Suggested Itineraries in and around Nice

Nice rewards slow exploration. The city holds nearly twenty museums, a UNESCO-listed historic centre, two millennia of layered history, and one of the most magnificent waterfronts in Europe — yet it also sits at the hub of a rail and road network that places Monaco, Cannes, Menton, Eze, Antibes, and the perched villages of the pre-Alps within an hour's reach. The itineraries below are designed for visitors staying in Nice, whether for a single day or an extended week, and range from themed walks within the city to day excursions across the Riviera. Practical notes on transport, tickets, and timing accompany each suggestion.



All ten of Nice's municipal museums — including the Musée Matisse, the Musée d'Art Moderne et d'Art Contemporain (MAMAC), the Musée des Beaux-Arts Jules Chéret, and the Musée d'Archéologie de Cimiez — offer free admission to their permanent collections. The Musée National Marc Chagall, being a national rather than municipal institution, charges a separate entry fee. The 4-day municipal museum pass (€15) covers all ten sites and is worth acquiring for any stay of three or more days. The **French Riviera Pass** (24h, 48h, or 72h versions) bundles the “Nice Le Grand Tour” tourist bus, the little tourist train, and access to numerous sites across the region including the Grimaldi Castle in Cagnes-sur-Mer, the Villa Kérylos, the Ephrussi de Rothschild gardens, the Exotic Garden of Eze, and the Oceanographic Museum in Monaco. A transport add-on option extends it to cover Lignes d'Azur buses and trams.

Getting Around

Within Nice

Nice's city centre is almost entirely flat, with the Promenade des Anglais as the south-facing axis, Place Masséna as the heart, and Vieux Nice immediately to the east. Most attractions in the lower city lie within comfortable walking distance of each other; only the hilltop districts of Cimiez (north-east) and Mont Boron (east) require transport.

The public transport network is operated by Lignes d'Azur and covers trams and buses. The system went fully card-based in 2023 with the **La Carte** contactless smart card, available at tram stop ticket machines (which accept bank cards, Apple Pay, and coins), at newsstands displaying the Lignes d'Azur sign, and from bus drivers. The card costs €2 (refundable). Fares are €1.70 per trip, with 74 minutes of unlimited same-direction transfers included per validation. Multi-day passes can be loaded onto the card: €7 (24h), €13 (48h), €20 (7 days). Multiple travellers can share one card by tapping it once per person at boarding.

- **Tram Line 1** (yellow): Connects northern Nice to the city centre via avenue Jean Médecin and Place Masséna, continuing east.
- **Tram Line 2** (blue): Runs west–east from Nice Côte d'Azur Airport (both terminals) to Port Lympia, passing through the city centre at Jean Médecin. The most useful line for airport arrivals; the journey takes around 30 minutes.
- **Bus 5**: Reaches Cimiez, stopping at the Musée Matisse / Arènes and the Musée National Marc

Chagall. The most reliable public link to the hilltop museums.
- **Bus 15**: Serves Villefranche-sur-Mer, Beaulieu-sur-Mer, and Saint-Jean-Cap-Ferrat from Nice centre. Boards fill quickly in summer; board early at Lycée Massena near the Promenade if possible.
- **Bus 82**: Runs from the Vauban tram stop to Eze Village (around 30 minutes). Note: take the bus to Eze Village, not the train, as the train station sits at sea level below the village.
- **Bus 655**: Connects Nice (via Cagnes-sur-Mer) to Saint-Paul-de-Vence, around 50 minutes total. Does not run on Sundays.

The **Pass SudAzur Explore** (3-day €35, 7-day €50, 14-day €80), available from July through early November, gives unlimited access to Lignes d'Azur trams and buses, local buses across the wider network including Monaco, and TER regional trains as far as the Italian border and inland to the Alps. It represents excellent value for visitors planning multiple day trips.



Always flag down the bus driver at a stop; buses do not halt unless signalled. Press the red button on board before your stop to signal your intention to alight. Ticket inspections are frequent on both buses and trams; always validate when boarding.

Coastal Day Trips by Train

The TER coastal rail line — one of the most scenic in France — links Nice-Ville station to Villefranche-sur-Mer, Beaulieu-sur-Mer, Èze-sur-Mer, Monaco-Monte Carlo, Roquebrune-Cap-Martin, and Menton in the eastward direction, and to Cagnes-sur-Mer, Antibes, Juan-les-Pins, and Cannes westward. Trains run every 20–30 minutes throughout the day. Tickets can be purchased at the station or via the SNCF Connect app; buying in advance is not required for coastal hops. Individual fares are modest: Nice–Monaco costs around €5, Nice–Cannes around €7–10.

Getting Around by Car

A hire car is advantageous primarily for inland destinations — Eze Village, Saint-Paul-de-Vence, Grasse, the Gorges du Verdon — where public transport is slow or infrequent. Driving within Nice centre is frustrating: dedicated tram and cycle lanes have reduced road space, and street parking is scarce. Leave the car outside the centre and use trams to reach it. For coastal towns served by train, the car adds no practical value and parking can be expensive.

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Itinerary 1: One Day in Nice — The Essential Walk

A single day, used well, is enough to experience the city's most compelling neighbourhoods. Begin early; markets and quieter streets reward those who arrive before 10:00.

Morning: Cours Saleya and Vieux Nice

Start at the **Cours Saleya**, the long square that runs along the southern edge of Vieux Nice, one block from the sea. The flower and produce market operates Tuesday through Sunday from 06:00 to 13:30; Monday transforms the square into a brocante (antiques market). Buy a socca — a thin, crispy pancake of chickpea flour, sprinkled with black pepper, cooked in a wood-fired oven — from the Chez Thérésa stand, the most trusted vendor in the market. Alongside it, pick up a slice of **pissaladière** (a Niçoise flatbread of caramelised onions, anchovies, and black olives) from one of the bakery stands.

From the market, spend an hour in **Vieux Nice**, the old town whose Baroque architecture, ochre and amber-painted façades, and labyrinthine lanes reflect the city's Savoyard and Italian inheritance as much as its French one. Navigate toward **Place Rossetti**, a small square anchored by the 17th-century Cathédrale Sainte-Réparate and generally animated with locals at café tables. The ice-cream parlour **Fenocchio** on the square, open from mid-morning, offers lavender, orange blossom, and dozens of other Provençal flavours; the neighbouring **Azzurro** is its main rival and equally reputable. Continue west along the covered **rue de la Préfecture** and **rue Saint-François de Paule** to appreciate the painted trompe-l'œil shutters and doorways that give this neighbourhood its distinctive character.

Mid-Morning: Colline du Château

From the eastern end of the Cours Saleya, take the lift (free) or climb the steps up to the **Colline du Château** (Castle Hill). The medieval castle that once stood here was razed in 1706 on the orders of Louis XIV; what remains is one of the finest public parks in the city, with an artificial waterfall, shaded terraces, and a panoramic viewpoint offering a sweeping view south over the Promenade des Anglais and the Baie des Anges and east over the port and the Colline de Mont Boron. The park is free and open daily. Allow 45 minutes to an hour.

Late Morning: Place Masséna and the Promenade du Paillon

Descend into the city and walk west to **Place Masséna**, Nice's central square. Its black-and-white tiled paving, Italianate red-ochre buildings, and the seven tall illuminated sculptures by Jaume Plensa (representing the seven continents) form one of the most architecturally coherent public spaces on the Riviera. The fountain at the centre — whose Apollo figure has a mildly scandalous history among the city's Catholics — anchors the square on its south side.

Walk north from the square along the **Promenade du Paillon**, a long linear park completed in 2013 that replaced a parking lot. The promenade runs along the buried bed of the Paillon river and connects Place Masséna to the National Theatre and ultimately to Place Garibaldi at the north-eastern edge of the old town. It is generous, shaded, and full of families, especially on weekends.

Lunch

Return to Vieux Nice for lunch. **Lou Pilha Leva**, a standing snack bar with long picnic tables at Place Centrale, serves a concentrated range of Niçoise street food: socca, pissaladière, petits farcis (vegetables stuffed with minced meat and herbs), and zucchini flowers. For a sit-down meal, **Chez Acchiardo** on rue Droite is one of the most traditional bistros in the old town, serving salade Niçoise,

daube Niçoise (beef braised in wine with mushrooms), and raviolis Niçois in an unpretentious, cash-preferred setting.

Afternoon: Promenade des Anglais

Walk south to the seafront and turn west along the **Promenade des Anglais**, the 7-kilometre boulevard that has defined Nice's identity since English visitors funded its construction in the early nineteenth century. Stroll past the blue *chaises longues* — the azure-painted chairs that are the promenade's signature furniture — and the grand Belle Époque hotel facades that line the north side, most notably the pink-domed **Hôtel Negresco** at number 37. The Negresco's bar is open to non-guests and worth a look for its extraordinary interior; the cocktail menu includes the Royal Negresco, a signature Champagne and Kirsch creation.

The beach is composed of large smooth pebbles rather than sand. **Castel Plage**, near the foot of Castle Hill, is one of the better-regarded private beaches (sunlounger hire available). **Plage Publique des Ponchettes** near the Cours Saleya end is the closest free public beach to Vieux Nice, with calm, clear water.

Evening: Apéritif and Dinner

Return to the Cours Saleya as it transforms from market to terrace. The square fills for evening drinks, especially on the café terraces along its north side. For dinner, the area around **rue Masséna** and the pedestrian zone offers a wide range from tourist-oriented brasseries to neighbourhood bistros; the most serious cooking in the city is found a few streets off the main circuits. The **Cuisine Nissarde** label, awarded by the city's tourist authority, identifies restaurants committed to authentic Niçoise recipes — look for it on menus and windows in the old town.



Most serious restaurants in Nice observe a lunch service (12:00–14:00) and an evening service (19:00–21:30 or later). Arriving at 19:00 on the dot secures a table more reliably than arriving at 20:30 without a reservation in summer.

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Itinerary 2: Two Days in Nice

Day Two adds the art museums and the hilltop quarter of Cimiez, turning a visitor's impression of Nice from a beach town with a pretty old quarter into the layered cultural city it actually is.

Day One

Follow Itinerary 1 above in its entirety.

Day Two, Morning: Cimiez

Take Bus 5 from Jean Médecin (or from closer stops depending on your accommodation) uphill to the **Arènes / Musée Matisse** stop in **Cimiez**. The neighbourhood, now a quiet upper-class residential district, was the capital of the Roman province of Alpes Maritimae before Nice itself existed; the city of Cemenelum occupied this hill from the first century AD and held a population of around 10,000 at its peak. During the Belle Époque it became the preferred winter quarter of the European aristocracy — Queen Victoria spent several winters at the Excelsior Régina Palace, whose vast 200-metre façade still dominates the boulevard.

The **Jardin des Arènes de Cimiez** is a vast public park built around a 500-year-old olive grove, criss-crossed by paths named after jazz musicians who performed here during the Nice Jazz Festival (1974–2010). Within the park:

- **Musée Matisse** (164 avenue des Arènes de Cimiez): Housed in a red 17th-century Genoese villa, the museum holds one of the world's most comprehensive collections of Henri Matisse's work — paintings, drawings, sculptures, graphic works, and the famous cut-out paper compositions, including designs for the Chapel of the Rosary he built in Vence in 1951. Matisse lived in Nice from 1917 until his death here in 1954. The permanent collection is free. Open Wednesday–Monday 10:00–18:00 (17:00 in winter); closed Tuesdays.
- **Musée d'Archéologie de Cimiez** (160 avenue des Arènes): The archaeological museum presents the excavated remains of Cemenelum, including the Roman baths (among the largest in the western Alps), the amphitheatre, and a large collection of objects found during excavations. Entry €5 for adults; free for under-18s, students with ID, and holders of the municipal museum pass. Open same hours as the Matisse Museum. A combined ticket with the Matisse Museum is available.
- **Monastère de Cimiez** (Place du Monastère): The Franciscan monastery, founded in the 16th century on the site of an earlier Benedictine church, is still inhabited by Franciscan monks. Its Italian-style rose garden — a former kitchen garden of the monastery, maintained with its original layout including a central well and ancient pergolas — offers one of the most tranquil viewpoints in Nice, looking south over the Paillon valley toward the sea. Entry to the gardens is free. The monastery church contains three large altarpieces by Ludovico Brea, the great Ligurian Renaissance painter. Adjacent to the church, the **Franciscan Monastery Cemetery** is the resting place of Henri Matisse and Raoul Dufy, both buried here with their wives.



The recommended approach to Cimiez is to take the bus uphill to the Monastère stop, walk through the gardens and monastery, then descend through the park past the Roman ruins and Matisse Museum. From there, walk downhill along the broad, plane-tree-lined **boulevard de Cimiez** — one of the most architecturally impressive avenues in Nice, lined with grand Belle Époque palaces and villas — to reach the Musée National Marc Chagall on the way back toward the city centre.

Day Two, Afternoon: Musée National Marc Chagall

A 15-minute walk downhill from Cimiez (or two stops on Bus 5) brings you to the **Musée National Marc Chagall** (avenue du Docteur Ménard). Built specifically to house Marc Chagall's *Biblical Message* series — 17 large canvases depicting scenes from Genesis and Exodus, painted between

1954 and 1967 — the museum also holds mosaic works, stained-glass windows of luminous intensity, and a concert room designed around another cycle of Chagall glass. Chagall donated the entire collection to the French state in 1966; the museum opened in 1973. Entry fee applies (not covered by the municipal museum pass). Open Wednesday–Monday 10:00–18:00 (17:00 November–April); closed Tuesdays.

Day Two, Evening

Descend back into the city by bus or on foot via the pleasant avenue Malausséna and spend the evening exploring the area around **Place Garibaldi**, the large 18th-century square at the north-eastern edge of Vieux Nice. The square, dedicated to the Italian unification hero born in Nice in 1807, is lined with arcaded buildings in the Piedmontese style and has undergone significant renovation in recent years; its café terraces are a neighbourhood favourite for evening drinks.

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Itinerary 3: Three Days in Nice — Art, History, and the Sea

A third day allows for either a deeper exploration of Nice's remaining museums or a first foray out of the city. The programme below keeps the third day in Nice; day-trip options follow in the subsequent itineraries.

Day Three: Museums and the Western City

- **Musée des Beaux-Arts Jules Chéret** (33 avenue des Baumettes): Nice's fine arts museum occupies a 19th-century neo-Rococo palace built for a Ukrainian princess, later the residence of the King of the Belgians. The permanent collection spans the 17th through 20th centuries and includes a noted group of paintings by Jules Chéret, the father of the modern poster, who retired to Nice, as well as works by Monet, Sisley, Rodin, Bonnard, and Van Dongen. Free admission to the permanent collection.
- **Musée d'Art Moderne et d'Art Contemporain (MAMAC)** (Place Yves Klein): A large modern and contemporary art collection with strong representation of the Nouveau Réalisme movement (Yves Klein, Niki de Saint Phalle, Tinguely, Arman), American Pop Art, and the Nice school. The rooftop terrace offers strong views across the city. Free admission to the permanent collection. Closed Mondays.
- **Afternoon at sea**: Book a sailing excursion or a one-hour bay cruise from the quay at Port Lympia — a practical and scenic way to see the city's waterfront and the Baie des Anges from the water. Several operators offer departures throughout the afternoon.
- **Evening**: The neighbourhood around **Place Masséna** and the **rue de France** on the western side of the Promenade fills in the evening with locals. The Quartier des Musiciens, a few blocks inland between the train station and the sea, contains some of Nice's better neighbourhood restaurants, less frequented by tourists than Vieux Nice.

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Itinerary 4: The Eastern Riviera — Villefranche, Eze, and Monaco

This is among the most popular and rewarding day-trip routes from Nice, combining an intimate harbour village, a perched medieval village with extraordinary panoramic views, and the world's second-smallest sovereign state — all within a half-hour's travel radius.

Villefranche-sur-Mer (morning)

Take the TER train from Nice-Ville eastward; **Villefranche-sur-Mer** is just seven minutes away and two stops along the coast. Alternatively, Bus 15 from the Lycée Massena stop near the Promenade takes around 15 minutes. Villefranche offers what Nice, with its long urban waterfront, cannot: a working harbour of real intimacy, coloured fishing boats, and a village-scaled old town.

The **Chapelle Saint-Pierre**, on the quay at the waterfront, was decorated in 1957 by Jean Cocteau with frescoes in his characteristically sparse, line-drawing style. It houses an excellent small Cocteau museum alongside the frescoes. The **Rue Obscure** is a medieval vaulted street running beneath the upper town — one of the oldest streets in Nice's metropolitan area, dark and atmospheric, originally built to shelter inhabitants during bombardments. The beach at Villefranche (**Plage des Marinières**) is sandy rather than pebbly, with calm, clear water. Lunch on one of the harbour terraces before moving east.

Eze Village (afternoon)

From Villefranche, take Bus 15 east to Beaulieu-sur-Mer, then Bus 83 uphill to **Eze Village** — or return to Nice and take Bus 82 from the Vauban tram stop directly (around 30 minutes). Note carefully: Eze Village perches at 427 metres on a dramatic rocky spur above the sea; Eze-sur-Mer is the coastal town far below. Do not confuse the two.

The village is tiny but rewarding: a fortified medieval ensemble of stone lanes, art galleries, jewellery workshops, and sweeping terraces. The **Jardin Exotique d'Eze** (entry fee applies) occupies the ruins of the medieval castle at the summit and plants cacti and succulents against a backdrop of the Riviera coast 400 metres below — the view is among the finest on the entire Côte d'Azur. The **Fragonard Perfumery** laboratory in the village offers free tours and an introduction to the process of perfume making; this branch of the Grasse-based house is considerably smaller than the main Grasse operation but well-suited for an hour's visit.

For those who enjoy a bracing walk, the **Chemin de Nietzsche** descends from the village to Eze-sur-Mer through olive groves and scrubland — the path along which Friedrich Nietzsche is said to have conceived key ideas for *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* during his winters in the area. The descent takes around 45 minutes and is steep.

Monaco (late afternoon and evening)

From Eze Village, take Bus 112 or the TER train from Eze-sur-Mer station to reach **Monaco** in under 30 minutes; the train is the faster option if you descend via the Chemin de Nietzsche. Alternatively,

leave Eze earlier and dedicate the full afternoon and evening to Monaco, which warrants more than a quick look.

The **Prince's Palace** on the high rock of Monaco-Ville dates from the 13th century and remains the official residence of the Grimaldi family; when the flag flies, the prince is in residence. State apartments open to visitors in summer. The adjacent **Cathédrale Saint-Nicholas** (Cathédrale de Monaco) contains the tomb of Princess Grace. Descend to Monte Carlo for the famous **Casino de Monte-Carlo**, designed by Charles Garnier (architect of the Paris Opéra), whose Belle Époque interior is accessible to visitors without gambling (entry fee applies; passport or identity document required; dress code enforced in the gaming rooms). The square in front of the casino, Place du Casino, is reliably filled with the expensive cars that are Monaco's casual backdrop.

The **Musée Océanographique de Monaco**, founded by Prince Albert I in 1910 and perched at the edge of the rock above the sea, is one of the outstanding natural history institutions in the Mediterranean — its aquarium holds sharks, rays, and coral reef fauna of unusual size and variety. The rooftop terrace provides a dramatic view toward Cap Martin and the Italian Alps.

Return to Nice by TER train from Monaco-Monte Carlo station (around 30 minutes, trains frequent).



Monaco operates in the Schengen area and uses the euro, so there is no border formality for EU or Schengen passport holders. Non-EU visitors may need to present a passport when entering the Casino or certain sites.

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Itinerary 5: The Western Riviera — Antibes, Cannes, and Saint-Paul-de-Vence

The western arc of the Riviera has a different character from the eastern: more open, less dramatically compressed against the mountains, with longer beaches and a stronger association with contemporary art and film culture.

Antibes (morning)

Take the TER train from Nice-Ville to **Antibes** (around 20–25 minutes, trains every 20–30 minutes). Antibes is one of the most complete and liveable old towns on the Riviera — its Genoese-era ramparts still encircle the vieille ville, its lanes are covered in flowering vines and ivy, and its morning market on the **Cours Masséna** (daily 07:30–13:00 except Monday) is one of the most authentic in the region: fresh fish, local vegetables, olives, lavender honey, and charcuterie from the Niçois hinterland.

The **Musée Picasso** occupies the **Château Grimaldi**, the 14th-century castle where Pablo Picasso kept a studio for several months in 1946 after the Liberation and where he produced an extraordinary concentrated burst of work — ceramics, paintings, and drawings, 67 of which he subsequently donated to the castle, forming the collection that became the world's first Picasso museum. The château juts out over the sea; the outdoor terrace holds sculptures against the backdrop of the Mediterranean. Highly recommended.

Cannes (afternoon)

Return toward Nice by train (15–20 minutes from Antibes) and stop at **Cannes**. The city's identity rests overwhelmingly on the **Festival de Cannes** (held each May), whose celebrity traffic and its afterimage define how the world perceives the town; outside festival season, Cannes is a handsome, unpretentious Riviera city with a long sandy beach, a lively old quarter, and an excellent Saturday market. The **Boulevard de la Croisette** — Cannes' answer to the Promenade des Anglais — runs east from the Palais des Festivals; the **Le Suquet** quarter behind the old port, with its narrow streets climbing to a 12th-century tower, is the atmospheric antidote to the Croisette's luxury hotels. The **Marché Forville** (open most mornings except Monday) is a well-stocked covered market.

Saint-Paul-de-Vence (combining with either Antibes or Cannes)

For those with a hire car or willing to navigate the bus, **Saint-Paul-de-Vence** can be combined with either Antibes or Cannes as a half-day inland detour. By public transport, take the TER train to Cagnes-sur-Mer and transfer to Bus 655 to the village; total journey around 50 minutes. The bus does not run Sundays.

Saint-Paul-de-Vence is one of the oldest and best-preserved medieval villages on the Riviera — its 16th-century defensive ramparts remain largely intact and can be walked; the views south toward the sea and north toward the pre-Alps are exceptional. The village attracted artists and intellectuals from the 1920s onward — Marc Chagall is buried in the village cemetery — and its lanes today hold a concentration of serious art galleries alongside tourist shops. The **Fondation Maeght**, a ten-minute walk from the village, is the finest private art foundation in the south of France: a purpose-built modernist complex designed by Josep Lluís Sert, set into a pine-wooded hillside, holding a remarkable permanent collection of Miró, Giacometti, Calder, Léger, Kandinsky, and Braque alongside temporary exhibitions of the highest calibre.

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Itinerary 6: Menton and the Border

Menton, the last French town before Italy, sits at the eastern end of the Riviera — 40 minutes from Nice by TER train — and has a character quite distinct from the rest of the coast: quieter, more colourful, deeply Italian in its architecture and food culture, and famous for its lemon groves, which give the town a citrus scent that hangs in the warmth. Its nickname, “the Pearl of France,” is not unearned.

The **old town** climbs steeply from the seafront: a tight grid of pastel-painted houses, outdoor staircases, and shaded lanes surrounding the **Basilique Saint-Michel Archange**, a commanding 17th-century Baroque church whose ochre and white façade dominates the harbour view from the sea. The large open square in front of the basilica hosts classical music concerts in summer.

The **Musée Jean Cocteau Collection Séverin Wunderman** (quai de Monléon) is the main Cocteau museum on the Riviera — a modern building holding the most comprehensive collection of his works across media: drawings, ceramics, tapestries, photographs, and theatre designs. The **Salle des Mariages** in the Hôtel de Ville (Town Hall), decorated entirely by Cocteau in 1957, can be visited on weekdays for a small fee and is an extraordinary example of his total-artwork approach to interior

design.

The **Jardin Serre de la Madone** (Route de Gorbio), a botanical garden created by Lawrence Johnston in the early 20th century on a steep terraced hillside above the town, is considered one of the finest Mediterranean gardens in existence: rare and tender plants in micro-climates created by the sheltering valley walls. Entry fee applies; open most of the year, check ahead for seasonal hours.

Menton's markets and food stalls reward a detour: the **Marché des Halles** (rue du Marché, morning hours daily except Monday) is one of the most atmospheric covered markets on the Riviera, with exceptional Italian cheeses, prosciutto from over the border, lemon preserves, and local olive oils. The town's specialty is anything citrus — limoncello, lemon tarts, candied rind — and the annual **Fête du Citron** in February is the most colourful public festival on the eastern Riviera, with floats and sculptures constructed from hundreds of tonnes of citrus fruit.



Combine Menton with Eze Village for a full eastern day: bus to Eze in the morning, onward to Monaco by bus or train, then the train from Monaco to Menton for the late afternoon. Return to Nice from Menton by TER, a journey of around 40 minutes.

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Itinerary 7: Into the Hinterland — Eze, Peillon, and the Pre-Alps

The mountains that frame Nice from the north provide a completely different register of experience from the coast: medieval hill villages, dramatic gorges, terraced olive groves, and a walking pace that has not changed in centuries. None of these destinations requires a car, though a car makes the day considerably easier.

Eze Village

See Itinerary 4 above for details. Eze Village is the most accessible perched village from Nice and the one most easily reached by bus.

Peillon

Peillon is a smaller and less visited village than Eze — the descent to the village from the bus stop involves a ten-minute uphill walk — but its setting is more dramatic: the village appears to grow directly out of the rocky summit it occupies, with no modern additions visible from most angles. The interior lanes are exceptionally narrow; the **Chapelle des Pénitents Blancs** holds a series of Renaissance frescoes of considerable quality. Bus 364 from Nice's Vauban stop serves Peillon; allow 45 minutes each way. The village is small enough to visit in a morning; combine with Eze Village in the afternoon by returning to Nice and transferring.

Gorges du Verdon

The **Gorges du Verdon** — often described as the Grand Canyon of Europe — lies roughly two hours from Nice by car and is most practically visited on a guided day tour from Nice. The gorge cuts through the Verdon Regional Nature Park to a depth of up to 700 metres, with turquoise water at its floor and dramatic limestone cliffs on either side. Organised tours typically also visit the **Plateau de Valensole** (lavender fields in bloom from mid-May to mid-July), the village of **Moustiers-Sainte-Marie**, and the **Lac de Sainte-Croix**. A day excursion from Nice to the Gorges du Verdon by car, if driving independently, would allow stops at several viewpoints along the **Route des Crêtes** above the canyon's rim.

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Itinerary 8: The Train des Merveilles — Into the Alps

One of the most unusual excursions from Nice is a journey inland by the **Train des Merveilles** (Train of Marvels), a branch line of the TER network that climbs from Nice-Ville through the lower valleys of the Maritime Alps to the town of **Tende**, near the Italian border and close to the Vallée des Merveilles in the Mercantour National Park. The line passes through the towns of Digne-les-Bains and Breil-sur-Roya and stops at small stations in the mountain valleys.

The recommended tourist departure from Nice is at 09:15; the train reaches Tende by approximately 11:30. A summer service with multilingual commentary describes the landscape and the history of the region — the prehistoric Bronze Age rock engravings of the Vallée des Merveilles (accessible by foot from Tende with local guides) are the destination's most remarkable feature, though the engravings require a further guided walk of several hours to reach. Those without the time or inclination for the hike will still find Tende itself worthwhile: a stone-built village of considerable character under the Maritime Alps, with a good local museum devoted to the Vallée des Merveilles.

Intermediate stops — **Sospel**, a market town in a valley surrounded by mountains; **Saorge**, classified as one of France's Plus Beaux Villages and clinging to a near-vertical cliff face — are each worth a stop for those willing to break the journey and continue the following day.



The Train des Merveilles provides commentary only on specific seasonal departures. Check the SNCF Connect app or the Nice tourist office for the timetable of accompanied services before booking.

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Itinerary 9: A Food and Market Day

For visitors whose primary interest is cuisine Niçoise and the food culture of the city, a structured day of market exploration, tasting, and eating offers perhaps the deepest access to local life.

Morning: Cours Saleya Market

Arrive at the **Cours Saleya** by 08:30 for the market at its most atmospheric (Tuesday–Sunday; Monday is the antiques/brocante day). The market covers cut flowers, potted herbs, olives in dozens of preparations, fresh fruit and vegetables, local cheeses, and prepared Niçoise specialties. Key stops:

- **Chez Thérésa**: The most celebrated socca vendor in the market; the owner cycles back and forth from a nearby kitchen delivering fresh-cooked rounds. Eat it hot, with pepper.
- **Olive and oil stalls**: Local varieties of olive, tapenades, and cold-pressed oils from producers in the Niçois hinterland.
- **Pissaladière stands**: Buy a slice warm, ideally one that has been glazed with anchovy and olive before the last few minutes in the oven.

Late Morning: Vieux Nice Food Stops

A structured walk through the old town for food:

- **Lou Pilha Leva** (Place Centrale): The best place to try the full range of Niçoise street food — petits farcis, beignets de courgettes, panisse (chickpea fries), fleurs de courgettes farcies (stuffed zucchini flowers).
- **Chez Pipo** (13 rue Bavastro, near Port Lympia): One of the most respected dedicated pissaladière and socca establishments in Nice, consistently recommended for quality. Slightly away from Vieux Nice but worth the walk.
- Boulangeries throughout the old town sell **pan bagnat** — the round Niçoise sandwich of tuna, hard-boiled egg, anchovies, tomato, cucumber, peppers, olives, and olive oil, its bread soaked (pan bagnat means “wet bread”) until each ingredient perfumes the loaf.

Afternoon: Atelier Cuisine Niçoise

The **Atelier Cuisine Niçoise**, housed in the Palais du Sénat in the heart of the old town near the Cours Saleya, runs cookery workshops in which participants learn and then prepare two traditional Niçoise recipes — pissaladière, petits farcis, gnocchi, stuffed pouch of veal, chard pie — under the guidance of a specialist chef. Sessions begin at 09:30 and run for several hours; participants may take their creations home. Advance booking is required; contact the Nice tourist office or the Atelier directly. The format is suitable for individuals and groups alike and is conducted in French with English assistance available.

Evening: Dinner at a Cuisine Nissarde Restaurant

The **Cuisine Nissarde** label (awarded by the Nice tourist authority to establishments committed to authentic local recipes) is the surest indicator of a kitchen taking the tradition seriously. Several restaurants in and around Vieux Nice carry the label; among those consistently cited:

- **Chez Acchiardo** (38 rue Droite): One of the most traditional bistros in the old town; unpretentious, cash preferred, no frills, excellent daube and raviolis Niçois.
- **La Merenda** (4 rue Raoul Bosio): A famously doorbell-reservations-only (no telephone) neighbourhood restaurant run by a former Michelin-starred chef who returned to simple

cooking; the menu changes daily and draws entirely from Niçoise tradition. Small, crowded, unmissable.

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Practical Notes

Seasonal Considerations

- **Spring (April–May)**: Pleasant temperatures, lower crowds, and lavender not yet in bloom; ideal for walking itineraries and museum visits.
- **Summer (June–August)**: Peak season; Cours Saleya markets at their most abundant; beaches at their most crowded; accommodation expensive and must be booked well in advance. The Nice Jazz Festival, held in July at Place Masséna and the Théâtre de Verdure, is the city's premier summer cultural event.
- **September**: Still warm, crowds thinning, lower prices; often the most comfortable month for a first visit.
- **Winter (November–March)**: Mild by northern European standards (average January high around 13°C); very few tourists; many hotels and restaurants offer low-season rates. The Promenade des Anglais and old town are quiet in the best possible way. The **Carnaval de Nice** in February is the largest carnival in France.

Passes and Tickets

Pass	Coverage	Cost
Municipal Museum Pass (4-day)	All 10 Nice municipal museums	€15
French Riviera Pass (24h)	Tourist bus, train, selected regional sites	Varies
French Riviera Pass (72h)	As above, extended	Varies
Pass SudAzur Explore (7-day)	Trains, trams, and buses in Alpes-Maritimes and Monaco	€50
Lignes d'Azur La Carte	Single trips on Nice trams and buses	€1.70/trip
Lignes d'Azur Day Pass	Unlimited travel on Nice network for 24h	€7

Key Bus Routes Summary

Route	Destination	Approx. Journey Time
Bus 5	Cimiez (Matisse Museum, Archaeology Museum)	20 min from Jean Médecin
Bus 15	Villefranche-sur-Mer, Beaulieu-sur-Mer, Saint-Jean-Cap-Ferrat	15–25 min
Bus 82	Eze Village	30 min from Vauban
Bus 655	Saint-Paul-de-Vence (via Cagnes-sur-Mer)	50 min; no Sunday service
TER train	Monaco	30 min from Nice-Ville
TER train	Menton	40 min from Nice-Ville
TER train	Antibes	20–25 min from Nice-Ville
TER train	Cannes	30–37 min from Nice-Ville
TER train	Villefranche-sur-Mer	7 min from Nice-Ville

See Also

- Custom 5-Day Itinerary for a Couple in Nice, France

- Restaurants in Nice
- Museums of Nice
- Vieux Nice: The Old Town of Nice
- Cuisine Niçoise

- Monaco
- Èze Village
- Antibes
- Menton
- Saint-Paul-de-Vence

- Getting Around in Nice

External Links

- Nice Côte d'Azur Tourist Office
- Lignes d'Azur (bus and tram network)
- SNCF Connect (train tickets)
- Musée Matisse
- Musée National Marc Chagall
- Fondation Maeght, Saint-Paul-de-Vence
- Maison Mode Méditerranée

nice, itinerary, day-trips, riviera, tourism, transport, museums, food

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