

# Nice to Menton



What a splendid stretch of coast Nice to Menton is. Crowned by Riviera queen and belle of the ball, Nice, there is far more to this pebbly shoreline than frolicking in the sun or flouncing in a sky-blue chair on Europe's most legendary promenade. Nice itself is a real city that blends old-world opulence with rough'n'tumble modern-day grit, climaxing in an old town by the sea where bustling markets, dimly lit churches and narrow lanes studded with artists' workshops ensure a new experience with every visit. For cosmopolitans who like to dine out (and well), there is no better base from which to explore the Côte d'Azur – unless you're loaded, in which case millionaires' Monaco, with its star-studded hotels and lavish gardens of Menton next door, could be the hedonistic choice.

But if flopping by a pool at the end of the day against a soaring backdrop of majestic scenery and sweet silence (bar cicada song) is for you, stay elsewhere. How about one of the *chambres d'hôtes* that pop up unexpectedly along the three rollercoaster coastal roads, each higher and more hazardous than the last, that link Nice and Menton (and the 30km of towns in between)? Justly celebrated for their breathtaking sea views and luxurious villas, it was along these perilous roads that motorists raced the coastal *Train Bleu* from Paris in the 1920s. Or what about the Niçois hinterland, a spiky maze of hilltop villages and hairpin bends just made for motoring off into the back of beyond?

## HIGHLIGHTS

- Make the most of Nice: ogle at its *belle époque* beauties on **promenade des Anglais** (p265) and around Cimiez; visit its **art museums** (p266); and **dine** (p274) exceedingly well.
- Take a coastal walk around a luxuriant cape, far flung from the sun-seeking hordes, on **Cap Martin**, **Cap d'Ail** or **Cap Ferrat** (p280).
- Live like a millionaire: ride a teak-clad air-conditioned funicular for two down the cliff edge to a day of self-pampering at the seaside club of legendary **Grand Hôtel du Cap Ferrat** (p284).
- Revel in Mediterranean botanical splendour at **Villa Ephrussi de Rothschild** (p282) and the gardens of **Menton** (p293).
- Enjoy an eagle's-eye view of the coast – along the **Grande Corniche** (p286) or atop the hilltop villages of the **Niçois hinterland** (p288).



## ITINERARIES

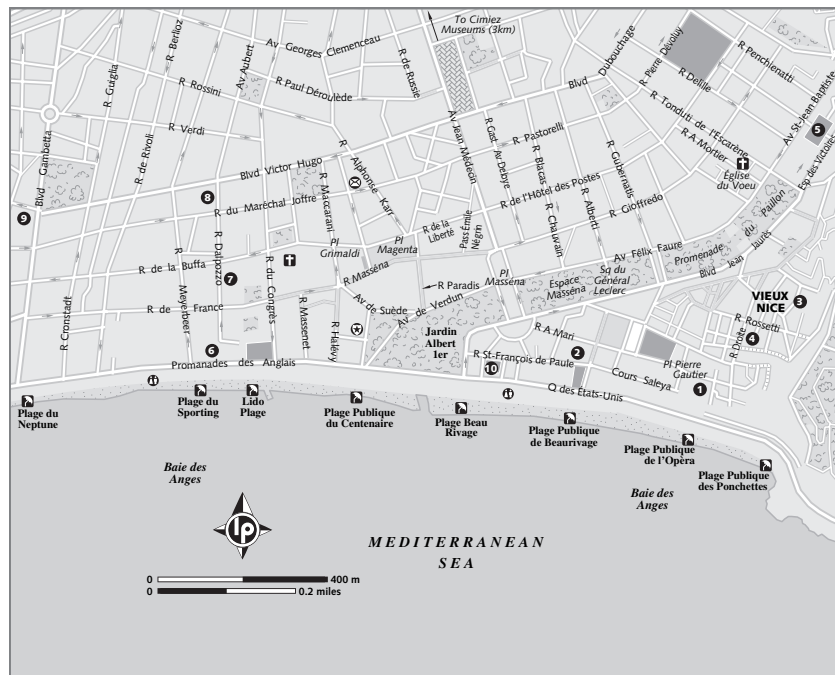
### ART & ARCHITECTURE

#### One Day / Nice

No seaside town has a richer trove of art and architecture than Nice (p260). Start the day slowly with an amble around the **cours Saleya markets** (1; p273) and *petit dej* at **Le Pain Quotidien** (2; p275). Then wind through the narrow old lanes of **Vieux Nice** (3; p265) – cut along rue Droite to take in its local **artist workshops** (4; p277), then go to **MAMAC** (5; p266), an essential port of call for Nice New Realist fans. Don't miss sweeping 360-degree city views from the rooftop sculpture garden or **Sosno's Square Head** (p266) in the modernist concrete gardens below.

For lunch at noon, cut through the Jardin Albert 1er to **promenade des Anglais** (6; p265), where lunch in the company of a Niki Saint Phalle statue at **Le 3e** (p274) in the mythical **Palais de la Méditerranée** (p265) is a real treat. Or consider **Karr** (p275) if a post-lunch mooch around the upmarket **art galleries and design shops** (7; p277) on rue Dalpoggio appeals. Then it's uphill to Cimiez's **Musée Matisse** (p266), **Musée National Message Biblique Marc Chagall** (p267) and **belle époque architecture** (p268). Late eaters can always squeeze in Cimiez before lunch, and spend the short afternoon devouring the ravishing architecture of Nice's greatest piece of living art, promenade des Anglais.

Make a **big-name dine** (p274) your venue for dinner. If you've nowhere to stay, Nice's **Hôtel Windsor** (8; p272), **Hôtel Hi** (9; p272) or **Hôtel Beau Rivage** (10; p272), where Matisse stayed in Nice, are dead artsy.

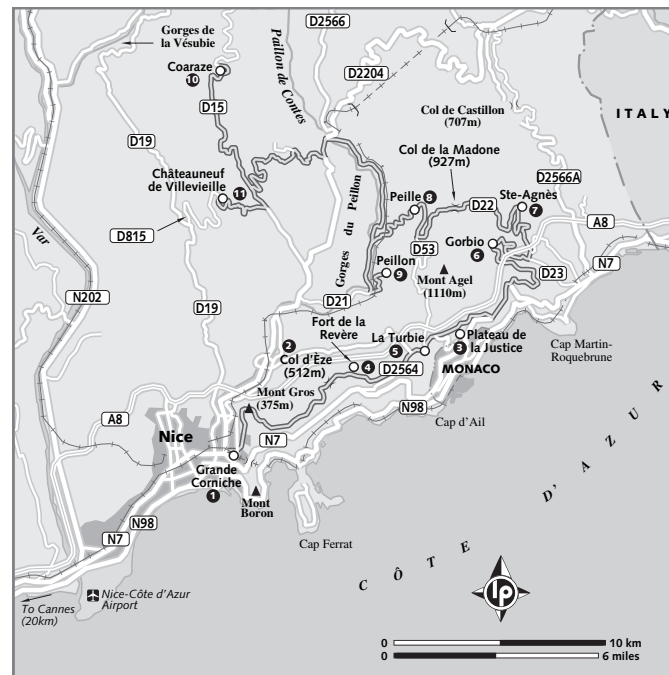


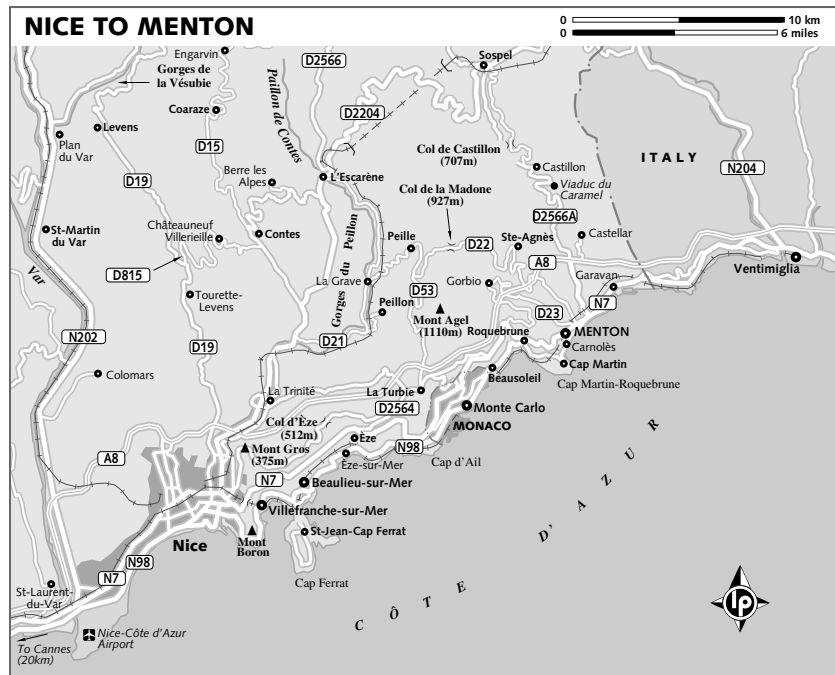
### MOUNTAIN ESCAPE

#### One Day / Nice to Châteaufort Villevieille

When it all gets too much on the fast-paced, body-packed coast, hit the slow road for a gulp of mountain air in the company of hilltop villages and staggering views: the legendary **Grande Corniche** (1; p286), signposted from Nice port, is your quick exit. Poodle along this magnificent high road, pulling up on the **Col d'Èze** (2; p286) in front of the **Hermitage du Col d'Èze** (p287) for a panoramic coffee break or, if you've brought your own, continuing a tad higher onto the picnic-friendly **Plateau de la Justice** (3; p288). Back on the road, head northeast to the **Fort de la Revère** (4; p288) for an invigorating stroll, then continue along the Grande Corniche to **La Turbie** (5; p287), where **Café de la Fontaine** (p287) is the perfect lunch stop after exploring the village. Not hungry yet? Carry on 15km east (20 minutes) to hilltop **Gorbio** (6; p294) for a quintessential Provençal lunch beneath jasmine.

In the afternoon, wiggle 13km (15 minutes) along the D23, D223 and D22 to **Ste-Agnès** (7; p295), from where the D22 continues in an increasingly alarming manner (hold on tight) to **Peille** (8; p289); pull up on the **Col de la Madone** for the best view of the quaint picture-postcard village. Time it right and you can end up for dinner either in **Peillon** (9; p289) at **Auberge de la Madone** (p289); at **Auberge du Soleil** (p289) in **Coaraze** (10; p288) or – should you decide to kip the night too – around a table shared with jovial *chambre d'hôte* hosts and a dreamy mountain view at **La Parare** in **Châteaufort Villevieille** (11; p288).





## NICE

pop 347,100

Nice is *not* 'nice': what an insult! This Côte d'Azur capital is a sparky, sexy city, with a gritty underside that keeps it grounded. If Nice was a person, it would wear designer cocktail dresses with tatty old army boots (laces undone), cause loads of trouble and be mad as hell about that insipid adjective.

Bursting with Brit-styled pubs that heave, designer lounge bars that sit sleek and cool across from the sea and clubs that throb, Nice is party town. Laden with backpackers, romance-seeking couples, old folk and families, there is something for everyone in this seaside town that never stops. Explore the intriguing old-town maze of narrow lanes, discover the port and chateau, nose around the raucous market, stroll the legendary promenade with its fantastical *belle époque* architecture and pebble beaches, fly in the sky from the back of a speedboat and know there is bags more tomorrow. The city's cultural scene buzzes and its museums are extraordin-

arily rich in modern art. Each year at Mardi Gras the famous Nice Carnival sets the streets ablaze with a merry-go-round of masked parades, big-head floats and a flower battle.

When the hectic pace gets too much, do as the Victorians did: take a long leisurely stroll along Nice's glorious silky smooth promenades, not forgetting to dip your toes in the sparkling Baie des Anges (Bay of Angels).

### ORIENTATION

Av Jean Médecin runs south from near the main train station to place Masséna, close to the beach and old town. The modern city centre, the area north and west of place Masséna, includes the pedestrian shopping streets of rue de France and rue Masséna. The local and intercity bus terminals are two blocks east of place Masséna.

From the airport, 6km west, promenade des Anglais runs along the curving beachfront (Baie des Anges), becoming quai des États-Unis near the old town. Vieux Nice (Old Nice) is crunched into a 500-sq-metre area enclosed by Blvd Jean Jaurès, quai des États-Unis and the hill known as Colline du Château.

The wealthy residential neighbourhood of Cimiez, home to several outstanding museums, is north of the centre.

### INFORMATION

#### Bookshops

**Cat's Whiskers** (☎ 04 93 80 02 66; catswhiskersnice@aol.com; 30 rue Lamartine) New and secondhand English-language novels and guides.

**Magellan Librairie de Voyages** (☎ 04 93 82 31 81; 3 rue d'Italie) Maps and travel guides (including Lonely Planet) in English.

**Papeterie Rontani** (☎ 04 93 62 32 43; 5 rue Alexandri Mari) Unsurpassable choice of locally produced guidebooks, reference books on Nice and the Riviera, maps and guides.

### Cultural Centres

**Holy Trinity Anglican church** (☎ 04 93 87 19 83; www.anglican-nice.com; 11 rue de la Buffa) Functions as an Anglophone cultural centre.

### Emergency

**Central police station** (☎ 04 92 17 22 22; 1 av Maréchal Foch; ☎ 24hr) Report lost or stolen passports at the **Foreign Tourist Department** (☎ 04 92 17 20 63; ☎ 9am-5pm) here.

### Internet Access

**Cyberpoint** (☎ 04 93 92 70 63; cybercom\_nice@yahoo.fr; 10 av Félix Faure; per 10min €1; ☎ 10am-10pm Mon-Sat, 3-9pm Sun) English keyboards and air-con.

**M@il Service Nice** (☎ 04 89 92 25 34; 6 rue Meyerbeer; per 10/15/30/60min €1/1.50/2.50/4; ☎ 9.30am-11pm) Quiet, efficient office atmosphere.

### Internet Resources

**www.nice.fr** Official city website.  
**www.nicerendezvous.com** Tours, cooking, Nice Carnival and more.  
**www.nicetourisme.com** Tourist office website.  
**www.plan-nice.org** Interactive city maps.

### Laundry

**Laundrette** (105 rue de France; per 5/16kg wash €3.50/7; ☎ 7am-9pm)

**Taxi Lav'** (22 rue Pertinax; per 5/7kg wash €2.80/3; ☎ 7am-8pm)

### Left Luggage

**Gare Nice Ville** (av Thiers; manual lockers small/large bag per 24hr €8/10; ☎ 7.10am-10.30pm Mon-Sat, 8.10am-10.30pm Sun; small/medium/large automatic lockers €4/6.50/8.50; ☎ 7am-10.45pm) Luggage lockers at the central train station.

### Library

**Anglo-American library** (12 rue de France; ☎ 10-11am & 3-5pm Tue-Thu & Sat, 3-6pm Fri) Up the passageway opposite 17 rue de France. Short-term membership available.

### Medical Services

**Hôpital St-Roch** (☎ 04 92 03 33 75; www.chu-nice.fr in French; 5 rue Pierre Dévoluy) Has 24-hour emergency service.

**Pharmacie Masséna** (☎ 04 93 87 78 94; 7 rue Masséna; ☎ 24hr)

**Pharmacie Riviera** (☎ 04 93 62 54 44; 66 av Jean Médecin; ☎ 24hr)

**SOS Médecins** (☎ 08 01 85 01 01) Emergency home visits.

### LITERARY NICE TO MENTON

Beach reads set in Nice, Menton and the bits in between.

- *High Season in Nice* (Robert Kanigel) 'How one French Riviera town has seduced travellers for 2000 years' is the tag line of this fascinating portrait of Nice.
- *The Mystery of the Blue Train* (Agatha Christie) Hercule Poirot investigates a mysterious murder aboard the *Blue Train* to the Riviera.
- *The Doves' Nest* (Katherine Mansfield) Short story, published the year the tuberculosis-stricken author in Menton died, about a group of lonely women living in a villa on the French Riviera.
- *The Rock Pool* (Cyril Connolly) Discover 1930s decadence on the French Riviera.
- *The Long Afternoon* (Giles Waterfield) The tale of the Williamsons and their quest for a quiet retirement, following husband Henry's premature retirement from the Indian Civil Service, in Menton: told through letters, extracts from literature, and travel guides.
- *Hallucinating Foucault* (Patricia Duncker) Postmodern novel that sees a heterosexual Cambridge postgraduate get entwined in a passionate affair with schizophrenic, homosexual French writer Paul Michel; the novel climaxes in Nice.





<b>INFORMATION</b>		Palais de la Préfecture.....(see 54)	Zucca Magica..... 111 G5
Alliance Française..... 1 D3	Palais Lascaris..... 55 G2		
Anglo-American Library..... 2 D5	Parc National du Mercantour	<b>DRINKING ☞☞</b>	
Beachfront Tourist Office..... 3 D5	Headquarters..... 56 D3	De Klomp..... 112 G2	
Belgian Consulate..... 4 D5	Roller Station..... 57 G3	L'ybane.....(see 123)	
Bibliothèque Louis Nucéra.....(see 44)	Tour Bellanda.....(see 35)	L'ybane..... 113 E4	
Canadian Consulate..... 5 E4	Trans Côte d'Azur..... 58 G5	La Casa del Sol..... 114 G3	
Cat's Whiskers..... 6 E3	Villa Raphaël-Surany..... 59 E2	Le Before..... 115 D4	
Central Police Station..... 7 E3	War Memorial..... 60 G6	Le Water Bar..... 116 H2	
Central Post Office..... 8 C3		Ma Nolan's..... 117 G3	
Cyberpoint..... 9 F2	<b>SLEEPING ☞</b>	McMahons Pub..... 118 G2	
Holy Trinity	Auberge de Jeunesse - Les	O'Hara's..... 119 H2	
Anglican Church..... 10 D5	Camélias..... 61 E4	Paddy's Pub..... 120 G2	
Hôpital St-Roch..... 11 F3	Backpackers	Thor Pub..... 121 G3	
Italian Consulate..... 12 B3	Chez Patrick..... 62 D3	Villa 14..... 122 E5	
Laundrette..... 13 F1	Hôtel Beau Rivage..... 63 E5	Wayne's..... 123 G2	
Laundrette..... 14 G2	Hôtel Belle Meunière..... 64 C3		
Laundrette..... 15 B5	Hôtel Carlone..... 65 B5	<b>ENTERTAINMENT ☞</b>	
Le Change..... 16 C3	Hôtel Cronstadt..... 66 C5	Blue Boy Enterprise..... 124 B5	
M@il Service Nice..... 17 C5	Hôtel de la Buffa..... 67 B5	Blue Moon..... 125 G5	
Magellan Librairie	Hôtel du Petit Palais..... 68 E3	Cinéma Nouveau	
de Voyages..... 18 D3	Hôtel Excelsior..... 69 C3	Mercury..... 126 G4	
Monégasque Consulate..... 19 E3	Hôtel Hi..... 70 B5	Cinéma Rialto..... 127 C5	
Netherlands Consulate..... 20 C4	Hôtel Meyerbeer Beach..... 71 C5	FNAC.....(see 139)	
Papeterie Rontani..... 21 F2	Hôtel Négresco..... 72 C5	Le Flag..... 128 D4	
Pharmacie Masséna..... 22 D5	Hôtel Suisse..... 73 F6	Le Klub..... 129 D5	
Pharmacie Riviera..... 23 G2	Hôtel Wilson..... 74 F1	Le Liqwid..... 130 F2	
Post Office..... 24 E5	Hôtel Windsor..... 75 C5	Le Smarties..... 131 F4	
Public Showers..... 25 B6	Nice Garden Hôtel..... 76 D5	Ôdace..... 132 D4	
Taxi Lav'..... 26 D3	Palais de la Méditerranée..... 77 D5	Opéra de Nice..... 133 F3	
Train Station Tourist Office..... 27 D3	Villa la Tour..... 78 H1	Théâtre de Verdure..... 134 E5	
US Consulate..... 28 D5	Villa Victoria..... 79 C4	Théâtre National de Nice..... 135 H1	
<b>SIGHTS &amp; ACTIVITIES</b>	<b>EATING ☞</b>	<b>SHOPPING ☞</b>	
3B Plongée..... 29 H5	11e Art..... 80 C5	Antique Market.....(see 91)	
Cascade Donjon..... 30 G5	Aphrodite..... 81 E3	Book Market..... 136 G2	
Cathédral Orthodoxe Russe	Atelier du Goût..... 82 G4	Cave de la Tour..... 137 H1	
St-Nicolas..... 31 B3	Blue Beach..... 83 B5	Caves Caprioglio..... 138 G2	
Cathédrale Ste-Réparate..... 32 G2	Boros..... 84 C5	Centre Commercial Nice	
Centre du Patrimoine..... 33 G3	Casitalia..... 85 B5	Étoile..... 139 D4	
Chapelle de la Miséricorde..... 34 G2	Chantecler.....(see 72)	Confiserie Florian..... 140 G5	
Château Lift..... 35 F5	Chez René Socca..... 86 H1	Flea Market.....(see 147)	
Club Alpin Français des	Fenocchio..... 87 G2	Flower Market..... 141 G3	
Alpes-Maritimes..... 36 D2	Festival de la Moule..... 88 G3	Galerie Ferrero..... 142 D5	
Église St-Giaume..... 37 G2	Fish Market..... 89 H2	Galleries Lafayette..... 143 E4	
Église St-Jacques Le Majeur..... 38 G2	Fleur de Café..... 90 D4	Henri Auer Confiserie..... 144 F2	
Electric Tourist Train..... 39 D5	Food Market..... 91 G3	Jean-Louis Martinetti..... 145 G2	
Galerie de la Marine..... 40 G3	Grand Café de Turin..... 92 H1	LAC..... 146 G4	
Galerie des Ponchettes..... 41 G3	Indyana..... 93 E4	Les Puces des Nice..... 147 G5	
Jardin Maréchal Juin..... 42 F3	Juice Bar..... 94 G2	Moulin à Huile	
L'Alhambra..... 43 E2	Karr..... 95 D4	d'Olive Alziari..... 148 F3	
La Tête Carée de Sosno..... 44 F3	Kei's Passion..... 96 C5		
Le Poseidon.....(see 58)	L'Escalinada..... 97 H1	<b>TRANSPORT</b>	
Matisse's House..... 45 G3	La Cantine de Lulu..... 98 F1	Airport Buses..... 149 C3	
Musée d'Art Moderne	La Petite Maison..... 99 E5	Bus Station..... 150 G2	
et d'Art Humaine de	La Reserve..... 100 H6	Car Rental Agencies	
Contemporain..... 46 F4	Le 3e.....(see 77)	(Train Station Annexe)..... 151 C3	
Musée de Paléontologie	Le Merenda..... 101 F2	Corsica Ferries Ticket Office.....(see 58)	
Terra Amata..... 47 H5	Le Padouk.....(see 77)	Ferry Terminal 1..... 152 H6	
Musée des Beaux-Arts..... 48 A5	Le Pain Quotidien..... 102 F2	Ferry Terminal 2..... 153 G6	
Musée Masséna.....(see 49)	Le Speakeasy..... 103 E4	Gare Maritime..... 154 H5	
Musée d'Art et d'Histoire..... 49 C5	Les Viviers..... 104 D4	Holiday Bikes..... 155 C3	
Musée National Message	Lou Pilha Leva..... 105 G2	Intercity Bus Station..... 156 G1	
Biblique Marc Chagall..... 50 E2	Monoprix..... 106 H1	JLM.....(see 155)	
Nautil Diving..... 51 G5	Monoprix..... 107 D3	Ligne d'Azur..... 157 D2	
Nice Diving..... 52 H5	Restaurant du Gesù..... 108 H2	Ligne d'Azur..... 158 G2	
Nice Le Grand Tour (Bus Stop)..... 53 D5	Terres de Truffes..... 109 E5	SNCF Boutique..... 159 E4	
Palais de Justice..... 54 G2	Voyageur Nissart..... 110 D3	SNCM Ferries Office.....(see 152)	

## Money

Banks and ATMs abound city wide.

**Le Change** (☎ 04 93 88 56 80; 17 av Thiers; ☹ 7.30am-8pm) Exchange opposite the train station.

## Post

**Post office** (train station 23 av Thiers; Vieux Nice 2 rue Louis Gassin)

## Tourist Information

Tourist offices distribute free city maps and reserve hotel rooms.

**Airport tourist information desk** (☎ 08 92 70 74 07; ☹ 8am-10pm) In the arrivals hall of Terminal 1.

**Beachfront tourist office** (☎ 04 92 14 48 00; 5 promenade des Anglais; ☹ 8am-8pm Mon-Sat, 9am-7pm Sun mid-Jun-mid-Sep, 9am-6pm Mon-Sat mid-Sep-mid-Jun)

**Train station tourist office** (☎ 04 93 87 07 07; av Thiers; ☹ 8am-8pm Mon-Sat, 9am-7pm Sun) Exit the train station and turn left.

## SIGHTS

### Vieux Nice

Nice's old town – a mellow-hued rabbit warren – has scarcely changed since the 1700s. At its northeastern corner lies arcade-lined **place Garibaldi**, built during the late 18th century and named after Giuseppe Garibaldi (1807–82). Born in Nice to a fishing family, Garibaldi went on to become a sailor, merchant captain, guerrilla fighter, leader of the Red Shirts and popular hero of Italian unification. He is buried in the **Parc du Château** cemetery (see right).

Baroque **Palais Lascaris** (☎ 04 93 62 05 54; 15 rue Droite; admission free, guided visit €3; ☹ 10am-6pm Wed-Mon, guided visit 3pm Fri) was owned by the Lascaris-Ventimiglia family in the 17th century and is a frescoed orgy of Flemish tapestries, faience and gloomy religious paintings. On the ground floor is an 18th-century pharmacy.

Parallel **rue Benoît Bunico** served as Nice's Jewish ghetto after a 1430 law restricted where Jews could live. It runs into rue de la Préfecture, the old city's main artery, dominated by the imposing **Palais de la Préfecture**, the 17th-

century home of the princes of Savoy; and the **Palais de Justice**, the imposing law courts built in neoclassical style in 1885. Head south to reach **cours Saleya**, buzzing with restaurants and markets. Nearby is **Matisse's house** (1 place Charles-Félix), where he lived in the 1920s. There's no plaque: look out for the lions.

Sweet-chiming baroque churches in Vieux Nice include **Cathédrale Ste-Réparate** (place Rossetti), honouring the city's patron saint; blue-grey and yellow **Église St-Jacques Le Majeur** (place du Gesù); and **Église St-Giaume** (1 rue de la Poissonnerie), all dating back to the mid-17th century. The slightly later **Chapelle de la Miséricorde** (cours Saleya) was built between 1740 and 1780.

## Parc du Château

Vieux Nice's eastern extremity is flanked by **Parc du Château** (Castle Park; ☹ 8am-8pm Jun-Aug, to 7pm Apr, May & Sep, to 6pm Oct-Mar), a towering 92m-high rock offering a cinematic panorama of Nice and the Baie des Anges. The 12th-century castle was razed by Louis XIV in 1706; only the 16th-century **Tour Bellanda**, the round tower you can see from quai des États-Unis, remains.

The park is fabulous for picnics. Its other simple attractions include **Cascade Donjon**, an 18th-century artificial waterfall crowned with a viewing platform; and open-air concerts in summer. The cemetery containing **Garibaldi's grave** covers its northwestern section.

To get here, ride the **Chateau Lift** (Ascenseur du Château; rue des Ponchettes; single/return €0.80/1.10; ☹ 9am-8pm Jun-Aug, 9am-7pm Apr, May & Sep, 10am-6pm Oct-Mar) from beneath Tour Bellanda or hike up the staircases on montée Lesage or the eastern end of rue Rossetti.

## Promenade des Anglais

Palm-lined promenade des Anglais, paid for by Nice's English colony in 1822, is a fine stage for a stroll. It's particularly atmospheric in the evening, with whizzing inline skaters and epic sunsets over the sea. Don't miss the magnificent façade of **Hôtel Negresco**, built in 1912 for Romanian innkeeper Henri Negresco, or Art Deco **Palais de la Méditerranée**, the prized property of American millionaire Frank Jay Gould and France's top-earning casino until the 1970s, when his luck changed and the place closed down.

East towards Vieux Nice, promenade des Anglais becomes **quai des États-Unis**, named after the United States in honour of President Wilson's decision in 1917 to join WWI. Modern

## NISSART

Nice's traditional hymn, *Nissa la Bella* (1912) – an ode to 'O la miéu Nissa, regina de li flou' (Oh my beautiful Nice, queen of flowers) – was written in Nissart, the age-old language of the Niçois.

art exhibitions are hosted by two former fish halls here: **Galerie des Ponchettes** (☎ 04 93 62 31 24; 77 quai des États-Unis; admission free; ☞ 10am–6pm Tue–Sun), a 19th-century vaulted building that was used as a public *lavoir* (wash house) in the 1840s, then as a fish market until Henri Matisse persuaded the council to revamp it in 1950; and **Galerie de la Marine** (☎ 04 93 91 92 90; 59 quai des États-Unis; admission free; ☞ 10am–6pm Tue–Sun). At the quay's eastern end, a **war memorial** hewn from the rock commemorates the 4000 Niçois who died in both world wars.

At the southern end of av Jean Médecin, Nice's main commercial street, sits **place Masséna**, with early-19th-century, neoclassical arcaded buildings painted in shades of ochre and red. Its western end is dominated by the 19th-century **Jardin Albert 1er**. The giant arc languishing on the lawn was designed by sculptor Bernard Venet to commemorate the centenary of the appellation 'Côte d'Azur', dreamt up by French poet Stéphane Liégeard (1830–1925). **Espace Masséna**, a public square, straddles the eastern side of place Masséna.

## Museums

### MUSÉE D'ART MODERNE ET D'ART CONTEMPORAIN

European and American avant-garde works from the 1950s to the present are the focus of Nice's don't-miss **Musée d'Art Moderne et d'Art Contemporain** (MAMAC; Museum of Modern & Contemporary Art; ☎ 04 93 62 61 62; www.mamac-nice.org; promenade des Arts; adult/student €4/2.50, guided visit €3; ☞ 10am–6pm Tue–Sun, guided visit 4pm Wed). Highlights among the

### MUSEUMS PASS

Museum fiends can invest in a **Carte Passe-Musées 7 jours** (€6, no concessions) or the **Carte Passe-Musées 1 An** (€18.30, student €9.15), sold at tourist offices. The former allows holders one visit to each of Nice's museums (excluding the privately run Chagall and Asian Arts museums) over seven consecutive days; the latter yields 15 museum visits in the space of a year. Under 18s get into municipal museums in Nice for free – as does everyone on the first and third Sundays of the month (Chagall and Asian Arts museums first Sunday only).

If you're visiting other museums on the Riviera, plump for a **Carte Musées Côte d'Azur** (p403).

### WHAT'S THAT?

From Nice's port, glance up at Mont Boron, home to celebrities such as Elton John. The pink confection you see is **Château de l'Anglais**, built in 1859 for an English engineer called Robert Smith, renowned at the time as being the only foreigner to live in Nice year-round. Locals quickly dubbed his castle 'Smith's folly'. The historical monument has since been split into private apartments.

permanent 2nd- and 3rd-floor exhibits include items wrapped by Christo; a red model-T Ford crunched into a 1.6m-tall block by Marseillais sculptor César; and the mundane objects (rubbish, letters, children's toys) encased in Perspex containers by Nice-born Arman (p61).

Temporary exhibitions fill the ground and 1st floors; art films and cult movies are screened in the auditorium; and atop the building, humpbacked wooden bridges connect the four marble towers, crowned with a rooftop garden and gallery featuring pieces by city son Yves Klein (p61). Outside, the red concrete **Jardin Maréchal Juin** (☞ 10am–8pm Jun–Aug, 10am–7pm Apr, May, Sep & Oct, 10am–6pm Nov–Mar) hugs MAMAC's eastern side and – more spectacularly – frames the giant square head of **La Tête Carrée de Sosno** (2002). The massive 30m-tall sculpture designed by Sacha Sosno (p62) – a 14m-square concrete head sitting on a pair of shoulders – is, in fact a building: the offices of public library **Bibliothèque Louis Nucéra** (2 place Yves Klein) are inside.

### MUSÉE MATISSE

Located about 2km north of the centre, **Musée Matisse** (Matisse Museum; ☎ 04 93 81 08 08; www.musee-matisse-nice.org; 164 av des Arènes de Cimiez; adult/under 18yr €4/free; ☞ 10am–6pm Wed–Mon) houses a splendid assortment of works by Matisse (p61). Its permanent collection is displayed in a red-ochre 17th-century Genoese villa overlooking the olive-tree-studded **Parc des Arènes**. Temporary exhibitions are hosted in the futuristic basement building. The reception hall of the museum is dominated by a colourful, 4.1m by 8.7m paper cutout frieze entitled *Flowers and Fruits*, designed by Matisse for the inner courtyard of a Californian villa in 1953.

Take bus 15, 17 or 22 from the bus station to the Arènes/Musée Matisse stop.

### MUSÉE NATIONAL MESSAGE BIBLIQUE MARC CHAGALL

The **Musée National Message Biblique Marc Chagall** (Marc Chagall Biblical Message Museum; ☎ 04 93 53 87 20; www.mn.fr; 4 av Docteur Ménard; adult/18–25yr/under 18 €6.50/4.50/free, plus €1.20 for temporary exhibitions; ☞ 10am–5.50pm Wed–Mon Jul–Sep, 10am–4.50pm Oct–Jun) houses the largest public collection of works by Belarusian painter Marc Chagall (1887–1985), known for his characteristic flying animals, flowers, violinists and kissing couples.

The exuberant swaths of colour used by Chagall to illustrate Old Testament themes are set off by the severity of this purpose-built museum. The main hall contains 12 huge interpretations (1954–67) of stories from Genesis and Exodus. In an antechamber, an unusual mosaic of Elijah in his fiery chariot, surrounded by signs of the zodiac, is viewed through a plate-glass window and reflected in a small pond. Five paintings (1960s) based on the *Song of Songs* form the most startling series, an explosion of passionate red (in contrast to the sea greens, deep purples and blues of the main room) dedicated to his wife Vava.

Take bus 15 to the Musée Chagall stop, or walk (signposted from av de l'Olivetto).

### MUSÉE ARCHÉOLOGIQUE DE NICE-CIMIEZ

Nice's little-spoken but lingering language, Nissart, derives most of its vocab from the Roman city of Cemenelum, founded by Augustus in 14 BC. Its ruins form the focus of the **Musée Archéologique de Nice-Cimiez** (Archaeology Museum; ☎ 04 93 81 59 57; 160 av des Arènes de Cimiez; adult/student €4/2.50; ☞ 10am–6pm Wed–Mon). Both the public baths and amphitheatre – the venue for outdoor concerts during the Nice Jazz festival (p270) – can be visited.

Buses 15, 17 and 22 go from the bus station to the Arènes stop.

### MUSÉE INTERNATIONAL D'ART NAÏF ANATOLE JAKOVSKY

Over 1000 works of naive art are gathered at the **Anatole Jakovsky International Naïve Art Museum** (☎ 04 93 71 78 33; av de Fabron; adult/under 18yr €4/free; ☞ 10am–6pm Wed–Mon), inside 19th-century Château Ste-Hélène, 2km west of the centre. Romanian art critic Anatole Jakovsky (1909–83), who moved to southern France in 1932, kick-started the museum by donating his vast collection. Pieces date from the 18th century to the present day.

### FREERIDER

Travel for free on bus 15 between the Matisse, Chagall and Archaeology Museums. Ask the ticket desks at each museum to supply you with a bus ticket.

Take bus 8, 10, 11 or 12 from the bus station to the Fabron stop, from where it's a 500m walk, or take bus 34 to the Musée Art Naïf stop.

### MUSÉE DES ARTS ASIATIQUES

Ornamental treasures from Cambodia, China, India and Japan are showcased in the striking white-marble **Musée des Arts Asiatiques** (Museum of Asian Arts; ☎ 04 92 29 37 00; www.arts-asiatiques.com in French; 405 promenade des Anglais; adult/under 18yr €6/free, 1st Sun of month free; ☞ 10am–6pm Wed–Mon May–mid-Oct, 10am–5pm Wed–Mon mid-Oct–Apr), designed by a Japanese architect, near the airport. Participating in a Sunday afternoon traditional Chinese or Japanese tea ceremony (€10 including museum visit; advance reservations essential) is a highlight. Take bus 9 or 10 from the bus station, or bus 23 from the train station.

### MUSÉE DES BEAUX-ARTS

Find Nice's **Musée des Beaux-Arts** (Fine Arts Museum; ☎ 04 92 15 28 28; www.musee-beaux-arts-nice.org; 33 av des Baumettes; adult/under 18yr €4/free, guided tour adult/under 18yr €7/free; ☞ 10am–6pm Tue–Sun) in a fantastic cream-and-apricot villa built in 1878 for Ukrainian princess Elisabeth Vassilievna Kotschoubey. Its decorative stucco friezes and six-column rear terrace overlooking luxuriant gardens make it typical of Nice's *belle époque*.

The collection is a mishmash of absolute gems, like Jan Brueghel's *Allegory of Water* and *Allegory of Earth*, and yawnsome 18th-century portraits. Fauvist appreciators will relish a roomful of works by Raoul Dufy (1877–1953). Also impressive are sculptures by Rodin, and some late impressionist pieces by Bonnard, Monet and Sisley. Local lads Jules Chéret (1836–1932), the 'Father of the Poster', and Alexis Mossa (1844–1926), who painted truly hideous symbolist works, also feature. The latter is more famous for adding wildly decorated floats to the Nice Carnival than for his watercolours.

From the bus station, take bus 38 to the Musée Chéret stop outside.

### A BEAUTIFUL DETOUR

*Belle époque* Nice was beautiful: the wedding-cake mansions, palaces and pastel-painted concrete gateaux that sprang up in abundance were fabulous and fantastical. Take in the cream of these lavish mansions in Cimiez, Nice's wealthy residential district 2.5km northeast of the train station.

From the town centre, follow av Jean Médecin north, beneath the train tracks, and turn right onto av Mirabeau. The **Musée National Message Biblique Marc Chagall** is signposted at the end of the street; follow the signs just past the museum, to blvd de Cimiez. Across this road is the Haussmann-style **Conservatoire de Musique** (8 blvd de Cimiez), built in 1902. At 46 is **L'Alhambra** (1901), an opulent private mansion set on a small, palm-tree-studded mound and surrounded by a high wall, though not high enough to hide the Moorish minarets that rise from the sparkling white building. **Villa Raphaëli-Surany** (1900), opposite at 35, is adorned with intricate mosaic reliefs. The boulevard's crowning jewel is **Hôtel Excelsior Régina** (71 av Régina), built in 1896 to welcome Queen Victoria to Nice (a statue of the queen stands in front). Henri Matisse later lived here. This titanic building houses private apartments and a handful of medical practices today.

### MUSÉE DE PALÉONTOLOGIE HUMAINE DE TERRA AMATA

East of the port, this **museum** (☎ 04 93 55 59 93; 25 blvd Carnot; adult/student €4/2.50; ☎ 10am-6pm Tue-Sun) displays objects from a site inhabited 400,000 years ago by the predecessors of *Homo sapiens*. Bus 32 links the local bus station and the museum; alight at the Carnot stop.

### MUSÉE D'ART ET D'HISTOIRE

Also called **Musée Masséna** (☎ 04 93 88 11 34; 65 rue de France), this museum was closed for renovation until 2007 at the time of writing, although the marvellous Italianate neoclassical villa (1898) housing the museum is worth a gander.

### Cathédrale Orthodoxe Russe St-Nicolas

Step inside this **cathedral** (av Nicolas II; ☎ 9am-noon & 2.30-6pm Mon-Sat, 2.30-6pm Sun) and let the icons and frescoes transport you to 17th-century Moscow. Consecrated in 1912 and crowned by multicoloured onion domes, it is the biggest Russian Orthodox Church outside Russia. Shorts, miniskirts and sleeveless shirts are forbidden.

### Monastère Notre Dame de Cimiez

Matisse is buried in the cemetery of the **Monastère Notre Dame de Cimiez** (☎ 04 93 81 00 04; ☎ 8.30am-12.30pm & 2.30-6.30pm). His grave is signposted *sépulture Henri Matisse* from the cemetery's main entrance (next to the monastery church on av Bellanda). Raoul Dufy is also buried here.

The monastery itself houses a small **museum** (admission free; ☎ 10am-noon & 3-6pm Mon-Sat) illustrating the everyday lives and activities of its Franciscan monks. Adjoining **Église**

**Notre Dame** boasts precious medieval art by Louis Bréa, and a monumental 17th-century baroque altar. Surrounding the buildings is **Jardin du Monastère**, filled with cypress trees and an abundance of sweet-smelling roses, and offering a sweeping panorama of the Baie des Anges. The **Nuits Musicales de Nice** (p270) are held in the cloisters in July and August.

Take bus 15, 17 or 22 from the bus station to the Arènes stop.

### Villa Arson

Sensational temporary photographic and contemporary art exhibitions are displayed at the **Centre National d'Art Contemporain** (☎ 04 92 07 73 73; www.villa-arson.org in French; 20 av Stéphane Liégeois; admission free; ☎ 2-7pm Wed-Mon Jul-Sep, 2-6pm Wed-Mon Oct-Jun), inside 18th-century **Villa Arson**, 1km north of the town centre.

Take bus 36 to the Villa Arson stop, or bus 4, 7 or 26 to the Fanny stop on blvd de Cessole.

### ACTIVITIES

Activities in Nice itself revolve around the water. But head out of town and green foothills quickly kick in. Before venturing out, pick up the scoop from:

**Club Alpin Français des Alpes-Maritimes** (☎ 04 93 62 59 99; www.cafnice.org in French; 14 av Mirabeau; ☎ 4-8pm Mon-Fri) Walking, paragliding, skiing and most other outdoor sports.

**Nice Randonnée** (☎ 06 67 22 93 46; www.nice-randonnee.com in French; 29ter blvd de Cimiez) Local walking club.

**Parc National du Mercantour Headquarters** (☎ 04 93 16 78 88; www.parc-mercantour.fr; 23 rue d'Italie; ☎ 8.30am-noon & 1.45-5pm Mon-Fri) Headquarters of the Mercantour National Park (p248).

### Beaches & Boats

If you don't like sand between your toes, Nice's beaches – covered with smooth, round pebbles – are for you. Free public sections of beach with lifeguards, first-aid posts and cold showers alternate with 15 private beaches equipped with restaurants, comfy sun-lounges (obligatory; around €15/day) parasols (optional; €4/day), warm showers and changing rooms. **Plage Publique des Ponchettes**, opposite Vieux Nice, gets the most packed with oiled bodies either basking in the sun or punching a ball on the beach-volleyball court.

Mid-June to mid-September water-sport thrills spill across **Lido Plage** (opposite the Palais de la Méditerranée), **Plage Beau Rivage** (☎ 04 92 47 82 82; 107 quai des États Unis) and **Plage du Neptune** (☎ 04 93 87 16 60; opposite Hôtel Negresco). Take to the air with a parachute strung to the back of a motorboat (*parachute ascensionnel*; one/two people €45/60); be dragged at speed in a rubber ring (*bouée tractée*; €20); water-ski or wakeboard (€25/200 per one/10 turns); have a daredevil blast on a fly fish (€35); or paddle around in a canoe-kayak (€6/10 per 30/60 minutes). Jet skis are only allowed on the far western bit of beach near the airport.

**Trans Côte d'Azur** (☎ 04 92 00 42 30; www.trans-cote-azur.com; quai Lunel; ☎ 9am-12.30pm & 1.30-6pm) runs one-hour boat trips along the coast, leaving from the port daily except Monday from March to June (€12.50/7 for adults/four- to 11-year-olds). Mid-June to mid-September it also runs weekly excursions to Île Ste-Marguerite (€34/26), St-Tropez (€49/35) and Monaco (adult/four- to 10-year-olds €26/19). Reservations are essential.

### Diving & Snorkelling

Diving shop **3B Plongée** (☎ 04 93 26 09 03; phplus@wanadoo.fr; 3 quai des Deux Emmanuel) sells equipment and offers diving advice. April to October (weekends only March, November and December), portside dive companies **Le Poseidon** (☎ 04 92 00 43 86; www.poseidon-nice.com; quai Lunel), **Nautil Diving** (☎ 04 93 14 66 81, 06 09 55 71 45; www.nautil-diving.com; quai Lunel) and **Nice Diving** (☎ 04 93 89 42 44; www.nicediving.com; 14 quai des Docks) organise courses, expeditions and equipment rental (€40/180 for one/five dives including equipment rental; €290 for a six-day group course).

### Inline Skating & Skateboarding

Skaters and boarders speed along the smooth, silky and long cycling track on promenade

des Anglais. Hire blades from **Roller Station** (☎ 04 93 62 99 05; 49 quai des États Unis) for €4/6/8 per hour/day/24 hours, or a skateboard or *trottinette* (microscooter) for €3/6/9 per hour/day/24 hours.

Skating club **Nice Roller Attitude** (☎ 04 93 13 97 64, 06 09 07 57 19; www.nice-roller-attitude.com in French) organises mass skates around town, usually departing from outside Hôtel Beau Rivage (p272) at 9pm on the last Friday of the month (check first; dates are on its website under the 'Randonnée' link). In July and August it runs skating courses (€20) for adults and kids.

### NICE FOR CHILDREN

Nice works for kids. Its boats and beaches (left) provide hours of fun, and a couple of private beaches, including **Blue Beach** (p272), sport a playground and/or slide-clad paddling pool for younger tots.

On the prom, there are scooters and inline skates to try; an electric tourist train (below) to toot along on; and an open-top double-decker bus (below) to ride. At its far eastern end, **Parc du Château** (p265) makes a relaxed picnic spot, as does playground-equipped **Parc Phoenix** (☎ 04 92 29 77 00; 405 promenade des Anglais; adult/under 12yr €2/free; ☎ 9.30am-7.30pm Apr-Sep, 9.30am-6pm Oct-Mar) at its western end.

Watching the ferries sail in and out of the port (p278) is always a good activity, as is **Marineland** (p318), a quick flit west by train or car.

### TOURS

Chug around the old town and Parc du Château in 40 minutes aboard an **electric tourist train** (☎ 06 16 39 53 51; www.petittrainnice.com; adult/under 9yr €6/3; ☎ 10am-5pm, 6pm or 7pm mid-Feb-mid-Nov), departing every 30 minutes (except when it rains) across the street from Jardin Albert 1er on promenade des Anglais.

Or try an open-topped double-decker of **Nice Le Grand Tour** (☎ 04 92 29 17 00; www.nicelegrandtour.com; 1-day pass adult/4-11yr/student €18/9/15). Buses go round the port, up to Cimiez, and along promenade des Anglais. Hop on/off at any one of 11 stops, including across the street from the open-air theatre on promenade des Anglais. Drivers and tourist offices sell passes.

**Cydotour** (☎ 08 26 10 00 03; western tour per 1/2 people €7/10.50; ☎ 10.30am-7.30 or 8pm Mon-Sat) runs pedal-powered tours around town by three-wheeled rickshaw with driver; telephone bookings only (€1).

Year-round, the tourist office runs an old-town tour in English (adult/five- to 10-year-olds €12/6) departing from the beachfront office at 9.30am on Saturday; you must reserve in advance. Otherwise, walking tours are organised by the **Centre du Patrimoine** (☎ 04 92 00 41 90; centre.patrimoine@ville-nice.fr; 75 quai des États Unis; adult €3). Tours last 1½ to two hours, start at 3pm or 5pm and cover, among other themes, baroque, Art Deco, neoclassical and *belle époque* Nice.

## FESTIVALS & EVENTS

The celebrated two-week **Carnaval de Nice** (Nice Carnival; www.nicecarnaval.com) has been held each year around Mardi Gras (Shrove Tuesday) since 1294, and attracts 1.2 million—odd spectators. Highlights include the *batailles de fleurs* (battles of flowers), when hundreds upon thousands of fresh blossoms are tossed into the crowds from passing flower-parade floats; and the ceremonial burning of the carnival king on promenade des Anglais, followed by an enormous fireworks display, at the end of the festivities.

The week-long **Nice Jazz Festival** (www.nicejazzfest.com) jives in July in the olive grove behind Cimiez's Musée Matisse. The two-day **Fête au Château** is an outdoor music festival in Parc du Château in mid-June, and Russian chants meet Mozart's *Requiem* for two weeks in late June during the **Festival de Musique Sacrée** (Festival of Sacred Music). **Les Nuits Musicales de Nice**, a two-week event in early August, brings classical music to the cloisters of **Monastère Notre Dame de Cimiez** (p268).

## SLEEPING

Accommodation is of the hotel rather than *chambre d'hôte* variety, but there are a couple of *chambres d'hôtes* with panoramic Nice views on the Corniches (p287) for those seeking peace and tranquillity at the end of a busy day in town.

Only the very best hotels in Nice have sea views. Accommodation can be hard to find in July and August, when most places brandish *complet* (full) signs by 10am.

## Budget HOTELS

Rue Paganini and rue Alsace Lorraine just south of the train station are littered with cheap two-star joints, some more inviting than others.

**Hôtel Belle Meunière** (☎ 04 93 88 66 15; www.bellemuniere.com; 21 av Durante; dm with/without shower

€22/15, d with washbasin & shared kitchen €36, d €45 with shower & toilet €58, tr with shower & toilet €66; reception ☎ 7.30am-midnight Feb-Nov; (P) This bustling place, a minute's walk from the train station, is run by the effervescent Niçoise Marie Pierre, whose family has run the place since 1984. Guests veer towards the younger, backpacking side; the tree-studded garden is great for meeting people and Marie-Pierre will wash your smocks for €5.50 a load (fill the basket up to the line) or stash your suitcase for you (€2). Night owls need a key code to get in after midnight. Rates include breakfast. Parking is €6.50 per night.

**Hôtel Meyerbeer Beach** (☎ 04 93 88 95 65; www.hotel-meyerbeer-beach-nice.cote.azur.fr; 15 rue Meyerbeer; dm low/high season €15/20, s/d/tr/q high season €60/75/105/135; reception ☎ 24hr Jun-Sep, 8am-8pm Mon-Sat, 8am-6pm Sun Oct-Apr; (P) ☒) Young out-to-party travellers are the primary clientele at this fun and friendly pad, a mere hop, skip and jump from the Med. Reception doubles as a common room with free cordial, instant coffee, tea and biccies, as well as free (but, thanks to the CCTV cameras competing for bandwidth, snail's pace) internet. There are beach mats to borrow and rooms come with a kitchenette hidden behind a roller shutter (€20 deposit).

**Hôtel de la Buffa** (☎ 04 93 88 77 35; www.hotel-buffa.com; 56 rue de la Buffa; d €25-35; (P) ☒) Character oozes out of this family-run hotel, appropriately accessed via a spiral staircase (no oversized suitcases please!). Ceilings are lofty, furnishings veer on the side of old-fashioned, and a more local-than-local covered food market is its appealing neighbour. Wi-fi access is €10 per 24 hours.

**Hôtel Wilson** (☎ 04 93 88 95 65; www.hotel-wilson-nice.com; 32 rue de l'Hôtel des Postes; s/d with washbasin €33.50/38, with shower €39.50/45, with shower & toilet €44.50/49) 'Sleep under a beautiful star' is the catchphrase at this unusual one-star hotel – home of bon vivant Jean-Marie Martinez who speaks six languages and shares his convivial dining table, books and classical music with guests. The Matisse room – a sky-blue affair – opens out onto a wrought-iron balcony with wooden chairs overlooking the rooftops. Low-season rates are about €5 less.

## HOSTELS

**Villa St-Exupéry** (☎ 04 93 84 42 83, free phone within France ☎ 08 00 30 74 09; www.vsaaint.com; 22 av Gravier; dm €22, s with washbasin €30, s/d/tr with bathroom €32/56/72;

reception ☎ 6.30-2am Jul-Sep, 7am-11pm Oct-Jun; (P) ☒) Readers rave about this luxurious hostel nestled in an old Carmelite monastery amid a leafy garden on the city fringes – and rightly so! Rooms are clean, fresh and most sport en suite showers; those up top have inspirational sea views (rooms 313, 314 and 315 even open onto a rooftop terrace). It lays on a clutch of free online computers (plus wi-fi); breakfast is a 10-choice cereal feast; and the 24-hour common room rocks as a bar with €1 beer come dusk. St-Exupéry's little prince (p33) would be proud. Find it 2.5km north of the train station. It is serviced by bus 23 to/from the station, bus 1 or 2 to the old town and port, and night bus N3 until 1.10am.

Also recommended:

**Auberge de Jeunesse – Les Camélias** (☎ 04 93 62 15 54; nice-camelias@fuij.org; 3 rue Spitalieri; dm incl breakfast €20; (P) ☒) Flash backpacking in space-age metallic bunks, with two wheelchair-friendly dorms and designer bar to hang in. Rooms locked 11am to 3pm. Wi-fi is €4 per hour.

**Backpacker's Chez Patrick** (☎ 04 93 80 30 72; www.chezpatrick.com; 1st fl, 32 rue Pertinax; dm/d €21/45; reception ☎ 8am-noon & 5-8pm; ☒) Central 24-bed place run by cheery Breton Patrick on the 1st floor (not to be confused with the hostel on the 4th floor that's received more than its fair share of complaints).

## Midrange

**Villa la Tour** (☎ 04 93 80 08 15; www.villa-la-tour.com; 4 rue de la Tour; s/d €49/52, with old-town view €72/78, s/d/tr with old-town view & balcony €127/135/145; ☒) Good service and charm are a given at this hybrid *chambre-d'hôte*-hotel, a convent in the 18th century and the only place to stay in Vieux Nice. Cane garden furniture marks the entrance to a flowery interior, laden with foliage and topped off with a cute little roof patio. Rates are slightly lower November to April.

**Hôtel Carlone** (☎ 04 93 44 71 61; 2 blvd François Grosso; s/d/tr/q from €50/60/77/90; (P) ☒) This old-style 1950s hotel without air-con is a steal thanks to its prime-real-estate location a stone's throw from the water and spacious balconies with a snippet of sea view. Guests staying a week or so can negotiate cheaper rates. Parking is €7 per night.

**Hôtel Cronstadt** (☎ 04 93 82 00 30; www.hotelcronstadt.com; 3 rue Cronstadt; s/d/tr €60/80/110; reception ☎ 10am-10pm) Find the Cronstadt hidden inside old-world Palais Adly: enter the building, cross the ravishing Arabian Nights courtyard gar-

## AUTHOR'S CHOICE

**Nice Garden Hotel** (☎ 04 93 87 35 62; www.nicegardenhotel.com; 11 rue du Congrès; s/d/tr low season from €40/55/75, high season from €50/65/90) The closest thing you'll find to a *chambre d'hôte* in the middle of Nice, this garden hotel is a real gem. The life-long dream of the very charming and amiable Marion (who is actually German, but very much at home in the region after living here for 23 years, with faultless French to prove it!), the hotel sits nestled in a bourgeois townhouse complete with fabulous walled garden. Hugely romantic room 5 has doors opening onto the enviable green space, as does room 1, while No 4 with two double beds, original mosaic floor and ceiling fresco is the family favourite. Breakfast amid flowers outside; consult Marion for the latest in-place to dine of an evening; and pinch yourself that you're really in downtown Nice...oh, and in the house where Thomas Mann's brother once lived.

den, press the buzzer at the far end, and *don't* be put off by the eccentric and unhelpful owner. Rooms are quiet and graceful, all with garden views, and it's the closest two-star to the sea.

**Hôtel du Petit Palais** (☎ 04 93 62 19 11; 17 av Émile Bieckert; www.petitpalaisnice.com in French; d low season €80-130, high season €88-150; (P) ☒) With its quintessential Mediterranean garden and idyllic sea views, this *belle époque* candy-box pink palace in upmarket Cimiez is palatial indeed. Writer, comedian and film-maker Sacha Guitry lived here. Parking is €10 per night.

**Villa Victoria** (☎ 04 93 88 39 60; www.villa-victoria.com; 33 blvd Victor Hugo; s/d/tr from €75/90/105; (P) ☒) The small botanical garden of this apricot villa with sun lounges and a flower-covered gazebo with table beneath is a perfect postcard-writing hide-out. Minibar, trouser press and safety deposit add a big-hotel touch to an otherwise intimate 38-room place to stay. Parking is €10 per day.

**Hôtel Suisse** (☎ 04 92 17 39 00; hotel.suisse@hotels-ocre-azur.com; 15 quai Rauba Capeu; d low season from €69/high season €95; ☒) Teak table and chair-clad wrought-iron balconies strategically placed on five floors overlooking the sweeping Baie des Anges are reason enough to stay at this attractive, three-star hotel on the prom. Service is



as crisp and efficient as one would expect of a hotel named Switzerland. Wi-fi access is free.

**Hôtel Excelsior** (☎ 04 93 88 38 69; www.excelsiornice.com; 19 av Durante; s/d/tr low season €70/100/115, high season €95/140/150; 📞 📺 📺) Oh-so-alooof Parisian manor in appearance, this handsome bourgeois townhouse dating from 1892 makes a smart choice. Wrought-iron balconies and a trio of enormous French flags front a lush garden with pond, fountain and elevated marble terrace. Parking is free; wi-fi access is €20 per hour.

**Hôtel Windsor** (☎ 04 93 88 59 35; www.hotelwindsor-nice.com; 11 rue Dalpozzo; d with/without balcony low season €150/85, high season €165/110; 📞 📺 📺) *Rendez-vous avec l'art* (meeting with art) is how this boutique hotel markets itself – and, indeed, a stay here is just that. Sleep in the company of your favourite artist (Ben makes great bedtime reading) or take your pick from the collection of poster and fresco rooms. White linens show off the original artwork and some rooms have balconies overlooking the true belle of the Windsor ball – a walled garden sprinkled with palm trees, beautifully shaded tables and chairs, and a pool. Free wi-fi.

## TOP END

Many upmarket hotels have private beaches so you can bask away from the riffraff.

**Hôtel Beau Rivage** (☎ 04 92 47 82 82; www.nice-beaurivage.com; 24 rue St-François de Paule; d low/mid/high season from €150/240/285; 📞 📺 📺) Step out of the pulsating summer heat and into this minimalist oasis of cool calm serenity, carved out of sleek designer furnishings and the soft hues of stone, wood, pebble and linen in 2004 by urban architect/interior designer Jean-Michel Wilmotte. Matisse (1916) and Russian playwright Anton Chekhov (1891) stayed here, not that they'd know it now.

**Hôtel Hi** (☎ 04 97 07 26 26; www.hi-hotel.net; 3 av des Fleurs; d from €190; 📞 📞 📺 📺) A concrete alley links a puritanical 1930s façade with the hi-tech interior of this urban hotel. French Philippe Starck protégé Matali Crasset has designed a hotel that turns convention on its head: baths look like four-poster beds and beds appear as tables in blanket-white White & White rooms; a 'sofablaster' (sofa with integrated sound system) is the *pièce de résistance* of Technocorner rooms; and acid-green Happy Day rooms turn pink come dark. A modish rooftop pool and giant waterbeds crown the 8th floor, and fodder available in the state-of-the-art canteen is strictly or-

ganic. Parking is €24 per 24 hours; wi-fi is €5 per day.

**Hôtel Negresco** (☎ 04 93 16 64 00; www.hotel-negresco-nice.com; 37 promenade des Anglais; d with courtyard/garden & sea views low season from €280/350, high season from €350/450; 📞 📺 📺 📺) Queen Elizabeth II, Charlie Chaplin, Matisse, Hitchcock, Walt Disney...all and sundry have stayed at this palatial hotel, built for Romanian innkeeper Henri Negresco in 1912. In the most stand-out building on the prom, with its boob-shaped candyfloss-pink dome, opulent rooms range in style from Louis XIII to Art Deco and are loaded with priceless art. At the heart of the hotel sits the stained glass Salon Royale, a Gustave Eiffel creation bearing one of the world's two chandeliers of its kind (16,800 beads of Baccarat crystal weighing over one tonne; the other's in the Kremlin). Jeanne Augier, now in her 80s, has owned the whole lot since 1957.

**Palais de la Méditerranée** (☎ 04 92 14 77 00; www.lepalaisdelamediterranee.com; 13-15 promenade des Anglais; d low/high season from €280/375, sea view from €550/810; 📞 📺 📺 📺) Nice's most historic, story- and celebrity-rich hotel after the Negresco, this stunning nine-storey cruise-ship liner of a building dating from 1929 rose from the ashes in 2004. Nothing more than a crumbling, Art Deco façade a few years back, the palace oozes four-star opulence today.

## EATING

Vieux Nice is rammed with restaurants, summer seeing a bounty of hybrid eating-drinking terraces fill its streets and squares: vast cours Saleya, place Pierre Gautier and place Rossetti buzz until well past midnight.

Much of the seashore is backed by beach restaurants offering predictable Mediterranean cuisine and the chance to dip between courses. Food at **Blue Beach** (☎ 04 93 87 10 36; 32 promenade des Anglais; mains €10-15; 📞) lunch year-round, lunch & dinner Jul & Aug) is a cut above the rest, plus it hosts free jamming sessions with musicians performing at the Nice Jazz Festival (p270) as well as interesting dinner conferences on Niçois history and culture in July.

Inland, pedestrianised rue Masséna is lined with unexceptional touristy cafés and restaurants buzzing with business.

## Niçois

**Restaurant du Gesù** (☎ 04 93 62 26 46; 1 place du Gesù; pasta & pizza €8-10; 📞) lunch & dinner Mon-Sat) Locals rave about this no-frills eating house, run with

## NIÇOIS NIBBLES

Perfect for filling a hungry moment coming from the beach (or any time of day) are a bunch of battered local specialities, especially common in Vieux Nice where **Chez René Socca** (☎ 04 93 92 05 73; 2 rue Miralhét; 📞 Tue-Sun Dec-Oct) and **Lou Pilha Leva** (☎ 04 93 13 99 08; place Centrale; 📞 8am-midnight or 1am) dole them out to a merrily munching, family-friendly, fun-loving crowd packed around shared bench seating on the street. Order drinks separately from a passing drink waiter.

Take your pick while standing in the cacophonous queue. A portion of *beignets d'aubergines* (aubergine slices fried in batter) or *beignets de courgettes* (battered zucchini slices) sets you back €4 (don't expect a china plate), as do *beignets des sardines* (battered sardines) – a guaranteed taste of sea. There are spicy fish cakes, deep-fried whitebait and battered zucchini flowers to choose from, or how about *farcis* (stuffed vegetables), a slice of pizza or *pissaladière* (traditional onion tart topped with black olives and anchovies), or a quintessential *salade Niçoise* (green salad with boiled egg, tuna and anchovy).

Essential tasting for every visiting palate is *socca* (€2), a savoury, griddle-fried pancake made from chickpea flour and olive oil. The *socca* cooked up by the flamboyant **Thérèse** (Cours Saleya market 📞 8am-1pm Tue-Sun) at her market stall (p36) with plastic tables beneath the awning is legendary. Order a glass of rosé with it.

dynamism and a huge dose of wit by the most gravelly voiced patron on the Riviera. The menu is simple – Niçois *beignets* (fritters) followed by pizza, escalope or homemade pasta with a choice of sauce, house speciality *sauce daube* (a meaty broth sauce) included. Find Gesù tucked away on an old-town square in the shade of a church.

**Voyageur Nissart** (☎ 04 93 82 19 60; www.voyageur-nissart.com; 19 rue d'Alsace-Lorraine; menus €12.99, €15.99 & €19.99; 📞 lunch & dinner Tue-Sat Aug-Jun) No frills, just good solid portions of traditional Niçois fare, served speedily and with a smile, ensure this small three generation-run family bistro near the train station makes it in practically every travel guide. Going strong since 1908, its clientele nonetheless remains fairly local.

**La Taca d'Oli** (☎ 04 93 80 70 93; 35 rue Pairolière; bagna cauda/pan €16/17.50; 📞) lunch & dinner Wed-Thu) No wonder the *bagna cauda* (raw mixed veg dipped into a pot of warm tangy anchovy paste known as *anchoïade*) at this tiny old-town bistro dating from 1947 is so legendary: the same chef has been making it here for the past 17 years! A shared portion of *bagna pan* (raw red mullet and sea bream fillets dipped in hot fish soup) ordered alongside it makes a perfect supper for two.

**La Cantine de Lulu** (☎ 04 93 62 15 33; 26 rue Alberti; starters/mains €10/15; 📞) lunch & dinner Tue-Fri, lunch Mon Sep-Jul) Lulu – Lucien Brych – is the name behind this illustrious bistro where local specialities and all the great French classics are eaten with vigour by an appreciative, regular

crowd. Friday is aioli, stockfish (€22.50) and *bouillabaisse* (order in advance) day. Lulu's Canteen is small; arrive on the dot.

**Le Merenda** (4 rue Raoul Bosio; mains €15; 📞) lunch & dinner Mon-Fri) Simple, solid Niçois cuisine by former Michelin-starred chef Dominique Le Stanc draws the tourist crowds to this pocket-sized bistro with stool seating (rub backs with the person sitting at the table behind you), a tiny open kitchen and the day's menu chalked on the board. Quintessential dishes to try include *tripes à la Niçoise* (tripe) with *panisse* (potato-sized chunks of fried chickpea) and stockfish; ask to taste a smidgen of the latter before ordering, if you're unsure. No credit cards, no telephone; same-day reservations in person only.

**L'Escalinada** (☎ 04 93 62 11 71; www.escalinada.fr; 22 rue Pairolière; menu €23; 📞) lunch & dinner daily mid-Dec-mid-Nov) Little has changed at this enchanting old-town *auberge* (inn; think red-and-white checked tablecloths) for decades: all the old Niçois favourites are cooked up here alongside a clutch of more adventurous specialities – pig nose salad and breaded sheep testicles (sweet breads) included. Get here early to snag a table on its candlelit street terrace. No credit cards.

**La Petite Maison** (☎ 04 93 92 59 59; 11 rue St-François de Paule; mains €13-35; 📞) lunch & dinner Mon-Sat) A sterling reputation props up this ode to contemporary Niçois cuisine, framed in a stylish clean-cut interior with concrete floor, potted olive trees, crisp white tablecloths and art on the walls. Whet your appetite with a shared

### TOP FIVE BIG-NAME DINES

Nice is graced with a handful of already big-name or rapidly rising chefs, so gourmands can dedicate several hours to the simple pleasure of dining decadently well.

- Bruno Clément is the name behind **Terres de Truffes** (☎ 04 93 62 07 68; 11 rue St-François de Paule; menu €40, mains from €18; ☎ lunch & dinner Mon-Sat), an exclusive deli-bistro where the much-acclaimed truffle chef prepares the region's famous fungi in every imaginable form. Truffles star in every dish, most of which you simply won't find anywhere else. Light lunch eaters can always opt for a selection of truffle tapas (€5 a shot) followed by apple pie with truffle caramel!
- A big address houses culinary giant, chef Bruno Sohn, who stuns palates with a cuisine oozing originality at **Le Padouk** (☎ 04 92 14 76 00; 15 promenade des Anglais; lunch starters/mains/desserts €15/23/8, evening starters/mains €25/40, lunch menu €35, dinner menus €50 & €70; ☎ lunch & dinner daily), on the 3rd floor of Palais de la Méditerranée. Be it octopus and red mullet prepared like stockfish, or a sweet feast of almond jelly, roasted apricots, exotic sorbet and basil syrup, Sohn insists on throwing an imaginative twist into his cooking pot. If the sheer length of dish names defeats you before you start (or you simply want to lunch), opt for simpler Le 3e (lunch buffet €24, *plancha* €29), the lounge bar across from the terrace pool where meats are barbecued *à la plancha* (on the griddle).
- His full name is Jouni Tormanen but everyone knows this overtly modern, 30-something Finnish chef, under the wing of Ducasse until branching out on his own, as Jouni. In southern France since 1993, the gastronomic dynamo impresses at his 'taste workshop', **Atelier du Goût** (☎ 04 97 08 14 80; www.jouni.fr; 10 rue Lascaris; menus €30-70; ☎ lunch & dinner Tue-Sat) with a simple choice (but still dead tricky to choose) of three starters, three mains and three desserts. He landed his first Michelin star in 2006 and in early 2007 he breathed new life into Nice's legendary **La Réserve** (☎ 04 97 08 14 80; 60 blvd Franck Pilatte), a *belle époque* building (built in 1876 as a hotel) at the port. Interior décor is pure Art Deco and the contemporary space combines gourmet restaurant with ground-floor lounge and rooftop bar. Watch this space.
- He might only be 26 years old but Japanese hotshot Keisuke Matsushima, alias Kei, makes heads turn at **Kei's Passion** (☎ 04 93 82 26 06; www.keispassion.com in French; place Croix de Marbre, 22ter rue de France; lunch menus €23 & €30, dinner menus €43, €65 & €90; ☎ lunch & dinner), a minimalist space dedicated to gastronomy and crowned with a shiny Michelin star within a year of its opening. Cuisine is overwhelmingly Mediterranean (lots of Italian influence in there) with a subtle dash of the Orient, while the wine cellar, notably, is predominantly organic.
- Inside Hôtel Négresco's Chantecler (p272), chef Bruno Turbot cooks impeccable classic French cuisine with flair at **Chantecler** (☎ 04 93 16 64 00; 37 promenade des Anglais; lunch menus €45 & €60, dinner menus €90 & €130; ☎ lunch & dinner Wed-Sun Feb-Dec). This crimson-coloured place may have lost one of its two Michelin stars (down the back of a Regency sofa?), but remains a mind-blowing extravaganza. Vegetarians get their own evening *menu* (€85).

plate of five/seven Niçois starters (€18/30), followed by a locally caught red mullet or fried snails.

### Fishy

A couple of touristy places on cours Saleya serve impressive seafood platters, while you can feast on as many *moules* (mussels) as you can eat at unpretentious, cheerful **Festival de la Moule** (☎ 04 93 62 02 12; 20 cours Saleya).

**Grand Café de Turin** (☎ 04 93 62 29 52; 5 place Garibaldi; seafood platters €21.10-34.85; ☎ 8am-midnight)

For mountains of fresh-from-the-sea, no-frills shellfish served in an authentic 1900 interior or outside beneath the awning, hit Grand Café de Turin. And yes, the fishmonger opening oysters like there's no tomorrow does do that all day long. Don't miss the sea urchins in season (September to April).

**Les Viviers** (☎ 04 93 16 00 48; www.les-viviers-nice.com; 22 rue Alphonse Karr; mains €20; ☎ lunch & dinner Mon-Sat Sep-Jul) A magnificent choice of oysters, urchins and other shellfish – not to mention a Breton lobster grilled alive (€69) – are

consumed to the sweet tinkle of a piano at this seafood temple. Try the Viviers 1900s-styled bistro next door for something less rarefied.

### French

**Karr** (☎ 04 93 82 18 31; 10 rue Alphonse Karr; mains €21-32; ☎ lunch & dinner Mon-Sat) Hugely popular for lunch with working 30-somethings, this spacious contemporary eating space with crowded street terrace is just the ticket for dining with a difference: think mussel soup, warm oven-baked goat's cheese with honey and almonds, lobster risotto or veal escalope with a stuffed artichoke (in season).

**Aphrodite** (☎ 04 93 85 63 53; www.restaurant-aphrodite.com; 10 blvd Dubouchage; lunch/dinner menu €23/60; ☎ lunch & dinner Tue-Sun) The uninspired interior might be nothing to write home about (although the tomato plants growing in pots around the glassed-in terrace are a nice touch) but David Faure's food is. Dish names take up at least three lines on the menu, sauces are delicate, there are shoals of fish, and hats off to the chef for his wholly vegetarian *menu* (€35).

**11e Art** (☎ 04 93 87 57 15; nice11art@yahoo.fr; 11 rue Meyerbeer; plat du jour €12, starters/mains €15/20; ☎ lunch & dinner Wed-Sun, dinner Tue) A relative newbie on the contemporary dining scene, this hybrid lounge-bar-restaurant is a smart, chic affair with steely bar stools out front and sofa seating in an ultracool air-con interior.

### World

**Boros** (☎ 04 93 88 90 75; 4 rue Dalpozzo; lunch platter €12-15, mezze for 1/2/3 people €12/30/45; ☎ lunch Mon-Sun) Don't tell anyone about this oriental *épicerie* (grocery) specialising in Greek, Lebanese, Turkish and Armenian delicacies that serves delicious lunches in the form of generous mixed platters.

**Indyana** (☎ 04 93 80 67 69; 11 rue Gustave Deloye; mains €21-32; ☎ lunch & dinner Tue-Sat, dinner Mon) Refined and elegant, Indyana lures a dressy set into its lair to nibble on minimalist Asian (tempura and sashimi) and other world cuisines. Pigeon breast in the company of a peachy peach chutney tickled our taste buds.

### Cafés & Quick Eats

Quaff beer, coffee and cocktails on shaded café and bar terraces on busy cours Saleya and pedestrian rue Masséna. For unusual freshly squeezed juices and soya milk or yogurt smoothies, hit the **Juice Bar** (16 rue de la Préfecture).

Cheap, quick Vietnamese and Chinese eateries abound in the train station area around rue Paganini, rue d'Italie and rue d'Alsace-Lorraine.

**Fleur de Café** (☎ 04 93 88 95 25; 7bis rue du Maréchal Joffre; salads €12-14; ☎ 10.30am-6.30pm Tue-Sat) Ice-cream cocktails, infusions, a dizzying choice of freshly squeezed fruit juices and delicious homemade cakes are the trademarks of this sweet café, strung around a small boutique selling nice stuff for the kitchen and home.

**Le Pain Quotidien** (☎ 04 93 62 94 32; 1 rue St-François de Paule; breakfast €6-8, salads €10.50-13.20, tartines €5.60-8.20; ☎ 7am-7pm) Startlingly good organic (not to mention six other) breakfasts and lavishly topped lunchtime *tartines* (toasted bread) are highlights at this rustic café overlooking the flower market.

**Fenocchio** (☎ 04 93 80 72 52; 2 place Rossetti; 1/2-/3-scoop cone €2/3.50/4.50; ☎ 9am-midnight Feb-Oct) Dither too long over the 70-plus flavours of ice cream and sorbet at this unforgettable *glacier* and you'll never make it to the front of the queue. Eschew predictable favourites and indulge in a new taste sensation: black olive, tomato-basil, rhubarb, avocado, rosemary, *calisson* (almond biscuit frosted with icing sugar), lavender, ginger or liquorice. Cone prices are the same whether you lick on the move or order at the counter and then nip inside to help yourself to a jug of iced water before sitting down at a table outside.

### Self-Catering

The market adds a whole new dimension to food shopping. Buy the catch of the day at the **fish market** (place St-François; ☎ 6am-1pm Tue-Sun) and fruit, veg, olives, oil and candied fruits at the heaving open-air **food market** (cours Saleya; ☎ 6am-1pm Tue-Sun) wedged between the sea and the old town. Nearby, rue du Collet and its continuation, rue Pairolière, are lined with cheese shops, bakeries, tripe shops and more.

Mainstream supermarkets:

**Monoprix** (42 av Jean Médecin & place Garibaldi; ☎ 8.30am-8.45pm Mon-Sat)

**Casitalia** (93 rue de France) Italian supermarket.

### DRINKING

Any of the café-terraces on cours Saleya are lovely for an early evening aperitif. Karr (left) lures a local, more sophisticated set and Vieux Nice's bounty of pubs (p277) attracts the noisy, boisterous crowd at the other end of the drinking spectrum.

### VEGETARIAN SURPRISE

- Zucca Magica** (The Magic Pumpkin; ☎ 04 93 56 25 27; 4bis quai Papacino; lunch/dinner menu €17/27; ☺ lunch & dinner Tue-Sat; ♀) You'll either love it or you'll hate it...the idea of someone else deciding what you eat. Bursting with vegetarian surprises and guaranteed to thrill, top Italian chef Marco Folicardi moved from Rome to Nice to open this much-vaunted 'veg, egg and cheese restaurant' – the only one of its kind on the Riviera – where one fixed *menu confiance* is served, dictated simply by the market and *la fantasia du chef*. Seating is on a small (traffic-noisy) street terrace or inside amid a fabulous collection of pumpkins. Bring along a gargantuan appetite and an advance reservation at weekends.
- Le Speakeasy** (☎ 04 93 85 59 50; 7 rue Lamartine; menus €12-14; ☺ lunch & dinner Thu & Fri, lunch Mon-Sat) This teeny weeny slice of veggie heaven run by Jane, a former English teacher and an American (hence the name of the place), cooks up unusual organic meals and juices. Take-aways available.

**Le Before** (☎ 04 93 87 85 59; www.before-nice.com in French; 18 rue du Congrès; ☺ 6pm-midnight Mon-Sat) It's all very hip and trendy at Le Before, chiefly an apéritif bar where a chic crowd gathers for an *apéro dînatoire* (apéritif with food) and background DJ mix.

**Villa 14** (☎ 04 93 80 37 82; 14 av Félix Faure; ☺ lunch & dinner Mon-Sat, dinner Sun) Dining is almost a passing thought at Villa 14, a contemporary eating space (off place Masséna) best known for its superlarge, great-at-any-time-of-the-day terrace beneath a turquoise awning. Lounge DJs kick in on weekends and on summer evenings.

**L'ybane** (city centre ☎ 04 93 16 26 26; 1 rue de la Liberté; Vieux Nice ☎ 04 93 92 92 32; 9 rue de la Préfecture; lunch platters €10-12; ☺ lunch & dinner Mon-Sat, dinner Sun) An eating joint too, this sultry lounge bar with food touts a busy street terrace and minimalist interior topped with a glass chandelier. The food is Lebanese.

**Le Water Bar** (☎ 04 93 62 56 50; 10 rue de la Loge; ☺ noon-midnight Mon-Sat) Slurp designer bottles of water from around the globe (fancy a Chinese lychee-flavoured water?) to the sound of lounge and electro. Décor is exotic.

**La Casa del Sol** (☎ 04 93 62 87 28; 69 quai des États Unis; ☺ Tue-Sat) A former bar turned into a restaurant, new look Casa del Sol is still a busy drinking spot come 11pm, when affluent 30-somethings hang out on sofa seating over cocktails and a dancy DJ mix.

### ENTERTAINMENT

Find cinema and theatre schedules online at [www.nice.webcity.fr](http://www.nice.webcity.fr) (in French); pick up *Nice Rendezvous* (free) from tourist offices; or buy *Semaine des Spectacles* (€0.80, weekly)

from newsstands. Tickets for most events are sold at FNAC inside the Nice Étoile shopping centre (opposite).

Primary venues for live music are the pubs of Vieux Nice (opposite); for details of sounds and musicians to listen out for, see p70.

### Nightclubs

**Le Klub** (☎ 04 93 16 27 56, 06 60 55 26 61; www.leklub.net; 6 rue Halévy; admission free Wed-Fri & Sun, incl 1 drink up to €15 Sat; ☺ midnight-5am Wed-Sun) This is not only the hippest gay venue in town; it is simply the hippest venue in town *point* (full stop). The best DJs on the Riviera can be heard here while the ever-popular Top 50 nights (every second Sunday) with DJ Max (p308) draw wild crowds.

**Blue Moon** (☎ 06 29 50 35 56; 26 quai Lunel; admission €12, free before 1am Fri & Sat; ☺ Wed-Sat 11pm-5am) R & B, rap and house are among the mixed sounds to throb out of this port-side club. Friday is usually themed and Thursday yields various alcohol deals – like as much as Sex on the Beach a girl can drink until 3am.

**Odace** (☎ 04 93 82 37 66; www.odace-club.com; 29 rue Alphonse Karr; admission free; ☺ 7pm-5am Thu-Sat) Lounge bar and club, this huge and happening drinking space is popular both after work and after midnight. Sushi and *nems* (spring rolls) quell hunger pangs.

**Le Liqwid** (☎ 04 93 76 14 28; www.liqwid-lounge.com; 10 rue Alexandre Mari; admission incl 1 drink €12; ☺ 6pm-midnight Mon-Sat) An exclusive bar-cum-club with food to boot (lunch is served noon to 2pm), Liqwid cooks fusion cuisine in a steely Art Deco interior that, late in the evening, stages some of Nice's best visiting DJs. There's a tough door policy.

### Cinema

**Cinéma Nouveau Mercury** (☎ 08 36 68 81 06; 16 place Garibaldi) and **Cinéma Rialto** (☎ 08 36 68 00 41; 4 rue de Rivoli) screen original-language films.

### Gay & Lesbian Venues

The hottest nightclub in town just happens to be gay; see Le Club, opposite.

**Le Flag** (☎ 04 93 87 29 67; www.le-flag.com; 6 rue Eugène Emmanuel; ☺ 7pm-1am Wed & Thu, 8pm-2am Fri & Sat) It might be gay (with fabulously gay, as in colourful, interior to boot and a house cocktail called Rainbow), but this modern art gallery and lounge bar has its finger bang on the pulse for pleasing punters of all shapes and sexual orientations.

**Le Smarties** (☎ 04 93 62 30 75; www.nice-smarties.com; 4 rue Défly; ☺ 10pm-late Sep-Jul) Nothing to do with chocolate and as mixed as gay, this smart retro *bar de la lounge* behind MAMAC has a 1970s décor, cocktails galore and a great line-up of electro soires. The crowd is wholly local and eclectic.

**Blue Boy Enterprise** (☎ 04 93 44 68 24; 9 rue Jean-Baptiste Spinetta; admission free, €12 Sat; ☺ 11pm-4am) Nice's oldest gay club.

### Theatre & Opera

**Théâtre National de Nice** (TNN; ☎ 04 93 13 90 90; contact@theatredeNice.org; promenade des Arts; box office ☺ 2-7pm Tue-Sat & 1hr before performances) Classical music, plays and dance are staged at the city's leading theatre, a modern construction.

**Opéra de Nice** (☎ 04 92 17 40 79; www.opera-nice.org in French; 4 & 6 rue St-François de Paule; tickets €7-75;

box office ☺ 9.30am-6pm Mon-Sat) From October to mid-June, operas and orchestral concerts are held at this Garnier-designed opera house that was built in 1885.

In summer, performances take to the stage beneath the stars at the atmospheric **Théâtre de Verdure** (promenade des Anglais; tickets €10-30; ☺ mid-May–mid-Sep); the tourist office has details.

### SHOPPING

Mad about markets? Buy blooms at the daily **flower market** (cours Saleya; ☺ 6am-5.30pm Tue-Sat, 6am-1pm Sun), and jumble goods at the weekly **flea market** (cours Saleya; ☺ 8am-5pm Mon). On Saturday, browse place du Palais de Justice for **antique books** (1st & 4th Sat of month), **art** (1st, 3rd & 4th Sat) or old **stamps, coins & postcards** (1st, 2nd & 3rd Sat).

Rue Paradis, av de Suède, rue Alphonse Karr and rue du Maréchal Joffre are lined with upmarket boutiques. Mainstream fashion lines av Jean Médecin, with shopping centre **Centre Commercial Nice Étoile** at No 30 and department store **Galeries Lafayette** at No 3.

### Art & Antiques

Small-time artists and crafts people labour in a fascinating line-up of *ateliers* (workshops) in Vieux Nice on rue Droite. Bigger prices are commanded by pieces sold in the contemporary galleries and shops on rue Dalpozzo. Top cat is **Galerie Ferrero** (☎ 04 93 88 34 44; www.galerieferrero.com; 2 rue du Congrès), Nice's most dazzling, dating from 1954 and specialising in works by Arman, César and other Nice New Realists.

### PUB TALK

Vieux Nice is loaded with Brit-styled boozers that pull in the punters with a mixed bag of live music, pub quizzes, big-screen-TV sport, Sunday roasts, karaoke, student nights and happy hours lasting three hours. Most open 11am to 2am daily. Best for:

- Fish'n'chips, Irish beef'n'Guinness pie and a hot vibe – bar of the moment, Irish **Ma Nolan's** (☎ 04 93 80 23 87; www.ma-nolans.com; 2 rue St-François de Paule)
- Beach parties, theme nights, meeting other travellers – legend in its own time **Wayne's** (☎ 04 93 13 46 99; www.waynes.fr; 15 rue de la Préfecture)
- Pool table, table football, cheap drinks and karaoke (Tuesday and Thursday) – Irish **McMahon's** (☎ 04 93 13 84 07; www.mcmahonspub.com; 50 blvd Jean Jaurès)
- Live music (chill soloists early on, bands late) – **Thor Pub** (☎ 04 93 62 49 90; www.thor-pub.com; 34 cours Saleya)
- Bottled beer and whisky – Dutch-themed **De Klomp** (☎ 04 93 92 42 85; 6 rue Mascoïnant)
- All-round pub vibe – Irish **Paddy's Pub** (☎ 04 93 80 06 75; 40 rue Droite)
- BBC on the box – **O'Hara's** (☎ 04 93 80 43 22; 22 rue Droite)

### GASTRONOMIC SHOP

- Chocolate-coated orange slices, figs and almonds from **Confiserie Florian** (☎ 04 93 55 43 50; www.confiserieflorian.com; 14 quai Papacino)
- Crystallised fruit based on family recipes dating back to 1820 from **Henri Auer Confiserie** (☎ 04 93 85 77 98; www.maison-auer.com; 7 rue St-François de Paule)
- Olive oil fresh from the mill at **Moulin à Huile d'Olive Alziari** (☎ 04 93 85 76 92; 14 rue St-François de Paule); from €9 per litre for extra virgin
- Truffles in every guise (oil, purée, laced in acacia honey) from the boutique of **Terres de Truffes** (p274)
- Wine from *cavistes* (cellarmen) who know what they're talking about: **Cave de la Tour** (☎ 04 93 80 03 31; 3 rue de la Tour, run by the same family since 1947; and **Caves Caprioglio** (☎ 04 93 85 66 57; www.cavescaprioglio.com in French; 16 rue de la Préfecture), since 1910, local wine from €1.60 a litre)
- Decadent cakes and chocolates from **LAC** (☎ 04 93 55 37 74; 18 rue Barla)

Shop for antiques under one roof at port-side **Les Puces de Nice** (place Robilante; ☎ 10am-7pm Tue-Sat Jun-Sep, 10am-6pm Tue-Sat Oct-May).

### GETTING THERE & AWAY

#### Air

Nice international airport, **Aéroport International Nice-Côte d'Azur** (☎ 08 20 42 33 33, flight information ☎ 08 36 69 55 55; www.nice.aeroport.fr), is 6km west of the city centre on the seafront.

#### Boat

Ferries to/from Corsica use the **Gare Maritime** (☎ 04 89 88 98 28; www.riviera-ports.com) at the port: **SNCF ferries** (☎ 04 93 13 66 66; ticket counter ☎ 6am-7pm Mon-Fri, 6am-noon & 1-5pm Sat, 6am-10am & 1-5pm Sun) sails in/out of **Terminal 1** (quai du Commerce); **Corsica Ferries** (☎ 08 25 09 50 95; ticket counter ☎ 6-8am & 9am-6pm Mon-Fri, 6-8am & 11am-6pm Sat & Sun) uses **Terminal 2** (quai Amiral Infernet); while the bright orange ships of EasyCruise dock by quai Lunel. See p421 for more details.

#### Bus

Several bus companies serve the coast and the Niçois hinterland from the **intercity bus station** (☎ 08 92 70 12 06; 5 Blvd Jean Jaurès; information counter ☎ 8.30am-5.30pm Mon-Fri, 9am-noon & 1-4pm Sat), including **Intercars** (☎ 04 93 80 08 70), which runs various long-haul services to European destinations (see p419).

Within the Alpes-Maritimes *département*, single bus fares are a flat €1.30 irrespective of distance. Drivers sell tickets. Services are at least hourly Monday to Saturday (less frequent Sunday) to/from Vence (50 minutes), Grasse (1¼ hours), St-Jean Cap Ferrat (30 minutes)

and Èze (20 minutes). Buses to/from Menton (line 100; 55 minutes) and Cannes (line 200; 1¼ hours) stop at most towns en route.

Destinations outside Alpes-Maritimes include Aix-en-Provence (single/day return €23.50/28, 2¼ hours, five daily), Marseille (single/day return €23.50/28, 2¼ hours, five daily), Digne-les-Bains (€23, 2¼ hours, four weekly) and Toulon (single/day return €23/25, 2½ hours, two daily Monday to Saturday) via Hyères.

Ski resorts Valberg (2½ hours, one daily mid-December to mid-March) and Isola 2000 (two hours, one to three daily) command a flat €8 single fare.

#### Train

Nice's main train station, **Gare Nice Ville** (Gare Thiers; av Thiers) is 1.2km north of the beach. In town, tickets are sold at the **SNCF Boutique** (nr rue de la Liberté & passage E Negrin; ☎ 8.30am-6.30pm Mon-Sat).

There are fast, frequent services (up to 40 daily in each direction) from Nice to towns along the coast between St-Raphaël and Ventimiglia (Italy), including Antibes (€3.70, 30 minutes), Cannes (€5.60, 40 minutes), Menton

### POSTCARD HOME

Dear Mum. Pic on the front is a shot of the blue chairs on promenade des Anglais taken by Niçois photographer **Jean-Louis Martinetti** (☎ 04 93 85 61 30; www.martinetti.fr; 17 rue de la Préfecture; ☎ 10am-noon & 3-7pm Tue-Sat). His work is just brilliant. Love N.

(€4.20, 35 minutes), Monaco (€3.10, 25 minutes) and St-Raphaël (€9.80, 45 minutes).

The mountain railway operated by **Chemins de Fer de la Provence** (☎ 04 97 03 80 80; www.train-provence.com) offers a scenic trip to Digne-les-Bains (€17.65, 3¼ hours, four or five times daily) from Nice's **Gare du Sud** (☎ 04 93 82 10 17; 4bis rue Alfred Binet). See p245 for full details.

### GETTING AROUND

#### To/From the Airport

Bus 99 provides a speedy link between Nice's main train station and the airport (€4, 15 minutes, every 30 minutes between 8am and 9pm), continuing to the port mid-June to mid-September. For the bus station and Vieux Nice, hop aboard bus 98.

From the airport bus station, next to Terminal 1, there are daily buses to destinations including Aix, Avignon, Cannes, Grasse, Isola 2000, Menton, Monaco, Valberg and Vence. Many buses stop at the Terminal 2, too.

A **taxi** (☎ 04 93 13 78 78) from the airport to downtown Nice costs €20 to €30 (cash payment only), depending on the time of day and which terminal you're leaving from.

#### To/From the Port

Free shuttle buses shunt ferry passengers between the port, train station and several upmarket hotels. Otherwise, buses 1 and 2 link the port with av Jean Médecin.

#### Bicycle

**Holiday Bikes** (☎ 04 93 16 01 62; www.holiday-bikes.com; 34 av Auber) and **JML** (☎ 04 93 16 07 00; 34 av Auber; right) as well as Roller Station (p269) rent out road and/or mountain bikes for around €5/10/15 per hour/day/24 hours.

#### Bus

Local city buses are run by **Ligne d'azur** (☎ 08 10 06 10 06; www.lignedazur.com), with its main hub on sq du Général Leclerc. Time-stamped tickets are valid for one hour and cost €1.30/10 for one/10 rides or €4 for a one-day pass (which covers trips to/from the airport). Passes are sold at **Ligne d'azur agencies** (10 av Félix Faure & 29 av Malausséna; ☎ 7.15am-7pm Mon-Fri, 8am-6pm Sat) and in **tabacs** (tobacconists). Passengers travelling without a ticket/time-stamped ticket risk a €37.80/25.20 on-the-spot fine.

Bus 12 links the train station with promenade des Anglais (15 minutes), and bus 30 is the bus for Vieux Nice.

### Car & Motorcycle

All the major car rental agencies are at the airport and snug in a **train station annexe** (12 av Thiers; ☎ 8am-1pm & 2-7pm Mon-Fri, 8am-1pm & 10am-7pm Sat, 8am-noon & 5-7pm Sun).

Opposite the station, Holiday Bikes and JML rent out 50cc scooters/125cc motorcycles for around €40/55 a day.

Parking costs €2-plus per hour and is difficult. Most hotels without private parking have deals with nearby car parks: when making your reservation, ask if the hotel can give you a discount parking card.

#### Taxi

Call **Central Taxi Riviera Nice** (☎ 04 93 13 78 78) to order a taxi by phone, or pick one up at a rank: in front of the train station; at place Garibaldi; on promenade des Anglais and so on. Journeys are metered and rates (pick-up charge €2.50, plus €1.56/km) must be displayed inside the cab. Night rates (€2.08/km) apply from 7pm and 7am, all day Sunday and on bank holidays. The minimum fare is €5.50.

#### Tram

At time of writing, the first line of the city's state-of-the-art tramway system was scheduled to be operational from summer 2007: line 1 will run for 8.7km between the north and east of the city. For the latest update, see www.tram-nice.org or call ☎ 08 11 00 20 06.

By 2010 a second line will run from the port, along rue Hôtel des Postes/rue de la Buffa, then along promenade des Anglais and beyond the airport, eventually stretching all the way to Cagnes-sur-Mer.

## THE THREE CORNICHES

Three parallel roads offering unparalleled views link Nice and Menton, passing quaint perched villages, epic monuments and the principality of Monaco on the way. The Corniche Inférieure (aka Basse Corniche, the Lower Corniche and the N98) sticks closely to the nearby train line and villa-lined waterfront. The Moyenne Corniche (the N7) is the middle road, clinging to the hillside and affording great views if you can find somewhere to pull over. The Grande Corniche leaves Nice as the D2564 and is the most breathtaking.

The Corniche Inférieure is well served by bus and train from Nice; the two higher roads

and the entire Niçois hinterland are practically inaccessible without your own wheels.

## CORNICHE INFÉRIEURE

Heading east from Nice to Menton, the Corniche Inférieure, built in the 1860s, passes through the towns of Villefranche-sur-Mer, St-Jean-Cap Ferrat, Beaulieu-sur-Mer, Èze-sur-Mer, Cap d'Ail and Monaco.

This lower coastal road is well served by buses and trains. Bus 100, the fastest line, runs the length of the Corniche Inférieure between Nice and Menton, stopping at all the villages along the way (every 15 minutes from 6am to 8pm), including Villefranche-sur-Mer (eight minutes) and Beaulieu-sur-Mer (11 minutes). The less direct bus 111 serves St-Jean-Cap Ferrat (25 minutes), Villefranche (10 minutes) and Beaulieu (45 minutes). Fares are a flat €1.30.

Nice-Ventimiglia (Italy) trains run along the coast every 10 to 20 minutes between 7am and 6pm, stopping at Villefranche-sur-Mer (€1.40, eight minutes), Beaulieu-sur-Mer (€1.70, 14 minutes), Cap d'Ail (€2.70, 21 minutes), Monaco (€3.10, 25 minutes), Cap Martin-Roquebrune (€3.70, 32 minutes) and Menton (€4.20, 38 minutes).

### Villefranche-sur-Mer pop 6649

Heaped above a picture postcard-perfect harbour, this picturesque village overlooks the Cap Ferrat peninsula and – with its ultra-deep *rade* (harbour) – is prime port of call for Titanic-sized cruise ships (Nice harbour isn't deep enough for the biggest cruise liners so they moor here and passengers get ferried to/from Nice in smaller boats).

Villefranche's 14th-century old town with its tiny, evocatively named streets, broken by twisting staircases and glimpses of the sea, is reason enough to visit. Don't miss eerie arcaded **rue Obscure**, a historical monument a block in from the water.

Above the old fishing harbour, **Port de la Santé**, lies place Amélie Pollonnais, filled by a Sunday **art and antique market**. From here a coastal path runs around the citadel to Port Royal de la Darse, fortified between 1725 and 1737 and sheltering pleasure boats today. En route there are good views of Cap Ferrat and the wooded slopes of the Golfe de Villefranche (Gulf of Villefranche), a Russian naval base in the 19th century during their conflicts with the Turks.

Villefranche was a favourite of Jean Cocteau, who sought solace here in 1924 after the death of his companion Raymond Radiguet.

### ORIENTATION & INFORMATION

From Villefranche-sur-Mer train station, follow the signs to the old town, whose main street (rue du Poilu) is on the same vertical level as the station; or take the steps down to quai Amiral Courbet and the shingle beach. To get to rue Obscure from the harbour, walk up the unpromising-looking staircase at 7–9 quai Amiral Courbet (between La Mère Germaine and L'Oursin Bleu) and turn right.

The **tourist office** (☎ 04 93 01 73 68; www.villefranche-sur-mer.com; Jardin François Binon; ☎ 9am–7pm Jul & Aug, 9am–noon & 2–6.30pm Mon–Sat Jun & Sep, 9am–noon & 2–6pm Mon–Sat Oct–May), a glass-fronted pavilion, is at the top of Villefranche in the newer town. From place Philibert, outside the citadel, follow av du Maréchal Joffre upwards, then bear left onto av du Maréchal Foch. The office is 100m along on your left.

### SIGHTS

#### Chapelle St-Pierre

Neglected 14th-century waterfront **Chapelle St-Pierre** (☎ 04 93 76 90 70; admission €2; ☎ 10am–noon & 3–7pm Tue–Sun, shorter hrs rest of year, closed mid-Nov–mid-Dec) was used by fishermen to store nets until a 68-year-old Jean Cocteau (1889–1963) transformed it into a mirage of sweeping, mystical frescoes. Scenes of angels, St Peter's life and the Roma of Stes-Maries de la Mer are interspersed with patterns, stars and the apocalyptic Eye of God design. The engraving above the (oddly, inner) door reads 'Enter this building as if it were made of living stone'.

Mass is celebrated here on 29 June, the feast day of St Peter, patron saint of fishermen.

#### Citadel

The imposing **Fort St-Elme** (place Emmanuel Philibert) was built by the duke of Savoy between 1554 and 1559 to defend the gulf. Nowadays the walls shelter a scattering of cultural doodahs, including the town hall, some well-combed public gardens and a clutch of museum collections: the **Musée Volti** (☎ 04 93 76 33 27; admission free; ☎ 9am–noon & 2.30–7pm Mon & Wed–Sat, 2.30–7pm Sun Jul & Aug, to 6pm Mon & Wed–Sat Jun & Sep) displays voluptuous bronzes by Villefranche sculptor Antoniucci Volti (1915–89).

Summer ushers in some fine outdoor events, including open-air musical concerts

### ITALY FLITS

Titillated by Italianate Nice? Go, taste the real McCoy Italy across the border. Our favourite day trips from Nice (or elsewhere along the coast):

- Lunch in style on the Italian Riviera at **La Réserve** (☎ 0184 26 13 22; Via Arziglia 20, Bordighera; antipasti/pasta €10/15, fish & meat €20–32; ☎ lunch & dinner Tue–Sat, lunch Sun) in Bordighera. Feast on zucchini flower and scallop risotto, followed by a salt-encrusted catch of the day at this design-driven beach restaurant with sun-bathing and swimming decks between the rocks.
- Re-live 1960s bohemia in **Bussana Vecchia**, a medieval village wiped out by an earthquake on 23 February 1887 and rebuilt by artists in the 1960s. The artists moved in and transformed the rubble into the quaint international artists' village Bussana is today. Tempted to stay the night? Eccentric sculptor-turned-writer **Colin Wilmot** (☎ 0184 51 01 14; wilmot@dmw.it; B&B €75) is your man. Wilmot arrived in 1966 to drag his eccentric mother, British socialite Elizabeth Wilmot, back to London – only to fall madly in love with the stunning 360-degree panorama of sea and Alpine foothill enjoyed from the ruins she called home. In 2000 the Italian Cultural Ministry declared Bussana a historical monument, hence state property, and tried to evict Wilmot, among others. The case continues.
- Shop for leather and Italian fashion in **San Remo**, haunt of Europe's social elite in the 19th century. Italy's principal **flower market** (Corso Garibaldi; ☎ 6–8am Jun–Oct) is also here: watch the frantic bidding.
- Ogle at knock-off leather bags, lingerie, clothes, fresh pasta, fruit'n'veg, flowers and a mind-blowing array of other market produce at **Ventimiglia's** vast, noisy and decades-old **Friday-morning market**. It stretches the length of the seashore.

during July's **Moments Musicaux de Citadelle**. The **Petits Matins de la Citadelle** (Citadel Early Mornings; ☎ 04 93 01 73 68; adult/under 12yr €8/3; ☎ 9am Fri May–Sep) includes a civilised breakfast in the museum garden, followed by a tour of the fortress and old town. Evening attractions include the 15-minute **changing of the guard** (7pm Jul & Aug) and movies screened beneath the stars in the open-air **Théâtre de la Citadelle** (tickets €7; ☎ 9.30pm Jun–Sep).

### ACTIVITIES

**Dark Pelican** (☎ 04 93 01 76 54; www.darkpelican.com; quai Courbet) rents out boats of all shapes and sizes, starting at €60/110 per morning/day for a five-person, no-licence-required Fun Yak 450 (€500 deposit).

Underwater photography is one of the many activities offered by diving school **Aqua Pro Dive** (☎ 04 93 01 71 04; www.apdi-villefranche.com; 16 rue du Poilu). It rents out all the gear and organises baptism dives (€50) and diving courses (€337/407 for seven dives without/with equipment hire).

### TOURS

Weekly two-hour boat tours to Monaco (adult/child €15/10, June to September), and

one-hour trips around Cap Ferrat (adult/child €10/5, July and August) are organised by **Actifrétement Maritime Villefrançois** (☎ 04 93 76 65 65; www.amv-sirenes.com; Port de la Santé; ☎ 9am–noon & 2–6pm Tue–Sun Jun–Sep). Boats leave from Port de la Santé, at the western end of quai Amiral Courbet.

The same company also sells tickets for dolphin- and whale-watching expeditions run by **Acti'Loisirs** (☎ 04 93 62 00 16; www.actiloisirs.com; ☎ Jun–mid-Sep). Boats sail several times weekly and expeditions last four hours.

### SLEEPING

Villefranche has no *chambres d'hôtes*.

**Hôtel Provençal** (☎ 04 93 76 53 53; www.hotelprovençal.com; av Maréchal Joffre; d with garden/sea view low season from €63/89, high season €78/105; 🍷) With its warm mustard-coloured façade and rooftop garden, this Logis de France hotel oozes a simple family charm. Over half of its rooms overlook the citadel gardens or harbour, and you can breakfast on a terrace shaded by orange trees. Wi-fi is available.

**Hôtel Welcome** (☎ 04 93 76 27 62; www.welcomehotel.com; 1 quai Amiral Courbet; d/ste from €132/199; 🍷) mid-Dec–mid-Nov; 🍷) Cocteau stayed at this peachy 17th-century convent, which is



opposite Chapelle St-Pierre. Every room has a wrought-iron balcony offset by sky-blue shutters overlooking the old port and there's an upmarket wine pier (☎ 04 93 76 27 40) open from 6pm, Tuesday to Sunday, where you can toast the sunset. Parking is €12.20.

## EATING

Crack open freshly caught crustaceans on quai Amiral Courbet, a quay lined with restaurants including **Oursin Bleu** (Blue Sea Urchin; ☎ 04 93 01 90 12; 11 quai Amiral Courbet; menu €34) and **La Mère Germaine** (☎ 04 93 01 71 39; 7 quai Amiral Courbet; menu €37), the great-grandmother of Villefranchois cuisine cooking up prized *bouillabaisse* (€63; order 24 hours in advance) since 1938.

**La Fille du Pêcheur** (☎ 04 93 01 90 09; www.lafilledupecheur.com; 13 quai Amiral Courbet; mains €15, bouillabaisse €45; ☎ lunch & dinner) Shrimps flambéed in pastis, baby octopus cooked in garlic or a simple plate of deep-fried whitebait (€12) are fishy pleasures to be tucked in to with relish at the Fisherman's Daughter... called Krystel.

**Beluga** (☎ 04 93 80 28 34; www.beluga.eu.com; 3 quai Poncharrier; salads €13-18, mains €25; ☎ lunch & dinner Tue-Sun) This hip DJ bar serves food too – meat and fish grilled *à la plancha* (on a metal plate) – and is a prime spot for lounging over drinks and dinner on soft lounge-style seating. Beluga lives in an old Savoy waterfront palace.

## St-Jean-Cap Ferrat

pop 2555

Once a drowsy fishing village, yacht-laden St-Jean-Cap Ferrat sits on the fringe of Cap Ferrat, a stunning wooded peninsula glittering with

millionaire mansions framed by high walls and hedges to thwart peeping Toms and paparazzi. Famous former residents read like a *Who's Who* of the 19th and 20th centuries: writer Somerset Maugham owned the luxurious Villa Mauresque (his regular guests included Noël Coward, Ian Fleming and Evelyn Waugh); and Charlie Chaplin, Winston Churchill and Cocteau holidayed here (not together).

Some 14km of eucalyptus-scented walking paths cover the cape; the **tourist office** (☎ 04 93 76 08 90; ot.stjeancapferrat@tiscali.fr; 59 av Denis Séméria; ☎ 8.30am-6pm Mon-Fri, 10am-5pm Sat & Sun) has maps. A coastal path links the fine-shingle **Plage de Passable** on the western side with the café-lined **Port de Plaisance** on the east; the easiest spot to pick it up is from the beach. Walking right round the cape (6km) takes just a few hours and is easily the best way to see the cape.

On the western side of the cape, **Zoo Parc du Cap Ferrat** (☎ 04 93 76 07 60; www.zoocapferrat.com; adult/3-10yr €14/10; ☎ 9.30am-7pm summer, 9.30am-5.30pm winter), a small but well-landscaped botanical park with 300 animals to discover, provides easy entertainment for parents with small children in tow. In town, the tiny port-side **Musée des Coquillages** (Shellfish Museum; ☎ 04 93 76 17 61; www.musee-coquillages.com; quai du Vieux Port; adult/under 18yr €2/1; ☎ 10am-12.30pm & 2-6pm Mon-Fri, 2-6pm Sat & Sun) is another crowd-pleaser.

## SIGHTS

### Villa Ephrussi de Rothschild

It's so extreme you just have to love it. A completely over-the-top *belle époque* confection, **Villa Ephrussi de Rothschild** (☎ 04 93 01 33 09;

## HOT TIP

Each year in August the colonnaded terrace of Villa Ephrussi de Rothschild becomes the stunning open-air stage for **Les Azuriales** (www.azurialopera.com), a two-week opera festival staged in the style of an intimate, 18th-century soiree.

www.villa-ephrussi.com; adult/7-17yr €9.50/7; ☎ 10am-7pm Jul & Aug, to 6pm Feb-Jun & Sep & Oct, 2-6pm Mon-Fri, 10am-6pm Sat & Sun Nov-Feb) was commissioned by the eccentric Baroness Béatrice Ephrussi de Rothschild in 1912, and took 40 architects seven years to build. Pink is everywhere (the Baroness' favourite animals were flamingos because of their colour). Fragonard paintings, frilly Louis XVI furniture and flowery porcelain heighten the sugary effect. The 1st floor costs a further €3 to see (tour only), and includes the Monkey Room, decorated with painted monkey friezes on the panelled walls and filled with Béatrice's collection of cheeky porcelain chimps.

Out of this world are the villa's seven themed gardens. Stroll through Spanish, Japanese, Florentine, stone, cactus and pink rose areas, before entering the romantic French garden, landscaped to resemble a ship's deck (the Baroness had her 30 gardeners dress as sailors to complete the effect). A stream flows from the Temple of Love to a pool at the heart of the complex, where musical fountains dance every 20 minutes. Magical.

Bus 111, which links Nice and St-Jean-Cap Ferrat, stops at the foot of the driveway leading to the villa, at the northern end of av Denis Séméria (the D25). By train, get off at Beaulieu-sur-Mer, a 20-minute walk away.

## SLEEPING & EATING

**Hôtel L'Oursin** (☎ 04 93 76 04 65; www.hoteloursin.com; 1 av Denis Séméria; d €50-80; ☎) Very *chambre d'hôte* in mood, the Sea Urchin looks more like an antique shop than a hotel. Breakfast is enjoyed around a shared table in the salon, crammed with period furnishings, and two of the 14 rooms have a sea view. Lou the Alsatian and Rita the French bulldog are permanent residents. Wi-fi access is free.

**La Voile d'Or** (☎ 04 93 01 13 13; www.lavoiledor.fr; av Jean Mermoz; d garden/sea view low season from €229/249, high season from €414/444; menus €80, starters/mains €32/40; ☎) In 1946 when the father of British film-maker Michael Powell bought the

Golden Sail (he sold his farm in Kent to do so), it had 25 rooms and just five bathrooms – that was luxury then. Today this legendary hotel on the water is *the* place to enjoy the Cap Ferrat good life: luxuries include sauna, two sea-water swimming pools, private beach and palatial rooms fit for a king and the long list of celebrities who've stayed here.

**Restaurant du Port** (☎ 04 93 76 04 46; av Jean Mermoz; menu €17, mains €12; ☎ lunch Wed-Mon) It looks so bog standard it scarcely warrants a second glance. But step inside and be stunned by a gregarious local crowd fuelling on excellent quality homemade fare – grilled sardines, steaks, fish carpaccio – courtesy of Richard and Jean-Marie. Sit at the table by the window for a lovely port view (and cooling sea breeze).

**Le Sloop** (☎ 04 93 01 48 63; Port de Plaisance; mains €10-20; ☎ lunch & dinner Jun-mid-Sep, lunch & dinner Thu-Tue mid-Sep-May) A blue-and-white nautical décor complements the seafaring spirit of the Sloop, the hot portside address of the moment where moneyed diners feast on seafood and shellfish. Advance bookings recommended.

## Beaulieu-sur-Mer

pop 3700

Another popular *belle époque* resort for Europe's artists, poets and princes. French architect Gustave Eiffel lived at the waterfront Villa Durandy (now converted into luxury holiday apartments) from 1896 until his death in 1923. His next-door neighbour was Théodore Reinach, oddball scholar and originator of the awesome Villa Grecque Kérylos, Beaulieu's main attraction.

Remnants of the resort's golden age include the **Grand Casino** (☎ 04 93 76 48 00; www.casinobeaulieu.com; 4 av Fernand Dunan), built in 1928 and still drawing wildcards until sunrise; and neighbouring **La Rotonde** (1899), a wedding cake-white hotel used as a hospital during WWII. Across from the harbour are the **Jardins de l'Olivaille**, venue for a two-week Jazz Parade in August.

Beaulieu's shingle beach overlooks the Baie des Fourmis (Bay of Ants). From here, promenade Maurice Rouvier leads southwest beneath a hedgerow of *lauriers-roses* (oleanders) to the port of St-Jean-Cap Ferrat, a pleasant 2.5km stroll.

For other scenic seaside walks, ask at the **tourist office** (☎ 04 93 01 02 21; www.otbeaulieusurmer.fr; place Georges Clemenceau; ☎ 9am-12.30pm & 2-7pm Mon-Sat, 9am-12.30pm Sun), in the train station car park.

## TALK TO A FISHERMAN

His father fished alone at sea until the grand old age of 90 – as did his father, and his father. And Jean-Paul Roux, fourth generation fisherman, 60 years old and still going strong, is no exception to the family rule.

'My father fished every single day of his life. He had to eat every day – so he fished every day. That is the essential principle of the fisherman.'

'The sea is my passion. It has to be. Fishing is a very hard trade and if you're not passionate about it, you wouldn't do it. I get up at 3am, am at sea from 4.30am until around 10am and work until at least noon sorting out my nets, the boat. There are different nets for every fish; at the moment it's the season for *chapon* and *bouille* (both used in *bouillabaisse*).

'My parents lived in Villefranche; my grandfather did. It is my town, although there are few Villefranchois left – just two or three fishermen like me.'

Jean-Paul can be found every morning from 10am to noon plucking seaweed from his nets aboard his traditional *pointu* (fishing boat), moored next to the quay opposite Hôtel Welcome. Most of the morning's catch goes straight into the kitchen of his daughter's restaurant, the Fisherman's Daughter (above). What's left he sells from a makeshift stall on the quay in front of his boat.

## SIGHTS

**Villa Greque Kérylos**

Eccentric and beautiful in equal measure is **Villa Greque Kérylos** (☎ 04 93 76 44 09; www.villa-kerylos.com; av Gustave Eiffel; adult/7-17yr €8/6; ☎ 10am-7pm Jul & Aug, 10am-6pm Feb-Jun & Sep-Nov, 2-6pm Mon-Fri, 10am-6pm Sat & Sun Nov-Jan), a seven-years-in-the-making mansion designed by scholar-archaeologist Théodore Reinach (1860–1928) and architect Emmanuel Pontremoli (1865–1956) in 1902. Rooms and everything in them are based on ancient Greek models. The result: a perfect reproduction of a 1st-century Athenian villa.

Audio guides lead you from the *balanèion* (bathroom), with its dolphin-decorated marble tub, to the *triklinos* (dining room), complete with Greek-style recliners, frescoes and gold-leaf ceiling. Several hundred square metres of mosaics cover the floors (look out for the wonderful Minotaur), and meticulously made walnut, rosewood, coral, marble and lemonwood furniture fills the rooms. It's all so immaculate, you long to see where Théodore's kids lived (sadly, it's out of bounds).

In the gardens, a botanical trail highlights the ancient uses of plants typical to Greece and the French coast, while the **pottery workshop** (☎ 06 13 27 18 05; www.stonewaves.com; admission from €15; ☎ 1-6pm Thu-Sun term time, 1-6pm daily school holidays, to 7pm Jul & Aug) introduces adults and children to the art of pot decoration and mosaic work.

A combined ticket for the Kérylos and Rothschild villas costs €14.50/10.

## SLEEPING &amp; EATING

**Hôtel Riviera** (☎ 04 93 01 04 92; www.hotel-riviera.fr; 6 rue Paul Doumer; d low/mid/high season from €47/52/56; ☎ ☎) A breath of air in every sense (the place is nonsmoking), this tasteful two-star hotel with Carrara marble staircase, Italian granite floors, wrought-iron balconies and a hibiscus-laden summer patio just perfect for breakfasting really is hard to resist.

**Villa Gracia** (☎ 04 93 01 03 60; kikou.lacas@laposte.net; montée des Orangers; d/q incl breakfast €90/150; ☎ (P)) Olive, lemon and orange trees – not to mention sky-high palms – add an alluring scent to this delightful *chambre d'hôte* with peach façade, walled-garden and sage-green shutters. Inside the 19th-century villa, a rustic décor with period furnishings, old stone walls and classical music playing in the background shouts 'family house'. Madame Lacas hails from northern France and speaks excellent English; Monsieur speaks Croat.

**La Réserve** (☎ 04 93 01 00 01; www.reservebeauieu.com; 5 blvd du Maréchal Leclerc; d with port/sea views from €475/840; ☎ ☎ ☎ ☎) Hard to believe this decadent post-WWII hang-out was a simple fish restaurant in 1880. One of the Riviera's most famed hotels, it has four stars, is very pink and boasts a guestbook to die for – Churchill, Walt Disney and Greta Garbo all stayed here. Hide from the paparazzi on the private pier, in the private saltwater pool and spa, or over champagne in the gourmet restaurant.

**Cap d'Ail**

pop 4550

Strolling and swimming are the key attractions of unpoetically named Cape of Garlic (actually derived from the Provençal 'Cap d'Abaglio', meaning 'Cape of Bees'). Motion-picture pioneer Auguste Lumière's grand house (1902) still stands among the palm trees and pines at 8 av Charles Blanc, while the spectacular Cocteau-designed **amphitheatre** serves as a youth theatre for the **Centre Méditerranéen**

## AUTHOR'S CHOICE

**Grand Hôtel du Cap Ferrat** (☎ 04 93 76 50 50; www.grand-hotel-cap-ferrat.com; Cap Ferrat; d low/mid/high season pine-tree view from €205/330/480, sea view from €345/515/800; ☎ ☎ ☎ ☎) Wholly aristocratic, you'll know you've made it if you can stay here, a stunning multistarred *belle époque* (1908) wonder bathed in history and brilliantly set well away from the rabble on the tip of Cap Ferrat. Walls are stucco and marble; priceless sculptures stud the vast and lavish gardens tended by an army of 50 gardeners (20 in winter); and the gastronomic creations served in Le Cap (menus €55 & €95) are simply sublime, darling. But forget trying to snag one of the 44 rooms here; they're invariably booked. Rather, lap up the luxury beside the superrich and famous at the Club Dauphin (half/full day Monday to Friday €45/60, weekends €55/70), open from 10am to 7pm from April to September, an exquisitely landscaped club by the sea with pool, poolside restaurant, children's playground and adorable little seaside huts, complete with sun lounges and phone (low/mid/high season €100/130/160 per day). Lebanese diamond dealer and jeweller Robert Mouawad owns the hotel.

(☎ 04 93 78 21 59; www.centremonte-carlo.mc; chemin des Oliviers), a language, sports and arts centre.

Smoking and dogs are banned on **Plage Mala**, Cap d'Ail's gravel beach tucked into a cove. From Cap d'Ail train station, walk down the steps to av Raymond Gramaglia, a promenade from where Cap d'Ail's splendid **Sentier du Littoral** (coastal path) can be accessed. Information panels along the way explain the lush flora and plush villas you pass; during rough seas the seaside path is closed. Bear west for a 20-minute amble around rocks to the beach, or east for a more strenuous stroll to Monaco. The **tourist office** (☎ 04 93 78 02 33; www.cap-dail.com; 87bis av du 3 Septembre; ☎ 9am-noon & 2-6pm Mon-Fri, 9am-noon Sat), in the village centre on the N98, has plenty more information on walks.

July kicks off with the three-day **Fête de l'Abaille** (Bee Festival). In August four days of jazz concerts fill the seaside **Amphithéâtre de la Mer** (☎ 04 93 78 02 33; place Marquet), overlooking Cap d'Ail's small port.

Cap d'Ail's stunning seaside hostel **Relais International de la Jeunesse** (☎ 04 93 78 18 58; av Raymond Gramaglia; dm incl breakfast €14, dinner €9, half/full board €22.50/28; ☎ Apr-Sep) is based in a villa perched above the sea. The downside? Travelers must vacate their rooms between 9.30am and 5pm, and a curfew kicks in at 11pm.

There is nothing more idyllic than a stroll along the Cap d'Ail coastal path to **La Pinède** (☎ 04 93 78 37 10; www.restaurantlapinede.com; 10 blvd de la Mer; menus €27, €37 & €47; ☎ lunch & dinner Thu-Tue Mar-Oct), housed in an old fisherman's hut. Feast on a refined fish lunch then sleep it off on the sea-facing terrace. From the train station, walk down the steps and head straight for the sea.

**Cap Martin**

Cap Martin – coastal quarter of Cap Martin-Roquebrune (p287) – is a green headland loaded with an incredible treasure trove of sumptuous villas, royal honorary citizens and famous past residents, with Coco Chanel, Winston Churchill, Marlene Dietrich, architect Le Corbusier, designer Eileen Gray and Irish poet WB Yeats among them.

Exploring on foot is pleasurable. Av Le Corbusier follows the coast east, around Baie de Roquebrune to the northern end of the cape where it turns into promenade Le Corbusier. The beach, **Plage du Buse**, is a two-minute stroll from the train station on av de la Gare. The hilltop village of Roquebrune is an hour's

walk (2km) – up numerous staircases – from the station, and Monte Carlo is three hours (7km) by foot.

The **tourist office** (☎ 04 93 35 62 87; www.roque-brune-cap-martin.com; 218 av Aristide Briand; ☎ 9am-1pm & 3-7pm Mon-Sat, 10am-1pm & 3-7pm Sun Jul & Aug, 9am-12.30pm & 2-6.30pm Mon-Sat Jun & Sep, to 6pm Oct-May), at the northern end of the cape midway between the Carnolès and Cap Martin-Roquebrune train stations, distributes a free map of walking trails around Cap Martin. It also arranges guided tours of Corbusier's seashore studio; see p65.

**Le Roquebrune** (☎ 04 93 35 00 16; www.leroquebrune.com; 100 av Jean Jaurès; d incl breakfast €135-195; ☎ ☎) might be Cap Martin-Roquebrune's sole *chambre d'hôte*, but it could not be more superbly placed – slap bang on the Lower Corniche above the sky-blue sea. Five rooms poetically named *L'Horizon* (the Horizon), *Ciel et Mer* and so on reflect its stunning location – offset by exquisite furnishings, fresh flowers as a welcome and crisp white tablecloths on the terrace table of each room. Below slumbers sandy Plage du Golfe Bleu (Blue Gulf Beach).

Roquebrune, the medieval counterpart of Cap Martin (see p287), has a couple of delightful eating options.

## MOYENNE CORNICHE

Cut through rock in the 1920s, the Moyenne Corniche takes drivers from Nice past the Col de Villefranche (149m), Èze and Beausoleil (the French town bordering Monaco's Monte Carlo).

**Èze**

pop 2510 / elev 429m

It might be more like toy town than anywhere else on the Riviera, but this rocky little village perched on an impossible peak is undeniably picturesque. After a hard afternoon spent hopping out of the way of other people's photographs and waiting for them to get out of yours, nip down to coastal counterpart Èze-sur-Mer by road or train for a dip in the sea.

When German philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche (1844–1900) stayed here, he started writing *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*; the path that links Èze with Èze-sur-Mer and the beach (45 minutes) is named after him. Walt Disney holidayed in Èze, and U2 guitarist The Edge got hitched on a luxury yacht moored off the coast here.

Visit the **tourist office** (☎ 04 93 41 26 00; www.eze-riviera.com; place du Général de Gaulle; ☹ 9am-7pm Mon-Sat, 10am-1pm & 2-6pm Sun) for the full village low-down.

### SIGHTS & ACTIVITIES

Steep streets lead to the medieval hilltop village, crammed with dinky art galleries, boutiques and cafés. Its crowning glory is the chateau ruins, brightened by a cactus-laden, oil-scented **Jardin Exotique** (☎ 04 93 41 10 30; adult/11-16yr €5/2.50; ☹ 9am-8pm or 9pm Jul & Aug, 9am-5pm or 7pm Sep-Jun).

Perfumery Fragonard (p326) has a **factory** (☎ 04 93 41 05 05; admission free; ☹ 8.30am-6.30pm Feb-Oct, 8.30am-noon & 2-6.30pm Nov-Jan) that you can visit on the eastern edge of Èze, and a small shop in the village.

### SLEEPING & EATING

Hotels here are small, frantically popular and booked months ahead.

**Château Eza** (☎ 04 93 41 12 24; www.chateaueza.com; rue de la Pise; d low/mid/high season €150/230/320; lunch menus €37 & €47; ☹ mid-Dec-mid-Nov) The winter residence (1923-53) of Sweden's Prince William is now a posh hotel-restaurant with just six rooms, four suites and a lovely sea-facing terrace and great views, not that the staff will let you take a peek unless you absolutely really positively intend to dine here. Two donkeys called Nani and Nina tied up in a stable at the foot of the village serve as a reminder of how the prince's baggage was carted up to his castle.

**Château de la Chèvre d'Or** (☎ 04 92 10 66 66; www.chevredor.com; rue du Barré; d from €270; lunch menu with/without wine €85/120, dinner menu excl drinks €168; ☹ Mar-mid-Nov; P ☹) In a class of its own, this gastronomic temple guarantees to thrill the most jaded of palates. Hotel facilities are heavenly too: sauna, hammam (Turkish bath), fitness centre, spa, infinity-edge swimming pool...the list is endless!

### Getting There & Away

Bus 112, operated by Rapides Côte d'Azur, serves the Moyenne Corniche, stopping at Èze village (€1.30, 20 minutes) and Beausoleil (€1.30, 40 minutes) en route to/from Nice. Buses run seven times a day Monday to Saturday, and three times daily on Sunday and holidays.

By train from Nice, get off at Èze-sur-Mer train station on the Corniche Inférieure, where shuttle buses transport tourists up and down

the hill from May to October. Failing that, it's a 3km uphill trudge on foot to Èze village.

### GRANDE CORNICHE

Hitchcock was sufficiently impressed by Napoleon's cliff-hanging Grande Corniche to use it as a film backdrop for *To Catch a Thief* (1956), starring Cary Grant and Grace Kelly. Ironically, the Hollywood actress, who met her Monégasque Prince Charming while making the film, died in 1982 after crashing her car on this very same road.

### SIGHTS

#### Observatoire de Nice & Astorrama

French architects Gustave Eiffel and Charles Garnier designed **Nice Observatory** (☎ 04 92 00 31 12; www.obs-nice.fr; guided tours adult/child €5/2.50, park & observatory tour €7.50), a 19th-century monument 5km northeast of Nice amid 35 hectares of landscaped parkland atop Mont Gros (375m). When the observatory opened in 1887, its telescope – 76cm in diameter – was among Europe's largest. Guided tours of the observatory take place at 2.45pm on Wednesday and Saturday, and of the parkland at 9.45am on Wednesday and 2.15pm on Saturday.

Watch the skies at **Astorrama** (☎ 04 93 41 23 04; www.astorrama.net in French; adult/7-10yr €7/5, 'spectacles aux étoiles' €10/7; ☹ 6-10.30pm Fri & Sat Sep-Jun, 6-10.30pm Mon-Sat Jul & Aug), a planetarium and astronomy centre 8km further northeast along the Grande Corniche in **La Trinité**.

### SLEEPING & EATING

**Col d'Èze**, winding along the Grande Corniche above hilltop Èze, has some lovely sleeping and dining options, as does the road that runs east to the mountain pass off the Grande Corniche to Astorama and Fort de la Revere (p288).

**La Vieille Bergerie** (☎ 04 93 41 10 22; www.lavieillebergerie.com; 585 rte de la Revère; d low/high season €90/120; P) This *chambre d'hôte de charme* is charming indeed. Roselyne Carpentier moved here from Normandy 30 years ago and spent a good 20 of them transforming this traditional shelter for sheep (built in 1860) into a very, very romantic hideaway. Some ceilings are vaulted, walls are pure stone and furnishings are white, rustic and a tad flowery. The grounds are less fussy. Find it 500m from the D46-Grande Corniche junction, 1.5km before Astorama.

**La Bastide aux Camélias** (☎ 04 93 41 13 68; www.bastideauxcamelias.com; 23c rte de l'Adret; d low/high season €100/120; P) Jacuzzi, hammam, sauna and

olive-tree framed pool are among the lazy-weekend comforts at this lovely *chambre d'hôte* where guests are pampered by Fred and Sylvienne. Four different rooms are named after plants: the Yucca room (€120/100) is a Zen affair with its own garden terrace, while Jasmin is a soft, delicate affair of creams and whites. DVD player, bathrobes, complimentary coffee, tea and infusions, candles and essential oils are beautiful touches. Wi-fi access is free. The Bastide is signposted immediately on your left after turning at the D46-Grande Corniche junction to Astorama and Fort de la Revère.

**Hermitage du Col d'Èze** (☎ 04 93 41 00 68; www.ezehermitage.fr; 1951 av des Diables Bleus, Grande Corniche, Col d'Èze; s/d low season €59/69, midseason €79/89, high season €99/109, menus €20, €25, €35 & €45; restaurant ☹ lunch & dinner Thu-Mon, dinner Tue; P ☹) Find this old-style 14-room inn – an apricot affair with lilac shutters – spectacularly set at the top of a mountain pass, 2.5km from Èze village. Food is strictly local fare and delicious to boot – a guaranteed taste of the region. Parking is free.

**Camping Les Romarins** (☎ 04 93 01 81 64; www.camping-romarins.com; Col d'Èze; 2 adults, tent & car low/mid/high season €22/22.55/23.65; reception ☹ 7.30am-10.30pm Apr-Sep) This lovely camp site, at the western end of the Col d'Èze, is as close as you'll get to wild camping in this protected neck of the woods. Pitch your tent on the terraced hillside and wake up to the most incredible views ever of Cap Ferrat and the coast.

### La Turbie

pop 3150 / elev 480m

La Turbie teeters dramatically on a promontory above Monaco and offers a stunning night-time vista of the principality. By day, enjoy an unparalleled aerial view from the gardens of the **Trophée des Alpes** (Trophy of the Alps; ☎ 04 93 41 20 84; 18 av Albert I; adult/under 18yr €5/free; ☹ 9.30am-1pm & 2.30-6.30pm Tue-Sun mid-May-mid-Sep, 10am-1.30pm & 2.30-5pm Tue-Sun mid-Sep-Mar), a 2000-year-old triumphal monument built by Emperor Augustus in 6 BC on the highest point of the old Roman road. The 45 Alpine tribes he conquered are listed on the inscription carved on the western side of the monument.

La Turbie village is unexciting, bar its small but intact old town neatly packed around the baroque-style **Église St-Michel** (1777), and the stunningly simple but superbly delicious creations cooked with flair by Michelin-starred chef Bruno Cirino at **Café de la Fontaine** (☎ 04 93 28 52 79; 4 av Général de Gaulle; mains €15; ☹ 6.30am-midnight).

### AUTHOR'S CHOICE

**Villa La Lézardière** (☎ 04 93 56 22 86; www.villa-nice.com; 87 Blvd de l'Observatoire; d incl breakfast low/high season €100/130; P ☹) This *chambre d'hôte* is a perfect choice for those with a car seeking peace, tranquillity and a dip in a pool with panoramic city-and-sea view after a busy day exploring Nice. Dutch-Thai couple Ruud and Pat Pauuw ran a Thai bistro in the Ardèche for seven-odd years, before jacking in the restaurant trade for this vine-covered house with singing cicadas and a flowery garden perched up high above Nice. Guests can order dinner for the next day the night before (French or Thai cuisine; €35 including wine and coffee) and breakfast is a convivial affair around a shared table outside. Parking and wi-fi is free. Find La Lézardière 400m down a gravel track, signposted off the Grand Corniche, 5km from the centre of Nice.

### Roquebrune

pop 12,375

Cap Martin-Roquebrune, sandwiched between Monaco and Menton, became part of France in 1861; prior to that it was a free town following its revolt against Grimaldi rule in 1848. The town stretches north from the exclusive suburb of Cap Martin on the coast (see p285) to the hilltop village perched 300m high on a pudding-shaped lump.

A fantastic feudal castle dating from the 10th century crowns medieval Roquebrune. The crenellated mock-medieval **Tour de l'Anglais** (Englishman's Tower) near the entrance was built by wealthy British lord William Ingram, who bought the chateau in 1911. His archaeological vandalism caused such outrage that **Château de Roquebrune** (☎ 04 93 35 07 22; place William Ingram; adult/7-18yr €3.70/1.60; ☹ 10am-12.30pm year-round, plus 3-7.30pm Jul & Aug, 2-6.30pm Apr-Jun & Sep, 2-6pm Feb, Mar & Oct, 2-5pm Nov-Jan) was immediately classified as a historical monument to protect it from further modification. The four floors are atmospheric, and concerts are held here in July and August.

Of all Roquebrune's steep and tortuous streets, rue Moncollet – with its arcaded passages and stairways carved out of rock – is the most impressive. Architect Le Corbusier (p65) is buried in the cemetery at the top of the village.

### PICNIC IN GARRIGUE

Atop the Col d'Èze, head up even higher to the **Plateau de la Justice**; follow the signposted road next to the Hermitage du Col d'Èze. Tree-shaded picnic spots (including a couple of tables and benches) abound amid the heavily scented *garrigue* (typical Mediterranean groundcover of aromatic plants) here.

For even mightier coastal views stretching beyond Cap Ferrat to Cap d'Antibes, the Îles de Lérins and the Ésterel, continue east along the Grande Corniche and at the D46 crossroads turn left (north) along route de la Revère to **Fort de la Revère** (675m).

An orientation table in front of the fort, built on top of the barren rocky outcrop in 1870 to protect Nice, tells you what's what: the panoramic view is the best on the coast. Picnic at tables beneath plane trees here, or follow the footpath around the fort sign-posted 'Maison de la Nature et Animations Nature' into the *garrigue*. On your left, a small rocky path leads to an **observation point**, from which bird enthusiasts can watch more than 80-odd species of migratory birds at work and play, including the osprey and falcon (both late August to mid-October), European bee-eater (mid-August to mid-September) and black stork (mid-October). The observation post faces Mont Agel. Continue downhill along the main footpath to reach the **Maison de la Nature** (☎ 04 93 41 24 36; ☒ variable), painted buttercup yellow. From here, a marked walking trail leads to La Turbie (1¼ hours).

### SLEEPING & EATING

**Les Deux Frères** (☎ 04 93 28 99 00; www.lesdeuxfreres.com; place des Deux Frères; s/d from €75/100, lunch/dinner menu €24/45; restaurant ☒ lunch & dinner Wed-Sat, lunch Sun, dinner Tue; ☒) The stylish restaurant languishing on a terrace above the water certainly steals the show at this beautiful 10-room hotel facing the sea. Waiters wear formal black, and mains come hidden beneath silver domed platters. The lunch menu, including a half-bottle of wine overlooked by a miserable-looking statue of *France Triumphant*, is good value.

**Au Grand Inquisiteur** (☎ 04 93 35 05 37; 18 rue du Château; menus €14, €26 & €37; ☒ lunch & dinner Wed-Sun) This rock-cave restaurant could be a film set for a movie about mad monks. Meat and fish dishes are the speciality here, carried to your table from the kitchen across the street!

### Getting There & Away

Bus 116 to/from Nice stops at La Turbie (€1.30, 35 minutes) en route to Peille (€1.30, one hour, four buses daily Monday to Saturday).

## ARRIÈRE-PAYS NIÇOIS

Studded with medieval hilltop villages, the little known Niçois hinterland stretches inland from Nice to Menton. Buses to this remote patch are far from frequent, making your own wheels essential.

### CONTES TO COARAZE

Roman **Contes** (population 6600), 16km north of Nice, sits on a ship-shaped rock above the River Paillon de Contes. Before exploring the town, nip into the **tourist office** (☎ 04 93 79 13 99; place A Olivier; ☒ 2-6pm Mon-Fri), level with the river and the D15.

At the northern end of Contes on the D15, olives have been crushed at the still-functioning **Moulin à Huile de la Lauouza** (☎ 04 93 79 19 17; www.musee-contes.fr in French; admission €2; ☒ 9.30am-12.30pm & 2-5pm Sat Dec-Oct) since the 13th century. Agricultural tools were made at the **moulin à fer** next door, a 13th- to 14th-century water-powered forge.

**Châteauneuf Villevieille** (also known as Châteauneuf de Contes), 6km west, sits snug at the foot of the overgrown ruins of the older village, abandoned prior to WWI. Territorial goats aside, the ruins can be freely wandered.

**Tourrette-Levens**, a particularly dramatic hilltop village 10km southwest via the westbound D815 and southbound D19, is crowned with a **Château Musée** (Castle Museum; ☎ 04 93 91 03 20; www.tourrette-levens.org; place du Château; admission free; ☒ 2-7pm summer, 2-5pm winter) housing an exotic butterfly collection and natural-history museum.

The Provençal words 'coa raza' meaning 'cut tail' gives **Coaraze** (population 659, elevation 650m), 9km north of Contes on the Col St-Roch (D15), its name: a lizard mosaic on place Félix-Giordan illustrates the tale of

how villagers caught the devil, leaving Satan with no choice but to slice off his tail to escape. A Jean Cocteau sundial adorns the town hall, and the **tourist office** (☎ 04 93 79 37 47; office .de.tourisme.coaraze@tiscali.fr; 7 place Ste-Catherine) has the key for 14th-century Église St-Jean Baptiste. Futurist works fill the **Musée Figas** (☎ 04 93 79 31 87; www.museefigas.asso.fr; Hameau l'Engarvin Duranas; adult/7-18yr €4/2; ☒ 3-6pm Sat & Sun summer, 2-5pm Sat & Sun winter), designed by painter Marcel Figas (born 1935) and home to his oils.

### Sleeping & Eating

**L'Alivù** (☎ 04 93 80 86 68; www.alivu.com; 816 rte des Baises, Coaraze; d €100, dinner €29; ☒ ☒) Hidden among trees, this perfectly manicured sun-coloured *mas* (farmhouse) with sage-green shutters and all the mod cons comes as something of a surprise after the 2km-long and narrow, winding lane leading to it. Each of its four rooms exalts a different type of local olive, each has doors leading to a terrace, and the sweeping panorama from the pool is inspirational. Rates include sauna and Jacuzzi, and dinner is a refined treat. To find it, approach the village from the south, turn right immediately after the bridge onto rue de Plan d'Eau and follow the signs. Wi-fi access is free.

**Auberge du Soleil** (☎ 04 93 79 08 11; 5 chemin de la Beguda, Coaraze; d €62, menu €23; ☒ mid-Mar-mid-Nov; ☒) Tucked right at the top of Coaraze, this family-run inn with 10 lovely double rooms and terrace restaurant is everything a

### UGLY DUCKLING

**Vista Palace** (☎ 04 92 10 40 00; www.vistapalace.com; 1551 rte de la Grande Corniche; d with sea view from €215, menus €55 & €75; Vistaero ☒ dinner summer, lunch & dinner winter; ☒ ☒ ☒) Never was there a more ugly duckling of a four-star hotel. From the outside the Vista Palace is an unfortunate overdose of concrete and formidable 1970s architecture (it was built in 1978), albeit one that hangs perilously on the edge of the cliff-hanging Grande Corniche. But step inside and be seduced by the most beautiful views of Monaco, its skyline and the rest of the coast. Dinner by candlelight in its sea-facing Vistaero restaurant (named after the original restaurant that wooed diners on this very spot in the 1920s) is a particularly romantic affair.

family-run place should be. Friendly, cosy and lacking pretension, it is the ideal spot for village moseying, swimming against a mountain backdrop and lounging in the garden.

### PEILLE & PEILLON

Twelfth-century **Chapelle St-Roch** (place Jean Miou) guards the eastern entrance to quaintly restored **Peille** (population 2055, elevation 630m), probably the hinterland's most intact hilltop village. In its teeny **Musée du Terroir** (☒ 2-6pm summer), captions are written in Pelhase, a dialect specific to Peille and distinguishable from the Niçois dialect by its absent 'r's and silent 'l's (Peillasques say 'carriera' instead of 'carriera', Niçois for 'street').

Not for the faint-hearted is the **Via Ferrata de Peille**, a difficult course that starts a 10-minute walk from the village and scales the Baous de Caster and Barma de la Sié rock formations with full complement of ladders, monkey bridges and zip lines. The lot takes 3½ hours to conquer, but 45-minute sections can be tackled. Reserve in advance at **Bar l'Absinthe** (☎ 04 93 79 95 75; http://peille.free.fr in French; 6 rue Félix Faure; admission €3, equipment hire €13).

Six kilometres of hairpin bends southwest of Peille on the D53 towards Peillon is **La Grave** (population 500), a blot-on-the-landscape cement works where the hinterland's limestone is turned into cement. The best aerial view of Peille and La Grave is from the **Col de la Madone** (927m), a hair-raising stone-tunnelled mountain pass (the D22) that runs east from Peille to Ste-Agnès.

**Peillon** (population 1229, elevation 456m), 14km northeast of Nice, is known for its precarious *nid d'aigle* (eagle's nest) location. From the village car park, a footpath leads to the **Chapelle des Pénitents Blancs**, noteworthy for its set of macabre 15th-century frescoes. Longer trails lead to Peille, La Turbie and Chapelle St-Martin. North of Peillon, the **Gorges du Peillon** (D21) cuts through the Peillon Valley to **L'Escarène** (population 2138), an important mule stop in the 17th and 18th centuries for traders working the rte du Sel (Salt Rd) from Nice to Turin in Italy.

### Sleeping & Eating

**Auberge de la Madone** (☎ 04 93 79 91 17; www.auberge-madone-peillon.com; 2 place Auguste Arnulf, Peillon; d €95-200, menus €30 & €65; ☒ Feb-mid-Nov, restaurant closed Wed; ☒) At the foot of the village of Peillon, this upmarket three-star hotel creates

## AUTHOR'S CHOICE

**La Parare** (☎ 04 93 79 22 62; 67 calade du Pastre, Châteauneuf Villevieille; d incl breakfast low/high season €95/110, dinner €29; (P) (B)) (Swedish) Karin and (French-Dutch) Sydney van Vollen are the widely travelled, multilingual couple behind this fabulous *chambre d'hôte*, an 18th-century stone *bergerie* (sheep-fold) that they spent 2½ years transforming stone-by-stone into a stunning space framed by terraced olive groves (still to be restored). A contemporary décor tells the tale of their lives – from Paloma Beach on Cap Ferrat where Sydney summered as a child, to Hong Kong where the couple met and lived for 10-odd years. Spacious, stylish rooms sport rich fabrics from China and Thailand, not to mention the odd kimono, and ooze romance: the Chapel room is a suite with a separate dovecote for the kids to sleep in; the Terrace room has a sofa in the bathroom for him to lounge on while she takes a bath; while room 4 – named after the old communal *four* (furnace) that sits outside in the garden, and was used by the village – sports a designer sunken bath overlooking an open fireplace. In keeping with its *'entre Zen et Provence'* (between Zen and Provence) strap line, breakfast is decadently served any time of day, and evening meals are cooked up upon request.

delicious local Peillonais cuisine that draws diners from far and wide. Rooms and tables need booking well in advance.

## MENTON &amp; AROUND

Lemons, lemons, hilltop villages, the most fabulous gardens on the Riviera and more lemons are the main attractions of this privileged coastal pocket, a pebble's throw from Italy.

## MENTON

pop 29,200

You'd have thought Eve was in enough trouble. But just before she was chucked out of Eden, she stole one of the garden's Golden Fruits. Upon arriving in lush, subtropical Menton, she was reminded of paradise so much that she instantly planted the fruit's seeds – ensuring a famed and fabulous bounty of lemons for

Menton ever since. Frenzied citrus worship has accompanied the two-week-long Fête des Citrons in February since the 1930s.

Adam and Eve aside, Gustave Flaubert, Guy de Maupassant, Katherine Mansfield and Robert Louis Stevenson all sought solace here. Jean Cocteau lived here from 1956 to 1958, leaving his mark through a couple of fantastic creations. Italians from across the border are the main visitors today, drawn by the town's unassuming magnetic charm, its pretty and precipitous red-hued old town and some of the Riviera's most beautiful gardens.

Historically, Menton, along with neighbouring Cap Martin-Roquebrune, found itself under Grimaldi rule until 1848, when its people rebelled and declared independence. In 1861 the two towns voted to join France, forcing Charles III of Monaco to sell them to Napoleon III for four million francs.

## Orientation

The old town and port are wedged between Baie de Garavan (east) and Baie du Soleil, which stretches 3km west to Cap Martin-Roquebrune. Promenade du Soleil and its continuations, quai Général Leclerc and quai de Monléon, skirt the length of Menton's gravel beach. More beaches fringe the coast directly northeast of the old port and east of Port de Garavan, Menton's pleasure-boat harbour.

## Information

Find banks on rue Partouneaux and internet access at Café des Arts (p294).

**Post office** (2 cours Georges V)

**Tourist office** (☎ 04 92 41 76 76; www.villedementon.com; Palais de l'Europe, 8 av Boyer; ☎ 9am-7pm May-Sep, 8.30am-12.30pm & 2-6pm Mon-Fri, 9am-noon & 2-6pm Sat Oct-Apr) Guided tours and garden visits in conjunction with the Service du Patrimoine (p293).

## Sights

By the port, the tiny 17th-century seafront bastion crowning the spur of land between Menton's bays shelters the **Musée Jean Cocteau** (☎ 04 93 57 72 30; sq Jean Cocteau; adult/under 18yr/18-25yr/ €3/free/2.25, 1st Sun of month free; ☎ 10am-noon & 2-6pm Wed-Mon). Cocteau restored the building himself, decorating the 2m-thick alcoves, outer walls and reception hall with pebble mosaics. Inside are crayon drawings, tapestries and ceramics by the French artist. His gravestone, looking out to sea, reads *Je reste avec vous* (I remain with you).

**MENTON**

0 500 m  
0 0.3 miles

**SLEEPING** (B)

Hôtel Aiglon.....	11	A3
Hôtel de Londres.....	12	B3
Hôtel des Arcades.....	13	C2
Hôtel Le Dauphin.....	14	A3
Hôtel Royal Westminster..	15	C2

**INFORMATION**

Post Office.....	1	B2
Tourist Office.....	2	B2

**SIGHTS & ACTIVITIES**

Basilique St-Michel Archange.....	3	D2
Chapelle des Pénitents Blancs.....	4	C2
Cimetière du Trabucquet.....	5	C1
Cimetière du Vieux Château.....	6	C2
Jardin d'Agrumes du Palais Carnolès.....	(see 7)	
Musée des Beaux Arts.....	7	A4
Musée Jean Cocteau.....	8	D2
Salles des Mariages.....	9	C2
Service du Patrimoine.....	10	D2
Town Hall.....	(see 9)	

**EATING** (B)

Café des Arts.....	16	C2
La Mandibule.....	17	B3
Le Bouquet Garni.....	18	C2
Le Lido.....	19	C2
Les Halles (Covered Market).....	20	C2
Marché du Carei (Outdoor Market).....	21	B2
Spa.....	22	B2
Sucre & Salés.....	23	B2

**DRINKING** (B)

La Terrasse.....	24	B2
------------------	----	----

**TRANSPORT**

Bus Station.....	25	B2
Holiday Bikes.....	26	B3

In 1957, Cocteau decorated Menton's **Salles des Mariages** (Registry Office; ☎ 04 92 10 50 00; place Ardoino; adult/under 18yr/18-25yr €1.50/free/1.15; ☎ 8.30am-12.30pm & 2-5pm Mon-Fri), inside the **town hall**, with scenes of mythological Orpheus' and Eurydice's wedding, galloping horses and starry local lovers.

From place du Cap a ramp leads to Southern France's grandest baroque church, the Italianate **Basilique St-Michel Archange** (place de l'Église St-Michel; ☎ 10am-noon & 3-5.15pm Mon-Fri) with creamy façade flanked by a 35m-tall clock tower and 53m-tall steeple (1701-03). Up the steps is apricot-coloured **Chapelle des Pénitents Blancs** (place de la Conception; ☎ 3-5pm Mon), built in 1689, which has an ornate trompe l'oeil cupola inside.

What a shame the occupiers of prime real estate **Cimetière du Vieux Château** (☎ 7am-8pm May-Sep, 7am-6pm Oct-Apr) can't appreciate the immense views. Walk up *montée du Souvenir* to reach the main gates of the ornate 19th-century cemetery. Rugby inventor, Reverend William Webb Ellis (1805-72), is buried in the southwest corner. For more grave musing and marvellous vistas, continue north along steep *chemin du Trabucquet* to **Cimetière du Trabucquet**.

Along the coast, Monaco's royal family summered at 18th-century Palais Carnolès, today the **Musée des Beaux-Arts** (Fine Arts Museum; ☎ 04 93 35 49 71; 3 av de la Madone; admission free; ☎ 10am-noon & 2-6pm Wed-Mon), surrounded by a fabulous lemon and orange grove stuffed with sculptures (p293).



## FOOD FIGHT

An odd Menton legend is the origin of August's **Fête de Bazais**, when everyone gathers round a huge cauldron of bean soup on quai Gordon Bennett. In the Middle Ages, so the story goes, plague, famine and incessant raiding by vicious Barbary pirates threatened to wipe out the town. The surviving residents, rather than turning on each other, clubbed together the food they had left and turned it into a body-and-soul-saving soup. Faced with such unnatural co-operation, the evil marauders fled.

Between 1920 and 1921 novelist Katherine Mansfield (1888–1923) stayed in the **Villa Isola Bella** (av Katherine Mansfield), in the upmarket neighbourhood of Garavan, to attempt to ease her worsening tuberculosis. A plaque on the villa wall marks her stay.

## Festivals & Events

Menton's fabulous two-week **Fête du Citrons** (Lemon Festival; www.feteducitron.com in French) in February sees sculptures and decorative floats made from 115 metric tonnes of lemons (plus another five tonnes used to replace damaged fruit during the festival) weave processions along the seafront. Afterwards, the monumental lemon creations are dismantled and the fruit sold off at bargain prices in front of Palais de l'Europe. Each year the festival follows a different theme (Asterix, Alice in Wonderland, world carnivals).

June is the month to visit Menton's gardens (opposite), some private gardens only opening their doors to visitors during the month-long **Rendez-vous aux Jardins**. Mid-July brings contemporary dance and jazz to Menton's gardens (opposite) during the **Rencontres de Danse Contemporaine**. August's classical **Festival de Musique** ushers in classical concerts to Parvis St-Michel (the square in front of Basilique St-Michel Archange).

## Sleeping

**Hôtel de Londres** (☎ 04 93 35 74 62; www.hotel-de-londres.com; 15 av Carnot; s/d with washbasin from €44/55, s/d/tr from €75/88/111; ☹ mid-Jan–Oct; ☹ ☹ ☹) Easily the best in its price range, this reliable Logis de France hotel is set back from the main road 25m from the sea with pretty wooden shutters and a flowery garden. Sun lounges,

beach parasols and table-tennis are much-appreciated perks. Only front-facing rooms have air-con (back-facing rooms have a fan). Parking is €8/49 per day/week.

**Hôtel Le Dauphin** (☎ 04 93 35 76 37; www.hotel-ledauphin.com; 408 promenade du Soleil; d low/mid/high season with sea view €74/79/92, with mountain view €59/65/73; ☹ ☹) If gazing out to sea is what you're wanting then the three-star Dolphin is for you: bask on wooden balconies and peep at the waves between three palm trees.

**Hôtel Agilon** (☎ 04 93 57 55 55; www.hotelagilon.net; 7 av de la Madone; s low/mid/high season €66/73.50/99.50, d from €86/96/121; ☹ mid-Dec–mid-Nov; ☹ ☹ ☹) In a former merchant's house, this three-star place has a definite air of *belle époque* quality to its pretty façade. A heated pool and upmarket restaurant (lunch/dinner menu €29.90/46) make it a solid family choice. Parking is €6 per day.

**Hôtel Royal Westminster** (☎ 04 93 28 69 69; www.hotel-royal-westminster-menton.cote.azur.fr; 1510 promenade du Soleil; s/d with sea views low season €75/105, high season €85/133; ☹ ☹) There's something very grandiose about this ornate late-18th-century palace, which, though enormous and busy with tour-groups, is a lovely spot. Gardens separate the hotel from the busy prom, and Wednesday-evening dinner dances transport guests back to Menton's aristocratic pre-WWI days.

Also recommended:

**Hôtel des Arcades** (☎ 04 93 35 70 62; 41 av Félix Faure; d incl breakfast from €56/65.20) Picturesque option on the old-town edge; no frills.

## Eating

Menton lacks outstanding restaurants, despite the line-up of eating places on av Félix Faure, rue St-Michel, place aux Herbes and place du Cap. Pricier terraces with sea views line promenade du Soleil (watch waiters dice with death to bring you a coffee).

**Le Bouquet Garni** (☎ 04 93 35 85 91; 1 rue Palmaro; plat/menu du jour €11/15; ☹ lunch & dinner Tue–Sat) What you see is what you get at *bouquet garni* (think a bunch of Provençal herbs), a dead-simple bistro and *bar à vins* (wine bar) down an alley off the main pedestrian street. Locals form the bulk of the no-frills-seeking clientele, and the *brochette de volaille à l'estragon* (poultry skewer with tarragon) hits the spot just fine.

**Le Lido** (☎ 04 93 28 48 71; 24 rue St-Michel; seafood platters for 2 €36–115; ☹ lunch & dinner) Sit on the buzzing terrace at this bustling no-frills seafood bar and feast on piles of *langoustine* (small saltwater lobster), oysters, sea urchins,

crab and prawns. Finicky eaters can opt for a bog-standard lasagne.

**La Mandibule** (☎ 04 93 28 41 95; www.lamandibule.com in French; 1014 promenade du Soleil; mains €10; ☹ lunch

& dinner) Tropical is the tone of this seafood restaurant, which serves a mean cocktail alongside dozens of different rums and good old-fashioned cuisine from the French island

## GARDENS OF EDEN

Menton's maze of beautiful gardens, each with a different horticultural appeal and historical charm, is a true Eden. But beware: getting into most gardens requires an advance reservation at Menton's **Service du Patrimoine** (☎ 04 92 10 97 10; Hôtel de Daniel d'Aohémar de Lantagnac, 24 rue St-Michel; ☹ 10am–12.30pm & 1.30–6pm). Most of these gardens are a short drive from the town centre.

- **Jardin d'Agrumes du Palais Carnolès** (☎ 04 93 35 49 71; 3 av de la Madone; admission free, guided tour €5; ☹ 10am–noon & 2–6pm Wed–Mon) Menton's most famous citrus garden in the grounds of Palais Carnolès; 60 different varieties, 400 plants, sprinkled with contemporary sculptures.
- **Jardin Botanique Exotique du Val Rahmeh** (☎ 04 93 35 86 72; valrahmeh@mnhn.fr; av St-Jacques; admission €5; ☹ 10am–12.30pm & 3.30–6.30pm Wed–Mon Apr–Sep, 10am–12.30pm & 2–5pm Wed–Mon Oct–Mar) Laid out in 1905 for Lord Radcliffe, governor of Malta. The terraces are renowned for their exotic fruit-tree collections and subtropical plants, including the only European specimen of the Easter Island tree *Sophora toromiro*, now extinct on the island.
- **Jardin Fontana Rosa** (av Blasco Ibañez; admission €5; ☹ tour only 10am Fri) Created by Spanish novelist Vicente Blasco Ibañez in the 1920s and dedicated to writers, its vivid colours are meant to conjure up Spain, but with fanciful benches, pergolas, pools and ceramics the effect is more of a delightful fairyland. Advance reservations at the Service de Patrimoine. Nearby, Parc du Pian (av Blasco Ibañez, admission free) has a 1000-year-old grove of 530 olive trees.
- **Jardin de la Villa Maria Serena** (21 promenade Reine-Astrid; admission €5; ☹ tour only 10am Tue) France's most temperate garden – known for its palm, olive and citrus trees – framing the white Villa Maria Serena, designed in a grandiose Second Empire style by Charles Garnier in 1866. Advance reservations at the Service du Patrimoine.
- **Jardin de la Serre de la Madone** (☎ 04 93 57 73 90; www.serredelamadone.com; 74 rte du Val de Gorbio; adult/under 12yr/12–18yr €8/free/4; ☹ 10am–6pm Tue–Sun Apr–Oct, 10am–5pm Tue–Sun Dec–Mar, guided tour 3pm Tue–Sun) It was American gardener Lawrence Johnston who planted dozens of rare plants here, picked up from his travels around the world. Abandoned for decades, it is slowly being restored. Take bus 7 to the 'Serre de la Madone' stop.
- **Clos du Peyronnet** (☎ 04 93 35 72 15; av Aristide Briand; admission €8; ☹ by appointment only) British artist and garden landscaper Humphry Waterfield's green-fingered triumph, designed around his Italianate villa. These terraced gardens with cypress-tree tunnels, wisteria-shaded porticoes and an incredible series of water pools tumbling down to the Med are exceptional. Pots and pots of rare South African bulbs are a horticultural highlight.
- **Jardins des Colombières** (rte des Colombières Garavan; admission €8; ☹ tour only Jul–mid-Aug) Olive trees, cypresses, lavender and other nonexotic plants feature here, inspired by different figures in Greek mythology. They were designed in 1919 by Ferdinand Bac (1859–1952), comic writer and the illegitimate son of Napoleon III. Advance reservations at the Service du Patrimoine.
- **Jardin de l'Esquinade** (☎ 04 93 57 67 28; 2665 rte du Super Garavan; admission free; ☹ by appointment only) Alongside the predictable mimosa, palm and lemon tree grows a rich bounty of vegetables and 120 different types of fruit tree, pomegranate, fig, pistachio and jujube included. Visits arranged directly through the owner.
- **La Citronneraie** (Colline de l'Annonciade, 69 corniche André Tardieu; admission €5; ☹ tour only) Cultivated by Mentonnais farmers several centuries ago, the Lemon Grove is just that – and more. The 350 citrus trees – think lemons, oranges, clementines, grapefruit – date to the 1950s, but the olive grove is at least 600 years old. Find it hugging Mas Fiofaro on a hill above Menton. The tourist office arranges visits.

of Réunion in the Indian Ocean. The cushioned wicker chairs beneath grass-skirted parasols on the prom have to be the comfiest from chairs on the Riviera.

**Café des Arts** (☎ 04 93 35 78 67; 16 rue de République; mains €8-15; ☎ 7.30-10pm Mon-Sat) This unstuffy bistro with stylish traditional-with-a-twist interior and a laid-back staff is a pleasing place to hang, surf, drink or dine on salad and pasta. Internet access costs €1.15 per 15 minutes.

Opposite the bus station, **Sucre & Salés** (8 promenade Maréchal Leclerc) is a contemporary spot to enjoy a coffee, cake or well-stuffed baguette sandwich (€3.80), eat-in or takeaway. The patisserie also serves breakfast (€5).

Picnic shop at **Spa** (8 promenade du Maréchal Leclerc), the daily morning outdoor market **Marché du Carei** (promenade du Maréchal Leclerc) beneath the railway bridge on the same street, or the covered market **Les Halles** (quai de Monléon; ☎ 5am-1pm Tue-Sun) near the water.

### Drinking

**La Terrasse** (☎ 04 92 10 16 16; www.lucienbarriere.com; av Félix Faure; ☎ 7pm-1am) The Terrace, atop the casino, is Menton's only really serious drinking space with sea view. *Ambiance lounge face à la mer* (lounge bar atmosphere facing the sea) is its marketing line. Saturday is disco night.

### Getting There & Around

#### BICYCLE

**Holiday Bikes** (☎ 04 92 10 99 98; www.holiday-bikes.com; 4 esplanade Pompidou) rents out mountain bikes/50cc scooters for €13/30 per day plus €230/500 deposit.

#### BUS

From the **bus station** (☎ 04 93 28 43 27; 12 promenade Maréchal Leclerc) there are buses to/from Monaco (30 minutes), Nice (1¼ hours), Ste-Agnès (45 minutes), Sospel (45 minutes) and Nice-Côte d'Azur airport (1½ hours; departures coincide with flight times) via Monaco. Fares are €1.30.

#### TRAIN

From the **train station** (place de la Gare) frequent trains run to/from Ventimiglia (€2.20, 10 minutes) in Italy. For Côte d'Azur train services see p278.

### AROUND MENTON

A string of mountain villages peer down on Menton from the **Col de Castillon** (707m), a hair-raising pass that wends its way up the Vallée

du Carei from the coast to Sospel (21km), the gateway to the Parc National du Mercantour (see p248). The road cuts through **Forêt de Menton**, a thick forest traversed with walking trails, then passes the **Viaduc du Caramel**. In former times the viaduct was used by the old Menton-Sospel tram, which used to trundle along the valley.

One of France's youngest villages, **Castillon** (population 280, elevation 535m), just south of the top of the pass, is a model of modern rural planning. The original village was destroyed by an earthquake in 1887 and bombed in 1944. It was built anew in 1951, perched in true Provençal fashion atop a mountain slope. Castillon has a small **tourist office** (☎ 04 93 04 32 03; www.castillon06.com; rue de la République) and several artist workshops to visit. The Sospel-Menton bus stops in the village.

About 5km northeast of Menton along the D24 is **Castellar** (population 830, elevation 360m). En route you pass **Tempe à Pailla** (1931-34), a glass-and-concrete 1930s building with round windows designed and lived in by Eileen Gray (see p65) until WWII when she was forced to flee further inland. Climb the village's steep narrow streets, scale stairs and cut through tiny covered passages to reach place Clémenceau, at its summit, from where there is a magnificent valley panorama. The GR51 and GR52 walking paths both cross Castellar.

### Gorbio

pop 1162 / elev 360m

Flowery hilltop Gorbio, 10km northwest of Menton, is known for its annual **Fête Dieu** (Corpus Christi) feast day in June when villagers light up its medieval streets with snail shells set in pots of sand and filled with burning olive oil during the traditional **Procession aux Limaces**.

Otherwise, exploring its maze of cobbled streets and lurching away several lazy hours at quintessential village inn **Beau Séjour** (☎ 04 93 41 46 15; lunch menus €24, €28 & €38, dinner à la carte; ☎ lunch & dinner Thu-Tue May-Sep) are Gorbio's chief attractions. The stuff of Provençal lunch dreams, Beautiful Stay serves up Provençal fare in a buttermilk house that has peppermint-green shutters and a beautiful jasmine-covered terrace overlooking a fountain and 300-year-old elm tree on the village square. No credit cards.

From Menton, there are a couple of daily buses to/from Gorbio (€1.30, 30 minutes), but having your own wheels makes life substantially easier.

### Ste-Agnès

pop 1200 / elev 780m

A 2km-long walking trail leads from Gorbio to Europe's highest 'seaside village'. From montée du Souvenir, 187 rocky steps lead to the rubbly 12th-century **chateau ruins** (admission by donation; ☎ 2-5pm Tue-Sun) with its intriguing flower beds, based on allegorical gardens found in medieval French poetry. Friendly

goats graze between the rocks, and coastline views are breathtaking.

The drawbridged entrance to the huge underground **Fort Ste-Agnès** (☎ 04 93 35 84 58; adult/7-14yr €4/2; ☎ 3-6pm Tue-Sun Jul-Sep, 2.30-5.30pm Sat & Sun Oct-Jun) sits at the top of the village. The 2500-sq-metre defence was built between 1932 and 1938 as part of the 240km-long Maginot line, a series of fortifications intended to give France time to mobilise its army if attacked. The fort is in good nick; it was maintained throughout the Cold War as a nuclear fallout shelter!

From Menton there are two or three buses daily to/from Ste-Agnès (€1.30, 45 minutes).

© Lonely Planet Publications. To make it easier for you to use, access to this chapter is not digitally restricted. In return, we think it's fair to ask you to use it for personal, non-commercial purposes only. In other words, please don't upload this chapter to a peer-to-peer site, mass email it to everyone you know, or resell it. See the terms and conditions on our site for a longer way of saying the above - 'Do the right thing with our content.'