

With its year-round sunshine, Menton on the Côte d'Azur makes an ideal winter break

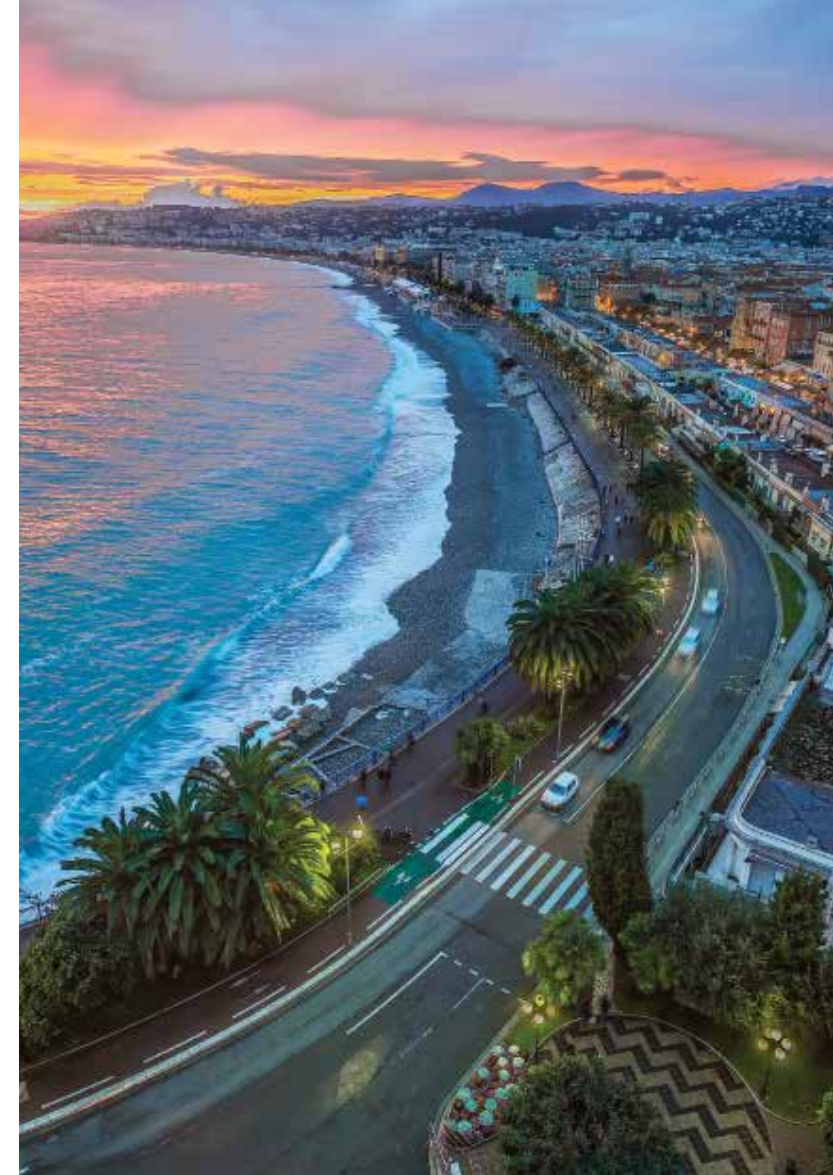


# Winter on the RIVIERA

Whenever the Côte d'Azur is mentioned, one immediately pictures the cloudless blue skies and busy promenades of summer. But as **Tristan Rutherford** discovers, the region is just as welcoming over the winter months, with the benefits of a moderate climate, an array of carnivals and events, and all the local museums and art galleries to yourself... »



“THE ARRIVAL OF THE RAILWAY MEANT THAT THE TWO-WEEK JOURNEY FROM LONDON TO NICE WAS SLASHED TO UNDER 30 HOURS”



**Clockwise from above:**

Originally built to attract the wealth of Europe, the Hôtel Regina is now a set of apartments; Nice's Promenade des Anglais at sunset; the old port at Cap-Ferrat; a French postcard of the monument to Queen Victoria in Cimiez; the Russian Orthodox Cathedral in Nice – the largest in Western Europe – was opened by Tsar Nicholas II in 1912

Those who winter in the South of France sojourn in the shadow of greats. The blazing winter sun tempted 19th-century celebrity to the Côte d'Azur: royalty, nobility, artists, authors. Just as *café* follows *déjeuner*, the merely wealthy followed the fabulously minted south. All the accoutrements that sparkle on today's French Riviera date from that golden age. Grand hotels, casinos, seafront promenades. Castles, art collections, public galleries. Theatres, opera houses, stately homes.

The initial attraction was obvious – especially to those burdened by the aristocratic afflictions of yesteryear: tuberculosis, gout and family disgrace. From December through March, most of the cloud is captured in the Alpes-Maritimes' mountains that backdrop the Côte d'Azur to the north, allowing the low sun to orbit underneath to the south. For every rainy day in winter, there are five dry ones. Sunshine cured the lungs of the consumptive; citrus healed the overweight; wine and laughter fuelled the dissolute who had already imbibed too much back home. Postcards, court circulars and scandalous snippets from *The Times* kept punters coming back for more.

By and large, today's visitors ignore the winter. The Côte d'Azur welcomes a mammoth 650,000 visitors per day in mid-August, yet just 50,000 per day in gloriously sunny December and January, rendering the museums

and palaces empty, inviting and tourist-free. Hotels halve in price, restaurants serve oyster and truffle lunchtime specials, and your neighbourhood *boulangier* will welcome you like an honorary local. In truth, the sun shines on anyone who's willing to railroad, fly or drive the short journey south.

**TRACKS OF TOURISM**

In 1863 a novel invention changed global tourism for good. The arrival of the railway meant that the two-week journey from London to Nice was slashed to under 30 hours. Lords and ladies could board at Charing Cross for afternoon tea, then be in the South of France for supper the following evening. The Côte d'Azur became the world's first 'long haul' destination, although guests aboard sipped claret, played Bezique and dined on roast quail. For these well-heeled travellers, 'economy' was unknown. The passenger list on what would become known as Le Train Bleu read like a *Who's Who* of *fin de siècle* celebrity, from Edward VIII to Winston Churchill.

Nice's Musée Massena history museum exhibits train tickets from Le Train Bleu, as well as menus from masked balls (with plenty of *crème anglaise* for dessert) plus portraits of white-suited gentlemen thronging the Promenade des Anglais, where *Niçois* of all ages now meet on New Year's Day for a chilly swim in the sea. A century ago, debutantes could come out during the Riviera's winter 'season'. The ropiest



MAGIS © FOTOLIA, J.J. PANGRAZI

no-hopers could travel on to Cairo via Genoa in anticipation of marrying an Indian Army officer or a colonial clerk. An annotated map on the museum's second storey captures the age: this 1875 *cadastre* (a French street map that *Notaires* give to property buyers) highlights the Cours Saleya boulevard along with the name and nationality of its residents. Like an Airbnb of the age, English milords, American magnates and a Russian Count have reserved the most desirable addresses for a high-season fling.

**VICTORIA'S SECRET**

The period's most celebrated arrival was Queen Victoria in 1882. The Empress of India travelled to the Riviera for another five sun-kissed winters until 1899. She travelled by private train, which would stop for an hour each morning for gentlemen to shave and ladies to dress themselves. Up to 100 staff would join her on the slow journey south to Gare de Nice-Ville (Queen Vic disliked travelling faster than 30mph) including kilted Scottish gillie John Brown and her turbaned private secretary, Abdul Karim.

A building boom was precipitated by Queen Victoria's stays of months at a time. The Hôtel Regina in Nice's ritzy suburb of Cimiez was built with the specific intention of wowing the royal family. It boasted electronic elevators and oil-fired central heating. Other madcap homes – Moorish castles, Roman villas, Normandy châteaux – were constructed nearby. Half »





The rose-coloured Villa Ephrussi was built for Baroness Béatrice de Rothschild at the turn of the 20th century. Its collection of art and antiquities is now open to the public



Monaco's casino was purpose-built to attract the rich and famous; how Nice advertised its winter train timetable



a century later, painter Henri Matisse moved into the Regina Palace hotel. His Musée Matisse, plus the museum dedicated to contemporary Marc Chagall, sit just around the corner in a suburb that still embodies Nice's old money sophistication.

Nobility of Victoria's calibre attracted the great houses of Europe – most of whom were related to the Empress anyway. Her Majesty bumped into her first cousin, Belgian King Leopold II, on the beach in Villefranche-sur-Mer. From distant Moscow a direct train would rattle its way from Belorusskaya Station via Smolensk and Minsk to Menton and Monaco. In winter 1912, Tsar Nicholas II sailed on the Russian royal yacht into the Port of Nice. His stately procession along the seafront Promenade was captured on flickering celluloid by the Lumière brothers, the Spielbergs of their day. The Russian Emperor was in town to open Nice's Orthodox Cathedral. The onion-domed edifice remains the largest of its kind in Western Europe, its interior a moody, broody kaleidoscope of candlelit icons and shimmering gold.

### BROKEN BANK AT MONTE CARLO

Back in the 1850s, Monaco was in dire straits. A series of poor lemon harvests in the territory of Menton – now the sunniest town in France – meant the ruling Grimaldi family was staring bankruptcy in the face. Charles III, Prince of Monaco, was tasked with a Dubai-style plan: build a whopping great casino and a series of grand hotels in the hope that high rollers would check in for winter. The ploy worked. Paris Opera House architect Charles Garnier designed the gaming halls. Queen Victoria contrived – and failed – to keep her pleasure-loving son Prince Bertie (later King Edward VII) from the roulette table. Vladimir Lenin also stopped by and fumed that the general public were gambling money on a mere “game of chance” –

IMAGE © FOTOLIA

## “BACK IN THE 1850s, MONACO WAS IN DIRE STRAITS... THE RULING GRIMALDI FAMILY WAS STARING BANKRUPTCY IN THE FACE”

which, if you're not a Bolshevik, is terribly good fun. In a final piece of PR puff, the Spélugues area (which translates as ‘caves’) was rechristened Monte-Carlo in honour of the ruling monarch.

To ensure that *Monégasques* don't fritter away their inheritance – Monaco's rulers are far from stupid – proof of overseas identity is needed to enter the Casino de Monte-Carlo. Ionic columns support the roof of the Salon Europe. Here roulette and blackjack are played under gilded ceilings for maximum bets of €10,000 – to wager more, have a word with the croupier then stroll on to the Salons Privés. Alas, to access Les Salons Super Privés it helps if you're staying at the Hôtel de Paris across the street, as a top-secret tunnel connects these two establishments. If you can't afford the hotel's €8,000 Garnier Suite, then a French 75 cocktail in its Bar Américain or lunch at its recently reopened Restaurant Louis XV (the only Michelin three-star for hundreds of miles around) might be more appropriate.

To add an artsy sense of class, a theatre was tacked onto the Casino de Monte-Carlo in the winter of 1879. Actress Sarah Bernhardt kicked off proceedings in January of that year. The most famous troupe of the time, Sergei Diaghilev's Ballets Russes, were stranded in the South of France by the Russian Revolution. Such was the region's cultural muscle that performances boasted costumes by Coco Chanel, sets by Pablo >>

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**Clockwise from above:** The advent of the railroad saw the South of France become the first 'long haul' destination for the well-heeled; Villefranche-sur-Mer – once the haunt of the monarchs of Europe; the Côte d'Azur's legendary Grand-Hôtel du Cap-Ferrat

Picasso and posters by Jean Cocteau. Opéra de Monte-Carlo's spellbinding 2017 season features Il Trovatore, which was first performed here in February 1884. Let's hope it's not disturbed by the Rallye de Monte-Carlo, which tears from the ski slopes high in the Alpes-Maritimes down to Casino Square.

**DRIVING WINTER TOURISM HOME**

Drive west along the Corniche coastal road in summer and you'll be stuck behind something as prosaic as a Carrefour delivery truck. Drive west in winter and you could double as Cary Grant in *To Catch a Thief*. The coastal road ribbons past orchards and ornamental gardens, past islands and beachy creeks, all beset with winter sprinkles of mimosa, bougainvillea and early citrus blossom. Veer off the main highway to spot Bonelli's eagles near Cap d'Ail, and multi-coloured Fischer's Lovebirds in Cap-Ferrat, the latter the descendants of escapees from a rich man's menagerie.

A century ago, it was wealthy *hivernants* who flocked to Cap-Ferrat. Not content with being the largest landowner in the world, Leopold II, King of the Belgians, also owned most of the peninsula, then (as now) the priciest spit of land on the planet. He sold the Cap piecemeal to aristocratic acquaintances. Wealthy divorcee Béatrice de Rothschild snapped up the prime piece of real estate on the peninsula's highest point and set about building a bright pink château of fairy-tale proportions.

In 1912 her Villa Ephrussi de Rothschild was finally complete. Béatrice furnished the winter home (other seasonal residences included Paris and Deauville) by having Sèvres porcelain and 5,000 other works of art railroaded to Beaulieu train station. (It helped that the Rothschild family owned a ruling stake in the Chemins de Fer de Paris à Lyon et à la Méditerranée.) On the platform, Béatrice would rifle through the antiques and



**A FOODIE HEAVEN**

With its fair share of Michelin-starred restaurants plus a variety of homegrown dishes, the Côte d'Azur is a great place for both fine dining and rustic fare while overlooking the Mediterranean



Niçoise cuisine is so tasty that city elders are bidding for UNESCO recognition of 90 key recipes including Salade Niçoise. Seasonal ingredients like these play a key role.

With just 70 hectares under vine, AOC Bellet is among the smallest appellations in France, and the only one found entirely within city limits. The two indigenous grape varieties, Braquet and Folle noire, pre-

date the Riviera's Roman occupation. Look out for early vintages in the tasting rooms of **Cave Bianchi** (7 rue Raoul Bosio, Nice) in winter.

The pungent winter truffles found in restaurants like **Terre du Truffes** (11 rue Saint Francois de Paule, Nice) hail from foraging parties high the Alpes-Maritimes' oak forests. Less pricey seasonal fungi include chanterelles and ceps.

Mediterranean seafood comes into its own after New Year: Snap up a bag of oysters, urchins or bulots (sea snails) from Nice's locals-only Libération Market.

have the best bits wagoned back to her mansion. Thirty gardeners dressed in naval uniforms with red pompom hats tended to the nine ornamental gardens.

Such shenanigans served to attract more wintering wealthy. In 1908 the Grand-Hôtel du Cap-Ferrat pushed open its revolving doors. Thanks to a mini microclimate that suffuses the peninsula with even more sunny days than the Côte d'Azur's habitual 300, the hotel remains a year-round retreat. The concierge can arrange a private after-hours visit to the Villa Ephrussi de Rothschild, as it can to former Cocteau home of Villa Santo Sospir just around the corner.

**ARTIST'S LIGHT**

A few miles further east, Friedrich Nietzsche wintered in Nice for health reasons in 1883 – there's a plaque outside his home on Rue de Foresta to prove it. For five successive seasons the sunlight eased his mental state. While hiking the 400m up to the ancient village perché of Èze, the German composed the third act of *Also Sprach Zarathustra* – the path twists and turns as tortuously as Nietzsche's philosophical text. The trail should only be attempted in winter when wildflowers sparkle and sage and thyme garland the route.

The same piercing winter light shone on the hundreds of other artists and writers who made the Côte d'Azur their home. Matisse fled south from Paris and awoke to see the sun: "When I realised that every morning I would see this light again I couldn't believe how lucky I was." The names of painters who moved south – Picasso, Renoir, Léger, Chagall, Bonnard – read like the Sale of the Century at Sotheby's. Although their respective museums that litter the landscape from Nice to Le Cannet are essentially empty in the off-season.

Whether that can be considered a shame or not depends on your view. Thanks to a dozen winter festivals and a new programme of year-round hotel openings, thousands more are discovering the off-season charms of the Côte d'Azur. Once again, the train tracks both east and west rattle with long-distance carriages running direct from Moscow (a luxurious 47-hour journey) and London (just nine hours with a quick platform change in Marseille). The French Riviera is just as sublime, and just as sunny, as it ever was. **FT**

● For more information on visiting the region see [www.cotedazur-tourisme.com](http://www.cotedazur-tourisme.com)





## A DOZEN HISTORIC SIGHTS ON THE CÔTE D'AZUR

Our selection of the must-visit places for travellers touring the South of France

The Alpes-Maritimes is the second most-visited region of France. Its ritzy backstory renders it awash with cultural sights, several of them once the private villas of the ostentatiously loaded. Even Nice, France's fifth-largest city, hosts more museums than any other French town outside Paris. Throw in historic hotels and art galleries, and you have an edifying panorama like no other. Even architectural gems from government buildings to banks and train stations (like the recently renovated Nice-Ville) have artistic merit.



### CAP MODERNE

The recently reopened seaside homes of architects Eileen Gray (Villa E-1027) and Le Corbusier (Le Cabanon) highlight the avant-garde atmosphere of the 1930s and 1950s. Learn more in the exhibition area, a refurbished railway shed that opened next to Roquebrune station in 2016.



### VILLA LES CAMELIAS

The suburb of Cap d'Ail was built as a ritzy French extension of Monaco. Villa les Camelias is a recently opened local history museum dedicated to *les années folles*. See photos, letters and even the casino chips of the *jeunesse dorée*.  
[www.villalescamelias.com](http://www.villalescamelias.com)



### VILLA SANTO SOSPIR

In 1950, Parisian socialite Francine Weisweiler invited artist Jean Cocteau to her Cap-Ferrat home for dinner. He ended up staying for 12 years. During that time he daubed the villa from head to toe in dreamy frescoes, which can be visited with the villa's kindly housekeeper Eric.



### GRAND-HÔTEL DU CAP-FERRAT

Luxury is served with a smile at this palace hotel on Cap-Ferrat's sunny southern tip. A microclimate ensures its winter gardens sparkle with camellias, mimosas and flowering cactus.  
[www.fourseasons.com/capferat](http://www.fourseasons.com/capferat)



### VILLA PALOMA

The New Museum of Monaco opened in two historic villas to showcase contemporary art. The Villa Paloma was built in 1913 for one of Monaco's scores of British residents, and has the ornamental gardens and sea views to make any Englishman smile.



### COCTEAU MUSEUM

The new Séverin Wunderman wing of Menton's Jean Cocteau Museum is a light-filled delight. Designed by the architect behind Marseille's MuCEM, it hosts canvases, mosaics, sculptures and videos by the cultural polymath.  
[www.museecocteaumenton.fr](http://www.museecocteaumenton.fr)



### GALERIE DES BAINS-DOUCHES

The ramparts that ring Antibes once sheltered bunkers, barracks and materiel. In 1935 a section of the ground-level vaults was converted into public baths, which later became a public gallery specialising in regional contemporary art.



### MUSÉE DE LA CASTRE

Cannes' artistic pretensions are strictly limited: who needs culture when you can saunter half naked into Chanel? But the Musée de la Castre, located on the heights of Le Suquet, has a fine selection of Côte d'Azur scenes painted a century ago.  
[www.cannes.com](http://www.cannes.com)



### LE NEGRESCO

Designed by Édouard-Jean Niermans, this independently-owned museum hotel opened in January 1913. Now listed as a National Historic Building, it has amassed 6,000 artefacts including colourful life-sized artworks by sculptress Niki de Saint Phalle  
[www.hotel-negresco-nice.com](http://www.hotel-negresco-nice.com)



### MUSÉE MATISSEE

Henri Matisse spent over 35 years in his adopted home. This angelic museum, situated on the Avenue des Arènes de Cimiez, hosts the finest output from his Nice period, including canvases painted from the windows of his cours Saleya apartment.  
[www.musee-matisse-nice.org](http://www.musee-matisse-nice.org)



### VILLA KERYLOS

Archeologist and statesman Théodore Reinach was a committed Hellenophile. Just over a century ago he built this replica of an ancient Greek mansion, complete with courtyards and sunken baths, on a finger of land that reminded him of the Aegean.



### MUSÉE RENOIR

Until his death at the age of 78, Renoir worked in the rambling gardens, orange orchards and centuries-old olive groves of this Cagnes country estate. Visitors can also enjoy panorama views all the way to Cap d'Antibes.  
[www.cagnes-tourisme.com](http://www.cagnes-tourisme.com)

IMAGES © MANUEL BOUCOT; CRIVILLA, SANTO SOSPIR, GRAND-HÔTEL DU CAP-FERRAT, NIMN PALOMA, ADAGP PARE, VILLE D'ANTIBES ET JUAN LES PINN, VILLE DE CANNES, HÔTEL NÉGRESKO, SUCCESSION MATISSE, CHRISTOPHE RECOURA, MUSÉE RENOIR

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## THINGS TO SEE AND DO ON THE FRENCH RIVIERA

It's not all art galleries and museums – there's plenty of events for visitors of all ages

For a complete listing of events, sites to visit and how to explore, take a look at the official tourism website, [www.frenchriviera-tourism.com](http://www.frenchriviera-tourism.com)

### CYCLING

Nice is the winter quarters of many current Tour de France cyclists – disgraced cyclist Lance Armstrong once lived in the Old Town. Cycle the Col d'Èze, the Ironman route or scores of other ancient Tour tracks.

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



Whether it's sightseeing or triathlon training, the region is ideal for cyclists

### HIKING

The hundreds of hiking, mountain biking, horseback and climbing trails detailed in the free **Randoxygène** guides are best tackled in the cool of winter.

[randoxygene.departement06.fr](http://randoxygene.departement06.fr)



The rolling hills of Alpes-Maritimes offer lovely views of the Mediterranean coast

### SKIING

The sun-kissed ski resorts of Auron and Isola shimmer at 2,000m, some 90 minutes from Nice Airport. Both specialise in day skiing, allowing you to be back on the beach for dinner.

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

### SNOWSHOEING

The established ski station of Valberg has several *raquette à neige* routes that lead out from the old village centre on snowshoes, including a four-hour **Planetary Trail**.

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



Not everyone wants to hurtle downhill on snow; some are happy to just walk on it



The Menton Lemon Festival displays are made from frames covered in 140 tonnes of fruit attached by more than a million elastic bands!

### DRIVING

Drive the Corniche coast of the Côte d'Azur in a classic Alfa Romeo Duetto or a Fiat 124 Spider. A dozen other classic marques come alive on the empty winter roads.

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



There are plenty of cars on offer, but who can resist the simple charms of an MGA?

### CUISINE

Discover the many different faces of Provence with an individualised culinary journey created for you by Domaines & Terroirs. Focus on what you want to see and learn about the area and experience the fabulous terroir Provence has to offer.

[www.domaines-terroirs.com](http://www.domaines-terroirs.com)

### EVENTS CALENDAR

January – Monaco

#### International Circus Festival

The Olympics of the Big Top draws contemporary and traditional circus performers from as far afield as China, Ukraine and Cuba. The 2017 event runs from 19-29 January.

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



The Monte Carlo International Circus Festival was initiated by Prince Rainier III

January – Villefranche

#### Combat Naval Fleuri

Over a long weekend in February, 20 traditional pointu boats throw flowers at dockside spectators, turning the sea into a carpet of red and yellow petals.

February – Nice

#### Carnaval



Leave the winter weather behind for the colour and glamour of Nice's Carnaval

A million visitors call in for Nice's two-week street theatre procession, which in 2017 honours the 'King of Energy'.

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

February – Menton

#### Lemon Festival

Some 140 tonnes of lemons are used to create dozens of 10-metre-high statues scattered throughout Menton.

[www.fete-du-citron.com](http://www.fete-du-citron.com)

February – Mandelieu

#### Mimosa Festival

One week of floral floats, street theatre, music and seasonal colour in the hills above Cannes.

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



The Fête du Mimosa is a noisy, colourful and heavily-scented affair in February

March – Cagnes-sur-Mer

#### Fête de l'Olivier

The Domaine Renoir that surrounds the late impressionist's home hosts a homage to Michelin-starred chefs, oil tastings and all things olive.

[www.cagnes-tourisme.com](http://www.cagnes-tourisme.com)

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# WHERE TO STAY AND EAT ON THE FRENCH RIVIERA

The best restaurants and hotels in the region, plus some hidden secrets only the locals know about

## RESTAURANT PICKS

### Josy-Jo, Haut-de-Cagnes

Gourmet bargain with an accent on seasonal produce, in particular seafood landed at Cagnes-sur-Mer harbour.

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



The Josy-Jo offers a rustic atmosphere with a terrace shaded by Bougainvillea

### Bistrot d'Antoine, Nice

Splendid restaurant in archaic centre of Nice's Old Town. Winter warmers include *saucisses* with Puy lentils and lashings of Dijon mustard.

27 rue de la Préfecture

### Café du Turin, Nice

Century-old seafood spectacular: Bouzigues mussels and Belon oysters are at their best in deep winter.

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



Taste of Med: Café du Turin offers some of the best seafood in Nice

### Table du Marché, Nice

New market-fresh cuisine concept in the heart of the Marché Libération. Chef Florent Barbereau dishes up a discount menu du jour, which may include aubergine burrata, beef cheeks and fig tart.

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

### Restaurant Albert 1er, Antibes

*Fruits des mers* specialist with lunchtime specials. Large takeaway bar stoked with crab, razor clams and other seasonal delights.

[www.restaurant-albert-1er.com](http://www.restaurant-albert-1er.com)

### Le Louis XV, Monaco

The finest dining table in Monaco reopened in 2016. Team Ducasse wow



Le Louis XV – Alain Ducasse à l'Hôtel de Paris: haute cuisine in the grandest of settings

guests with a lighter, tighter take on ingredients sourced from the vicinity including Provençal black truffles and San Remo prawns.

[www.alain-ducasse.com](http://www.alain-ducasse.com)

### Le Gambetta, Nice

Superb seasonal seafood sourced from the fish market across the street. Come winter both the *coquillage* and array of timeless French fish dishes are a must.

1 place du Général de Gaulle

### Eqvita, Monaco

The brand-new restaurant from local resident Novak Djokovic is an all-vegan affair. Think superfood burgers, plus pea, mint and lime sorbet.

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

## ACCOMMODATION PICKS

### Château la Roque, near Avignon

Boutique hotel in an 11th-century fortified castle overlooking the Rhône Valley. Offers five luxurious rooms, a heated outdoor pool, terraced gardens and Provençal cuisine.

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

### La Colombe d'Or, St-Paule-de-Vence

Once a no-frills inn where Picasso, Miro, Man Ray and Calder came to eat roast chicken and sip rosé. Now a high-end hotel filled with works from those very artists.

[www.la-colombe-dor.com](http://www.la-colombe-dor.com)

### La Perouse, Nice

Sea-view spectacular with hidden courtyard. Views are worthy of Dufy's portrait of the Promenade des Anglais,



La Perouse hotel provides spectacular sea views that once inspired Dufy

a copy of which sits out front.

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

### Okko Cannes Center, Cannes

Cannes' latest offering is a high-end bargain, especially in winter. Discover a rooftop terrace and pour yourself a free Nespresso. Located just minutes from La Croisette.

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

### Relais du Postillon, Antibes

Homely traditional hotel off Antibes' main square. Sip glasses of ruby-red

Côtes de Provence in front of the open fire.

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

### Le Grand Pavois, Juan-les-Pins

A discreet steal that dates from the 1920s, with the original foyer and ballroom – now the hotel's dining room – intact.

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

### Villa Saint Exupery, Nice

This attractive bargain is an art-filled hostel with private double rooms, opposite Galeries Lafayette in Nice. Offers winter market tours and ski trips to Auron.

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

### Riviera Experience, Villefranche-sur-Mer

Luxury sea-view apartments providing the perfect base for exploring the entire Riviera, with access to fabulous local food markets and *brocantes*.

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

### Pebbles, Nice

The top management company on the Côte d'Azur manages 180 first-class apartments from Saint-Tropez through Nice to Menton.

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



All of Pebble's properties are hand-picked and exclusive to the management company

## FRENCH RIVIERA ESSENTIALS

### GETTING THERE

#### BY TRAIN

TGV stations in Nice, Cannes and Antibes. TER stations in Roquebrune, Menton and Monaco.

#### BY CAR

Nice-Paris via the A6 and A7, 932km.

#### BY PLANE

Nice Côte d'Azur Airport.

