

▲ Le Plongeoir Restaurant in Nice. Photograph: MARION BUTET STUDIO

High art, grand views, deep blues: Nice Côte d'Azur – in pictures

From mountaintop medieval villages to grand promenades, galleries and the splendour of the Med, you'll find an incomparable mix of natural beauty and cultural highlights on an off-season trip to Nice Côte d'Azur

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Bairols

The "coast of blue" was a nickname the French gave to the county of Nice after they annexed it in 1860; but the moniker is deceptive, as much of this territory is actually lush, green mountains. It may take an hour to drive to Bairols from Vence via a steep incline up the Alps (it wasn't reachable by road at all until 1939), but it is one of the southernmost examples of the famous, ancient "perched villages" of the Tinée valley, and a true delight. Photograph: RIPOLL/Agence Média

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Villefranche-sur-Mer

Last century, the French Riviera was a hotbed of glamour and decadence that inspired writers from F Scott Fitzgerald to Graham Greene; and when you come to Villefranche-sur-Mer, you understand why these cultural heavyweights became so enchanted. After all, who wouldn't want to spend their life here drinking coffee in the morning, wine by the evening, with plenty of cheese to get you through the afternoon – talking, flirting, carousing and staring out at the sparkling blue of the Côte d'Azur? Photograph: Julien

Veran/metropole nca

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Promenade des Anglais Translating as "walkway of the English," this four-mile stretch of unadulterated sea views was created by aristocrats who fled to Nice to escape the British weather. Today it's still very popular with visitors of all nationalities for perambulating, not to mention cycling and rollerskating. The people watching continues to be second to none, and you can also spot the remains of a belle époqueera casino, which was damaged in the war, not to mention many of the city's fanciest hotels. Photograph: Valery Bareta/Shutterstock

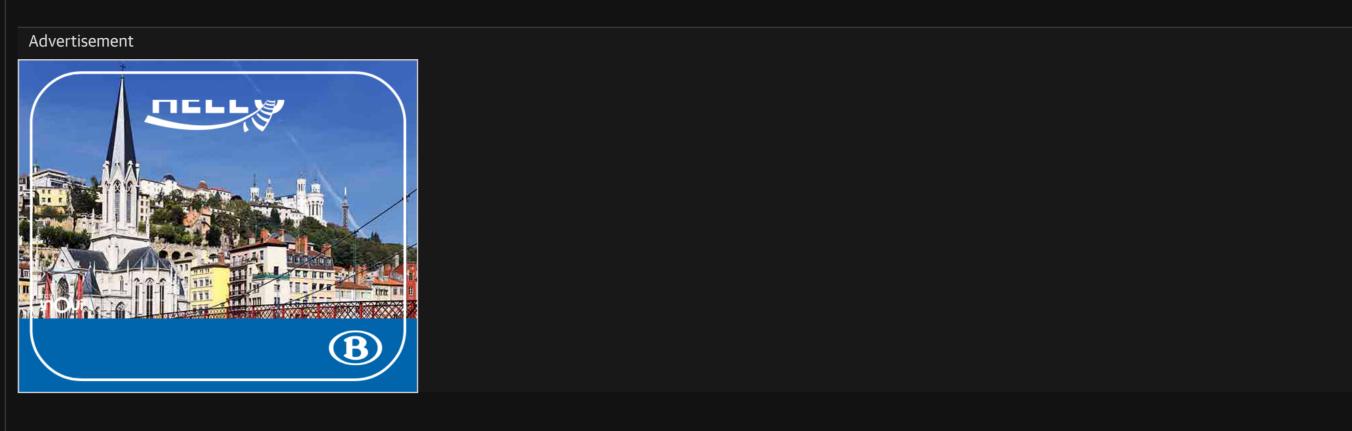
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Cours Saleya Market

Cours Saleya lies at the heart of the old town of Nice; filled with the colour of fresh fruit and vegetables, the scent of spice and flowers, and the hum of vendors, locals and tourists. From Tuesday to Sunday, the stalls selling food are open from 6am until 1.30pm and you can sniff the blooms until 5pm. On Monday, the space transforms into a flea market. For a quick, takeaway lunch try a socca – a delicious chickpea flatbread that is a Niçois speciality – at Chez Thérésa. Photograph: Fraser Hall/Getty Images fy





Villa & Jardins Ephrussi de Rothschild

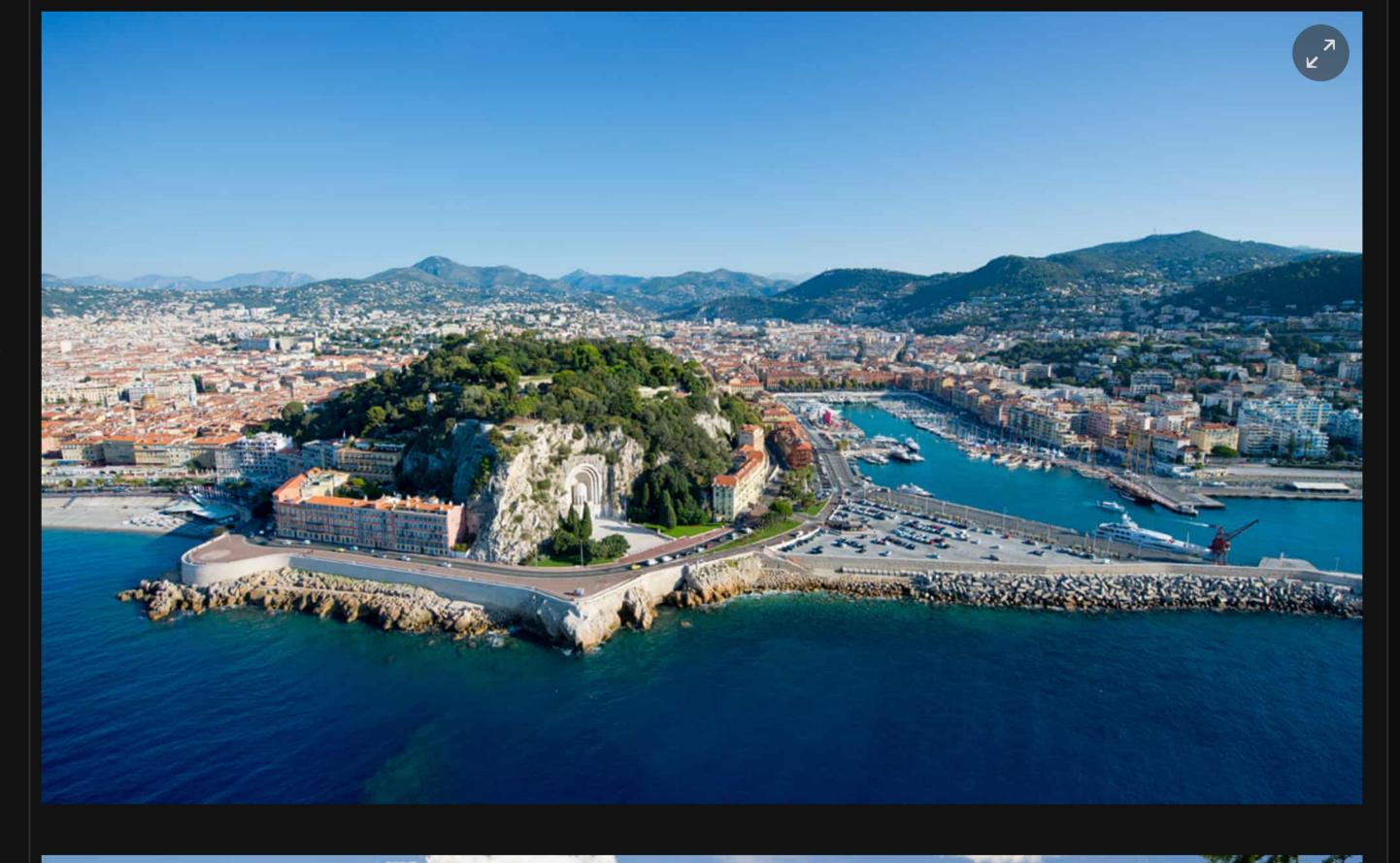
Located between Nice and Monaco, with incredible views out over the Mediterranean, <u>Villa & Jardins</u> Ephrussi de Rothschild is truly a sight to behold. Built for Baroness Béatrice de Rothschild between 1905 and 1912, this plush pink belle epoque mansion is filled with her incomparable collection of art and antiques, including paintings by old masters and fine, French porcelain. Outside, you'll find a series of gardens – classified by the French ministry of culture as one of the notable gardens of France – not to mention views over the Bay of Villefranche f





Old port of Nice

The old port of Nice was built in 1748 by Charles Emmanuel III the King of Sardinia, a century before the city became a part of France. Once a busy trading hub, today its pretty harbour is full of pleasure boats, bars and restaurants. The Île de Beauté square and the church of Notre-Dame du Port are charming and shady, while the Rue Bonaparte - named after Napoleon, who lived here in 1794 - is celebrated as a particularly LGBTQ+-friendly street. Photograph: A Issock f



Cycling

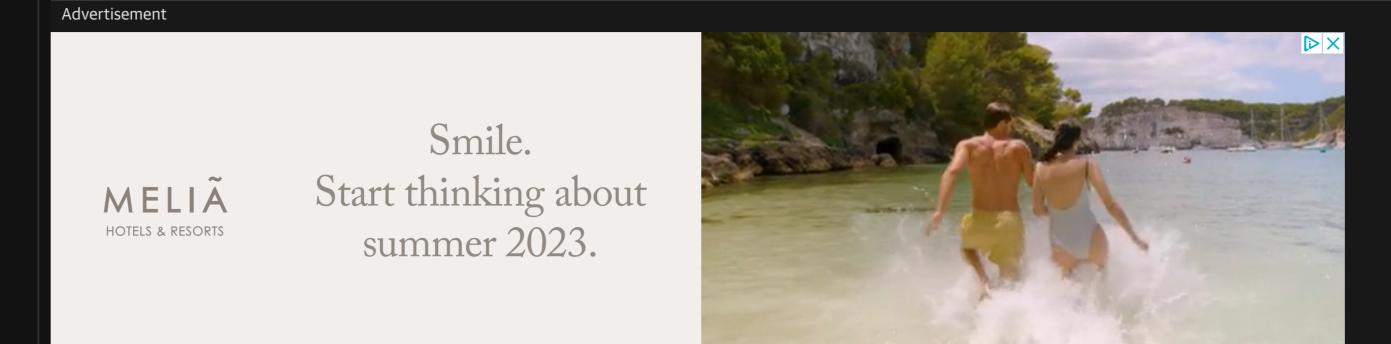
The Côte d'Azur is a cyclist's paradise and Nice has hosted the Grand Départ of the Tour de France twice. If you are looking for advice on planning your route or need to hire a *vélo*, the <u>Café du Cycliste</u> is an excellent place to start. There is an almost endless choice of rides, from challenging climbs to more charming inclines, and they will tell you how to stick with the herd via road or head off up the Alps on old gravel paths to cycle among sheep. Photograph: RIPOLL/Agence Média f



Saint Paul de Vence

The historic village of Saint Paul de Vence made its name in the 20th century as a haven for artists, writers and showbiz types. Jean-Paul Sartre, Sophia Loren and Catherine Deneuve were all regular guests at the La Colombe d'Or hotel, where Picasso famously decorated the walls in exchange for lodgings. James Baldwin was a resident of the village for 17 years until his death, as was Marc Chagall, who is buried in the local cemetery. Their artistic legacy lives on in nearby art museums such as the Fondation CAB and the Fondation Maeght. Photograph: Rolf E Staerk/Shutterstock f





Old town, Nice A warren of narrow, shady streets filled with historic tenements, churches, and squares, wandering

through the old town, or *vieux* Nice,



makes you feel like you're stepping back in time. Landmarks to look out for - if you're not too busy with the boutiques and bars – include: the Cathedral of St Reparata, which contains the sacred remains of the patron saint of the city; the Lascaris Palace, a museum that was once an aristocratic villa; and the False Gate, a golden-ceilinged marble passage that connects the old town with the new. Photograph: veran/Julien veran f

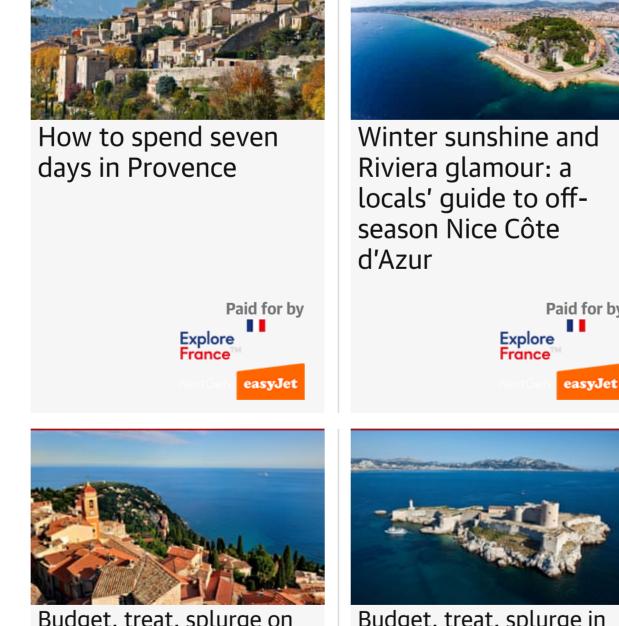


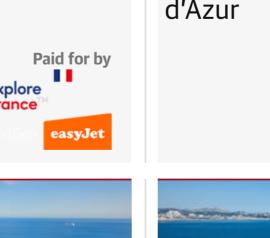
Le Plongeoir restaurant

For a memorable meal, you'll be hard pressed to beat Le Plongeoir. Established in the late 19th century during *la belle époqu*e, the restaurant began life as a fishing boat secured to a rock six metres above the waves, connected to land by a walkway leading to a gazebo. When this setup required repair in 1941, architect René Livieri designed the current incarnation, complete with diving boards fixed to the seaward side. Nowadays the diving boards may be decorative, but Le Plongeoir remains one of the most beautiful, and historical, restaurants on the French Riviera. Photograph: MARION BUTET STUDIO f





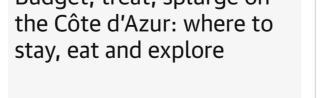




Budget, treat, splurge on the Côte d'Azur: where to Budget, treat, splurge in Marseille-Provence: where to stay, eat, and explore

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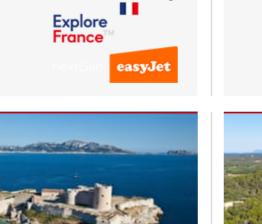
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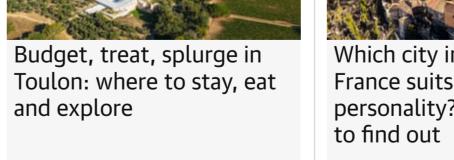
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