.COM**

## Beaulieu-sur-Mer

**Bus:** 100 (3-4 per hour). Journey time 30 minutes.

**Train:** (3 per hour). Journey time 15 minutes.

The well-manicured beaches of Beaulieu-sur-Mer are ideal for the tourists who want to get away from the crowds; a mix of sand and pebbles, there are both public and private areas available. The shallow bay of the **Plage des Formis** is great for families and the **Plage Petite Afrique**, on the far side of the attractive Port, is literally sandwiched between the mountains and the sea.

From the western end of the Plage des Formis visitors will find the **Promenade Maurice Rouvier** which leads all the way past **Place David Niven** to St-Jean-Cap-Ferrat. This flat walk makes for a lovely stroll with sparkling sea views the whole way.

As well as being a charming resort to walk around, Beaulieu is also famous for its tribute to ancient Greece with a faithful reconstruction of a fifth century Greek villa: the **Villa Greque Kérylos** (*impasse Gustave Eiffel*, [www.villa-kerylos.com](http://www.villa-kerylos.com)).



## Saint-Jean-Cap-Ferrat

**Bus:** 81 (2 per hour). Journey time 30 minutes.

The main attraction in exclusive St-Jean is the **Villa Ephrussi-de-Rothschild** ([www.villa-ephrussi.com](http://www.villa-ephrussi.com)). Here you can see the priceless collection of royal porcelain, but the main draw is the famous gardens. Consisting of seven hectares, and decorated with patios, fountains, ponds and flowerbeds, these nine gardens have arresting views over the Mediterranean.

Cap Ferrat is a great place for walking with a well-signed 10 km path that winds all the way around the Cap: past the **Plage des Fosses**, a pebbly beach which is ideal for small children. Swimmers can also drive or walk to **Paloma Beach** (1 *Chemin de Saint-Hospice*, [www.paloma-beach.com](http://www.paloma-beach.com)) with its tree-lined bay 500 metres south of Port St-Jean.



For apartments in St-Jean-Cap-Ferrat & Beausoleil:

**RIVIERAPEBBLES.COM**

## Monaco

**Bus:** 100 (4 per hour). Journey time 60 minutes.

**Train:** (min. 2 per hour). Journey time 20 mins.

Famed for its casinos, elitist crowd, and of course the Grand Prix, Monaco is hugely popular with tourists who want to experience the high life first-hand.

The principality measures a mere 1.5 square miles, so all the sights are easily accessible.

For people watching and flashy car spotting head straight to the **Casino Square**. Those who want to try their luck in the **Monte Carlo Casino** (*Place du casino*, [www.montecarlocasinos.com](http://www.montecarlocasinos.com)) the majestic gambling home for the idle rich, should remember to bring their passport and dress up a little.

If gazing at the jaw-dropping yachts in **Port Hercule** ([www.ports-monaco.com](http://www.ports-monaco.com)) leaves you wishing you could set sail, you can always take to the water on the slightly less impressive **Bâteau Bus** (*3 av President J.F Kennedy*, [www.cam.mc](http://www.cam.mc)) which, for a meagre €1, will transport you from one side of the port to the other.

Right up at the top of **Le Rocher** you will find the fairytale **Palais de Princes** ([www.palais.mc](http://www.palais.mc)), protected by cannons and guards. With much pomp and circumstance, the Changing of the Guards takes place every day at 11.55am sharp and lasts for about 15 minutes.

For an incredible view of the principality, head to the **Jardins Exotiques** (*62 Bd du Jardin Exotique*, [www.jardin-exotique.mc](http://www.jardin-exotique.mc)). Complete with underground caverns, the sheer size and beauty of these tropical gardens have wowed many of our guests. The plants displayed come from all over the world and it's believed that the caves were inhabited by both humans and bears over 200,000 years ago.

## Menton

**Bus:** 100 (3-4 per hr). Journey time 1 hr 25 mins.

**Train:** (minimum 2 per hr). Journey time 35 mins.

Menton is the last stop on the coast before the Italian border, and it has the mildest climate on the Riviera. Lemon trees thrive here and this is celebrated each year in February with the **Fête du Citron** ([www.feteducitron.com](http://www.feteducitron.com)).

Food enthusiasts should make a point of booking a table at the gastronomic restaurant **Mirazur** (*30 av Aristide Briand*, [www.mirazur.fr](http://www.mirazur.fr)) which, with its highly creative menus, gained a second Michelin star in 2012.

Several tourists decide to nip across the border and combine a trip to Menton with bargain hunting at **Ventimiglia Market** ([www.ventimiglia.it](http://www.ventimiglia.it)) where you can stock up on olive oil, Parmesan cheese and Italian wine.



Menton

# St Tropez

## St Tropez in a Day

The French Riviera's most famous town, St Tropez has a mythical allure. Brigitte Bardot frolicked on its beaches, celebrity-stocked mega-yachts moor stern-to in the town's pastel-washed port, and, come summertime, Kate Moss and family wander its tiny streets, while Beyoncé, Rihanna and Paris Hilton hit the heaving nightclubs, where a bottle of Bollinger costs more than a return ticket home.

Dreamt about sipping sundowners where Bardot, Richards and Jagger once sat? Then read on. Seeing St Tropez in a day is possible from every Riviera resort. Note that your choice of transport (see box opposite) will dictate how long you have in town: mix and match our suggested itinerary to suit your schedule.

**10am** St Tropez is petite and entirely walkable. Start off by exploring the town's picturesque vieux port. The busy **Tourist Office** ([www.ot-saint-tropez.com](http://www.ot-saint-tropez.com)) may sit in its southeastern corner, but St Tropez is not just for holidaymakers. A stroll past the raucous **Porte de la Poissonnerie** fish market, where fishermen spread their morning catch under the ancient city gate, quickly puts paid to that premise. If you're visiting on a Tuesday or a Saturday head to **place des Lices**. Here, a vast alfresco market sells delectable Provençal treats – from croissants and savoury fougasse bread, to soft goat's cheese and homemade marmalades – that make a perfect breakfast on the go. Alternatively, drop into **La Tarte Tropézienne** (**Place des Lices**, [www.tarte-tropezienne.com](http://www.tarte-tropezienne.com)) for freshly baked treats. This famed boulangerie takes its name from

its renowned tarte Tropézienne, a soft sponge and custard layered cake, although their sandwiches, salads and raisin swirls are spot-on too.

**11am** Steel yourself for a steep hike up to the **Citadelle** (€2.50 per person). This 17th century fort has a small museum charting the town's pre-Bardot history, but best of all are the bird's eye views over the stunning St Tropez Bay. Too taxing? Slip in a swim in the sea instead. Locals cool off on the petite beach **Plage de la Ponche**, at the eastern end of town.

**12<sup>30</sup>pm** Two of St Tropez's lunch favourites have been going strong for decades. **Pizzeria Bruno** (**2 rue de l'Eglise**) is a tiny spot that's been firing up crispy pizzas, along with giant fresh salads, for over 60 years. Since 1953, the petite, portside bar **Le Gorille's** (**1 Quai Suffren**, [www.legorille.com](http://www.legorille.com)) specialty has always been beef tartare and chips – although they also make a mean croque-monsieur (hot ham and cheese sandwich). No matter where you dine, be sure to sample a glass of St Tropez rosé from the vineyards that surround the town.

2pm

For a dose of local culture, head over to **Musée l'Annonciade** (Place Grammont, €5 per person).

This 16th century chapel has been turned into a must-see arty snapshot of Riviera life. The collection includes depictions of the Provence coastline by major modern artists such as Paul Signac, Henri Matisse, Pierre Bonnard and Raoul Dufy. If browsing St Tropez's boutiques sounds more your speed, rest assured you'll be spoiled for choice. Window shop the big designer names from Armani to Zegna that line **rue François Sibilli**. Alternatively, try **La Chemise Tropicaine** (23 rue Gambetta, [www.lachemisetropicaine.com](http://www.lachemisetropicaine.com)) for crisp cotton shirts, or **K. Jacques** (25 rue Allard, [www.lestropéziennes.com](http://www.lestropéziennes.com)) for handcrafted strappy leather sandals.

3:30pm

Pop over to **Place des Lices** for a game of pétanque, Provence's favourite pastime. **Le Café** and **Café des Arts** will both happily lend patrons a set or two of pétanque balls (also called boules) to toss around for free. It gets easier after the second glass of pastis, the regional tippie of choice.

4:30pm

Finish off your day with (or make the pétanque loser pay for) a round of aperitifs back in St Tropez's charming harbour. **Papagayo** ([www.papagayo-club.net](http://www.papagayo-club.net)) may be a celebrity-studded club come midnight, but, before J.Lo and P.Diddy hit the dancefloor, it also boasts one of St Tropez's prettiest portside terraces.

by Kathryn Tomasetti

Place des Lices



# Getting to St Tropez

## BY ROAD

**Driving to St Tropez can be a cinch.** That is, if the traffic gods smile on you – in summer, these roads can be one long bouchon. Take the A8 motorway south to Fréjus-St Raphaël. From here, the pine-dappled D559 runs along the coast, eventually skirting the St Tropez Bay, before bringing you into the town itself. Allow an hour and a half driving time from Nice. There are two main car parks in St Tropez, **Parking des Lices** (Place des Lices) or **Parking du Port** (Nouveau Port).

## BY RAIL

Hop any of the Riviera's regular coastal trains ([www.voyages-sncf.com](http://www.voyages-sncf.com)) to St Raphaël. It's an hour from Nice, or 30 minutes from Cannes. From here, **Les Bateaux de St Raphaël** ([www.bateauxsaintraphael.com](http://www.bateauxsaintraphael.com)) runs two to four ferries per day to St Tropez depending on the season. The cruise between the super-yachts in the gulf takes an hour. Day returns cost €24 per adult, €14 per child aged 2–9 years and are free for kids one or under.

## BY SEA

The **Trans Côte d'Azur** ([www.trans-cote-azur.com](http://www.trans-cote-azur.com)) fleet transports passengers to St Tropez from Nice and Cannes. Ferries have open-air and interior decks, onboard bar and toilets. The ride itself is sublime, taking in the Riviera's breathtaking coastline including the Iles des Lérins and the Cap d'Antibes.

From both Nice and Cannes, ferries depart daily between 9th July and 2nd September. Between 31st May and 8th July, as well as between 14th and 30th September, there are transfers on Tuesdays, Thursdays, Saturdays and Sundays.

Boats depart from Nice at 9am, arriving in St Tropez at 11.30am. The passage back sets off at 4.30pm, arriving back at Nice's port at 7pm. Return tickets cost €58 per adult, €44 per child aged 4–10 years and are free for kids 3 years and under.

Boats depart from Cannes at 10.15am, arriving in St Tropez at 11.30am. The passage back sets off at 4.30pm, arriving back at Cannes' port at 5.45pm. Return tickets cost €44 per adult, €32 per child aged 4–10 years and are free for kids 3 years and under.

# Bon Appétit



## Nice Cuisine

There's no denying that tasting the local cuisine is a highlight of anyone's trip to the French Riviera. Niçois cooking is a wonderful mix of Mediterranean specialities with a strong Italian influence.

From shopping in the daily markets to tasting the fresh, local produce, to some of the country's best restaurants, Nice is a culinary paradise.

When you first arrive in Nice it's easy to be overwhelmed by the sheer quantity of restaurants. With possibly only a week to test the mouthwatering local cuisine; there's no time to waste on a bad meal!

All of our recommended restaurants have been carefully handpicked by us. We've all tried and tested plenty, but only the best make the cut.

So what is so special about the ones we list here? Quite simply, after several years of trying and testing, they are our favourites. We have received feedback in the past that some of our readers thought these were advertising listings – we promise they are not. None of the restaurants featured in this section have paid to be in this guide. Trust us, they do not need the business, and for almost all the restaurants we suggest here you should try to book ahead. If you don't feel comfortable reserving a table in French, either pop in to see them, send them an email via their website, or ask us to do it for you.

If you see restaurants featured in last year's guide, this means we've continued to eat at these restaurants throughout the year and they're still just as good as ever. We've also replaced some because of less than perfect feedback from our guests or the Pebbles team.

There are some exciting new additions to this year's restaurants, which prove that, however long you live somewhere, there are still some gems to be found.

If you want to find even more spots to grab a bite, visit our cuisine pages at [www.nicepebbles.com](http://www.nicepebbles.com) and [www.rivierapebbles.com](http://www.rivierapebbles.com) for more detailed restaurant reviews and interesting facts about local cuisine.

As ever, we love hearing about your dining experiences. This helps us give accurate recommendations to future guests. Please feel free to share your dining experiences with us. Contact us by email at [info@nicepebbles.com](mailto:info@nicepebbles.com) or drop by and see us at our office.



English speaking staff and/or menu



Map references: Nice p.29, Antibes p.41



E6

## La Maison de Marie

5 rue Massena  
☎ 04.93.82.15.93

Set right in the heart of the Pedestrian Zone, the delightful courtyard of this restaurant is a real haven away from the crowds. The food is a combination of typical Niçois and Mediterranean dishes, and the varied menu offers meat, fish and pasta options.



We are particularly fond of the three-course Menu Niçois, which at €23.50 offers a good insight into the local cuisine. The lunch menu is also good value at €14.90 for two courses and €18.90 for three. Alternatively, *à la carte* main courses start at around €13.

Open daily.

[www.lamaisondemarie.com](http://www.lamaisondemarie.com)



D5

Fine Dining

## Luc Salsedo

14 rue Maccarani  
☎ 04.93.82.24.12

Having trained with several highly regarded chefs including Alain Ducasse, it's no surprise that Luc Salsedo offers some of the best contemporary French cuisine in Nice: all with the



chef's own personality, and often ingredients fresh out of his own garden. The service, wine list and elegant crisp surroundings all add to the class. The menu changes every 10 days depending on what's in season. Not at all stuffy, it's a firm favourite of ours for a special occasion. Three courses menus start at €45.

Closed Wednesday.

[www.restaurant-salsedo.com](http://www.restaurant-salsedo.com)



G4

## Amada

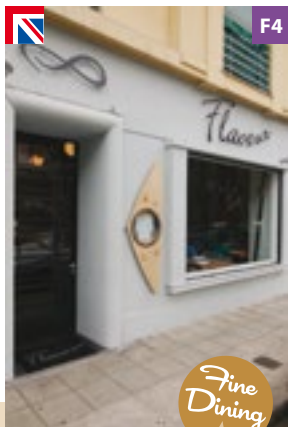
17 rue Tonduti de l'Escarène  
☎ 04.93.62.00.81

This tiny Japanese restaurant exudes authenticity. We love everything from the décor and the discreet service, to the soft background music, the original place settings and of course the food. Perfect for everything from a light lunch to a romantic night out, the chef focuses on high



quality ingredients which are simply prepared. The lunchtime specials, complete with soup and salad to start, are great value at €13. In the evening we would expect most diners to opt for the more elaborate three course €35 menu which includes five starter dishes, a choice of four mains and a dessert. Our tip: try the chef's more unusual dish of his version of the Niçois staple, *petits farcis*.

Closed Sunday. Closed for lunch on Monday and Wednesday.



Fine Dining  
★

## Flaveur

25b rue Gubernatis  
☎ 04.93.62.53.95

From the moment Flaveur opened in November 2008, it became a huge hit with our guests, locals and the Pebbles team alike. The décor is refreshingly chic and the service impeccable. Taking Mediterranean cuisine and



giving it a contemporary twist, often with hints of unusual spices, is Flaveur's speciality. Rightly keeping a firm hold of the Michelin star it earned in 2013, Flaveur is a gastronomic experience not to be missed.

*Closed Sunday and Monday.  
Closed Saturday lunch.*

[www.flaveur.net](http://www.flaveur.net)



## Lou Pistou

4 Rue Raoul Bosio, 06300. Nice.  
☎ 04.93.62.21.82

Those looking to sample traditional Niçois fare should look no further. This intimate bistro never fails to impress; the husband and wife team run the place with a smile and they serve up homemade dishes which pack a real punch taste-wise.



The perugines (local sausages) and lentils is a classic here, but there are also plenty of other dishes to choose from including Niçois ravioli and petits farcis (stuffed vegetables).

*Closed Saturday and Sunday.*



## Au Vieux Four

1 rue Emmanuel Philibert  
☎ 04.93.89.00.89

Baked to perfection with a paper-thin crust, these pizzas are hard to beat. Pizza chef Pascal Fritsch was awarded the best pizza on the Côte d'Azur for his Pizza Campagnarde. If pizza is not for



you, they also do good meat dishes and fantastic scallops. Whoever makes the tiramisu should also win an award. Lots of our guests love the place for the food, the service and the bustling atmosphere.

*Closed Sundays & Monday lunch.*



H5

## Oliviera

8 bis rue du Collet  
☎ 04.93.13.06.45

Half olive oil shop, half restaurant, Oliviera is the perfect stage to showcase the wonderful local oils on sale here. Each dish complements the aroma and taste of one of the olive



oils. Sample an olive oil to be used with avocado, another for goat's cheese, and another for lasagne. There's even an oil for the tiramisu! The friendly owner, Nadim, is very charming and enthusiastic about his oils. Once you've tasted them, you'll understand why. The menu is made up of fresh local produce, and, if you're up early, you're likely to see Nadim at the Cours Saleya market choosing the day's vegetables. Specialty dishes from €14.

*Closed Sunday and Monday.*

[www.oliviera.com](http://www.oliviera.com)



F4

Fine Dining

## Les Épicuriens

6 Place Wilson  
☎ 04.93.80.85.00

Classy, yet very friendly and decidedly unstuffy, Les Épicuriens celebrates the art of enjoying a good meal. Classic meat and fish dishes are incredibly well cooked, beautifully presented and accompanied by expertly chosen wines by the glass, specifically selected to complement each



individual dish. A local, business crowd flocks here at lunch time to enjoy the formule. In the evening it's à la carte only, with mains ranging from €16–30 and starters and desserts from €10. A real find, les Épicuriens is perfect for anyone who appreciates good food as much as we do!

*Closed Sunday and Monday*



F1

Fine Dining

## Le Bistro Gourmand

3 rue Desboutin  
☎ 04.92.14.55.55

This upmarket restaurant offers a great value prix fixe lunch (Mon-Fri); only €18 for one of the two dishes of the day (meat or fish) and a dessert. Two further menus at €35 and €55 (available both lunch and dinner) give more scope for choice and provide a mouth-watering insight into the French cuisine this restaurant has become known for. The attentive staff create



a refined yet welcoming atmosphere, and will happily help you to select wine to accompany your dishes.

*Reservation recommended.  
Closed on Sundays.*

[www.lebistrogourmand.fr](http://www.lebistrogourmand.fr)



G6

## La Rossetisserie

8 rue Mascoinat  
☎ 04.93.76.18.80

Intimate and friendly, the chef cooks up a feast in this cute little bistro, just a stone's throw away from Place Rossetti. Blink and you'll walk straight past – but you'll be missing out if you do! Serving uniquely roast meats, with scrumptious homemade accompaniments, it's simple, fresh and great value. Choose



from slow roasted lamb, pork, chicken, veal or beef served with mashed or roasted potatoes, ratatouille or salad for just €12. Homemade desserts, which change daily, complete the menu and finish off your meal perfectly.

*Closed Sunday and Monday.*



F6

## La Voglia

2 rue Saint François de Paule  
☎ 04.93.80.99.16

Simple, good quality Italian cuisine served in copious portions is what you can expect at La Voglia and its sister restaurants La Favola (just opposite) and Villa d'Este on the pedestrian zone. Hearty pasta dishes, mouth-watering pizzas and delicious desserts are the stars of the menu. It's a firm



favourite with our team who are regulars. The queue out of the door is a year round fixture and surely proof of its popularity with locals and tourists alike. Pizzas and pastas start at €10.

*Open daily.*

[www.lavoglia.com](http://www.lavoglia.com)



J4

## Le Rosalina

16 rue Lascaris, 06300 Nice  
☎ 04.93.89.34.96

Located a few steps away from the Port of Nice, this restaurant has already got a following of the younger crowd of Nice, due to its kitsch décor, electro music and great cocktails, all for a reasonable price.

This restaurant is ideal for larger groups, and the food is traditional fresh French/ Italian cuisine, with vegetable tarts, Gnocchi and pasta dishes on offer.

Ensure that you save space for dessert, but a word of warning for the Baba au Rhum – it is more rum than Baba!

*Open Tuesday – Saturday.*



G6

## Le Comptoir du Marché

8 rue du Marché, Vieux Nice  
☎ 04.93.13.45.01

The new kid on the block, this charmingly quaint French bistro is already one of the most sought after tables in town. Following in the footsteps of its sister restaurant (the locally renowned Bistrot d'Antoine), the sumptuous French classics on offer ensure its cute dining rooms fill up night after night.

Expect to pay between €12–15 for the reasonably priced mains and €7 for starters and desserts.



The portions are just the right size to allow you to take a starter, main and dessert: ideal for sampling as much of the chef's tasty offerings as possible!

*Closed Sunday and Monday*



F4

## La Mise au Verre

17 rue Pastorelli  
☎ 04.93.85.69.90

From the owners of local wine shop La Part des Anges comes their friendly bistro La Mise au Verre. With the emphasis on lesser known, quality wines and fresh, seasonal produce, the menu changes daily, so you never know what you're going to get. Over the course of the year we've enjoyed sea bass



with wild rice, steak with Niçois panisse and a tasty springtime vegetable risotto. The staff are knowledgeable about both their wines and their produce, and you can enjoy wines by either the glass or the bottle along with a selection of champagnes. Mains are around €15 and desserts and starters from €7.

*Closed Saturday and Sunday lunchtime.*



J6

## Les Pecheurs

18, quai des Docks, Nice Port  
☎ 04.93.89.59.61

Perfect for a summer lunch or dinner watching the sun set over the port, Les Pecheurs has been recommended to us by owners and guests alike. As the name



suggests, this is a great spot to enjoy fresh fish and the finest seafood. Enjoy starters of scallops or langoustines, mains including sea bass, red mullet or share a delicious bouillabaisse.

While there are other options, the carte leans heavily towards seafood. You can order à la carte or opt for one of the menus at €29–47.

*Closed Monday and Tuesday noon in summer and all day Monday and Tuesday in winter.*

[www.lespecheurs.com](http://www.lespecheurs.com)

**H5**

## La P'tite Cocotte

**10 rue Saint-Augustin, Vieux Nice**  
☎ **04.97.08.48.61**

We doubt many tourists stumble across La P'tite Cocotte by accident, though perhaps it's the smell of delicious cooking that lures hungry tummies up the tiny, cobbled rue Saint-Augustin in the Vieux Nice.

The lucky ones who do come across it won't be disappointed. Run by a husband and wife team, this gourmet hideaway is a real treat. The couple serve up a small menu in their cosy dining room, and the rustic, exposed stone walls just add to the charm of the setting.

Mains, including cod with a fennel sauce, polenta and fresh veg, are often served in their speciality 'cocottes'. A word of advice: be sure to save space for dessert; the chocolate fondant cocotte with pistachio ice cream is to die for! Evening menus start at €20.50 and two courses at lunch cost just €13.50.

*Closed Tuesday and Wednesday.*

[www.la-ptitecocotte.fr](http://www.la-ptitecocotte.fr)

**H6**

## Acchiardo

**38 rue Droite, Vieux Nice**  
☎ **04.93.85.51.16**

Run by the Acchiardo family since its opening in 1927, this unassuming restaurant may not look like much from the outside, but it's been one of the locals' worst kept secrets for years. With more and more tourists stumbling across this hidden gem you're likely to hear conversations in several languages from your neighbouring tables, however, testament to its success, Acchiardo has never lost its solid, local following.

The food is typically Niçoise: expect to tuck into specialities such as petits farcis nicois, daube and soupe de poisson, just how they're meant to be served. Enjoy a carafe of the house rosé with your meal and you'll feel like a local in no time! The best news is you won't be out of pocket at this down to earth eatery, mains start at around €13, but be aware, as with a couple of other local institutions, Acchiardo doesn't take credit cards.

*Closed Saturday and Sunday.*

# Antibes & Juan-les-Pins Restaurants



D6

## La Taille de Guèpe

24 rue de Fersen, Antibes.  
☎ 04.93.74.03.58

This delightful restaurant, a favourite with the locals, is all about eating well, so the dishes are good for both your taste buds and your waistline! Fresh edible flowers often feature in the cuisine, adding a real touch of elegance to the presentation and giving diners a chance to taste flavours that they may not yet have experienced.

Great care is taken with the selection of ingredients, and the menu, which focuses on simple dishes cooked with a dash of originality, changes regularly. The atmosphere, perfect for a light lunch or romantic dinner under the twinkling fairy lights, really adds to the restaurant's appeal, so we'd recommend booking ahead!

*Closed Sunday and Monday.*



E5

## Le Figuier de Saint Esprit

14 rue Saint Esprit, Antibes.  
☎ 04.93.34.50.12

Christian Morriset is the celebrity chef at this chic restaurant which is certainly worthy of its Michelin star. Christian had previously worked at other well-known establishments on the Riviera such as La Chevre d'Or and Le Moulin de Mougins, and for this venture is cooking alongside his son, Jordan.

Eating here is an unforgettable dining experience for all the right reasons – we love it! As well as the gorgeous setting (especially on the vine-wrapped indoor terrace), impeccable service and excellent wine list, the delicious food is highly creative. Dinner menus are available at €62 and €83, and at lunchtime it's possible to have the dish of the day with wine and a coffee for €32.

*Closed Tuesday and Wednesday (November to April), Monday and Wednesday lunch and Tuesday all day (May to October).*

[www.restaurant-figuier-saint-esprit.com](http://www.restaurant-figuier-saint-esprit.com)



D5

## L'Enoteca

6 rue Auberon, Antibes.  
☎ 04.93.34.03.90

In this welcoming wine bar, just minutes from the market square, there are over 30 wines available by the glass. With prices ranging from €5 to €18, amateurs can try well-chosen wines from the Provence, Languedoc, and Rhone Valley regions, amongst many others.



Those feeling peckish after a glass or two can move through to the vaulted stone dining room where Mediterranean dishes, some with an Asian twist, are attentively served. The staff here will happily help you to pair wine to your chosen dishes, prolonging the wine enthusiast's pleasure!

*Open daily*



E6

Fine  
Dining  
★

## L'Armoise

2 rue de la Tourraque, Antibes.  
☎ 04.92.94.96.13

This tiny restaurant is a delightful surprise, and if you're a gastronome this should definitely be on your list! Once a hidden gem, this restaurant is gaining in recognition and we wouldn't be surprised to see it get its first Michelin star in the not too distant future.



Set menus range in price from €38 to €69, and the emphasis here is on seasonal produce cooked exceptionally well. Example dishes include a risotto with shavings of summer truffles, catch of the day with Piedmontais gnocchi, and honey roasted apricots served with almond milk ice cream. Yum!

*Closed Monday all day & Tuesday and Wednesday at lunch.  
Holidays: First two weeks of July, two weeks before Christmas*



D6

## L'Oursin

16 rue de la République,  
Antibes.  
☎ 04.93.34.13.46

When you're by the sea the temptation is always to eat some of the local catch, and when in Antibes the place to go is L'Oursin. Eating in this reliable restaurant is an experience in its own right, the maritime decoration, brass portholes and all, will make you feel like you have literally set sail on a yacht of days gone by!



The friendly staff will show you the catch of the day, and, as well as the à la carte menu, there are several set menus and seafood platters on offer. Prices for three-course set menus start at €21.50 and the platters start at €20. There is also a children's menu available for €10.

*Closed Monday (October to May).*

[www.restaurant-loursin.fr](http://www.restaurant-loursin.fr)



D6

## La Cafetière Fêlée

18 rue de Marc, Antibes.  
☎ 04.93.34.51.86

It would be hard to stumble across this restaurant discreetly tucked away on a side street, but for those who enjoy fusion cooking it's worth hunting down! The restaurant is owned by a young local chef, Julien Fiengo, whose passion for mixing new and traditional flavours is clearly evident in the stunningly-presented dishes his restaurant is reputed for.



At lunch there are several set menus available, ranging from €14.50 to €35. Example dishes include the foie-gras and roasted prawn maki served with a white porto and mango jelly and a ponzu vinaigrette or the lamb shank confit with a thai curry sauce. Take away bento boxes are also available for those who would rather dine al fresco.

*Closed Sunday and Monday.*

[www.lacafetierefelee.com](http://www.lacafetierefelee.com)



## L'Horizon

37 Bis Boulevard Charles  
Guillaumont, 06160, Antibes  
Juan les Pins  
☎ 04.93.67.23.11

You may just walk past this restaurant believing it to be another "tourist trap" on the sea-front, however take Pebbles' advice and venture in.

You will be greeted with a warm welcome by this husband-wife team, with the husband as your host and his wife providing excellent food from the kitchen.

The style is French sea-food, with the products evidently very fresh and served in large portions.

Try their version of the Paella (enough for several to share) and save space for the unique homemade desserts.

The prices are very reasonable, and their house wine served by the carafe is delicious.

*Open daily*



Bon  
Appétit

# Rest of Riviera Restaurants



## Mocca

1 boulevard la Croisette, Cannes  
☎ 04.93.68.93.00

Mocca's, situated just opposite Palais des Festivals, boasts a menu that takes you on a journey of exploration; expect to taste classic and exotic dishes at this restaurant. The interior is elegant and cosy, almost lounge-like, making you feel instantly relaxed, and their large terrace allows you to take in all the glamour of Cannes.



Tempting dishes include warm goat cheese, almond crumble and dry fruits (€15.60), and truffle cream penne pasta (€21.50). Bottles of wine from €25. Refined cuisine with a creative touch.

Open Monday – Sunday  
8pm – 8.30am with a non-stop  
service 11.30pm – 1am.

[www.moccarestaurant.com](http://www.moccarestaurant.com)



## La Voglia di Pasta

73 rue Félix-Faure, Cannes.  
☎ 04.93.33.80.59

Popular with locals, this inconspicuous matchbox of a restaurant is wonderful for people watching as it's directly opposite the morning flower market on the Croisette.



The linguini scoglia is not to be missed: al dente pasta with a mix of the freshest seafood available. Wash it down with a sparkling red Lambrusco, perfect for lazy afternoons! Main dishes start at around €13.

Open daily.



## La Place de Mougins

Place du Commandant Lamy,  
Mougins.

☎ 04.93.90.15.78

Formerly the Feu Follet, this restaurant has recently undergone extensive renovations. The terrace is undeniably appealing, but the restaurant itself, decorated with original works by artists such as Dufy, Matisse and Warhol (from the English owner's private collection), is also a delightful place to dine.

The chef, Denis Fetisson, really draws on produce according to the season, and there is always a menu based around an 'ingredient of the moment' which varies from lemons, to asparagus, to wild mushrooms as the year goes on. Set menus range from €25 at lunch to €75 for the seven course Menu Gourmandise.

Open Tuesday – Sunday  
(no dinner service Sun).

[www.laplacedemougins.com](http://www.laplacedemougins.com)



Fine Dining

## Bistrot de la Marine

96 Promenade de la Plage,  
Cros-de-Cagnes  
☎ 04.93.26.43.46

This upmarket bistro is a great find on a seafront lined with restaurants. On the terrace, which is set back a little from the road, it is possible just to sit and have a drink, but venture inside this former fisherman's cottage and you will find a smart restaurant dotted with seafaring artifacts; the highlight being the bar which is beautifully decorated with what must be hundreds of anchovy tins!

The two-course menu at €25 comes highly recommended. Sample dishes include sea bass roasted Niçois style with artichokes, courgettes, potatoes, tomatoes, olive oil and lemon, and fresh scallops grilled with a Niçois risotto.

*Open Wednesday – Sunday.*

[www.bistrotdelamarine.com](http://www.bistrotdelamarine.com)

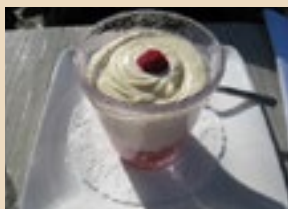


Fine Dining

## Le Tilleul

2 Place Tilleul, St-Paul-de-Vence  
☎ 04.93.59.84.04

On a cobbled square in Saint-Paul-de-Vence, the enticing terrace under the shade of the linden tree (*tilleul* in French) is reason alone to try out this restaurant which has been recommended by several of our guests.



Open from breakfast through to dinner, we would suggest stopping by for at least an afternoon tea as their pastries and desserts are phenomenal. For those with a little more time on their hands, the €25 lunch menu is a great way to sample some of the gastronomic cuisine, and the more elaborate dinner menu includes dishes such as homemade ravioli filled with lobster and leek in a consommé of beef flavoured with truffle.

*Open daily.*

[www.restaurant-letilleul.com](http://www.restaurant-letilleul.com)



Fine Dining

## La Mère Germaine

9 Quai de l'Admiral Courbet,  
Villefranche  
☎ 04.93.01.71.39

An institution in Villefranche, this restaurant has been serving up fish and seafood to locals, tourists and celebrities since the 1930s. The location couldn't be better: right by the water with a view over the sublime Villefranche bay. It really is an idyllic place to spend an evening.



Fresh fish is never cheap, but the €42 three-course menu is reasonable, and includes dishes such as rock fish soup and a mixed fish and seafood platter grilled à la plancha.

*Open daily. Holidays mid-November to Christmas.*

[www.meregermaine.com](http://www.meregermaine.com)



## Les Garçons

18 rue Poilu, Villefranche  
☎ 04.93.76.62.40

A favourite with the locals, tucked just one street back from the port, Les Garçons is run by two brothers. The focus is on market-bought ingredients and simple home cooking with an occasional Asian twist.



Diners can choose to eat in the restaurant or outside on the pretty terrace, and at lunch the regularly changing two-course set menu is a modest €15. Sample dishes include risotto with fresh scallops and truffle oil, and yakitori chicken salad with bean sprouts and crunchy vegetables.

*Open Thursday – Monday.*



## African Queen

Port de Plaisance, Beaulieu-sur-Mer  
☎ 04.93.34.50.12

This is an infamous good quality restaurant which is always busy, and it has a warm and relaxed atmosphere. You can choose to have a gastronomic feast (their huge fish platters are legendary) for around €50, or, more simply, a pizza from their wood-burning oven, a salad or a char-grilled burger for around €10.



There is a spacious indoor eating area, but most diners favour basking in the sun on the large terrace. The African Queen may be pricier than others on the same port-side strip, but, in our eyes, it's worth paying that little bit extra.

*Open daily.*

[www.africanqueen.fr](http://www.africanqueen.fr)



## Café Llorca

10 avenue Princesse Grace, Monaco  
☎ 003.77.99.99.29.29

Situated on the first floor of the Grimaldi Forum, this stylish café-restaurant (Alain Llorca's latest venture) comes complete with a 220 square metre terrace and an impressive Mediterranean backdrop.

You would expect prices to be sky high in such a setting, especially in Monaco, but starters begin at a mere €10 and mains at €14. Every day there is a dish of the day on offer for €15 to €20, and this is a great chance to try traditional recipes such as Daube (beef stew) or Aioli. Particularly good value are the lunchtime set menus: €20 for a main, a dessert and glass of wine, or €22 for a starter and main with a glass of wine. With prices this reasonable, it's hard to resist!

*Restaurant open daily for lunch. The Olive Bar is open until 6pm for drinks and snacks.*

[www.cafellorca.mc](http://www.cafellorca.mc)



## Mayabay

**24 Avenue Princesse Grace,  
98000 Monaco**  
☎ +377.97.70.74.67

With a wonderful terrace decorated in a traditional Asian style, this restaurant is like a mini-holiday to Thailand in the middle of the Riviera! Specialising in both Thai and Japanese food. They provide arguably the best sushi on the Riviera, with the highlight being the Maya roll so beautiful it's a shame to eat it, but you will be glad you did!



Each course is like a mini work of art, and make sure you try the Po Pia Thot – translating as chocolate spring rolls! Prices range start from €6, and they have a great 3 course menu for €18 which changes daily.

*Open from Tuesday – Saturday  
from 12 noon to 2pm and  
from 8pm to 11pm*

[www.mayabay.mc](http://www.mayabay.mc)



## Au Grand Inquisiteur

**18 rue du Château,  
Roquebrune-Cap-Martin**  
☎ 04.93.35.05.37

Minutes from the Château, this tiny restaurant – a former sheepcote – just exudes history from its 14th century stone walls. There is always a great



atmosphere in the vaulted dining room, due in particular to the warm welcome from the staff.

Here it's all about French home cooking, and the dishes include Coq-au-Vin and Crème Brûlée as well as frogs legs and snails for those brave enough to try them! Prices range from €25 for two courses to €44 for the very generous two starters, a main course and a dessert.

*Open Tuesday – Sunday.*

[www.augrandinquisiteur.com](http://www.augrandinquisiteur.com)



*Fine  
Dining*

## Mirazur

**30 Ave. Aristide Briand, Menton**  
☎ 04.92.41.86.86

Despite being listed as one of the top 25 restaurants in the world and having just received its second Michelin star, the Mirazur remains classy in an understated way. Here there is no menu as such; you just select the number of courses you would like. The waiters will ask if there's anything you don't eat, then Argentinean chef Mauro Colagreco and his team will set about creating dishes accordingly. The creative food centres around whatever is in season in the restaurant's gardens, one of which can be seen just below the restaurant, and fresh fish and meat. Each dish is described in detail as it's placed in front of you and the memories of this exceptional cuisine will linger long after you leave.

Prices range from €29 for two courses at lunch to €120 for the Carte Blanche.

*Open Wednesday – Sunday (mid-February to early Nov.). Special opening hours mid-July to end August: Tuesday – Sunday dinner, lunch Saturday and Sunday only.*

[www.mirazur.fr](http://www.mirazur.fr)



## Nice Gourmet Challenge: Michelin vs Tripadvisor

One is a 115-year-old fine dining bible. The other boasts 100 million improbably spelt restaurant reviews. Yet both are loyal touchstones for the 13 million passengers who disembark at Nice Airport each year. **Guide Michelin** and **Tripadvisor** compete on the app store and the Android market, as restaurateurs vie for a coveted **Michelin Star** or a **Tripadvisor Certificate of Excellence**. But which one is the more deserving restaurant guide during your priceless week of holiday?

The arena for such a contest can only be Nice. A century of high-end tourism has made it an epicentre of culinary excellence. The resort boasts eight Michelin stars – more than Marseille, a city six times its size. To assure scientific conditions I plan to perform the ultimate test: to gorge myself stupid at two Tripadvisor favourites and two Michelin star stalwarts over a 48-hour window. A tough job, but somebody's got to do it.

I start my culinary challenge at single-starred **L'Univers Christian Plumail** on Place Massena. With a €23 set lunch, it's the cheapest rung on the Michelin ladder. The Guide assured me that: *"Guests come from far and wide to try the authentic, tasty Niçoise cuisine"*. Tripadvisor ranks it a lowly #149 of 1,291 restaurants in Nice, while commentator Strawb54 of Twickenham, UK, complains: *"The lack of ability to serve your own wine began to annoy"*. Classy fellow.

In Michelin grading terms, one star is awarded for *"very good cuisine"*. Then two for *"excellent cuisine, worth a detour"*. And finally three stars for *"exceptional cuisine, worth a special journey"*. As the lucky veteran of dozens of gourmet restaurants, I can safely declare that this glass-fronted bistro looks the part. An amuse bouche of edible flowers is followed by tarte paysanne with a spinach cream. Sure, you get 'peasant tart' instead of truffles for this price, but it's presented with needlepoint precision. The main fish choices of whiting and gurnard are hardly lobster and swordfish either, but both taste sublime.

So, are bow ties and cheap fish enough to win a Michelin star? Not quite. As any undercover inspector will tell you, it's also all about the service. And at L'Univers, it's impeccable. As a single diner drinking the cheapest house wine (€6 per glass) I'm treated like royalty. Gone is the snobbiness associated with

fine dining decades ago. France's restaurant industry recently emerged from a financial crisis, so maître d's can't be picky about diners' decorum or dress – although I'd draw the line at Crocs.

Dinner – only slightly less expensive than lunch – is equally inspiring. I hit Tripadvisor favourite

**Rossetisserie**, an ultra-friendly grilled meat specialist near place Rossetti in Nice Old Town.

According to a recent comment from Top Contributor AlanAndLyn from Gosport, UK: *"There is a choice of 5 starters, I had sardine rillettes, my wife passed"*. Well, I hope she's feeling more alive now.

I'm not the only foreigner dining here. A good few of the 32 million members of 'The World's Largest Travel Website' are seated in front of the rotating rotisserie oven. It's to be expected. Visit a top Guide Michelin recommendation and there will be at least one ponce verbally jousting with the sommelier. Visit a top Tripadvisor joint and it will be packed with friendly faces from (in this evening's case) Clarksville, Tennessee.

The food? It's innovative, inexpensive, hand-made and truly scrumptious. Mains revolve around the restaurant's spit-roast. Choose half a chicken, pork, lamb or beef for €14.50, with a side of mashed potatoes, fries or ratatouille thrown in. But it's nonetheless a Michelin no-no. Service is blissfully smiley, but there are no silver salvers. Wearers of Havaianas, Birkenstocks or Doc Martens are treated with the same backslapping bonhomie. That's democracy in one opinion; disgrace in another.

As a working town by day, Nice's finest restaurants must dish up honestly priced fare at lunch even if they charge gourmet tourist prices at dinner. I can thus afford the €28 prix fixe at Michelin-starred **Keisuke Matsushima**, although the evening set meal would make me €110 lighter. The Guide states that: *"Fascinated by France's gastronomy, Matsushima reinterprets it with the finesse of his origins"*. A worthy description. Since moving to France in 1998, the Japanese chef has paired authentic local ingredients like red mullet and San Remo shrimp with wasabi and yuzu.

Formality and again fine service won Matsushima his first Michelin star in 2010. But Tripadvisor only rates it as the 198<sup>th</sup> best restaurant in Nice. So how does its cuisine compare against the online oracle's most acclaimed eatery in the entire country?

That's right. Humble pizzeria **Les Amoureux** in Nice Port bagged dozens of five-star reviews during its

inception. This made it not only the 'best' restaurant in Nice, nor the finest restaurant in the Alpes-Maritimes, but the greatest restaurant in France. That's some statement. As Tripadvisor owns sites as diverse as CruiseCritic and FamilyVacationCritic, as well as purchasing rival site Virtual Tourist in 2009, a top review here means the world to a restaurant this size. No wonder the three-star chefs in Paris fear the might of the American internet giant.

For quality, I'd agree with Senior Contributor Thomas87654321: *"Crusty, doughy, cheesy, with the best tomatoe (sic) sauce I ever had"*. Despite the cramped interior, Les Amoureux's 50-strong selection of authentic Neapolitan pizzas is superb. Owner Ivan asks me to review the restaurant online as I depart from my €12 feast. His request sums up Tripadvisor's power: restaurateurs have a vested interest in keeping the good reviews coming by hook or by crook (other proprietors have been prosecuted for posting fake reviews) so the site's success becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy.

Alas, Michelin's aims aren't entirely altruistic either. The Guide was started by the Michelin rubber company in Clermond-Ferrand in order to increase car touring – and therefore boost the sales of tyres. Tales of bribes, barbs, suicidal chefs and bitter restaurant wars predate Tripadvisor's social media cynicism by a century. Tomorrow's menu? I settle for a picnic on the beach.

by Tristan Rutherford

## L'Univers Christian Plumail

54 Boulevard Jean Jaurès

☎ 04 93 62 32 22

[www.christian-plumail.com](http://www.christian-plumail.com)

## La Rossetisserie

8 Rue Mascoïnât

☎ 04 93 76 18 80

[www.larossetisserie.com](http://www.larossetisserie.com)

## Keisuke Matsushima

22 rue de France

☎ 04 93 82 26 06

[www.keisukematsushima.com](http://www.keisukematsushima.com)

## Les Amoureux

46 Boulevard Stalingrad

☎ 04 93 07 59 73

FACTBOX



## Skiing and Hiking

**F**rom mid-December until the end of March, tourists can join the local community and take to the nearby slopes for the weekend or even just a day. An adult ski pass costs no more than €30. In summer too, the mountains can be well worth a visit.

Take a hike through tranquil meadows and forests where you can breathe in the air full of the scent of alpine flowers, admire the awe-inspiring scenery and observe birds and animals in their natural habitat. The excellent bus service throughout the Alpes-Maritimes makes the mountains easily

accessible. If you want to mix up your winter city break or you've had enough of lying on the beach, a day's outing or an overnight stay in the mountains can be just the ticket. Especially when that ticket costs €1 each way!

### Isola 2000

[www.isola2000.com](http://www.isola2000.com)

**Bus:** Daily Santa Azur buses [www.santa-azur.com](http://www.santa-azur.com)

**Journey time:** 2 hours each way.

At 90 km from the coast, Isola is the closest ski resort to Nice, and a favourite for snowboarding. The 120 km of slopes are divided into 42 runs: 3 black, 11 red, 21 blue and 7 green.

In the summer, as well as taking in a mountain walk, you can pick up tickets from the tourist office to try out activities such as riding, tennis, archery, and swimming, all located within walking distance of the main village.



## Auron

[www.auron.com](http://www.auron.com)

**Bus:** Daily Santa-Azur buses [www.santa-azur.com](http://www.santa-azur.com)

**Journey time:** 2 hours each way.

Close to Isola, Auron is part of the **Mercantour National Park** and boasts over 50 km of cross-country pistes. The snow park includes a half-pipe, advanced tricks zone and dedicated snowboard club. The 135 km of slopes features 8 back runs, 16 red, 16 blue and 2 green. What's more, if you've ever fancied dog-sledging or snow-shoeing this is the place to try it.

When the snow has thawed, visitors can enjoy many walking and hiking trails around mountain lakes and pretty villages such as **Saint-Etienne-de-Tinée**.

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## Valberg

[www.valberg.com](http://www.valberg.com)

**Bus:** Daily buses from Nice centre and Nice Airport.

**Journey time:** 2 hours each way.

A great ski resort for beginners offering 90 km of slopes over 52 pistes. The snow park comes with a half-pipe, big air jump, ramps and an outdoor speaker system. Ice-climbing and paragliding are also available.

In summer, all manner of outdoor activities are on offer including climbing, canyoning, rafting, potholing, abseiling and even bungee jumping.

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## Limone Piemonte

[www.limonepiemonte.it](http://www.limonepiemonte.it)

**Train:** Daily trains from Nice.

**Journey time:** about 2 hours 30 minutes.

It may be over the border, but this Italian resort is just as easy to access from Nice as the French ski stations. Here, the traditional mountain village is as much a pull as the slopes themselves, making this a great destination for skiers and non-skiers alike.

There are 80 km of slopes (6 black, 23 red and 8 blue), an excellent beginner's piste, a kinderpark and a Big Air Bag.

In summer hiking, climbing, golf, mountain biking and rafting are all possible, or simply get supplies from one of the local shops and have a picnic by one of the mountain lakes.





# Top 10 family-friendly activities for 2014

**B**oasting hundreds of miles of sun-splashed coastline from Marseille all the way to the Italian frontier, the South of France makes an idyllic family escape. This year, we give you a rundown of the latest and greatest favourite family-friendly activities.

**1** **Domaine du Rayol**  
Avenue des Belges,  
Rayol-Canadel-sur-Mer  
[www.domainedurayol.org](http://www.domainedurayol.org)

West of St-Tropez sits Domaine du Rayol. These botanical gardens tumble over 50 acres of pristine coastline. The Eden-like oasis is divided into 11 different regions, mimicking natural environments from as far afield as New Zealand and California.

Linger in the bamboo forest, paddle on the private beach or relax with an organic snack at the newly renovated Café des Jardiniers. On the way in, little ones are given a mini scavenger hunt that zigzags across the Domaine.

*Entrance fee €10.50 adults; €7.50 for children 6 to 17 years old; free for children 5 & under; €25 family ticket (two adults plus any children under 18 years old).*



**2** **Monaco Open-Air Cinema**  
Le Rocher, Ave de la Quarantaine, Monaco  
[www.cinema2monaco.com](http://www.cinema2monaco.com)

Grab a bucket of popcorn. This year the season at Monaco's open-air Cinema has been extended from June until September. Blockbuster movies are all VO (original language), with around half of them screened in 3-D. Seating is perched under the eastern side of Monaco's Rock, hovering above the Mediterranean Sea. Last year its massive 200m<sup>2</sup> movie screen showcased Hangover 3, The Bling Ring and The Great Gatsby.

*Tickets €11 adults; €8 for under 20s, students and over 60s; additional €3 for 3-D films*

### 3 Gorges du Verdon

[www.lesgorgesduverdon.fr](http://www.lesgorgesduverdon.fr)

Les Gorges du Verdon is Europe's own Grand Canyon. And impressive it is, measuring 25km long and up to 700m deep. But joining the cars crawling along the canyon's edge come summertime is a sure-fire path to familial discord. Head instead to the cool waters of Lac Sainte-Croix, France's third-largest lake, just west of the Gorge. Sainte-Croix's small beaches are lapped by emerald waters, perfect for exploring by pedalo en famille.

*Lac Sainte-Croix's Le Petit Port, located in Sainte Croix de Verdon, rents pedalos from €14/hr ([www.lepetitport04.com](http://www.lepetitport04.com)).*



### 4 Off-the-beaten-track beaches

St-Tropez, Cap d'Antibes & Roquebrune

Everyone loves a day at the beach. And that's just the problem. This summer ditch the high season crowds and claim a stretch of sand as your very own. Our favourite off-the-beaten-track beaches include the windswept shores of Plage de Gigaro on the southern coast of the St-Tropez Peninsula; the Cap d'Antibes' tiny cove Plage des Ondes, flecked with fishing boats; and Roquebrune's sheltered Plage de Buse.

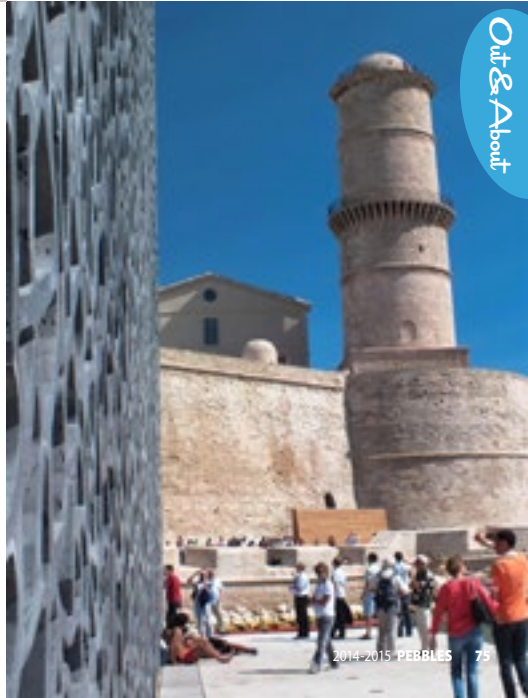


### 5 MuCEM

(Museum of European and Mediterranean Civilisations), 1 esplanade du J4, Marseille  
[www.mu cem.org](http://www.mu cem.org)

In 2013 Marseille revelled in its role as European Capital of Culture. This year, the crowds have departed, but the city's hip new venues remain. The coolest urban addition is MuCEM. Designed by Rudy Ricciotti, the modern block is linked to the 17th-century Fort St-Jean via a panoramic footbridge. Indoors, interactive multimedia exhibits chart the history of the entire Mediterranean. Don't miss MuCEM's top-floor restaurant, La Cuisine du Môle, where Michelin-starred chef Gérald Passédât serves up a two-course buffet of local flavours for just €18 a pop.

*Entrance fee to both the permanent collection and any temporary exhibitions €8 adults; €5 for visitors 18 to 25 years old, students and over 65s; free for children 17 and under; €12 family ticket (two adults plus up to five children under 18 years old)*





## 6 Parc Nationale des Calanques

[www.calanques-parcnational.fr](http://www.calanques-parcnational.fr)

Parc Nationale des Calanques stretches two-dozen kilometres, from Marseille to Cassis. France's newest National Park as of 2012, it's a unique medley of limestone cliffs, turquoise creeks and deserted beaches. For gentle access to some of the park's prettiest coves, pick up a map from Cassis' Tourist Office. Then head west to follow the panoramic trail, *Découverte entre Terre et Mer* (Land and Sea Discovery, 1 hr). Alternatively, regular boat trips depart from Cassis' port, skirting along the Calanques' coastline.

**Cassis Tourist Office:** [www.ot-cassis.com](http://www.ot-cassis.com)

**Boat trips in the Calanques from €16 per adult, €9.50 per child.**

## 7 Fondation Maeght

623 chemin des Gardettes, Saint-Paul-de-Vence  
[www.fondation-maeght.com](http://www.fondation-maeght.com)

This year, contemporary art museum the Fondation Maeght celebrates its 50th anniversary. Following a springtime exhibition dedicated to Josep Lluís Sert, architect of the Fondation's unique building, their large-scale summer show shares more than 100 masterpieces from their private collection. Look out for artworks by Bonnard, Braque, Chagall and Léger, along with Joan Miró's garden labyrinth and Alexander Calder's colourful mobiles. The museum's playful approach to fine art makes the experience appealing for all ages. Better still, anniversary celebrations continue with temporary exhibitions at Nice's MAMAC and Musée Matisse art museums.

**Entrance fee €15 adults; €10 for visitors 10 to 17 years old; free for children 9 and under. Additional €5 photography fee.**



© Fondation Maeght

## 8 2CV Escapade

[www.2cv-escapade.com](http://www.2cv-escapade.com)

For an out of the ordinary exploration of the Côte d'Azur, 2CV Escapade offers guided tours in the most classic of French cars, the Citroën 2CV. Motor around Nice's Old Town or along Cannes' Croisette – or climb your way up to the panoramic heights of Eze village instead. Private tours are also available in a Citroën DS or a convertible Fiat 500. All tours are offered in French, English or German.

**2CV hire from €149/day (9 hours); private tours from €30/person, maximum three people per car.**



## 9 Monaco Electric Bicycles

[www.cam.mc](http://www.cam.mc)

Can you imagine a retired billionaire cycling their way around Monaco? Nope, neither can we. So when we first heard about the Principality's bike-sharing scheme we were sceptical. But of course, Monaco's bikes are electric. Launched in 2013, each Monaco Electric Bike is each equipped with seven gears and a small motor. They're perfect for roaming steep and winding streets – or even whizzing around the legendary Grand Prix Circuit.

*Fifty electric bikes are parked at ten stations around Monaco. To register for use, stop into Service Vélos Electriques at 3 avenue JF Kennedy, Monaco. A three-month pass costs €15, and allows free use of any bike for up to two hours at a time.*

## 10 Promenade du Paillon

Skirts the north side of Nice's Old Town, and can be easily accessed from Place Masséna.

A long, skinny strip of a park, Nice's kilometre-long Promenade du Paillon opened in late 2013 after more than three years of city centre renovations. Stretching from the MAMAC, Nice's contemporary art museum, to the promenade des Anglais, this verdant oasis is a soothing alternative to the beach – particularly at midday. It's dotted with olive trees and vines, climbing frames and sunny benches, and a vast mirrored expanse of fountains.



**By Kathryn Tomasetti**

*Kathryn Tomasetti is the author of Frommer's new Easyguide to Provence and the French Riviera, published August 2014.*



© OTC Nice

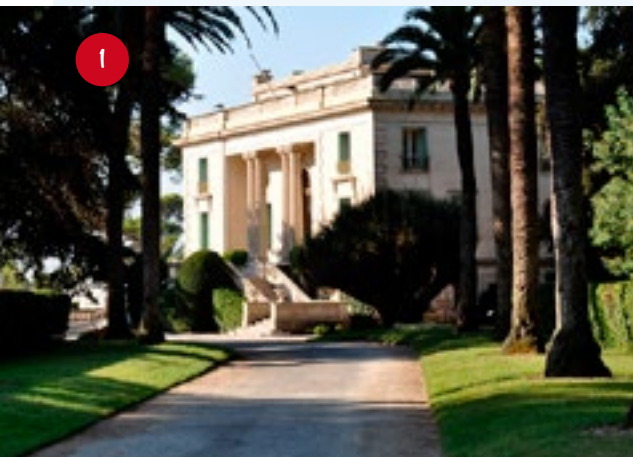


# Movie Hotspots of the French Riviera

The South of France has been thanking its lucky stars since 1895. That summer near St Tropez, the local Lumière brothers screened the globe's premier moving picture, 'The Arrival of a Train at La Ciotat Station'. Bien sur, the world's first movie simply had to be shot on the Cote d'Azur.

In 1908 Pathé became the first movie house to set up shop on the French Riviera. Its studio on Nice's route de Turin allowed year-round filming as the set enjoyed 300 days of sun per annum. La Victorine Studios opened nearby in 1921, with the purchase of film set space for just €1 per square metre (Nice property now averages €5,000 per square metre, should you be interested). Gina Lollobrigida, Sophia Loren and Cary Grant shot major movies here throughout the 1950s and 1960s.

By the 1980s the French Riviera film industry had become more hardnosed business than sun-blessed backdrops. The PR value of having movie stars cavort along the coast's beaches and clubs was too important to be left to chance. Nowadays the Cannes Film Festival keeps the Cote d'Azur in the eye of every movie mogul, while the French Riviera Film Commission ensures that the region produces the greatest amount of movies possible – including 121 feature films in the last 12 years alone.



## Villa Eilenroc, Cap d'Antibes Magic in the Moonlight (2014)

One of two major French Riviera movie releases in 2014, the latest Woody Allen film is set in the roaring 1920s on the Cap d'Antibes. The veteran director called for hundreds of local extras during filming, with several thousands movie wannabes answering his call (although tattoos, piercings and dreadlocks were banned). Filming took place at the ritzy Villa Eilenroc (open to the public on Wednesdays and Saturdays), just next door to the ultra-swish Hotel du Cap.

## Old Town, Nice The Transporter (2002)

Muscle-bound mockney Jason Statham performed all his own stunts in this Luc Besson scripted thriller. The five-minute car chase around Nice Old Town takes place on the Ponchette roofs above the Cours Saleya, and has become a YouTube classic. Daredevil driving scenes also whiz above Cassis, through Eze village, and along the avenue de Vallauris in Cannes.



## Hotel Le Meridien, Nice

Ronin (1998)

The baddies chose Nice's best-located hotel for the French Riviera's greatest car chase movie. After photographing the enemy, secret service agents Robert De Niro and Jean Reno speed to secret meetings in Villefranche and lethal assignments above Nice Old Town. The deadly driving duels below La Turbie near Monaco are topped only by a car mashup in the historic town of Arles. Brilliant.

3



4



© Monte-Carlo SBM

## Casino de Monte-Carlo

Never Say Never Again (1983)

The greying Sean Connery should have said "never" to this Bond franchise rerun. The superannuated Scotsman shuffles from Antibes to Monaco and into the arms of 30-year-old Kim Basinger. Fortunately, the filming locations steal the show.

The Casino de Monte-Carlo (open to the non-gambling public since 2012) stands in for the fabled Casino Royale, while Antibes Fort Carré (open Tuesday to Sunday) doubles as villain Largo's lair.

Out & About

## Port Hercule, Monaco

Goldeneye (1995)

That's more like it. The first Bond flick to feature Pierce Brosnan (and with 'Diamonds are Forever', the third 007 movie to feature the French Riviera) took off in a Tiger helicopter above Monaco's glittering port. The scene cuts to Monte Carlo Bay Hotel ('bargain' lunches from €48 and up). The best footage of all is the driving duel between Bond's vintage DB-5 and Russian spy Xenia Onatopp's Ferrari 355GTS on the roads below Eze. Don't replicate that in a 'compact' hire car.

5



6



## Hotel Carlton, Cannes

**French Kiss (1995)**

This enchanting rom-com bowls through Provence and the French Riviera using every cliché in the book. Ditzzy American (Meg Ryan), check. Touchy-feely Frenchman (Kevin Kline), check. Lavender fields and bucketloads of cheese, check. Emulate Ryan and Kline at Cannes's Hotel Carlton grill (champagne breakfast €42). Or book one of the secret suites on the Carlton's seventh floor, such as the 380m<sup>2</sup> Sir Sean Connery Suite, complete with Jacuzzi in the hotel's cupola.

## Old Town, Menton

**Grace of Monaco (2014)**

The Riviera's movie release of the decade opened the Cannes Film Festival in 2014. But Monaco's ruling Grimaldi family weren't happy with the biopic of the late Grace Kelly, so opening scenes were shot at Menton's Saint-Michel Archangel Basilica instead. Filming then moved to Ventimiglia's Villa Hanbury, whose famous botanical gardens are open to the public, a few miles over the Italian border.

7



8



## Port of Monaco

**Herbie Goes to Monte Carlo (1977)**

Sure, it's hardly Oscar-winning stuff. And the movie only garnered a measly score of 5.4 on IMDb. But when Herbie races from Paris to Monte-Carlo – falling in love with a Lancia Scorpion en-route – some belting panoramas of Provence and the Port of Monaco ensue.

A crime that the Love Bug wasn't smitten with one of the movie's classic Italian beauties instead, like the De Tomaso Pantera, the Ferrari Dino (shown left) or the Maserati Indy.

9



## Ville Ephrussi de Rothschild, Cap Ferrat

**Dirty Rotten Scoundrels (1988)**

Steve Martin and Michael Caine team up in the fictional Riviera town of Beaumont-sur-Mer to swindle an American heiress. With breathtakingly crude taste, they take over the Villa Ephrussi de Rothschild (a genteel stately home open daily to the public) and the Grand-Hotel du Cap-Ferrat (where suites cost up to €5,100 per night). Filming also took place at Nice's La Victorine Studios.

## Streets of Monte-Carlo, Monaco

**To Catch a Thief (1955)**

Alfred Hitchcock paired cat burglar Cary Grant with future Monaco princess Grace Kelly in this Riviera crime caper. The movie features speedboats, Cannes's Hotel Carlton and an epic drive to Monte-Carlo.

Black and white stills in the Hotel de Paris' Bar Américain (glass of wine from €18) follow the filming locations along the Cote d'Azur.

10



© Hotel de Paris

## Being John Malkovich

**Wannabe A-listers** tread a fine line on the French Riviera. Pick up a Gatsby-esque summer wardrobe from Zara and a Ferrari California from Platinum Rent (from €1,900 per day) and your waiter will think you're Brad Pitt. Rock up to St Tropez – the home of understated chic – in an SUV and you'll be confused with Steven Seagal.

Bargain bling can be sourced in any grand hotel. Try Bar l'Amiral in Cannes' Hotel Martinez, where each bar stool is embossed with the name of a famous director (hamburgers from €35). Or soak up the sun on Cap d'Antibes Plage de la Garoupe beach, where the like of Madonna and the Beckhams jog past. Movie buffs may also lunch at Nice's Victorine Studios (now called Studios Riviera), where 500 films have been shot since 1945.

*Tristan Rutherford writes about the French Riviera for The Times and The Independent.*





## Services For Our Guests

**H**ere at Pebbles we pride ourselves on the service we offer our guests. We greatly appreciate the positive reviews written by past guests on various forums, including TripAdvisor. We're still chuffed to bits when we learn that many of our guests are previous patrons or found us by word of mouth. We're here to make your holiday perfect, from your initial enquiry with us, until we sadly wave you off... till hopefully next time.

All our guests are **VIPs**. That's **Very Important Pebbles**.

*Here's how we strive to offer our guests the service they deserve:*

### Initial enquiries through to booking with us:

- ◆ Detailed web pages on each apartment, including a page on what guests liked most, and also what they liked least
- ◆ Hundreds of impartial reviews on how previous guests found their rental property and our services
- ◆ Dedicated staff to answer your phone or email enquiries, six days a week
- ◆ Online booking system so you can book your holiday in minutes
- ◆ Packages to enhance your stay, including airport transfers and mid-stay cleans
- ◆ Insurance backed and licensed, so in these uncertain times you can be sure any monies you send to us are completely safe

### While you are here:

- ◆ A shop in central Nice – open five days a week – to help with any issues that may arise, assistance for guests faxing and printing, and to store luggage free of charge
- ◆ HQ in the UK open six days a week until 6pm, and salaried emergency staff 24 hours in France
- ◆ Early check-in and free storage of luggage during opening hours
- ◆ Personal Meet and Greet on arrival, including a personal tour of the rental property and details on the property and area
- ◆ Personal recommendations of restaurants and activities from our knowledgeable team
- ◆ Personal copy of the Pebbles Guide and local maps and area information
- ◆ Complimentary beach towel hire
- ◆ Complimentary welcome pack and L'Occitane toiletries

### When you sadly leave us:

- ◆ Late check-out and free storage of luggage during opening hours
- ◆ Collection of loyalty points for future stays with us
- ◆ Choice of packages including airport transfers

# PEBBLES RENTALS

## Revive in stylish bathrooms...

Nightly rates from:

Cataleya .....	£70
La Chapelle .....	£70
Alsace Lorraine .....	£95
Artist's Loft .....	£140
Majestic .....	£150

La Chapelle



Majestic



Cataleya



*Alsace Lorraine*



*Artists' Loft*



Holidays

# PEBBLES RENTALS

## Succumb to good night's sleep...

Nightly rates from:

**Avoca** ..... £75

**Sea Breeze** ..... £80

**Grimaldi** ..... £85

**Pastorelli** ..... £95

*Grimaldi*



*Avoca*



## Sea Breeze



## Pastorelli



# PEBBLES RENTALS

## Prepare culinary feasts...

Nightly rates from:

**Sonnet**..... £80

**Bergerac**..... £85

**Cognac** ..... £90

**Manhattan** ..... £225

*Cognac*



*Sonnet*



# Manhattan



# Bergerac



Holidays

# PEBBLES RENTALS

## Vantage Point Balconies...

Nightly rates from:

Raphael.....	£75
Fenocchio.....	£85
La Fontaine .....	£95
7eme Ciel .....	£95
Esprit .....	£100

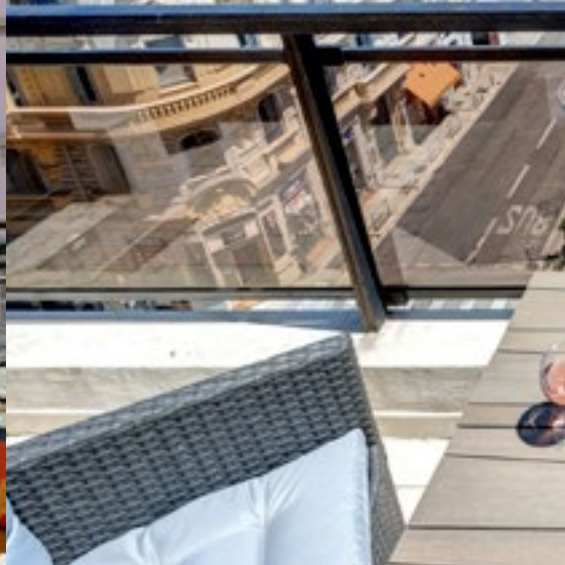
*La Fontaine*



*Raphael*



*Esprit*





7eme Ciel



Fenocchio



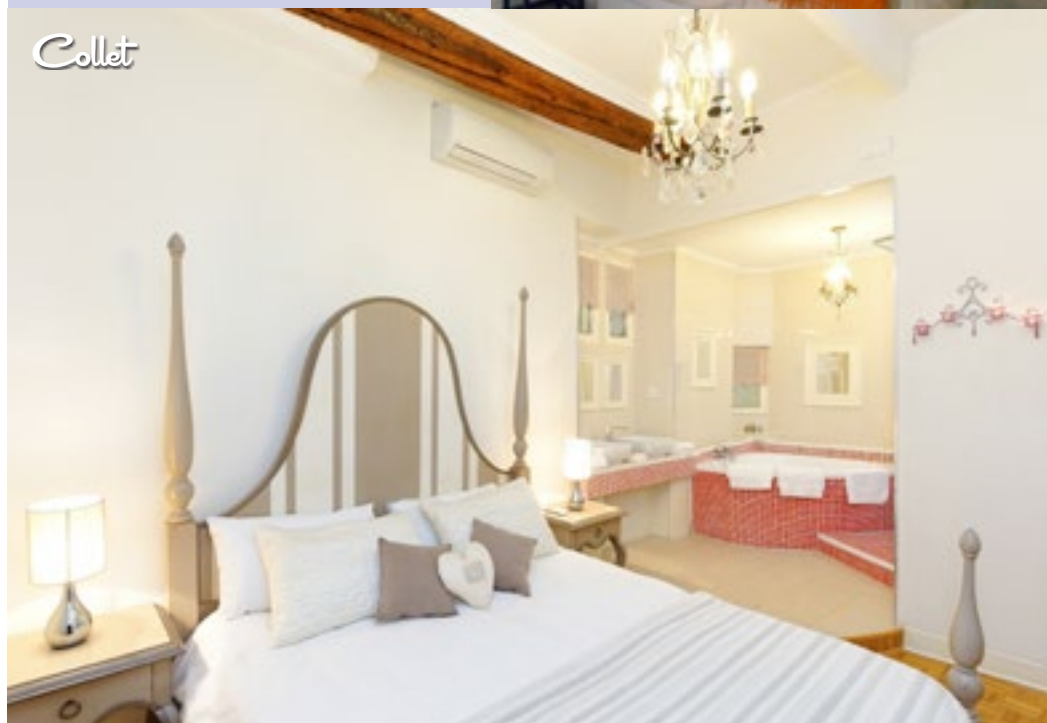
Holidays

# PEBBLES RENTALS

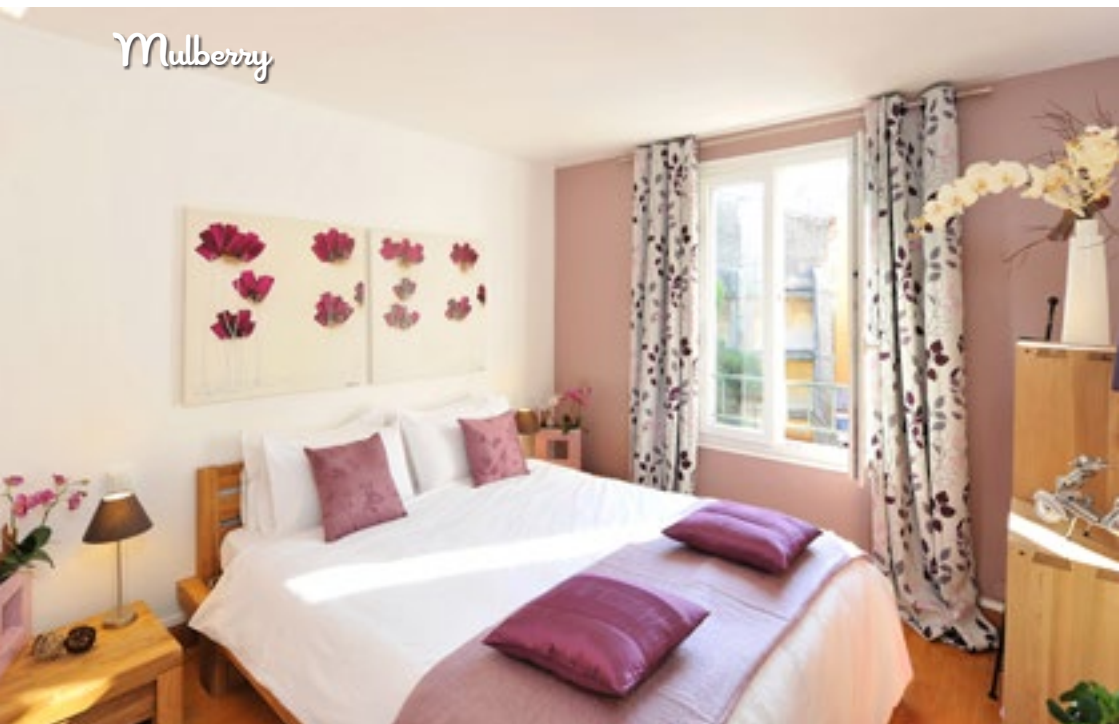
## Couple's romantic retreats...

Nightly rates from:

<b>Mulberry</b> .....	<b>£65</b>
<b>Le Foresta</b> .....	<b>£75</b>
<b>Francois</b> .....	<b>£80</b>
<b>Sinclair</b> .....	<b>£80</b>
<b>Collet</b> .....	<b>£80</b>



Mulberry



Sinclair



Holidays

# PEBBLES RENTALS

*Bleu Marine*

## Dazzling Sea Views...

Nightly rates from:

<b>Blue Marine</b> .....	<b>£70</b>
<b>Andre de Joly</b> .....	<b>£70</b>
<b>Sea Breeze</b> .....	<b>£80</b>
<b>Promenade</b> .....	<b>£130</b>



*Andre de Joly*

## Sea Breeze



## Promenade



Holidays

# PEBBLES RENTALS

Via Guiglia

## Peaceful Terraces

Nightly rates from:

Al Fresco ..... £75

Via Guiglia ..... £95

Jardin Pastorelli ..... £100

Cathedrale ..... £115



Al Fresco



*Gardin Pastorelli*



*Cathedrale*



*Holidays*

# PEBBLES RENTALS

## Old Town Charm

Nightly rates from:

**Chocolat** ..... £70

**Monastere** ..... £70

**Clochette** ..... £95

**La Belle Excuse** ..... £115



*Chocolat*

*Clochette*



*La Monastère*



*La Belle Excuse*



Holidays

# PEBBLES RENTALS

Anatoly

## Family apartments with style

Nightly rates from:

Anatoly ..... £120

Opera Ville ..... £140

Artist's Loft ..... £140

Majestic ..... £150



Opera Ville



## Majestic



## Artist's Loft



Holidays

# PEBBLES RENTALS

Poppy

## Favourites with facelifts

Nightly rates from:

Poppy .....	£80
Boucherie.....	£80
Windsor .....	£95
Marechal.....	£115



Windsor



## Marechal



## Boucherie



# PEBBLES RENTALS

## Private Villas with grounds

Nightly rates from:

**Villa Mimosa** ..... £215

**Villa Lou Boutchin** ..... £260

**Villa Val Fleuri** ..... £365

**La Sittelle** ..... £570

**Villa Manderinette**..... £600



*Villa Manderinette*



*Villa Mimosa*





Holidays

# PEBBLES RENTALS

## Son et Lumiere

Nightly rates from:

**Francois** ..... £80

**Cognac** ..... £90

**Baie des Anges** ..... £165

**Villa Mimosa** ..... £215



*Cognac*

*Villa Mimosa*





*Francois*



*Baie des Anges*



*Holidays*

# PEBBLES RENTALS

## Boutique Chic

Nightly rates from:

Lily .....	£75
Angelica .....	£95
Port View .....	£95
Hepburn .....	£95

*Angelica*



*Lily*



# Hepburn



# Port View



Holidays

# Harmonie



**B**rian and Rachel's relationship with Pebbles began as guests, then as sales clients, then as Owners of our lovely property Harmonie, and finally as employees on American Work Visas.

They have experienced Pebbles from every angle, and this is what made saying Bon Voyage especially difficult for everyone on their return to Nashville, Tennessee. If there is anyone who knows Pebbles inside and out, it's this lovely pair. Here they share their experience with you...

**Pebbles:** *Nice is a long way from Nashville, so why did you buy here?*

**Brian:** Rachel studied in Nice for a year in the late 90s. We visited again together in June 2011. We stayed with Pebbles in the Francois and Cathedral apartments. We couldn't have been happier with the apartments and service from the Pebbles team and during our stay we read the Pebbles Guide. By the end of our stay, we'd decided we wanted to buy an apartment of our very own.

**Rachel:** We kept in contact with Nice Pebbles and I found the Harmonie apartment on their website, which seemed perfect to us especially since it was already rented on their books. Matt created a video of the apartment as well as the common area and streetscape since we lived so far away and we were eager to find a quality investment property quickly. It was his counsel and knowledge of the apartment as well as the critical video that gave us the comfort of making an offer. We signed the papers, and the sale was going through when we finally got back over in February 2012. From the first moment we walked in the door, we knew we had truly found the perfect place for us. We'd bought a great apartment, and even before the sale completed we had management and bookings in place. A perfect scenario. We are still in love with the property over two years later and having used it day to day not only on holiday, even more so.

**Pebbles:** *Missing question?*

**Rachel:** As well as being spacious, Harmonie has a true "at home" feel. The kitchen is well equipped and the bedroom is at the back so extremely quiet. The bed is more comfortable than the one we have at home. The bathroom is plenty big enough for two with a rain-shower with great water pressure – something we've found a real bonus after a run on

the Promenade or a day at the beach. We also love that it's near to several of our favourite restaurants.

One of my favourite things about Harmonie is its location. Harmonie is in a part of the Old Town that is equidistant from both Place Rossetti and Place Garibaldi, a perfect place for cocktails or an after dinner gelato stroll. But, it's also just minutes by foot to the sea and now only steps away from the tram stop and the brand new Coulee Vert, which is amazing if you haven't seen it yet! We're really going to miss the apartment, but we're pleased other guests can continue to enjoy it as we do.

**Pebbles:** *What made you take the step to come to France to work?*

**Rachel:** The timing seemed right in our lives to try something completely out of the box. While Brian had travelled extensively throughout the United States for both work and pleasure, he had always lived in Nashville. I was interested in pursuing a work opportunity where I could apply my French language skills and international business studies outside of the U.S.

**Pebbles:** *Was working at Pebbles what you expected?*

**Brian:** We approached our experience with Pebbles with a very open mind. Even though parameters were set for our roles, we really didn't know what to expect, other than to be immersed in another culture as well as work in a completely new industry.

**Rachel:** What we did expect was to work with some great and talented people and we found this to be absolutely the case.

**Pebbles:** *What did you learn working at Pebbles, going from Owner to member of the Pebbles team?*

**Brian:** Experiencing how the wheels turn is the one area where, in retrospect, we as owners definitely took the work that Pebbles did for granted, not realising all that it took to make the machine work. It was an eye-opening, but positive experience, and not at all what we expected.

**Rachel:** Obviously as owners we were curious as to what goes on behind the scenes. We never

expected to find so many moving parts that have to be in concert to make Pebbles the leader in the holiday rentals space that they are. If only every Owner had a chance to see this first hand many would have a greater appreciation for the hard work that is required every single day. No two days is ever the same.

**Pebbles:** *What will you take back to Nashville with you?*

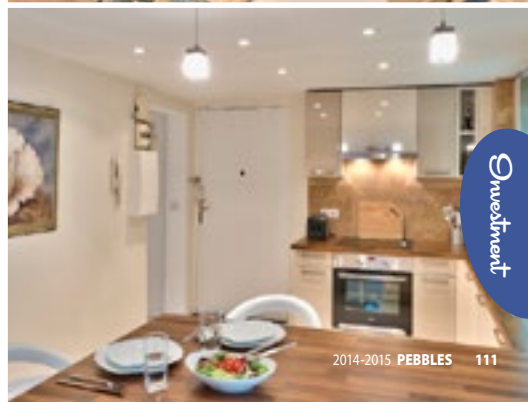
**Brian:** More than anything, it is the relationships we made with people from around the world who had very different backgrounds and ways of doing things that has had the biggest impact on us.

We have a deeper respect for the many successful business owners and hard working people that we met. It has allowed us to go home with a greater appreciation for how difficult it is to run a successful business in France. Back home in the States (as I'm sure in the UK) the barrier to entry for starting a business is small relative to the obstacles that you face with French laws and regulations. To then take that entrepreneurial spirit and grow it is more challenging than we ever expected.

**Rachel:** Living in France, we learned that it truly is a great country and they certainly deliver with their beautiful landscape, delicious food, and what we think are some of the best wines in the world. We took every opportunity to see as much of France as we could while we were here, and many of the villages that we stumbled upon were very much the kind of thing that people dream about. In our travels throughout France as well as living in Nice, we met "salt of the earth people" who were proud of where they were from and hold close to traditions more than any we have ever seen.

We also gained a greater appreciation for what it means to be "French". While things didn't always get done the way we were accustomed to them being done, we saw that it is possible to get things accomplished even if it isn't always the way that you might think is best.

*On behalf of everyone at Pebbles, it was a pleasure to work alongside Brian and Rachel and they will be missed by all of the Pebbles team. Thank you for the work you did with us as employees, and thank you for trusting us with your apartment, Harmonie, which has always been a big hit with our rental guests, and we're sure will continue to be. We know we'll see you again soon.*





## NICE PEBBLES SALES

**P**ebbles doesn't just have charming apartments and homes to rent – you can buy with us too. Whether for investment, pleasure or a bit of both, perhaps you're ready to take the plunge and buy your own piece of the French Riviera.

Nice is a vibrant city with plenty to offer local residents and visitors alike. With the appealing mix of the Promenade, excellent year round climate, proximity to the airport, gastronomy and culture, it's no surprise that this part of France attracts buyers from all over the world. 12% of the properties owned on the French Riviera belong to non-French residents, with a higher concentration in the central areas of Nice.

This high proportion of foreign investors means that the area is sheltered from the ebbs and flows of the national economy giving greater stability in times of a national recession.

Buying in Nice is a solid, safe investment but if you choose to rent your property with us, as well as capital growth, you can also benefit from a rental return of between 4% and 6%. We are experts in sourcing property that will give the most rental yield as well as growth. Please feel free to contact us to find out more.

Viewing properties is not only the most important stage in the property buying process, but also the fun bit! With Nice Pebbles we'll tour around as many apartments and villas as you wish. It's as easy as telling us your wish list and then we'll draw up a property shortlist. We will chat through the shortlist prior to the viewings and then hit the town.

If you have looked into buying property in Nice before you might have noticed that many of the agency windows show the same properties. This is because, like the USA, and some other countries, France largely operates through a multi-listings system, which means agencies tend to share properties. We have close ties with certain estate agencies, and we are a member of SIA: the multi-listings agency, which means we have access to most of the properties in Nice for sale at any given time.

For buyers this system is great news. There's no need to send your details out to lots of agencies or trawl through agency windows. We can do all the hard work for you – it is just like having a personal shopper!

The Nice Pebbles Sales team are real industry experts who take pride in their comprehensive knowledge of buying and selling property in Nice. Take a look at the website where you will find a wealth of useful information to help with your hunt to find the ideal property.



+33.(0)4.89.05.06.60

Scan the code with your mobile phone to connect to our website

**NICEPEBBLES.COM**

# 10 Tips on Buying

The three-stage plan of purchasing, renovating, and then holiday letting is a popular choice with many of our clients. Here are our top ten tips:

- 1 Location is everything.** Consider where a new visitor to the Riviera would like to stay; for example in Nice, popular areas are the Old Town, the Carré d'Or and certain areas of the Port.
- 2 Don't be put off** by shabby or unattractive common areas in the building. Common parts are often not looked after and even if they are new now, they will fade over time. Today's scruffy common parts are tomorrow's refreshed ones, and vice versa. Essentially, don't let this cloud your judgement of a potentially great apartment.
- 3 Lifts can be important**, but are not essential. We still have apartments on the top floor without lifts that are very popular. That said, the apartment at the top needs to be worth the climb.
- 4 Property with outside space**, needing renovations, should be put on your shortlist as this is very popular with our guests. Even a small balcony, with two chairs where you can sit out and enjoy a drink, is a real plus.
- 5 Be aware of natural light.** Walls, if any, can be taken out for more open-plan living, maximising the space available. If a property is to be renovated and has two bedrooms you'll need living room space for two sofas and a dining area to seat four.
- 6 Sea views are understandably popular** and can attract a rental premium, but, for this to be balanced against the extra price of the apartment, it should also be in close proximity to shops and restaurants.
- 7 Would you enjoy staying in the property?** Remember it's not just about attracting new guests to your property with great photos; if your guests have enjoyed the apartment and location they will very likely tell others and also return themselves.
- 8 Most guests want the kind of standards they have at home.** It is not enough for an apartment to be clean and central; from experience guests are happy to pay extra for something modern that has been decorated with taste and style.
- 9 Spend the maximum you have on styling** your apartment; it will pay dividends in the long run.
- 10 Amenities are very important.** Washing machines, dishwashers, tumble dryers, Wi-Fi and cable TV are very important and add a premium to your rental space.



*Come in and ask us for more information about buying, renovating, or renting your property. We can provide you with facts and figures of what works and what doesn't.*





## The Pebbles Sales Team

The Pebbles sales team consists of Matt, Gayle, Maria and Ioana. Collectively, we have over thirty years of real estate experience. Smart new clients interview potential agents before deciding who they want to work with. To help, we've done this for you.

Maria joined Pebbles in 2011 and Ioana in 2012 and it's these two lovely ladies who you'll meet if you ever decide to come and chat to us about buying, selling and even renting with us. It's these two who will pound the streets of Nice with you searching out that perfect property with your name on it, who will hold your hand through the process of buying and selling and work with you until you are settled into your new home... and beyond. Our clients, and the Pebbles team, love them dearly. You will too.

**Pebbles:** *Where are you from and how did you come to be living in Nice?*

**Ioana:** Romania – a beautiful town called Brasov. I came to holiday after I finished Uni and fell in love with the place. It's funny that I studied English at University, but ended up in France.

**Maria:** I was born in Riga, Latvia and came to Nice as a student to study French. I saw the Mediterranean and immediately fell in love with this place! After two months I had to return to my hometown of Riga but I dreamt and prayed every day to be able to return to Nice next summer. I did, with an internship in a language school. I was so very sad when I had to go back home but when I landed in Riga my luggage stayed in Nice – it was a sign for me: "MARIA GO BACK TO NICE!"; One month later, a one way ticket and one suitcase I flew back to Nice to start my French adventure.

**Pebbles:** *How did you come to join Pebbles?*

**Maria:** When I lived on rue Delille, I used to pass by Nice Pebbles rentals office on Gioffredo. I said to myself: "It would be so nice to work in this office one day!" Many months later on a rainy autumn day I was

passing by Nice Pebbles Sales office. I was looking for a new apartment to rent for myself, so thought Nice Pebbles might help me. Something pushed me to ask Matt if Nice Pebbles had a vacant job offer. After a chat, I left the sales office without an apartment, but with a potential new job!

**Ioana:** From a friend who had nice things to say about them. I loved the concept, heard that Pebbles was a forward thinking and friendly company - which it is - and I thought "I would like to be part of this company". So I contacted everyone from reception to the boss, and eventually got an interview, and then got a job working in reception. From there I moved to maintenance and then to Nice Pebbles Sales. I've loved all three roles, but think I have found my home in Sales and as I have worked in different departments of Pebbles I know how everything works for clients who are buying to invest.

**Pebbles:** *What do you love about your job at Nice Pebbles Sales?*

**Ioana:** I love challenges. Some clients are difficult to please, but I see that as my job to turn them into happy owners, and it means so much to me when they do. I also love working with the Sales team. Maria and I get on so very well and I still enjoy learning a lot about the business with Gayle and Matt. Many clients who come to us want to buy for the rental market, or sell with rental bookings in place and this means I need to know how both sides of rentals and sales works. I also like that I get to speak English most of the day, as well as French so my studies haven't gone to waste.

**Maria:** Working and dealing with people, because I simply love people. I like the diversity of our clientele. The sales process is very challenging and enriching. I think that my job in some way contributes to people's happiness – helping people to find a new home – what can be more exciting?! I've found that we tend to build a long term relationship with our clients and often end up becoming friends.

**Pebbles:** *What is your most memorable day at Pebbles so far?*

**Ioana:** There are several. But I guess the staff parties come to mind first. They're always great fun! I also still remember the call whilst I was on holiday asking if I'd like to move over to the sales team. I was so excited. I've also had to juggle a few sales where we have received two asking price offers on the same day, those are hard. I am delighted for the successful purchaser, but disappointed for the one I have to let down. It's the Owners' choice which of the offers to accept, but it's me who has to break the news. Luckily, I've been able to find another great buy for one buyer whose offer wasn't accepted, so that made up for it.

**Maria:** When I sold an apartment on the same day it was put up for sale. It was a real rush.

**Pebbles:** *What trait have you learnt from the French?*

**Ioana:** To enjoy the outside as much as possible. This could be a long lunch on a pavement café, a jog in a park or a walk on the beach. I might be selling property, but the outside life is why people want to buy here.

**Maria:** I'd agree with Ioana.

**Pebbles:** *What's the perfect way to spend a day off?*

**Maria:** Oh là là! Go to the beach – order a "café crème" and a "pain au chocolat" – take a swim – fall asleep under umbrella on a sunbed – wake up – swim – sip a refreshing Mojito – listen to music and just enjoy! And it's nice to have some friends there too!

**Ioana:** Out at sea, on a little boat at Iles de Lerins, snorkelling. I've done it a few times, and never tire of it. It is very peaceful and gives me time to unwind. Those who know me well know I need a little calm. I can be a little hyperactive at times. Days like this re-balance me.

**Pebbles:** *What do you think clients need to know for the year ahead?*

**Ioana:** That Pebbles are here, waiting and willing to help! This is hard for me to answer, each client is

different. I suppose clients need to know that the market has improved, that the general vibe is that the French Riviera is still a great place to invest. The Telegraph voted the French Riviera as the second best place to buy a second home this year, I don't know whether that has had an impact, but this year I am finding that as soon as a buyer has arranged a shortlist of properties, half have been sold. So, that's the best advice, when you find something you really like on-line, you must be prepared to move quickly.

**Maria:** It's so awful when you have to tell a client who have set their heart on a property that it's sold. It has happened twice this year to me. I felt so bad. So, yes, an internet search is where most of our buyers start, but you have to get here quickly, or even buy from the photos sometimes. We don't know how long the property is going to be on the market for.

Also, buyers don't always understand that the French system is different, and really you should only choose one agent to work with or you can end up being shown the same properties many times with different agents. Clients need to choose the agent they think is best going to look after them with the whole process. Nice Pebbles of course!

Anyone can show a property, but it's the whole package that we offer. We help with the notaire, the signing, the transfer of utilities and getting you all set up ready in your new home. This is important. These things will matter to our buyers once the process of buying is happening. We will have been able to show the client the property that is on another agency's website or in their shop window. Most agencies in France share properties, and France works on a multi-agency basis. Choosing the right agent is huge.

**Pebbles:** *What's the best advice you can give a client who wants to invest?*

**Ioana:** Listen to what the rental guests want and put personal preferences aside if buying mainly for investment. There are certain things that guests consistently want, like headboards, air-conditioning (where possible) if you are relying on rental income.

**Maria:** It can pay to have sorted out a mortgage or finances before you are ready to make offers. You can often negotiate on the sale price if you have your mortgage in principle. A cash buy will put you ahead if there is another interested party. But just come and see us, because we are the best!



# PEBBLES SALES

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**Investor Advantage**  
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Essential to promote your property to its full potential

## **FREE STAGING**

To maintain that standard of presentation our guests expect

## **FREE FLOOR PLAN**

Expected and useful for guests, showing we care about finding them the right property for their holiday

## **FREE PROPERTY UPLOAD**

Good quality writing takes time and helps guests know they are in good hands

## **FREE LISTINGS**

On key external advertising sites to gather all important reviews and give your property even more exposure

## **JUMP THE QUEUE**

Pebbles has a waiting list of properties wanting to join the rental portfolio. Our property buyers are not only guaranteed to be able to join the rentals portfolio, they also go to the top of the list.

## **FOR MORE INFORMATION**

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Founded in 2011 by Corinne Carter, a UK and France bi-national, ACPACA have established themselves as a lifeline for the Riviera's English speaking community from those with a holiday home to the small and medium sized French business. Let ACPACA take the strain leaving you to enjoy the finer things of the French Riviera.

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*corinne.carter@acpaca.com*

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Insurance & Banking in France since 1992

**Agence Limonier** is a British team covering the whole of France. With over 20 years experience, we offer an extensive range of services to meet the needs of expatriates in France, including: **Motor insurance with European coverage, Home including prestige risks, Medical cover** whether one benefits from a National cover or not, **Travel insurance, Legal Protection, Corporate insurance** as well as **Yacht and crew insurance** including P&I.

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PER NIGHT



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## Secret Switches

**H**ave you stayed in one of our apartments that have secretly switched owners? Our Owners who bought in the early noughties (yep, time goes fast) may feel it is time to cash in on their investment and pass the baton along. With Pebbles, this couldn't be any simpler and like most things easy, it is a win-win situation for buyers, sellers and guests alike. That's why Pebbles is growing a firm reputation as a one-stop shop for all property needs in Nice. It simply makes sense.

**“A fast track investment with favourable reviews, professional photos and management in place”**



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**£85**  
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**“Enjoy a hassle free transaction from offer to completion”**



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From  
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**"Turnkey solutions with a proven track record"**



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**"Business as usual throughout the sales process for all involved"**



From  
**£85**  
PER NIGHT



Investment



## Collet

**G**ayle and Matthew Roberts of Nice Pebbles bought their Collet apartment back in 2006. In January 2013 they sold it, complete with all furniture, bookings and goodwill to Lucy and Keith Blenkinsopp, a British couple who divide their time between Nice and South England.

### **Gayle tells her story of owning and selling Collet...**

#### **Pebbles: When did you buy Collet, and why?**

We bought Collet in early 2006, whilst we still had full time jobs in the North of England. The apartment needed a lot of work, but we were brimming with enthusiasm and energy and willing to spend some time and money on doing some work to it. It was always bought with the intention of being our pension. We would offer it as a holiday rental let and work towards clearing the mortgage over the next twenty years. However, shortly after the sale had completed, we decided to actually come and live in Nice and start our little company. This meant turning it into a holiday rental investment was put on hold and Collet became our home.

When we were ready to do the renovation, we were clear what we wanted: an open plan bedroom and bathroom which we had enjoyed on our honeymoon a few years earlier in Italy. We also invested in an expensive Roche Bobois bed that would be the centre piece of the bedroom. Chandeliers from the antiques market were bought and stored as soon as we found them. Expensive furniture from decent boutique shops was bought in the January sales. This all went into storage for a few months until we were ready and able to complete the look and feel of luxury and comfort that we absolutely knew would work. We knew there was a gap in the market for this type of rental, an affordable honeymoon pad that would make couples feel special without breaking the bank.

#### **Pebbles: Was Collet a good investment?**

Over the years when it was a holiday rental investment for us we achieved an average annual return for 2011 – 2013 of around £16,000 a year. We managed to cover the mortgage on the rental income and without noticing we were steadily whittling away at the mortgage. Consequently when the sale was completed in 2014 we were very pleased with the cheque that the notaire handed to us.

#### **Pebbles: Why did you sell Collet?**

We really didn't want to sell Collet, it was a great investment, but we had financially stretched ourselves to buy a house in Cagnes-sur-mer for our young family. We'd also decided that we wanted to have a UK base as well as a French one. When the French government announced an incentive for a reduction in CGT in late 2013 selling Collet became the sensible thing for us to do at this stage in our lives, even if it broke our hearts just a little. We could then get ourselves back onto the housing ladder in the UK. It was rather like dreaming of the holiday home in reverse!

We have no regrets at all in the purchase or sale of Collet. Collet had some fantastic memories for us. We're delighted we could sell it on as a continuing rental on our Pebbles portfolio to a like-minded couple. Like us, Lucy and Keith wanted to secure their financial future with a little investment in the holiday rental market. We are always eager to talk through the benefits of a holiday rental investment with Pebbles for couples who want to have a pension plan that is much more fun than a mutual fund, but often far more lucrative.



### **Lucy shares her story of the purchase...**

#### ***Pebbles: Why did you want to buy in Nice?***

We were looking for a coastal location with year-round sunshine situated a short distance from an international airport well-served by low cost airlines, that offers a mix of city and resort life for both long holidays and weekend breaks - and there are very few of those available. The Cote d'Azur is world renowned and whilst there were other options such as Cannes, we feel that Nice is the more vibrant city offering something for everyone. It also seems to be a city with real momentum. The opening of the Promenade de Paillon and the development of the Port area are just two examples, and the more time we spend here the more we realise just how much there is to see and to do.

#### ***Pebbles: Was it purely for investment, for pleasure or a bit of both?***

Definitely a bit of both. Nice property values are rising but it is a very slow rise and the high number of rental properties available in Nice makes the market very competitive for visitors. We are also unlikely to experience a bubble, like what happened in Spain, and the subsequent crash. Much more importantly, we wanted a property that we could spend time in ourselves several times per year. My husband is fortunate enough to be able to work from Nice and from London and I am a yoga teacher, so my work travels with me. We have a March suntan, we know that most of the restaurants and bars are open all year round, not just in the summer season, so the city always feels exciting with a choice of places to go and things to do. Just last week we discovered a champagne bar in the Old Town that has recently opened, so we spent an unexpectedly pleasant evening! We like Nice so much that we have recently purchased a second property that we are going to keep for ourselves, so that we and our family and friends have access to Nice all year round.

#### ***Pebbles: Why did you put an offer in on Collet?***

Collet is a rare gem of a property. We knew that we wanted it as soon as we saw it. The photos do not really do it justice. The building is a former monastery that oozes history, with thick walls and high ceilings that keep it cool (and quiet) in summer and warm in winter. It was tastefully (and expensively!) renovated by the previous owners, and is a really romantic space. It's location on the edge of the Old Town is right in the thick of all the tourist attractions and the beach, yet just a few steps from the open spaces of the Promenade de Paillon.

#### ***Pebbles: How did you feel when it was accepted / when you got the keys?***

Another buyer also put an asking price offer for Collet on the same day as ours, so it seemed like more of a prize when Matthew and Gayle accepted our offer over the other one. The first time we walked over the threshold we couldn't wait until it was ours, so when we finally signed we were very excited. The key is a big old iron one, and is a constant reminder of the place itself!

#### ***Pebbles: How are you finding the rental side of things?***

We are new landlords and learning as we go. We just try to offer a place that we would want to stay in ourselves, and hope that that works for other people. We know Collet has a lot of repeat guests and the reviews of Collet with Nice Pebbles speak for themselves.

#### ***Pebbles: How did you find the sales process and why did you choose Pebbles?***

The sales process was straightforward and went according to plan. Pebbles for rental was an easy choice. You don't get to be the biggest and the best by chance, you have to offer the best properties and service as customers always have another choice of somewhere to stay. It's as simple as that really.

# Serenity



Some of the Pebbles' team (Michelle, Maria and Martina) are just about recovered from Richard and Sarah Neiland's housewarming last week when they celebrated the purchase of their gorgeous three bedroom apartment on Rue Cronstadt. Thank you from the Pebbles team for a lovely evening.

The apartment became theirs in February 2014 and they have worked hard between then and May 2014 to get this ready for rental guests as well as having some special time in their apartment for themselves. Here they tell us their story.

**Pebbles:** *Why did you decide to buy in Nice?*

**Richard:** We wanted a home in France for some time and we almost bought a place in Languedoc last year. However, the new French tax changes made full time residency difficult for us, so we decided to buy a holiday home somewhere along the Riviera that was also a reliable, long-term investment. With the vagaries of the global economy to contend with, investing in a property in a popular location seemed sensible. We know that sun, good food, wine and beautiful surroundings make us very happy and making Nice our European base was an irresistible choice.

**Sarah:** Nice meets all of our needs for having fun and enjoying French life. It's a great base from which we explore some of the most fabulous parts of France and Italy. It's easy for friends and family to visit as the transport links are second to none. After careful consideration, we chose the Carre D'Or as it's a prime residential area and very popular with tourists. It was clear to us that Nice was investing in its infrastructure, parks and attractions, but hasn't become over-developed, unlike some other parts of the Riviera.

**Pebbles:** *How did you manage to buy your apartment, Serenity?*

**Sarah:** We contacted Pebbles very early in the process as the Nice Pebbles website frequently came top of the search results. Their website was very professional with great photos, lots of local information and a portfolio of high calibre properties. Pebbles looked like the company we wanted to do business with as we hadn't found any other company with an equally good online presence. From the initial phone call to testing out the service ourselves, by staying at one of their rentals, the Pebbles service proved faultless.

Gayle gave us very honest, thorough and, most importantly for us, well-informed advice on rental returns etc. She helped us to avoid months of wasted time and to quickly identify the right property at the right price in the right area. It was clear that purchasing through Nice Pebbles and then renting it out through them was the way to go. It sounds obvious, but Pebbles had every incentive to find us the best possible holiday rental property as their business relies upon successful rental. Working with a standard Immobilier would have cost the same, but they would have shown no longer-term interest in its rental success.

There were very few properties on our short list. We knew what we wanted, but there weren't many three-bedroom places in the Carre D'Or. We wanted good living space for us plus room for friends, family and kids. 'Serenity', as we decided to call it, was newly refurbished and with its white walls it was a blank canvas ready to go. It has high ceilings, loads of light, and was in a well-maintained building. It ticked all our boxes and we fell in love with it straight away.

**Pebbles:** *What drew you to this apartment?*

**Sarah:** We are light sleepers, but the guy who refurbished it explained to us that the wall, ceiling and floor had been sound insulated. It was music to our ears! It's so quiet, yet we are in the heart of the city - you can see the top of the famous Negresco Hotel from our window. The living areas are south-facing above a quiet courtyard, with a balcony that is a sun trap. We were picturing ourselves spending quality time here and we hadn't even put an offer on it! So, we did the right thing and slept on it and then tried to find fault with it. We couldn't, so the decision was made.

**Pebbles:** *How did you find the sales process?*

**Richard:** Maria at Pebbles was very helpful in getting us to this point in the sale, but there was some negotiating to do on price and contents. As well as the usual price negotiations, the owners wanted to leave all the furniture and charge us for it, most of which we didn't want. Maria's excellent



English and French meant she handled the communications for us and negotiated a final price with furniture that we were happy with. She was strong on our behalf to avoid us having to pay over the odds for things we did not want. They selected a great notaire for us who spoke English and was very patient in explaining everything which meant we had no need for a translator or English legal advice. The process here does protect you very well, you just have to accept the French way of doing things and don't expect to be able to hurry things along.

**Pebbles:** *Where are you now?*

**Sarah:** We are now sitting in the sun, fresh croissant in hand, friends around us and big smiles on our faces. We have been working our socks off to get Serenity ready to be a luxurious home from home for us and our guests. Nice Pebbles have been great partners to help us make this happen.

**Richard:** Overall, Nice is just fabulous. We are having a ball and we have made great local friends already. They clearly have a lot of patience as they put up with our appalling attempts to speak French, but great local wine and cheese have worked well to smooth things out.



# Agatha

**D**avid and Anna Grunfeld fell in love with Nice years ago as students... and then fell in love with each other. Nice had always held a special place in their hearts. In February 2014, they cemented their love for the place where they met by becoming the proud owners of our Agatha apartment on rue Droite.

*David tells us about their exciting purchase.*

**Pebbles:** *Why did you want to buy in Nice?*

As well as Nice being a very special place for us, we now live in Dubai, which is amazing but also frenetic and lacking in authenticity, so we tend to seek a more relaxed pace and cultural stimulation for our holidays – both for our children's education and our own sanity.

We spent a week in Nice a couple of years ago and fell for the place all over again. We were staying in a Nice Pebbles apartment and enjoyed the experience so much that we started to consider buying a property in Nice.

**Pebbles:** *At what stage did you contact Nice Pebbles?*

It took us a while to figure out what we were looking for. Once we knew that we wanted to be around Vieux Nice – where we had met and spent our first year together – that we wanted two bedrooms, and how much we were looking to invest, we got in touch with Nice Pebbles.

At the time, we didn't know Nice Pebbles were doing property sales, so we just wanted to figure out whether it would make sense for them to manage our property for holiday rentals, if we were to buy. Once we found out they could help us find a property and then manage it too, everything started to fall into place.

**Pebbles:** *How did you find the process up to getting the keys?*

Buying a property from a distance was never going to be easy, but the great team at Nice Pebbles supported us every step of the way.

Our apartment, Agatha, is newly renovated, and we worked with a London-based interior design firm to design and furnish it, so there were a million things to do. Pebbles also helped with banks, insurance, and even to navigate the French bureaucracy through the purchase process... no small matter.

Sure, there were a few bumps along the way, but they didn't run away when there were problems to

be solved, reinforcing our trust in them and giving us confidence that we have chosen the right partner for us moving forward.

**Pebbles:** *Was your purchase for investment, pleasure or a bit of both?*

It's an investment but we plan on enjoying it too. That's one of the great things about using it for holiday rentals – people from around the world can enjoy the apartment and experience the best of Nice and the Riviera...and so can we.

We plan on visiting at least a couple of times a year and using it as a base to explore Southern France, Italy and Spain. From winters in the nearby Alps to relaxing on the picturesque beaches in the summers...it's a tough place to beat.

**Pebbles:** *What do you think guests are going to love about Agatha?*

We're actually excited to find out – I guess it'll depend on what they're looking for.

We know the location is perfect – only a few minutes' walk from the Promenade Des Anglais, Castle Hill, the Cours Saleya, and all the amazing markets, restaurants and boutiques around the historic Old Town, the commercial centre, and the trendy Port area. And Vieux Nice has no traffic, so it's safe and quiet... but trams, buses and taxis are only a block away.

Families will also enjoy the nearby parks, the apartment's entertainment system with internet-connected TV, and hopefully the feeling of Niçois luxury...but with all the comforts and convenience of home. The fact that the building has a small elevator – one of only a handful in the Old Town – is great for younger families and our older guests.

We've put a lot of time and thought into the apartment, so we hope guests love it as much as we do.





***Pebbles: What's your favourite thing about your apartment?***

For me, I suppose it's more of a feeling. The sense of peace that comes over me when I walk in from a long day at the beach or wandering the charming streets of Vieux Nice – a true feast for the senses – to a private, stylish and serene environment.

It's not a very big place but the high ceilings and stunning Mediterranean light that floods in through the huge windows more than make up for it. Ever-changing and always mesmerising, these views are unmistakably Nice and they're how, more than anything else, I know I'm home again.

***Pebbles: Have you any tips for would be buyers?***

Be patient in your search... but ready to move quickly once you find the right place. I think you also need to be prepared to make some compromises... but never on anything that really matters. To avoid frustration, I also think buyers should be aware that it may take longer than you expect to complete everything. Enjoy the process and you'll get there in the end!



# Poppy – the owners

In February 2014, our Owners' Jim and Rachel took the plunge and went for a partial renovation of their "Poppy" apartment. The results can be seen here, just as we are going to print. We firmly believe that a good investment is about location, amenities and the way it is presented. Interior designed apartments are the ones we see time and time again being the first to book, at the highest prices, and with the highest annual returns. Yes, good décor comes at a price, but the initial outlay is always worth the investment.

**Pebbles:** *How long have you owned your apartment?*

**Rachel:** We took the plunge and bought "Poppy" back in 2003. The allure of the Riviera and Nice in general goes without saying but we choose Poppy because of the area and the generous south facing terrace and balconies leading off from the bedrooms.

At that time, outside space was *de-rigueur* so we were delighted to have found such a great terrace in our budget. The off-road parking was also very handy when we would be taking that long drive South!

**Jim:** In our opinion the area is the ideal base in Nice. We're minutes away from the Garibaldi Square and the Old Town. The Port itself is just down the road and the Promenade des Anglais and the beach is no great leg stretch. If you are travelling further afield then Riquier train station is an easy walk.

Of course there's the tram and the buses all on the doorstep. Oh, of course don't forget the mark-one-legs. We frequently walk out to Villefranche-sur-Mer over Mont Boron or around the Corniche Inferieure, there is so much to explore.

**Pebbles:** *You rented Poppy for over ten years then?*

**Jim:** In the first years of ownership it was used just by ourselves. However, it was left vacant a lot of the time since sadly we've got to work occasionally! Also the novelty of the early 70s décor was beginning to tire even me! The solution was to rent out the flat and reinvest in modernising the apartment.

**Rachel:** I spoke with several agencies but decided to liaise with Pebbles. Pebbles agreed to take us on with a mutual desire that we would renovate over time. So its since the summer of 2012 we have been with Pebbles and aside from the clear financial gains, we are very happy that others have been able to benefit from Poppy and furthermore teaming up with Pebbles has removed many of the hassles associated with foreign property ownership.

**Pebbles:** *Why did you decide to give Poppy a facelift?*

**Jim:** It was Pebbles who suggested Liz Gibney and her team to undertake the major works this spring. We'd tackled the bathroom in early 2013, and that had been enough for us to not do it alone again.

Although we were remote through the whole process from planning to completion we were confident to be in good hands Communication with Liz was both by phone and email made as feel as if we were almost "on-site". It ended up much more than a facelift, we have replaced the whole kitchen and installed air-conditioning and given Poppy some serious love.

**Rachel:** We came for a holiday arriving on the 18th April 2014 and this was the big day – the day we would see the renovated apartment for the first time. We admit to being apprehensive as we took the bus from the airport to Garibaldi square then the short walk to Poppy...well, what a transformation!

It is bright, modern and functional. There was also not a speck of dirt or dust anywhere. Clearly a very high standard of workmanship has been employed. The kitchen is now a dream to work in. We're so looking forward to enjoying the new Poppy for years to come and we hope our guests will too.



*Some of Liz Gibney's work can also be seen on pages 102 - 103 where we showcase Favourites with Facelifts.*



# Poppy – the designer

**W**e've heard from our Owners, now let's hear from the designer. **Liz Gibney** has done over a dozen refurbishments for happy Pebbles Owners, and we now call on her for her advice when we think a property is starting to show the signs of age.

Poppy apartment was one of twenty that we highlighted at the end of 2013 and was no longer up to our high standards. Rental income was starting to decrease and it was time to take action.

**Pebbles: What struck you that needed improvement when you first looked around?**

**Liz:** The apartment has a number of really good attributes which were hidden by the general presentation. The kitchen was very old fashioned and dark and the furnishings were showing signs of wear. The words which came to mind were 'unrealised potential'.

**Pebbles: Tell us about the project**

**Liz:** Having submitted our report Gayle discussed the contents with Rachel and Jim, the owners. They took the critique well and decided to get the apartment back on track. Since first making contact with Rachel and Jim I couldn't have asked for better clients who were open, committed and enthusiastic to do what needed to be done to get the project completed before the season came into full swing. They gave me quite a challenge: a full refurbishment; new kitchen, air conditioning, redecoration, new furniture throughout and curtains. And all to be completed in 6 weeks!

And we did it – together. To pull this off required a high degree of co-operation from Rachel and Jim and complete trust in me. Whilst of course I always like to have a good idea of the client's tastes since it's ultimately their apartment, there are the guests and all important return to consider too. Rachel and Jim gave me a clear brief and then let me get on with it, within their budget. Though we all knew that with a big project like this there would be unforeseen challenges, we were able to agree clear parameters in which to work, which I think is essential so there are no nasty surprises.

**Pebbles: Were there any challenges?**

**Liz:** The six week timescale was of course the biggest, but the kitchen also needed careful planning. I wanted to create more work surface and to include the ever growing important amenity

– a dishwasher. So, the kitchen has been made to measure and has been a head-scratcher at times right down to the last day, as we made adaptations right down to the final day.

Another challenge, as always, was the deliveries and getting things quickly in France. This is never easy! For example, we needed a specific sink to fit under the work surface and since our supplier in France could only oblige in six weeks we sourced the sink from the UK and had it shipped directly to the granite suppliers which meant they could make the cut-out for the sink. The extra bonus was that by shipping directly to the granite suppliers we were able to fit the work surface a week earlier than anticipated.

**Pebbles: What do you think is now special for Pebbles guests?**

**Liz:** It is very hard to isolate any one thing. The changes we have made and the investment in good quality furniture have created a lovely light, calm and comfortable space. The balconies are a great asset and, of course, with the new beds, bedding AND air conditioning the guests can look forward to a great night's sleep. It will be a pleasure to cook in the well-equipped and bright kitchen whilst enjoying their efforts in a chic dining space. Rachel and Jim have gone the full mile in investing in everything from the big things to the little things to make it a special holiday home for the Nice Pebbles guests.

**Pebbles: What is your favourite part of the whole design of a project?**

**Liz:** I have a great passion for the creation of a lovely ambiance and I believe this is what makes a space a home. This is always a mix of utilising the space to its fullest (which often means changing the space as we have done with Poppy) with lovely furniture, lighting and soft furnishings. I love mixing colours and textures and interesting objects to achieve a great balance of comfort, peace and practicality. I love what I do so I have to say I love everything about a project, but especially seeing the client's face when they see it for the first time.



Before After



Before

**Pebbles:** *What do you think Owners need to look for when embarking on a facelift or complete overhaul?*

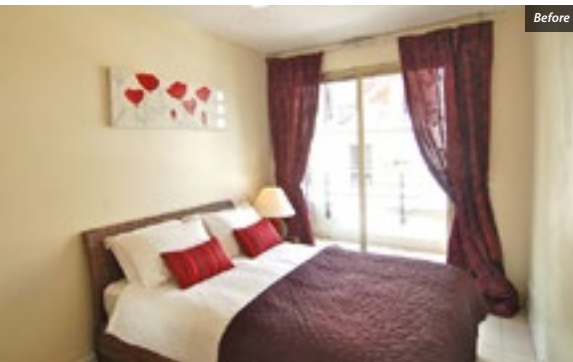
**Liz:** At the very base level the owners need to decide what they want to achieve. Is the apartment purely for investment? Is the apartment a mix of second home and investment? This has an impact on the extent to which personal taste comes into the equation. Even if the apartment is a second home you need to imagine a guest arriving in a new place and making that place their home for the length of their break. Not an easy trick to please so many people.

Having worked with Nice Pebbles for some years now I have learned that the successful rental apartments are those which cater for a wide range of tastes and have the basic constituents identified by Gayle and Matt right at the start of their business. The apartment checklist is a good starting point for highlighting these basics.

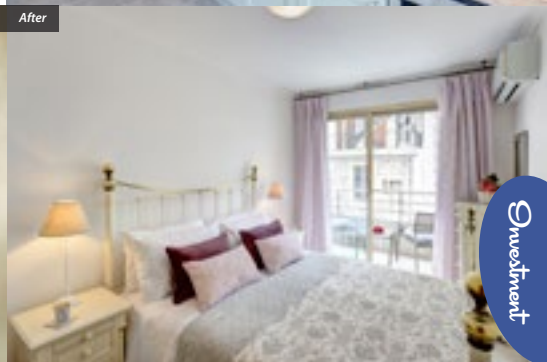
One more thing I think is worth stating. If you have a successful rental apartment, it will get a lot of use and of course that's what you want. To maximise this, invest in the best quality furniture you can afford and go for hard wearing and practical items. The trick is to match good looks with practicality.



After



Before After



# Lost in Translation?

There are dozens of scenarios in France where you need to put your trust in a translator. Perhaps you are setting up a business or setting down roots or even purchasing a second home and need a translator at the final signing. If you are looking for the personal touch when your French simply won't cut it, then look no further than Florence Fauconnier.

"The Riviera was the homeland of two of my great grandmothers, and it is also mine. It seems that I was born under a shooting star for I am so fond of the Mediterranean. What is more, I had the opportunity to travel, study and work abroad for many years, before settling back again in Nice.

I'm French but through my varied career I have lived in London, Helsinki and even St Petersburg. I've been very lucky to have found a career that I love and would like to think that my understanding of people's needs and expectations comes from listening attentively and my experience of different cultures.

Academic studies, combined together with a wide experience in different language related fields allows me to provide tailor made services. My commitment to meet the highest standards in professional ethics, such as for instance strict confidentiality or respect of the customer's own business contacts, ensure trustful relations in the long run.

I've worked as a translator and interpreter for the Trade and Economy Department of the French Embassy, as well as the Belgium Embassy in Helsinki. I have a master's degree in Translation from the University of Helsinki and I have studied law at the University of Nice – Sophia Antipolis. I have been an official Court translator and interpreter for ten years for the French to Finnish languages. For this, you need to be very precise. I operate the same principles when translating between English and French.

I've also worked at several language schools in France and Finland. I enjoy teaching languages and would tell anyone there is no mystery for success; one has to be actively involved in the learning process and immerse themselves as fully as possible. My input consists in explaining a few rules which might not be clearly stated in most books, finding adequate material to study from, listen to the

learner in order to provide with a helpful motivation to push forward.

My love of translating is a gift and I don't take the responsibility lightly. Reading someone's text is like reading this person's mind. I translate not only words, but also strive to make the translated text work as the author wished to convey it. Open communication with my clients is what I always aim for.

Interpreting is, in my mind, similar to dancing. One has to practise covertly for a long time before performing with an intense concentration and a semblance of ease. And as the music plays, interpreting simply takes over and afterwards all you remember are the persons meeting in tune. I can be a simultaneous cabin interpreter during a conference or an interpreter hired for helping in negotiations.

When I am not working, you will not find me on the ski slopes! I had enough of snow during my twenty seven years in Finland. I prefer to enjoy the sunshine on my back as I jog along the Promenade or tend to my secret garden nestled in the courtyard of my city apartment. My garden is my own treasure of the French Riviera and I hope you find your own discoveries in this wonderful part of the world."

## **Florence Fauconnier**

48 avenue Jean Médecin  
06000 Nice

☎ **06.16.28.27.23**

[florence.fauconnier7@orange.fr](mailto:florence.fauconnier7@orange.fr)

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## The Money Men – Peter Brooke

**H**aving now lived on the Cote D'Azur for over 10 years I have seen many changes, experienced a global *and local* financial crisis and seen friends come and go during this time. I love seeing my children (now 8 and 5... where does time go?) get involved with the diverse cultural and lifestyle aspects of living somewhere like this, they both are learning to ski, are great swimmers and are completely bilingual, I hope one day they may thank us for this... but I doubt it!

I have always been someone who quite likes change from time to time. Crises, often have a way of clearing "rubbish from the system" and resetting our own quality control which often gets overlooked when things are going well. The recent global financial crisis certainly did this and doing business in France and across Europe has certainly become even more difficult, though not impossible, even if sometimes it feels that way.

The property market on the Riviera is a great example of this... though not a complete collapse, it went VERY quiet for a while as people watched and waited; many local estate agents went to the wall, banks closed their international branches, building firms shut up shop and investors sold where they could and often felt the pain of having to sell quickly.

From where we are today, we can see that the businesses that survived, Spectrum and Pebbles are good examples of this, have strong business models, offer excellent service, have diverse income streams and planned well for the recovery.

Whilst running a business in France is still an expensive venture, and even though our clientele has become much more deliberate in its planning and seeking more information than ever before, I think this is all good news. I much prefer my clients to make decisions about their money, their property and their futures for themselves. I enjoy my role a lot more when engaging fully with someone, knowing they are going to be glad they planned later on. This is so much more rewarding than filling out an order for a mortgage or pension plan.

It's certainly not all been doom and gloom, the Cote D'Azur is a fantastic place to live and work and my business has continued to expand into other interesting areas. For example the tax advantages of using a *back to back* mortgage solution have become more apparent, especially for non-residents and we continue to try and find secure, reputable and sensible banks to work with on this sort of planning.

For those who are now resident in France or considering it, then there are some more heavily policed rules to consider in terms of declaring foreign accounts on your tax return; there has been a lot of discussion about exactly what needs to be declared and so, for the record, our view is that it is anything that adds to your '*Patrimoine*' or wealth... this includes bank accounts, investments, property, ISAs etc.

Also for those renting out their properties in France it is imperative to declare your rental income to the French authorities, I am surprised by how few owners realise this, you must also declare to your home tax authorities too, and shouldn't be taxed twice on the same income, depending on where you live.

Keeping up with tax changes in France is a full time job and I am delighted to work within Spectrum as we have a huge range of skill and knowledge across our team of 20 advisers in France and a further thirty across five other European countries. Many of us specialise in certain areas such as UK pensions or Tax and so using our services doesn't just mean you access me and my abilities but also that of the entire group as well as our specialist networks too.

In Nice I work with Stephanie Glasper of HENT associates – she is a tax lawyer who helps many of my clients with detailed tax advice and structures, I cannot speak highly enough of her skill set. Please do spend the time to plan your investment in France, don't hesitate to speak to ALL of the local experts you can to build the best possible plan for you and your family. Be deliberate – it's your money after all and remember... With Care, You Prosper.

**Peter Brooke**  
[peter.brooke@spectrum-ifa.com](mailto:peter.brooke@spectrum-ifa.com)

## ABOUT PETER

*For 5 years Peter was based in London advising clients in addressing the balance, structure and performance of their investment portfolios. He now specialises in addressing the unique financial planning needs of expatriates and those with cross-border interests. He has a detailed knowledge of international product providers and tax-efficient structures that can assist in asset building, asset protection and, ultimately, estate planning. Peter is an honours graduate of the University of Sussex and not only holds the UKSIPP Investment Management Certificate but also the Chartered Institute of Insurers (CII) Financial Planning Certificate. He is a member of the CII and a certified member of the Personal Finance Society (Cert PFS).*



**The Spectrum IFA Group**  
Independent Financial Advisers

[www.spectrum-ifa.com/peter-brooke/](http://www.spectrum-ifa.com/peter-brooke/)

Mobile: +33.(0)6.87.13.68.71

Tel: +33.(0)9.70.44.98.85

Fax: +33.(0)4.93.00.01.14

Skype: **pbrooke**

### **The Spectrum IFA Group**

Media Garden Hotel,  
120 Route des Macarons,  
06560 Valbonne, France

### **TSG Insurance Services S.A.R.L.**

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# French Mortgages – the basic facts

The single most important element in successfully getting a mortgage in France is income. There is no 'self certification' in France. Strict Banque de France lending laws state that your total debt cannot exceed more than one third of your total income.

In some circumstances it is possible to have a slightly higher allowance. So if you earn €6000 per month then your mortgages (including the new one), credit cards, rent, and other debt repayments cannot exceed €2000 per month. The income may be net or gross, depending on the bank.

As an EU, but non-French resident, you can apply for a loan up to 85% of the value. You must then fund the 15% deposit plus the notary costs. Non-EU residents may only be able to borrow up to 70%. The loans can be for up to 30 years, depending on your age and the bank.

Notary fees work out to approximately 7.2% in government taxes (like stamp duty), plus 1% in notary fees and approximately 1% of the mortgage amount (if you are taking a mortgage) to assign the bank's legal interest in the property. Estimate 8% of the purchase price when preparing to buy and this should cover everything.

All mortgage interest rates in France are linked to the three-month or 12-month Euribor index (Euro Interbank Offer Rate). See [www.euribor.org](http://www.euribor.org)

## TYPES OF LOANS

### VARIABLE INTEREST RATES

Linked to a Euribor Index plus the bank's margin. Some banks offer variable rate mortgages that can safeguard against rises in the interest rates by capping the maximum rate or by extending the term of the loan rather than raising the monthly payment. Most products also give you the option to convert to a fixed interest rate at any time.

### FIXED INTEREST RATES

The rate and repayments are fixed for the whole term, so you know exactly what you will be paying each month. Fixed rates are usually higher than variable rates and tend to have penalties for early redemption.

### INTEREST ONLY MORTGAGES

Hugely popular in the UK and US, interest only deals are becoming more available in France. There are three main types:

- **Assurance Vie Linked (In Finé)**

*Instead of placing your deposit into the property you take a 100% Interest Only loan and invest the deposit (minimum of 20%) into a French investment scheme that runs along side the mortgage. These schemes can have significant tax planning advantages and can offer flexibility if you are going to buy and sell a lot of properties as they can be kept as the deposit for the next purchase.*

- **Dual Phase**

*Some banks offer a product that is Interest Only for five or ten years and then becomes a repayment loan for ten to 25 years. This is particularly useful if you believe you will pay off large sums in the first period.*

- **Asset Backed**

*A few banks now offer an 80% interest only product that simply requires you to provide proof that you hold other net assets valued between 120% and 150% of the loan amount. This is a very good and popular product, especially to those who own other properties.*

### BUY TO LET MORTGAGES

Buy to let loans don't exist in France. Future rent can be taken into account but banks will only take 80 percent of the possible rent as part of their calculation and you must still be able to afford the loan without it.

### EQUITY RELEASE

More common since the boom in property prices, you can now release up to 70% of the value of the property. Usually a reason for the release is required, but the list of options is broad.

Refinance, bridging loans, renovation costs and loan consolidation solutions are also all available in France.

## Where there's a Will...



So you've bought on the French Riviera, all the necessary furnishings are in place and you have management and even an accountant in place and now it's time to simply enjoy. But you know something is niggling at you...yep, it's the planning for the future when you might not be around. *déjà vu*, *déjà vu*. What's the rush?

Sadly you could be leaving a big headache behind for your loved ones if you leave it until the tomorrow that never arrives. Many of our clients ask us about succession laws in France, so here we talk to Graeme Perry, of Sykes Anderson Perry to explain the basics of succession laws with your overseas property.

**Pebbles:** *Many of our Clients, or those who have bought here will have an English Will. Will their French property be covered in their English Will?*

**Graeme:** It can be but this is likely to cause considerable complications so it is advisable to have a separate French will.

**Pebbles:** *Why is a French Will advisable?*

**Graeme:** Firstly, matters commonly dealt with in English Wills, such as the appointment of trustees and the creation of trusts, are not appropriate in respect of a French property. A further issue is the treatment of minor children. Any property left to beneficiaries in France is transferred to them automatically on death rather than being held on trust for their benefit. The mechanisms in France are difficult to put in place if the minors are neither French nationals nor French residents.

**Pebbles:** *What about forced heirship rules?*

**Graeme:** French Law will effectively dictate that certain individuals are "reserved heirs". The simplest provisions in France are those from a parent to their child. Where a parent leaves one child, they may only freely dispose of one-half of their French estate, reducing to 1/3 where there are two children and 1/4 where there are three or more children. Spouses can be left a special legacy that can "encroach" on the share received by the children.

**Pebbles:** *What can be done about this?*

**Graeme:** It is essential that this is planned around and considered in advance, rather than survivors dealing with unpleasant family situations at a stressful time. Without considering these issues, unwelcome scenarios can arise such as descendants, normally children, and, say, a second wife jointly owning the

same property. Alternatively, a family may have agreed that adult children would renounce their forced heirship rights. If this option has not been made in the required form, the notaire will often refuse to carry out the request, taking the view that the non-French beneficiaries are not aware of the full impact of their decisions. In our experience, without specialist cross-border probate assistance, such matters are rarely resolved successfully.

**Pebbles:** *Will there be inheritance tax in France?*

**Graeme:** French property falls within the scope of French inheritance tax even if you are not resident or domiciled in France at the date of death. It applies very differently to UK inheritance tax and it is important to consider this in detail when you are putting your Wills in place.

**Pebbles:** *Will the position change in the future?*

**Graeme:** There is new European legislation which comes into effect in August 2015, which seeks to offer more certainty on succession rules. One particularly significant aspect is that individuals should be able to elect for the law of their nationality to apply to the succession of all their assets throughout the EU regardless of the law where the assets are located. At present the UK has opted out of this but France has not so it should be possible for English people to elect for English Law to apply to their French assets from August 2015. It is possible to make an election in French Wills now for English Law to apply from August 2015. This would mean that the succession is not governed by the forced heirship rules after that date.

**sykesandersonperry limited**

Solicitors UK & International Law

**Graeme Perry, Solicitor and Director  
Sykes Anderson Perry Ltd**

9 Devonshire Square, London EC2M 4YF

T: 020 3178 3770 E: [graeme.perry@saplaw.co.uk](mailto:graeme.perry@saplaw.co.uk)

[www.saplaw.co.uk](http://www.saplaw.co.uk)

# The Money Men – Arnaud Ruff

## ...how can Arnaud Ruff help?

All of us can feel a little lost when faced with tax rules and regulations. Even more so in a foreign country. A small downside of dipping your toes into the French Property Market is that you have to get to grips with some of the French tax system, a system notoriously hard to navigate. It pays to get decent advice and help from the off.

Buying a property is one thing, but if you are thinking of a permanent move to France, or starting a business here, then proper advice from the beginning is essential.

We were pleased as punch to find Arnaud Ruff, an English speaking accountant whose firm specialises in helping clients who are looking to move to France, who live in France already or who want to buy property in France as a holiday home or as a buy-to-let investment.

Hopefully our clients will find like we did that once you bring in the professionals you'll find the French system isn't quite as daunting or as costly as first feared.

Arnaud Ruff is happy to share some principles of French tax law with our readers that might help you understand the basics. However, there is never any substitute for individually tailored advice, which might save you thousands of pounds in the long run.

### WEALTH TAX

Foreigners who buy property in France as a simple holiday home are not subject to French income tax if it's privately used only. They may be subject to wealth tax if the value of the property exceeds 1,300,000€ (updated in the 2014 Finance bill) though the net worth of the property can be offset by any loans or mortgages taken out to finance the purchase.

The tax rate is:

- 0.50% above 800,000€ and below 1,300,000€
- 0.70 % above 1,300,000€ and below 2 570 000€
- 1% above 2,570,000€ and below 5,000,000€
- 1.25% above 5,000,000€ and below 10,000,000€
- and it goes up to 1.50 % above 10,000,000€ of net wealth.

### CAPITAL GAINS TAX

Currently, you can benefit from a reduction in the tax base from the 5th year of ownership and you can be completely exempt from this tax after 22 years. The tax rate for capital gains tax varies and can be either 19% or 33.33% depending on the seller's country of residence. In addition to the CGT, there are additional social charges of 15.5% that are completely written off after 30 years.

### LOW CAPITAL CIVIL COMPANY (SCI)

You may buy property in France as an individual or through a low capital civil company (SCI in French). An SCI offers numerous fiscal and legal advantages and property held through an SCI equally benefits from the same capital gains tax exemptions as individuals do if the rental is unfurnished. Another major selling point of this kind of structure is that it allows for a straightforward inheritance process if properly done. A potential drawback is that if you decide to rent out your property furnished through an SCI, your income will be subject to corporation tax at a rate of either 15 % or 33.33 % and you will not benefit from the capital gains tax exemption available for individuals.

### RENTAL INCOME

Non-residents and French residents alike who let their properties in France can choose to do so furnished or unfurnished. This will have an impact on the base calculation of tax, so this is something to keep in mind.

For unfurnished lettings, you may choose to be taxed on your real net income or on 70% of your total income if this is under 15,000€ per year. If you prefer to be taxed on your real income, you may deduct interest payments on most outgoings including mortgage payments and maintenance and repair costs.

For furnished lettings, you may choose to be taxed on your real net income or on 50 % of your total income if this is under 32,600€ per year. If you prefer to be taxed on your real income, you may deduct interest payments on most outgoings including mortgage payments, maintenance and repair costs, accounting fees and an allowance for depreciation of assets in the property.

### **INCOME TAX RATES**

Non-residents with rental income from property in France are taxed only on their French income at a minimum rate of 20% or higher, depending on the amount of annual income.

### **BECOMING A FRENCH TAX RESIDENT**

Perhaps surprisingly, some foreigners pay less income tax in France than they would do in their home countries. This is often because income tax is mainly calculated on the number of people that make up a household and not only the total household income. Large families (three children or more) can often pay very little or no tax even if household earnings are high. There are also a number of tax credits related to expenses including hiring a maid (limited to 7500€), investing in making your home energy efficient, and childcare.

Before large families start packing their bags though, there can also be pitfalls with the French system. To make the most of any advantages, becoming a French tax resident must be a clearly thought out process and should be planned well in advance.

If you do not want to become a French tax resident you should avoid spending more than 182 days in France.

### **TAX RETURNS**

Tax returns are usually due in at the end of May for residents and at the end of June for EU residents. It is very important to respect the deadline as late payment charges are usually incurred for returns submitted after this date.

**Note:** the above information relates to basic French tax law. Each case must be carefully studied on its own. French tax law is subject to change or to alteration by the Government. (March 2014).



### **ABOUT ARNAUD**

*I specialise in helping English-speaking and international clients with their fiscal and legal matters in France. Years of experience in these fields and with this clientele have allowed me to build up a large database that I can tap into and adapt to the needs of each client. It's a great feeling knowing that I've saved my clients from a lot of headaches!*

*On a more personal note, as you would expect from any self-respecting Frenchman, I appreciate the fine wines and cuisine my country has to offer. I like to think of myself as a wine lover so I would be quite willing to share my knowledge in this department with any potential clients! I also take advantage of the weather our region is blessed with by spending lots of times outdoors, be it skiing in the Alps just an hour away from Nice in the winter, running and cycling around or just enjoying our wonderful region.*



**RUFF & ASSOCIÉS**  
Chartered Accountant

**Arnaud Ruff**

Qualified Chartered Accountant

**Cabinet RUFF & Associés**, 4, rue du Docteur Barety, 06045

[www.ruffetassocies.com](http://www.ruffetassocies.com)

Email: [arnaud.ruff@ruffetassocies.com](mailto:arnaud.ruff@ruffetassocies.com)

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Halifax	1.19	£20	£1,701
RBS	1.18	£10	£1,705
Barclays	1.17	£25	£1,734
Natwest	1.16	£22	£1,746

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