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## France / Côte d'Azur

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The French Riviera, known in France as the Côte d'Azur, is the privileged Mediterranean coastline stretching from Menton in the East to St. Tropez in the West. It is an area of spectacular beauty, with dazzling white cliffs rising from the sea, gracefully curved bays, vineyards and fine little towns. The nature of this area with its abundance of flowers and subtropical plants is magnificent. The biggest city on the Côte d'Azur is Nice. Nice has a race-track, 16 museums and many night clubs, but above all this is a place for sunning, swimming and generally relaxing. The "Promenade des Anglais" extending for miles along the waterfront is wonderful for strollers; and so is the Flower Market on a handsome pedestrian Mall. The beaches are sand over pebbles and not very wide so it does get crowded in summer.

### Telephone and time difference

Access code to USA: 00 (dial tone), USA Direct 19 (dial tone) 0011 (a special AT&T service). To phone France: 33; time difference (Eastern Daylight) plus 6 hours.

### Climate

Hot summer days in Nice are tempered by fresh breezes off the bay, and winter months are mild. The average temperature in January is 48°F (9°C). But there is a lot more rain than the tourist officials like to admit. (Nice averages 66 days of rain a year) and sudden bouts of the whipping "mistral" (cold gusts of wind from the northwest) in spring.

### Sights and Museums

Old Nice is a tight labyrinth of winding streets, alleys, and steep ascents between medieval buildings; especially nice to be ambled through under a morning sun. The modern city has several museums, the two most important ones being: Marc Chagall National Museum built on a wooded hill in the Cimiez section of Nice in 1972, the museum houses works donated by Chagall. Not only paintings but also sculptures, mosaics, sketches and lithographs. Matisse Museum (Musée Matisse et d'Archéologie) Here you can see some of the artists personal effects and his private art collection as well as canvases, drawings and sculptures done at various stages of his career. The Archaeological Museum, in the same building, has artifacts found at the Roman site of Cimez.

### Theatre and Nightlife

In summer, all of Nice's best theatrical experiences take place outdoors at Théâtre de Verdure in the Albert I garden, and at the Roman Arena in Cimiez. Nice abounds with cafes and bars, most of which can be found in the Pedestrian areas: Rue Masséna, Place Magenta, and Rue Paradis. Well known but expensive discos are: La Camargue, 5 Place Charles-Felix and Le Sphinx, 29 Rue de Préfecture. Gamblers will have to go to Cannes or Monte Carlo.

### Shopping

Shopping hours are usually from 9 am to 7.00 pm, daily except Sundays, with some stores closing for lunch between noon and 2 pm. Many boutiques also close on Mondays. Regional products include faience pottery from Quimper and Vallauris and porcelain from Limoges, as well as truffles from Périgord, mustard from Dijon and herbs from the Provence. Street market shopping in the Vieille Ville is the least expensive and most fun. Rue Masséna, Place Magenta, and Rue Paradis are the pedestrian zones of shops and cafes. There is also a flea market on Boulevard Risso every day except Sunday.

### Excursions

Eze village. This village perched on a rock 1.550 feet above the sea is rather unusual. It was once a medieval fortress and offers a splendid panorama of the Riviera. It also has a tropical garden (Jardin Exotique) and a church with a beautiful 15th century font. Nietzsche is supposed to have first worked out his masterpiece, "Thus Spake Zarathustra", here. Eze is less than 7 miles (11 km) from Nice, along the Middle (Moyenne) Corniche on the way to Monte Carlo.

Monaco, 12 miles (18 km) east of Nice, has a higher population density (over 40,000 per square mile) and smaller total area (425 acres plus 75 that have been added through land reclamation) than any other nation in the world. It is just about half the size of New York's Central Park. Ruled by members of the Grimaldi family since the late 13th century, it has been an independent state - almost unbelievable in Europe- since 1415. This remarkable dynasty has reigned for more than 5 1/2 centuries. The Principality is divided into distinct sections: Old Monaco ( a tiny antiquated village that sits on The Rock), La Condamine (home of many amiable Monegasques). Fontvieille, a residential district on the reclaimed land, and Monte Carlo (named for Charles III in 1866). The casino is free but will usually refuse you admission if you are wearing jeans or sneakers or if you are under 21. Other things to see here are: the Royal Palace in front of which the guard changes every day at 11.55 am.(It is also possible to go inside); the Botanical gardens with a beautiful view of the capital Monte Carlo; the Oceanographic Museum and the Stalactite caves.

Northwest of Nice is St. Paul. A cobblestoned village with sixteenth-century ramparts. The town is now an artists colony; galleries and studios line its narrow streets.

The Cannes is the showiest jewel on the Riviera. It sparkles with sumptuous villas and flaunts a sandy beach that is painstakingly maintained and artificially improved. The elegant Boulevard de la Croisette, with riotously colorful gardens tracing the Gulf of Napoule, is the key to Cannes. Here are smart boutiques, outdoor cafes, and the Majestic and Carlton Hotels, the headquarters for international stars during the city's annual film festival in the spring. As you follow the boulevard to the Pointe de la Croisette you come to the famed (and original) Palm Beach. Take the boulevard in the opposite direction to get to the port, a harbour for the most extravagant yachts you could hope to see. Cannes has more quaint charms as well, for example the Flower Market in the Allée de la Liberté, or the Old City centered around Place de la Castre. On the way from Nice to Cannes it is possible to visit the world-famous flower and perfume city of Grasse. From here you have a magnificent view of the surroundings. The perfume factories Molinard (52 Bd. Victor Hugo) and Fragonard (Bd. Fragonard) are open to the public.