

Things to Do in Nice

📍 [Nice](#), the capital of the 📍 [Alpes-Maritimes](#) department and France's fifth-largest city, rewards visitors with an exceptional density of things to see and do. Its Mediterranean climate, distinctive 📍 [Niçois cuisine](#), world-class art museums, Baroque churches, and kilometre after kilometre of coastline make it one of the most satisfying cities in Europe to explore at any pace. This page organises the city's main attractions by category, from iconic landmarks and fine-art institutions to neighbourhood wandering and day trips along the Riviera.



Most of Nice's municipal museums — including the Musée Matisse, Musée Chagall, MAMAC, and the Musée d'Art Naïf — charge no permanent-collection admission fee for Nice residents and EU citizens under 26. Always verify current pricing before visiting, as special exhibitions carry their own tickets.

Iconic Landmarks & Promenades

Promenade des Anglais

The city's defining artery runs seven kilometres along the 📍 [Baie des Anges](#) along the 📍 [Promenade](#), lined with palms, 📍 [Belle Époque](#) hotels, and the famous blue wooden chairs — the *chaises bleues* — that have become an unofficial emblem of Nice. Walking or cycling the full length at any hour offers a different experience: early morning belongs to joggers and dog-walkers, late afternoon to tourists and families, and sunset to everyone. The western end near the airport fades into residential Nice; the eastern end meets the [Vieux-Port](#) and the base of [Colline du Château](#).

The Promenade carries the weight of history as well as pleasure: it was the city's English winter-resident community who funded its original paving in 1820, hence the name. It is also the site of the devastating 📍 [July 2016 attack](#), commemorated by a permanent memorial near the Hôtel Negresco.

- 📍 [Hôtel Negresco](#) ([37 Promenade des Anglais](#)) — Built in 1913 and still privately owned, the Negresco is one of France's most celebrated grand hotels and a classified historic monument. Even non-guests can admire the exterior pink dome and, near the entrance, 📍 [Niki de Saint Phalle](#)'s unforgettable pop-art sculpture of Miles Davis. The bar inside, hung with a 17th-century tapestry, is open to the public for drinks.

Place Masséna

The city's central square, rebuilt in its present checkerboard-paved form in 1843, anchors the northern end of the Promenade des Anglais and the foot of the main shopping street, Avenue Jean Médecin. The 📍 [Promenade du Paillon](#), a leafy green corridor that cuts across the city, intersects here. Seven tall statues called *Conversation à Nice* by artist 📍 [Jaume Plensa](#), symbolising each continent, stand high above the [square](#) and are illuminated at night. At the square's centre stands the Fontaine du Soleil, whose marble Apollo caused a minor scandal at its 1956 unveiling — the sculptor 📍 [Alfred Janniot](#) was later pressured to reduce the statue's proportions, a story Nice locals still recount with

amusement.

Colline du Château (Castle Hill)

🗺️ [Castle Hill](#) is a 93-metre limestone rock overlooking the Baie des Anges. A military citadel occupied the summit from the 11th century until Louis XIV ordered its demolition in 1706; today the hilltop is a vast public park — the most visited in Nice — and the city's finest viewpoint. The main panorama spans the entire length of the palm-lined Promenade des Anglais to the west and overlooks Mont Boron to the east.

A cannon fires daily at noon. The hill contains an artificial 19th-century waterfall, archaeological excavation sites revealing the remains of a 5th-century cathedral, mosaic murals including a trail depicting Homer's *Odyssey*, two historic cemeteries (Christian and Jewish), a playground, and a small snack kiosk called La Citadelle. A wall near the entrance records the names of 3,602 men, women, and children deported from Nice to the Nazi death camps.

The Bellanda Tower — built in 1826 as a reconstruction of one of the castle bastions — once housed the composer 🗺️ [Hector Berlioz](#), who wrote his 🗺️ [King Lear](#) overture while living there.

- **Address:** [Colline du Château, 06300 Nice](#)
- **Access:** Steep staircases on the Old Town side; a free elevator operates from the waterfront near the eastern end of the Promenade des Anglais. The Port side has a gentler path.
- **Hours:** Daily 08:30–20:00 (summer hours extended)
- **Entry:** Free at all times.

Art Museums

Nice claims one of the densest concentrations of public art museums of any French city outside Paris.

Musée Matisse

🗺️ [Musée Matisse](#) — 🗺️ [Henri Matisse](#) lived in Nice for nearly 40 years, and this museum holds one of the world's largest collections of his work, including paintings, drawings, sculptures, and his famous paper cut-outs. The collection occupies a handsome 17th-century Genoese villa (the Villa des Arènes) set in an olive grove on the Cimiez hill, with a rotating programme of temporary exhibitions. Alexander Calder's *Stabile-mobile* stands on the forecourt, linking the building to the garden.

- **Address:** [164 Avenue des Arènes de Cimiez, 06000 Nice](#)
- **Hours:** Wednesday–Monday 10:00–17:00 (Oct–Mar), 10:00–18:00 (Apr–Sep); closed Tuesdays
- **Admission:** Free for permanent collection

Musée National Marc Chagall

🗺️ [Musée National Marc Chagall](#) — Seventeen major Biblical Message tableaux by 🗺️ [Marc Chagall](#) line the walls of this purpose-built museum, conjuring a vibrant world where folk art and spiritual imagination converge. The stained-glass windows — illuminating the concert hall — are themselves

considered among the finest works in Chagall's oeuvre. Many local experts rate this the most spiritually affecting museum in Nice.

- **Address:** [Avenue Docteur Ménard, 06000 Nice](#)
- **Hours:** Wednesday–Monday 10:00–13:00 and 14:30–16:30; closed Tuesdays

MAMAC — Musée d'Art Moderne et d'Art Contemporain

📍 [MAMAC](#) covers major art movements from the 1960s onwards, with significant works by 📍 [Niki de Saint Phalle](#), 📍 [Andy Warhol](#), and the 📍 [Fluxus](#) movement. The building itself, with its glass-bridged towers, is an architectural statement. The rooftop terrace offers an underrated panoramic view across the city towards the sea.

- **Address:** [Place Yves Klein, 06000 Nice](#)
- **Hours:** Closed Mondays
- **Admission:** Free for permanent collection

Musée d'Art Naïf Anatole Jakovsky

📍 [Musée d'Art Naïf Anatole Jakovsky](#) — Housed in a graceful Belle Époque château (the 📍 [Château Sainte-Hélène](#)), this museum holds one of the world's most important collections of 📍 [naïve art](#) — over 600 works spanning centuries and continents. Temporary exhibitions regularly complement the permanent collection.

- **Address:** [23 Avenue de Fabron, 06200 Nice](#)
- **Hours:** Wednesday–Monday 10:00–12:30 and 13:30–18:00; closed Tuesdays
- **Admission:** €5

Palais Lascaris

📍 [Palais Lascaris](#) — Built in the 17th century, this palazzo was home to one of the first noble families of Nice and is considered one of the finest examples of a Genoese Baroque townhouse in the city. Bought by the municipality in 1942 and opened as a museum in 1970, its *étage noble* contains elaborate 18th-century ornamentation, and a substantial collection of historical musical instruments occupies the upper floors. Located in the heart of Vieux Nice, a visit pairs naturally with an exploration of the Old Town.

- **Address:** [15 Rue Droite, 06300 Nice](#)
- **Hours:** Wednesday–Monday 10:00–18:00; closed Tuesdays
- **Admission:** €4

Historic Neighbourhoods

Vieux Nice (Old Town)

📍 [Nice's Old Town](#) is genuinely large, and built in a palette of golden, orange, pink, and red hues that

create picture-perfect vistas around every corner. The street grid largely follows its medieval layout, and the narrow *caruggi* (alleys) open onto unexpected squares — most notably **Place Rossetti**, anchored by the 🗼 [Cathédrale Sainte-Réparate](#) and surrounded by gelato stands, cafés, and the sound of the fountain. **Place du Palais** and **Place du Général de Gaulle** are also worth finding.

The Old Town is the natural home for trying the city's distinctive street food: 🥞 [socca](#) (a crisp chickpea-flour galette), 🥞 [pissaladière](#) (onion tart with anchovies and olives), 🥞 [pan bagnat](#) (the portable version of salade Niçoise), and the stuffed vegetables known as 🥞 [petits farcis](#).

Cimiez

The 🗼 [Cimiez](#) hill — a residential area of great architectural interest — is home to beautiful Belle Époque residences, the former palace hotel Le Regina (now converted into apartments), and princely palaces of Moorish inspiration such as L'Alhambra. 🗼 [Queen Victoria](#) wintered here multiple times in the 1890s; the European aristocracy's enthusiasm for Cimiez's air drove the construction of its grand hotels.

The hill rewards a half-day visit combining the Matisse Museum, the Archaeological Museum (Roman Cemenelum), the Franciscan monastery and its rose garden, and a walk through the ancient olive grove.

Le Port (Vieux-Port & Quartier du Port)

🗼 [Nice's port](#), Port Lympia, occupies a basin dug in the 18th century and remains a working harbour — fishing trawlers, ferries to Corsica and Sardinia, and private yachts share the same water. The surrounding neighbourhood, with its ochre-coloured Piedmontese architecture ([Port Lympia](#)), harbours excellent seafood restaurants, antique dealers, and a laid-back atmosphere distinct from the tourist centre. The **Place Garibaldi** — Nice's grandest square after Place Masséna — anchors the northern end of the port neighbourhood and is named for 🗼 [Giuseppe Garibaldi](#), the Italian nationalist hero born in Nice in 1807.

Markets

Marché du Cours Saleya

The 🗼 [Cours Saleya](#) flower market dates to 1897. These days it also sells fruit, vegetables, and street food, but the floral displays dominate the atmosphere. Dried herbs, spices, unusual teas, and jars of tapenade travel well, alongside fresh bread and pastries. The market operates Tuesday through Sunday (flowers and produce in the morning); on Mondays the same space hosts a well-regarded antiques and brocante market.

- **Address:** [Cours Saleya](#), 06300 Nice
- **Hours:** Tue–Sun 06:00–13:00 (flower & produce); Mon 07:30–13:00 (antiques)

Marché de la Libération

The city's working market, beloved by residents of the Centre and Musiciens neighbourhoods, runs every morning except Sunday on the broad Avenue Malaussena. Less theatrical than Cours Saleya but arguably more authentic, it stocks excellent seasonal produce, charcuterie, cheeses, and prepared Niçois dishes.

Churches & Sacred Sites

Cathédrale Sainte-Réparate

The 17th-century  [Cathédrale Sainte-Réparate](#) on Place Rossetti is the mother church of the Archdiocese of Nice, dedicated to the city's patron saint. Its tiled dome and intimate interior — featuring carved woodwork and ornate side chapels — merit a brief visit while in the Old Town.

- **Address:** [3 Place Rossetti, 06300 Nice](#)
- **Hours:** Tue–Sat 09:00–12:00 and 14:00–18:00; Sun 09:00–18:00; closed Mondays
- **Entry:** Free

Cathédrale Saint-Nicolas (Russian Orthodox)

 [Cathédrale Saint-Nicolas](#) — Built during the reign of  [Tsar Nicholas II](#) and consecrated in 1912, this cathedral has dazzled visitors with its brilliant onion domes and spires. Designed by the St Petersburg architectural professor  [Mikhail Preobrazhensky](#) and inspired by the Kremlin's churches, it has been a classified historical monument of France since 1987. The largest  [Russian Orthodox](#) cathedral in Western Europe, it stands as a testimony to the deep historic ties between Nice and Imperial Russia. See the wiki's [Russians in Nice](#) page for fuller context.

- **Address:** [Avenue Nicolas II, 06000 Nice](#)
- **Hours:** Mon–Fri 10:00–13:30 and 14:00–17:30; Sat 10:00–18:00; Sun 12:00–18:00
- **Entry:** Free

Monastère Notre-Dame de Cimiez

 [Monastère Notre-Dame de Cimiez](#) — Alongside the convent buildings, near the Roman amphitheatre, the monastery garden retains its original layout as a former vegetable garden and orchard, with a central well, ancient pergolas covered with climbing roses, citrus trees, olive trees, and a lower terrace with a fountain opening onto a panorama of the Paillon valley and the sea.  [Henri Matisse](#) is buried in the cemetery here, as is the filmmaker  [Roger Vadim](#). The Franciscan church attached to the monastery contains three exceptional altarpieces by  [Louis Bréa](#) (15th–16th century).

- **Address:** [Place Jean-Paul II, 06000 Nice](#)
- **Hours:** Daily 08:00–19:30 (garden); check church hours separately
- **Entry:** Free

Beaches

Nice has 15 private beach clubs and 20 public beaches along the [Promenade des Anglais](#). Nice's beaches are famously shingled rather than sandy — an acquired taste for those used to the sandy strands of Cannes or Antibes, but locals regard the smooth grey pebbles as part of the city's character. The water in the 🌊 [Baie des Anges](#) is exceptionally clear.

- **Plage Publique des Ponchettes** — Family-friendly, shallow water, good amenities, directly below Cours Saleya
- **La Réserve / Plage de la Réserve** — Local favourite east of the port, with a traditional diving board
- **Private beach clubs** — Most line the western Promenade; visitors pay for lounge hire and access to showers, bars, and restaurants. Expect €20–35 for a lounge in high season



Renting a beach lounge is optional, not obligatory. The public beaches are entirely free; simply bring a towel or beach mat. Morning visits avoid the worst of the midday crowds.

Food & Drink

Niçois Cuisine

Nice's gastronomy is its own tradition, distinct from both 🌊 [Provençal cuisine](#) and Italian cooking despite borrowing from both. The defining dishes:

- 🍷 **Socca** — Thin galette of chickpea flour, olive oil, and water, cooked on a huge iron plate in a wood-fired oven. Chez Thérèse on Cours Saleya is the historic institution; expect a queue.
- 🍷 **Salade Niçoise** — In its authentic local form, this contains no cooked vegetables: raw tomatoes, hard-boiled egg, canned tuna or fresh anchovies, olives, and green beans (when in season). Any restaurant adding potatoes or cooked peas is catering to the tourist interpretation.
- 🍷 **Pissaladière** — Caramelised onion tart on bread dough, topped with anchovies (*pissala*) and black olives. Found in every boulangerie.
- 🍷 **Pan bagnat** — Literally “bathed bread”: a round roll packed with salade Niçoise components and pressed. The ideal picnic food.
- 🍷 **Petits farcis** — Seasonal vegetables (courgettes, tomatoes, peppers, onions) stuffed with a meat and breadcrumb mixture and roasted.
- 🍷 **Daube Niçoise** — A long-braised beef stew fragrant with olives, orange peel, and red wine.

For the city's wider dining landscape including Michelin-starred restaurants, see the [Top Restaurants in Nice](#) page.

Wine: Bellet AOC

The 🍷 [Bellet](#) appellation — one of France's most obscure and smallest 🍷 [AOCs](#) — lies entirely within the city limits of Nice, on hillside vineyards north of the airport. Bellet whites (made from 🍷)

Rolle/[Vermentino](#)), rosés, and reds (from Braquet and Folle Noire) are rarely exported and best experienced in local restaurants and wine shops. Several Old Town wine shops offer guided tastings.

Archaeology & History

Roman Cemenelum — Cimiez Archaeological Site

 [Roman Cemenelum](#) — This major archaeological site preserves the remains of three complete thermal complexes dating from the 1st to 3rd century, streets, a residential area with shops, an amphitheatre, and a paleo-Christian group consisting of a cathedral and baptistery. Cemenelum was the capital of the Roman province of  [Alpes Maritimae](#), and its ruins have been continuously visible since antiquity — the Roman arena hosted performances for centuries, including the  [Nice Jazz Festival](#) until 2011.

- **Address:** [Jardin des Arènes de Cimiez, 06000 Nice](#)
- **Hours:** Wed–Mon 10:00–17:00; closed Tuesdays
- **Entry:** €5; free for under-18s and EU residents under 26

Seasonal Events

Nice Carnival

The  [Carnaval de Nice](#) runs for two weeks in February–March and is one of the largest and oldest carnival celebrations in the world, with origins traceable to the 13th century. The main events — the processions of flower-decorated floats ( [Bataille de Fleurs](#)) and grotesque satirical figures — take place on the Promenade des Anglais and around Place Masséna. Tickets for the grandstand are advisable; the street parades are partly free to watch.

- **Official site:** nicedecarnaval.com

Nice Jazz Festival

Founded in 1948, the  [Nice Jazz Festival](#) is among the oldest jazz festivals in Europe. It relocated from the Roman arenas at Cimiez to the Place Masséna area in 2011, running for five days in mid-July. Past performers span the full breadth of jazz and world music.

- **Official site:** nicejazzfestival.fr

Other Annual Highlights

-  [Fête du Citron \(Menton\)](#) — Not Nice itself, but the lemon festival in nearby Menton (February–March) is a short train ride away and forms a natural complement to Nice Carnival
-  [Fête de la Musique](#) — 21 June; free concerts throughout the city
- **Christmas Markets** — A well-regarded market occupies Place Masséna and the Promenade du Paillon from late November through the Christmas period

Day Trips from Nice

Nice's position at the hub of the 🚆 [Côte d'Azur](#) rail network makes it the natural base for exploring the entire French Riviera. The regional 🚆 [TER](#) train service runs frequently and cheaply along the coast in both directions.

- 🚆 [Èze](#) (30 min by bus from Nice) — Medieval village perched 427 m above the sea, with a cactus garden offering some of the most dramatic views on the Riviera. The lower village of Èze-sur-Mer has good beaches.
- 🚆 [Monaco](#) (25 min by train) — The world's second-smallest sovereign state combines the 🎰 [Monte Carlo Casino](#), the 🏛️ [Oceanographic Museum](#), the 🏰 [Prince's Palace](#), and some of the most extravagant real estate on earth.
- 🚆 [Antibes](#) (30 min by train) — The 🏰 [Grimaldi Château houses the Musée Picasso](#), and the old town retains a less touristic character than Nice. The Cap d'Antibes peninsula, with its coastal path, is exceptional.
- 🚆 [Cannes](#) (35 min by train) — La Croisette, the 🏝️ [Lérins Islands](#) (a 15-minute ferry ride), and the old quarter Le Suquet around the port.
- 🚆 [Saint-Paul-de-Vence](#) (1 hr by bus) — A fortified hilltop village and historic haunt of artists including Matisse, Chagall, and Picasso. The 🏛️ [Fondation Maeght](#) is one of France's finest private modern art foundations.
- 🚆 [Menton](#) (35 min by train) — The easternmost town on the French Riviera before the Italian border; famous for its lemons, Baroque architecture, and the nearby 🏰 [Villa Ephrussi de Rothschild](#) on the Cap Ferrat peninsula.
- 🚗 [Gorges du Verdon](#) (2–3 hrs by car or organised excursion) — A canyon up to 700 m deep, sometimes called the Grand Canyon of Europe, set in the 🏞️ [Verdon Regional Nature Park](#). Best reached on an organised day tour from Nice.

Getting Around Nice

Nice's city centre is compact and walkable. The main 🚆 [tramway lines](#) connect the airport, the railway station, and the seafront. Bicycles are available through the 🚲 [Vélo Bleu](#) hire scheme (docking stations throughout the city). Taxis and ride-share apps are plentiful.



The Promenade des Anglais has a dedicated shared cycle and pedestrian lane separate from the vehicle roadway. Cycling is one of the best ways to cover the full length of the waterfront.

Practical Information

- **Tourist Office:** [25 Avenue Jean Médecin, 06000 Nice](#) — Mon–Sat 09:00–18:00; Sun 10:00–13:00 and 14:00–18:00
- 🚆 **Nice City Pass:** Covers entry to all municipal museums, unlimited tram and bus travel, and discounts on selected attractions — good value for visitors planning multiple museum visits
- **Best seasons:** May–June and September–October offer the best combination of warm weather, manageable crowds, and lower accommodation prices. July and August are peak season: hot,

busy, and expensive. Winter remains mild by northern European standards and the city is uncrowded.

- **Language:** French; Italian is widely understood in the Old Town. English is spoken at most tourist-facing businesses.

See Also

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- [Top Restaurants in Nice](#)
- [Russians in Nice](#)
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Last update: **2026/03/31 05:22**

