



The French Riviera & Monaco

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Best Place to Eat

- » Auberge de l'Oumède (p855)
- » SeaSens (p844)
- » La Montgolfière (p865)
- » La Colombed'Or (p840)
- » Relais du Vieux Sauvair (p857)

Best Places to Stay

- » Château Eza (p862)
- » Les Quatre Saisons (p860)
- » Lou Cagnard (p854)
- » Hôtel Bellevue (p857)
- » Hôtel La Pérouse (p832)

Why Go?

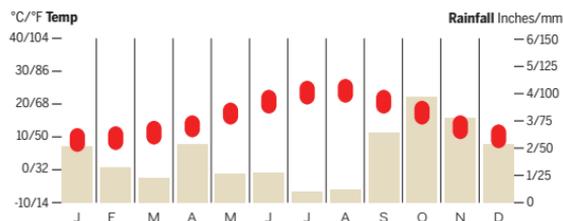
With its glistening seas, idyllic beaches and fabulous weather, the Riviera (known as Côte d'Azur to the French) encapsulates many people's idea of the good life. The beauty is that there is so much more to do than just going to the beach – although the Riviera does take beach-going *very* seriously: from nudist beach to secluded cove or exclusive club, there is something for everyone.

Culture vultures will revel in the region's thriving art scene: the Riviera has some fine museums, including world-class modern art, and a rich history to explore in Roman ruins, WWII memorials and excellent museums.

Foodies for their part will rejoice at the prospect of lingering in fruit and veg markets, touring vineyards and feasting on some of France's best cuisines, while outdoor enthusiasts will be spoilt for choice with coastal paths to explore, and snorkelling and swimming galore.

When to Go

Monaco



February Carnival season, with two weeks of festivities in Nice and Menton.

May Jet-setters descend on the Riviera for Monaco's Grand Prix and the Cannes Film Festival.

July Fireworks on 14 July, outdoor clubbing in Cannes and jazz in Antibes.

AccommodationWarning

Accommodation can be impossible to find, not to mention prohibitively expensive, during the Cannes Film Festival and the Monaco Grand Prix (both held in May). This applies to the coast between Menton and Cannes but doesn't affect areas beyond Massif de l'Estérel (St-Raphaël, St-Tropez etc).

July and August are busy everywhere, so book well in advance.

MAGICAL MATISSE TOUR

If you're mad about Matisse, you can cherry-pick a Côte d'Azur itinerary that takes in some of the major sites of his life.

Born on New Year's Eve in 1869, Henri Matisse arrived in Nice from Paris in 1917 to recover from bronchitis. He remained here until his death in 1954 at his home and studio in the mansion-lined suburb of Cimiez; this is where the Musée Matisse (p827) is now located.

Matisse's visits to **Renoir's villa** (now the Musée Renoir, p838) in Cagnes-sur-Mer provided further inspiration for paintings, including the 1917 *Oliviers, Jardin de Renoir à Cagnes* (Olive Trees, Renoir's Garden in Cagnes).

During WWII Matisse rented Villa Le Rêve in Vence where he was visited by Picasso and Aragon, among others. It was during his stay in Vence that he designed the Chapelle du Rosaire (p840).

Matisse is buried at the Monastère Notre Dame de Cimiez (p830) in Nice, near the Musée Matisse; signs lead to his grave.

Tourist offices all along the Riviera have an info-packed brochure (available in English) about tracing Matisse's footsteps.

GREAT WALKS

There are superb walks along the Riviera, with great panoramas. Try the well-trodden Cap d'Antibes (p837) or the more-challenging Massif de l'Estérel (p850)..

FastFacts

- » **Population** 2.08 million
- » **Area** 10,272 sq km
- » **Hotel overnights/yr** 11.8 million
- » **Signature drink** rosé wine

RivieraTravel Essentials

- » Smart clothes for top-end restaurants, clubs and casinos with strict dress codes
- » A penknife and corkscrew for decadent picnics
- » Mosquito repellent for a buzz-free night

Resources

- » Côte d'Azur Tourisme (www.cotedazur-tourisme.com)
- » Tourisme PACA (www.tourismepaca.fr)
- » VisitVar (www.visitvar.fr)

TopBeaches

- » **Plage de Pampelonne, St-Tropez** (p 853) Sea, sand and celebrity.
- » **Z Plage, Cannes** (p 841) Glamour and creature comforts on La Croisette.
- » **Plage de Gigaro, La Croix-Valmer** (p 857) Not too big, along wooded shores, blissful.
- » **Calanques, Massif de l'Estérel** (p 850) Take your pick from the dozen coves with crystal-clear waters.
- » **Île de Port-Cros** (p 858) Most beaches on this beautiful island will make you feel like a castaway.

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