

Côte d'Azur & Monaco



The Côte d'Azur (Azure Coast), with its glistening seas, idyllic beaches and lush hills, is a gift from the heavens. Nothing less. Greeks and Ligurians were quick to spot this, and were early settlers. Queens, tsars and assorted crowns followed a few centuries later, coming for mild winters and hedonistic lifestyles on what became known as the French Riviera.

The monarchs gone, celebrated artists and writers (Matisse, Chagall, Picasso, F Scott Fitzgerald, Cocteau) took over, propelling sleepy villages to fame and immortalising in a brush stroke or a verse what so many before them had quietly contemplated. You can admire or read their legacy the world over but the Riviera villages they inhabited have what no other museum on earth will ever have: their souls.

These days the Riviera is the destination de rigueur for the celebrity set. They like to hang out in glitzy St-Tropez, glamorous Cannes and sovereign Monaco. But the coast also beckons millions more for the simple pleasures of swimming in turquoise waters, walking along paradisaical shores, taking in the incessant song of millions of cicadas and buying shiny fruit and veg from groaning market stalls.

In summer, crowds are the price to pay for these pleasures. Spring and autumn are definitely best, but at any time of year, drive 15 minutes inland and the infinitely less-touristed hinterland offers rows of perfume-producing flower fields, acres of rosé-yielding vineyards, the rugged red Massif de l'Estérel, the forested slopes of Massif des Maures mountains, and the myriad hilltop villages proffering breathtaking Mediterranean views.

HIGHLIGHTS

- Retrace **Matisse's steps** (see boxed text, p867) in and around Nice
- Experience your own epiphany on the **Chemin de Nietzsche** (p898) between Èze and Èze-sur-Mer villages
- Party under the stars at Antibes' legendary beachside **La Siesta-Le Pearl** (p876) nightclub
- Head to Hyères' beaches for prime **kitesurfing** (p892)
- Catch a ferry to **Île de Port-Cros** (p890), France's only marine national park, for pristine Mediterranean land- and seascapes
- Wind your way through Bandol's **vineyards** (p897) and try some of the area's famed wines at **Maison des Vins** (p896)



■ POPULATION: 2,044,000

■ AREA: 4300 SQ KM

History

The eastern part of France's Mediterranean coast, including the area now known as the Côte d'Azur, was occupied by the Ligurians from the 1st millennium BC. It was colonised around 600 BC by Greeks from Asia Minor, who settled along the coast in the areas of present-day Marseille, Hyères, St-Tropez, Antibes and Nice. Called in to help Massalia against the threat of invasion by Celto-Ligurians from Entremont, the Romans triumphed in 125 BC. They created Provincia Romana – the area between the Alps, the sea and the River Rhône – which ultimately became Provence.

In 1388 Nice, along with the Haute-Provence mountain towns Barcelonnette and Puget-Théniers, was incorporated into the House of Savoy, while the rest of the surrounding Provençal region became part of the French kingdom in 1482. After Austrians were driven from northern Italy due to an agreement between Napoléon III and the House of Savoy in 1860, France took possession of Savoy.

Within the Provence-Alpes-Côte d'Azur *région* (administrative division of France – usually contains several *départements*), the Côte d'Azur encompasses most of the *départements* of the Alpes-Maritimes and the Var. In the 19th century, wealthy tourists and artists and writers added to the area's cachet. Little fishing ports morphed into exclusive resorts. Paid holidays for all French workers from 1936 and improved transportation saw visitors arrive in summer, making it a year-round holiday playground. But it's not all play, no work: since the late 20th century, the area inland of Antibes has been home to France's 'Silicon Valley', Sophia Antipolis, the country's largest industrial/technological hub.

Dangers & Annoyances

The Côte d'Azur isn't a dangerous area, but theft – from backpacks, pockets, bags, cars and even laundrettes – is rife. Watch your belongings, especially at train and bus stations, on overnight trains, and on the beach. Keep your passport, credit cards and cash on your person, not in your bags. Always drive with the doors locked and windows up as thieves often pounce at red lights. If you're travelling by bicycle, store it off-street overnight.

Getting There & Away

The efficient SNCF train network and regular bus connections link the Côte d'Azur with

Provence and the rest of France. Excellent road networks make the region easy to access by car. There are international airports at Nice (the country's second busiest after Paris) and outside Toulon.

For information on ferry services from Nice and Toulon to Corsica, see p907.

Getting Around

SNCF trains shuttle along the coast between St-Raphaël and the Italian border, and north to Grasse. The coastal area between St-Raphaël and Toulon (where the train line veers inland) is served by regular buses. Boat services operate to St-Tropez in summer.

Except for the traffic-plagued high-summer season, the Côte d'Azur is easily accessible by car (and to get off the main tourist routes, you'll need one). The fastest thoroughfare is the uninspiring, speed-camera- and road-toll-ridden A8 motorway which, travelling west to east, starts near Aix-en-Provence, approaches the coast at Fréjus, skirts the Estérel range and runs more or less parallel to the coast from Cannes to the Italian border at Ventimiglia (Vintimille in French).

NICE TO TOULON

NICE

pop 346,900

Most people come here for the light. Me, I'm from the north. What moved me are January's radiant colours and luminosity of daylight.

Henri Matisse

The words are Matisse's but they could be those of any painter, or in fact, of any visitor who comes to Nice, for it's true: the light here is magical. The city also offers exceptional quality of life: shimmering Mediterranean shores, the very best of Mediterranean food, a unique historical heritage and Alpine wilderness within an hour's drive. No wonder that so many young French people have it high on their wishlist of places to live, and that tourists keep flooding in.

Thanks to its busy international airport, Nice has a very cosmopolitan and diverse crowd. Bars reverberate with a Babylonian hubbub of merry punters, the seafront is lined with strollers, in-line skaters, beach-goers,

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and businesspeople working on their laptop by the Promenade. Every now and then you'd think you're in California. Fortunately, Nice has way too much attitude to become such a polished product, and that's just fine by us: like a good bit of French attitude.

History

Nice was founded around 350 BC by the Greek seafarers who had settled Marseille. They named the colony Nikaia, apparently to commemorate a nearby victory (*nike* in Greek). In 154 BC the Greeks were followed by the Romans, who settled further uphill around what is now Cimiez, where there are still Roman ruins (see Musée et Site Archéologiques, p867).

By the 10th century, Nice was ruled by the counts of Provence but turned to Amadeus VII of the House of Savoy in 1388. In the 18th and 19th centuries it was occupied several times

by the French, but didn't definitively become part of France until 1860, when Napoléon III struck a deal (known as the Treaty of Turin) with the House of Savoy.

During the Victorian period, the English aristocracy and European royalty enjoyed Nice's mild winter climate. Throughout the 20th century, Nice enjoyed an exceptional art scene, spanning every movement from Impressionism to new realism. The new tram line (customised by local and international artists) and the decision to open all museums for free in 2008 are recent examples that show how art is still very much a part of city life.

Orientation

Av Jean Médecin runs south from near the Gare Nice Ville (the main train station) to place Masséna. The modern city centre – the area north and west of place Masséna – includes the pedestrianised shopping streets rue

de France and rue Masséna. The bus station is located three blocks east of place Masséna.

Promenade des Anglais follows the gently arced beachfront from the city centre to the airport, 6km west. Vieux Nice (Old Nice) is delineated by bd Jean Jaurès, quai des États-Unis and, east, the hill known as Colline du Château. The port is further east, on the other side of the Colline du Château.

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

Information

BOOKSHOPS

Cat's Whiskers (☎ 04 93 80 02 66; 30 rue Lamartine; ☹ closed Mon morning & all Sun) Linda and her four-legged assistant Vodka will help you pick new and second-hand English-language books.

Magellan Librairie de Voyages (☎ 04 93 82 31 81; 3 rue d'Italie) Stellar selection of maps and travel guides, including Lonely Planet titles in English.

Maison de la Presse (1 place Masséna; ☎ to 7.30pm Oct-Jun, to midnight Jul-Sep) Maps and guides, plus books and magazines in English.

EMERGENCY

Police Station (☎ 04 92 17 22 22, Foreign Tourist Department 04 92 17 20 31; 1 av Maréchal Foch)

INTERNET ACCESS

New internet cafés abound (there are around 10 on rue Pertinax alone); you'll have no problems staying connected.

Cyberpoint (☎ 04 93 92 70 63; 10 av Félix Faure; per hr €4; ☹ 10am-9pm Mon-Sat, later in summer, 3-9pm Sun) An organised internet café with English keyboards.

INTERNET RESOURCES

Nice Tourism (www.nicetourisme.com) The tourist office's website.

PACA (www.crt-paca.fr) Umbrella site for all of Provence and the Côte d'Azur.

Riviera Guide (www.guideriviera.com) Covers the eastern Côte d'Azur.

Var Destination (www.vardestination.com) Info on the Côte d'Azur's western Var region.

LAUNDRY

Self-service laundrettes are plentiful, especially around Gare Nice Ville. Expect to pay about €3 for a small load of around 5kg.

Laverie Mono (8 rue Belgique; ☹ 7am-9pm)

Lavomatique rue Pertinax (22 rue Pertinax; ☹ 7am-8pm); rue du Pont Vieux (11 rue du Pont Vieux; ☹ 7am-8pm)

MONEY

Barclays Bank (2 rue Alphonse Karr) Has a change counter.
Travelex (☎ 04 93 88 59 99; 13 av Thiers; ☹ 8am-8pm Mon-Fri, 9am-5.30pm Sat & Sun) Opposite the station.

POST

Main Post Office (23 av Thiers)

Post Office (2 rue Louis Gassin) In Vieux Nice.

TOURIST INFORMATION

Airport Tourist Information Desk (☎ 08 92 70 74 07; ☹ 8am-9pm Jun-Sep, closed Sun Oct-May) In Terminal 1.

Main Tourist Office (☎ 08 92 70 74 07; 5 promenade des Anglais; ☹ 8am-8pm Mon-Sat, 9am-7pm Sun Jun-Sep, 9am-6pm Mon-Sat Oct-May) Right by the beach.

Train Station Tourist Office (☎ 08 92 35 35 35; av Thiers; ☹ 8am-8pm Mon-Sat, 9am-7pm Sun Jun-Sep, 8am-7pm Mon-Sat, 10am-5pm Sun Oct-May) Next to the Gare Nice Ville.

Sights

Nice has some great museums, most of which are free since the election of a new mayor in 2008. Only the Chagall Museum, which is a national museum, has retained a fee.

VIEUX NICE

Forget about maps and books for a moment, and embrace Nice's labyrinthine baroque old town. There is something really unique about this tangle of alleyways and backstreets bursting with local life and history. The northern end of this historical centre, running against bd Jean Jaurès, is packed with shops and holes in the wall, all claiming to sell *specialités niçoises* more genuine than their neighbours'. Further south, atmospheric squares fill with cafés, street artists and delighted *flâneurs* (strollers). Cours Saleya, running parallel to the seafront at the southern end of Vieux Nice, is the venue for one of the most vibrant, vividly hued local markets (p873) in the south of France.

Jutting above the rooflines are the spires of some historic churches including the baroque **Cathédrale Ste-Réparate** (place Rossetti) and its stunning glazed terracotta dome, built around 1650; the blue-grey and yellow **Église du Gesù** (place du Gesù), close to rue Rossetti, whose baroque ornamentation also dates from the mid-17th century; and the mid-18th-century **Chapelle de la Miséricorde**, next to place Pierre Gautier.

Perpendicular to rue Rossetti is the notorious **Rue Benoît Bunico**, Nice's old Jewish ghetto,

NICE IN...

Two Days

Kick-start the day with an espresso and pastry from **Multari** (p872) before an invigorating run or in-line skate along **promenade des Anglais** (p868). Browse the fragrant flower and produce **markets** (p873) for picnic supplies to take up to the **Parc du Château** (below). Amble the little alleys of **Vieux Nice** (p865), then laze away the afternoon on the beach, or sail the Baie des Anges on a **catamaran** (p868). Settle down for dinner at the fabulous **Les Épicuriens** (p872) and round off the night in your favourite **bar** or **pub** (p872). The following day, trace Matisse's artistic evolution at the **Musée Matisse** (below) and stroll along **Cimiez'** bourgeois avenues (p868). Grab some Nice-style tapas at **Chez René Socca** (p871) for lunch before getting a dose of pop culture at **Mamac** (below). Finish your day with a long **apéritif** at **Les Distilleries Idéales** (p872) and head to **La Havane** (p873) for a night of Latin flavour.

Four Days

Traverse the twisting cliff-side **corniches** (coast roads; p897) to the medieval village of **Èze** (p898), walk down along **Nietzsche's path** (p898) to Èze-sur-Mer and catch the train to **Monaco** (p900) for a punt at the **Casino de Monte Carlo** (p905), a tour of the aquarium at the **Musée Océanographique de Monaco** (p903) and a taste of the principality's culinary delights at **Castelroc** (p904). On the fourth day, go inland to **Grasse** (p883) to tour its **perfumeries** (p884) and, in season, its **flower-filled fields** (p884), or venture west to tackle one of the 100-odd hiking trails criss-crossing the jagged red crags of the **Massif de l'Estérel** (p885).

where a 1430 law ordered Jews to be locked in by gates at each end of the street from sunset to dawn.

PARC DU CHÂTEAU

From this 92m hilltop park the glittering views of Vieux Nice spires and the Baie des Anges are mesmerising.

The shaded hill and park, at the eastern end of quai des États-Unis, are named after a 12th-century château that was razed by Louis XIV in a fit of pique in 1706 and never rebuilt. To reach the park you can walk up *montée Lesage* or climb the steps at the eastern end of rue Rossetti, or take the **ascenseur** (lift; per person €1; ☎ 9am-8pm Jun-Aug, 9am-7pm Apr, May & Sep, 10am-6pm Oct-Mar) under Tour Bellanda.

MUSÉE D'ART MODERNE ET D'ART CONTEMPORAIN (MAMAC)

Designed by Yves Bayard and Henri Vidal, **Mamac** (Museum of Modern & Contemporary Art; ☎ 04 97 13 42 01; www.mamac-nice.org; Promenade des Arts; admission free; ☎ 10am-6pm Tue-Sun) is worth a visit for its stunning architecture alone, but it also houses some fantastic avant-garde art from the 1960s to the present. These include iconic pop art from Roy Lichtenstein, and Andy Warhol's 1965 *Campbell's Soup Can*. The marbled towers' glass walkways lead to highlights like Niki de St-Phalle's papier-mâché sculptures and a

shopping trolley wrapped by Christo. An awesome panorama of Vieux Nice unfolds from the rooftop garden/gallery, which features works by Nice-born Yves Klein (1928-62).

MUSÉE NATIONAL MESSAGE BIBLIQUE MARC CHAGALL

This small **museum** (Marc Chagall Biblical Message Museum; ☎ 04 93 53 87 20; www.musee-chagall.fr, in French; 4 av Dr Ménard; permanent collection adult/student €6.50/4.50, temporary exhibitions additional €1.20; ☎ 10am-5pm Wed-Mon Oct-Jun, to 6pm Jul-Sep) houses the largest public collection of the Russian-born artist's seminal paintings of *Old Testament* scenes. Be sure to peek through a plate-glass window across a reflecting pond to view a mosaic of the rose window at Metz Cathedral. Take bus 22 from place Masséna (Masséna/Guitry stop) to the front of the museum or walk. The same bus goes to the Musée Matisse. Chagall (1887-1985) is buried in St-Paul de Vence (p877).

MUSÉE MATISSE

Heading northeast from the Chagall museum (about 2.5km from the city centre) brings you to the **Musée Matisse** (☎ 04 93 81 08 08; www.musee-matisse-nice.org; 164 av des Arènes de Cimiez; admission free; ☎ 10am-6pm Wed-Mon). Housed in a 17th-century Genoese mansion, this small museum reveals Matisse's evolution as an artist rather than wowing the crowds with masterpieces. There

are some well-known works such as the blue paper cut-outs *Blue Nude IV* and *Woman with Amphora*, but you'll also see a number of less-well-known sculptures and experimental pieces using cloth, paper, oils, ink etc.

Take bus 17 from the bus station or bus 22 from Place Masséna to the Arènes stop. For other Matisse highlights in the Côte d'Azur, see boxed text, below.

MUSÉE ET SITE ARCHÉOLOGIQUES

Nice's little-spoken but lingering language, Nissart, derives most of its vocabulary from the Roman city of Cemenelum, founded by Augustus in 14 BC. Its ruins lie behind the Musée Matisse, on the eastern side of the Parc des Arènes, and are the focus of the **Musée et Site Archéologiques** (Archeology Museum & Site; ☎ 04 93 81 59 57; 160 av des Arènes de Cimiez; admission free; 🕒 10am-6pm Wed-Mon). You'll need a little imagination to picture the public baths, amphitheatre and original paved streets signposted across the site, but the relics inside the museum such as ceramics, glass, coins and tools bring it to life.

CATHÉDRALE ORTHODOXE RUSSE ST-NICOLAS

Crowned by six multicoloured onion domes, the **Cathédrale Orthodoxe Russe St-Nicolas** (Russian Orthodox Cathedral of St-Nicolas; ☎ 04 93 96 88 02; av Nicolas II; admission €3; 🕒 9am-noon & 2.30-5pm Mon-Sat, 2.30-5pm Sun) is an unexpected find on Nice's landscape. It was built between 1902 and 1912 in early-17th-century style, and is the largest cathedral outside Russia. Shorts, miniskirts and sleeveless shirts are forbidden.

MUSÉE DES BEAUX-ARTS

In a resplendent 1878 belle époque villa, the **Musée des Beaux-Arts** (Fine Arts Museum; ☎ 04 92 15 28 28; 33 av des Baumettes; admission free; 🕒 10am-6pm Tue-Sun) displays works by Fragonard, Monet, Sisley and Rodin, as well as an excellent collection of Dufy works.

Activities

For a breath of fresh air, head out to the stunning **Parc National du Mercantour** (see boxed text, p858), where walking and mountain-biking trails abound.

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 in the area.

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, Cimiez.

Checking into the **Hôtel Beau Rivage** (p870), he went on to rent a flat on quai des États-Unis, then moved to what is now the **Palais de la Méditerranée** (p870), where he also exhibited. Many of the works he painted in Nice are housed in the city's **Musée Matisse** (opposite).

Matisse's visits to **Renoir's villa** (see boxed text, p878) 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. To unleash your own creative streak, you can take a **painting course** (☎ 04 93 58 82 68, www.mclean.dk; 🕒 Mar-Nov) at the villa, with seven nights' accommodation, from around €650. While living here, Matisse's friendship with his former model-turned-Dominican Sister Jacques-Marie inspired him to design his masterwork, the nearby **Chapelle du Rosaire** (Rosary Chapel; ☎ 04 93 58 03 26; www.vence.fr/the-rosaie-chapel.html; 466 av Henri Matisse, Vence; admission €3; 🕒 2-5.30pm Mon, Wed & Sat, 10-11.30am & 2-5.30pm Tue & Thu, closed mid-Nov-mid-Dec), completed in 1951. Midmorning is the prime time to see sunlight streaming through the vast stained-glass windows. Matisse's artistic blueprints for the chapel, including 42 drawings, 21 paper cuttings, two stained-glass windows, two ceramic pieces and a sculpture, are on display in the Musée Matisse.

Matisse is buried at the **Monastère Notre Dame de Cimiez** (Cimiez Notre Dame Monastery; ☎ 04 93 81 00 04; 🕒 8.30am-12.30pm & 2.30-6.30pm), near the Musée Matisse; signs lead to his grave.

Tourist offices throughout the Côte d'Azur have an info-packed brochure (available in English) about tracing Matisse's footsteps.

CULTURE CARTE

If you're planning on making many visits and taking many tours in and around Nice, the **Nice Riviera Pass** is a good option for saving a few bob. Available for one, two or three days, it costs €24/36/54 and gives you free entry to Nice's paying sites – the Marc Chagall (p866) and the Cathédrale Orthodoxe Russe St-Nicolas (p867) – access to Le Grand Tour open-top bus (below), guided tours organised by Nice's tourist office and the Centre du Patrimoine (below), the Jardin Exotique in Monaco (p903), and the Musée Renoir (p878) and the Musée Picasso (p875) in Cagnes-sur-Mer. The pass also offers reductions in a number of shops and restaurants. See the tourist office for more details.

CITY WALKING

Established by English expats in 1822, wide, palm-lined **promenade des Anglais** (English promenade) is a timelessly elegant place for a beachfront stroll.

Continuing east along **quai des États-Unis** (named after the 1917 decision by President Wilson for the USA to enter WWI) to the end brings you to a colossal **WWI memorial** carved in the rock. It commemorates the 4000 people from Nice who died during the war.

Behind the quay is strolling heaven – Vieux Nice (p865).

Other pleasant spots include **Jardin Albert 1er** (west of Vieux Nice), which was laid out in the late 19th century; **Espace Masséna** (northeast of Jardin Albert 1er), a public square enlivened by fountains; the nearby atmospheric **place Masséna**, with its early-19th-century, neoclassical arcaded buildings in shades of ochre and red; and **Cimiez**, the most exclusive (and steep) quarter in Nice, just north of the city, with its turn-of-the-century villas, tree-lined avenues and vistas of the city.

IN-LINE SKATING

Smooth and flat, with great views to boot, the promenade des Anglais provides 7km of perfect skating ground between the port and the airport. **Roller Station** (☎ 04 93 62 99 05; 49 quai des États-Unis) rents out skates and kneepads for €8 a day and bikes for €15 a day. Some ID is required as a deposit.

BEACHES & WATER SPORTS

Made up of round pebbles, you'll need at least a beach mat to cushion your tush from Nice's **beaches**. Free sections of beach alternate with 15 sun lounge-lined **plages concédées** (private beaches; ☞ late Apr or early May–15 Sep), for which you have to pay by renting a chair (around €15 a day) or mattress (around €10).

On the beach, operators hire out catamarans, paddleboats and jet skis; you can also parasail, waterski or paraglide. There are showers on every beach, and indoor toilets and showers opposite 50 promenade des Anglais.

Dive companies **Le Poséidon** (☎ 04 92 00 43 86; www.poseidon-nice.com; quai Lunel) and **Nice Diving** (☎ 04 93 89 42 44; www.nicediving.com; 14 quai des Docks) offer PADI courses and run diving expeditions in English. An introductory dive costs around €40, with equipment.

Tours

The tourist office-run **guided walking tours** (per 2½hr tour €12; ☞ 9.30am Sat) of Vieux Nice, in English, depart from the main office on the promenade des Anglais. The **Centre du Patrimoine** (☎ 04 92 00 41 90; www.nice.fr, in French) also runs 11 thematic 1½-hour walking tours in French and English, each costing €3. The tourist office has a full listing; tours must be booked 24 hours ahead.

With headphones commentary in several languages, the open-topped **Le Grand Tour** (☎ 04 92 29 17 00; adult/student/child €20/18/10) buses give you a good overview of Nice. Tours (1½ hours) depart from the Jardin Albert 1er on the promenade des Anglais.

Trans Côte d'Azur (☎ 04 92 00 42 30; www.trans-cote-azur.com; quai Lunel; ☞ Apr–Oct) runs scenic one-hour coastal cruises (adult/child under 10 years €14/8.50) as well as day trips to the Îles de Lérins (adult/child €32/23; p880), St-Tropez (adult/child €52/39) and Monaco (adult/child €29/21).

To tour the coast in style, take a DIY day trip in a classic convertible. **Le Road-Show** (☎ 04 92 04 01 05; www.azur-roadshow.com, in French) offers packages for two people including car rental, lunch at a gourmet restaurant en route and a detailed driving itinerary (guaranteed getting lost – driving) plus fuel and insurance for €390.

Festivals & Events

Carnaval de Nice (www.nicecarnaval.com) This two-week carnival, held in February, is particularly famous for its battles of the flowers, where thousands of blooms are tossed into the crowds from passing floats, as well as its fantastic fireworks display.

Nice Jazz Festival (www.nicejazzfestival.fr) In July, Nice swings to the week-long jazz festival at the Arènes de Cimiez, amid the Roman ruins.

Les Nuits Musicales de Nice Moonlit classical-music concerts are held over three weeks in late July/early August at the Cloître du Monastère de Cimiez.

Sleeping

Nice has a suite of places to sleep, from stellar independent backpacker hostels to international art-filled icons. However, parking in the centre can be a nightmare. Prices jump during summer and also for regional festivals such as Monaco's Grand Prix or the Cannes Film Festival.

BUDGET

Hostels

Villa Saint-Exupéry (☎ 04 93 84 42 83; www.vsaint.com; 22 av Gravier; dm incl breakfast €18-25, s €35, d €55-80; ☑ ☒) Why can't all hostels be like this? Set in a lovely converted monastery in the north of the city, this is a great place to put down your bags for a few days. Chill out in the 24-hour common room housed in the old stained-glass chapel, sip a €1 beer on the barbecue terrace, cook in the state-of-the-art self-catering kitchen, agonise over your choice of 12 different breakfast cereals, and stock up on travel tips. The villa staff will come and pick you up from the nearby Comte de Falicon tram stop or St Maurice stop for bus 23 (direct from the airport) when you first arrive.

Auberge de Jeunesse – Les Camélias (☎ 04 93 62 15 54; www.fuaj.org, in French; 3 rue Spitalieri; dm incl breakfast & sheets €20.70; ☑ ☒) This squeaky-clean 136-bed hostel is a signature Fédération Unie des Auberges de Jeunesse (FUAJ) establishment: brightly coloured and spacious; equipped with bar, self-catering kitchen and laundry; and faithful to the dreaded midday lockout (11am to 3pm; no night curfew, though). The bright dorms sleep four to eight people and have in-room showers. There is good wheelchair access.

Backpackers Chez Patrick (☎ 04 93 80 30 72; www.chezpatrick.com; 32 rue Pertinax; dm/d €22/50; ☑ ☒) Ultrahandy for the station, you'll find this

24-bed independent hostel inconspicuously situated on the 1st floor, above a restaurant (look for Chez Patrick's doorbell on the street below). Chill out in the air-conditioned, French-washed tiled common room, or in the high-ceilinged rooms. A word of warning however: check ahead that it will be open at the time of your visit.

Budget hotels that also have dorm beds available:

Hôtel/Hostel Meyerbeer Beach (☎ 04 93 88 95 65; www.come.to/meyerbeer; 15 rue Meyerbeer; dm from €16, d €54; ☑ ☒) Cramped, kitchenette-equipped rooms near the sea with free internet, soft drinks and beach mats.

Hôtel Belle Meunière (☎ 04 93 88 66 15; www.bellemeuniere.com; 21 av Durante; dm €17-22, d €45-60) Run by a lady who has travelled a lot herself, this beautiful 1870s mansion has huge, airy rooms. Numbers 8 and 9 sport an iron-lace balcony that overlooks the courtyard where breakfast is served until noon.

Hotels

our pick **Hôtel Wilson** (☎ 04 93 85 47 79; www.hotel-wilson-nice.com; 39 rue de l'Hôtel des Postes; s €29-50, d €34-65) Many years of travelling, an experimental nature and exquisite taste have turned Jean-Marie's rambling flat into a compelling place to stay. The 16 rooms have individual, carefully crafted decor, and share the eclectic dining room where photo albums, African statues and paintings offered by previous guests ornate the walls. Mind the two resident tortoises as you sit down for a breakfast of fresh bread and croissants (served until a very civilised noon). There's no lift, and the cheapest rooms do not come with attached bathrooms, but this place is absolutely worth it.

Hôtel Paradis (☎ 04 93 87 71 23; www.paradishotel.com; 1 rue Paradis; d €55-110; ☑ ☒) This sun-filled, spotless budget hotel is a stone's throw from the promenade. Top-floor and courtyard rooms have air-con and all rooms are equipped with fridges, handy to keep those picnic supplies and beers chilled. Try to get your hands on one of the three rooms with balcony.

MIDRANGE

Villa la Tour (☎ 04 93 80 08 15; www.villa-la-tour.com; 4 rue de la Tour; s €45-129, d €48-139; ☑ ☒) Small but perfectly formed, the Villa la Tour is delightful, with warm, romantic Provençal rooms, a location at the heart of the Vieux Nice, and a diminutive, flower-decked roof-terrace

with views of the Colline du Château and surrounding roofs.

Nice Garden Hôtel (☎ 04 93 87 35 63; www.nicegardenhotel.com; 11 rue du Congrès; d €60-98; ♿ ☒ ☒) Behind heavy iron gates hides this little gem of a hotel: nine beautifully appointed rooms displaying a subtle blend of old and new, overlooking an equally exquisite garden with a glorious orange tree (the fruit ends up on the breakfast table, in season). Amazingly, all this charm and peacefulness is just two blocks from the promenade.

Hôtel Armenonville (☎ 04 93 96 86 00; www.hotel-armenonville.com; 20 av des Fleurs; d €62-98, tr €79-112; ♿ (P)) Tucked away at the back of an alleyway and shielded by its large garden, this grand early-20th-century mansion has sober rooms, three of them (12, 13 and 14) with a huge terrace overlooking the garden. There is a free car park and wi-fi.

Hôtel La Petite Sirène (☎ 04 97 03 03 40; www.sirene-fr.com; 8 rue Macarani; s €72-90, d €107-149, apt €147-318; ♿) Fresh and frescoed, rooms at the 'Little Mermaid' have good wheelchair access and a sun lounge-lined terrace (albeit with rather unfortunate fake grass) where you can sip cocktails from the in-house bar. Rooms 15 and 16 have their own private terrace (and no fake grass).

Hôtel Les Cigales (☎ 04 97 03 10 70; www.hotel-lescigales.com; 16 rue Dalpozzo; s €75-160, d €79-160, ♿) The Cicadas' brightly coloured rooms may be spacious and well located, but the hotel's real asset is its roof terrace. Think chilled rosé wine on long summer evenings or lazy breakfasts in the morning sun – now *that's* what we're talking about.

Villa Victoria (☎ 04 93 88 39 60; www.villa-victoria.com; 33 bd Victor Hugo; s €75-160, d €90-210; ♿ ☒) Its plastic furniture and heavily patterned materials do not make for the subtlest of decors, but this hotel does have its own botanic garden, complete with a fairy-lit gazebo. There's also a lovely breakfast room flanked by five sets of French doors. You can also rent bikes here.

Le Petit Palais (☎ 04 93 62 19 11; www.petitpalaisnice.fr, in French; 17 av Émile-Bieckert; s €80-140, d €90-170; ♿) In Cimiez' breezy heights, this yellow, neo-classical mansion offers breathtaking views of Nice – the views get better with every floor you climb (three in total). Ground-floor rooms are deprived of vistas but make up for it with private gardens. Decor is elegant throughout. The only downside is the *steep* 10 minutes' walk from bd Carabacel.

Hôtel Windsor (☎ 04 93 88 59 35; www.hotelwindsor.nice.com; 11 rue Dalpozzo; d €90-175; ♿ ☒ ☒) This original boutique hotel has let rip artists' imaginations – be it with the graffiti mural by the pool; the weird and wonderful artists' rooms customised from bathroom to bedspread; the more 'traditional' rooms (although there's no such thing as traditional at the Windsor) with their large frescoes; or the luxurious garden with its unconventional exotic plants.

Hôtel Excelsior (☎ 04 93 88 18 05; www.excelsior.nice.com; 19 av Durante; d €120-195, 3–4-person apt €175-275; ♿) This 1892 building would not look out of place on a Parisian boulevard, but its handsome exterior hides big variations in the quality of rooms inside. Ask to change rooms if you're not satisfied. Apartments have kitchenettes. Good wheelchair access.

TOP END

Palais de la Méditerranée (☎ 04 92 14 77 00; www.lpalaisdelamediterranee.com; 13 promenade des Anglais; d €180-850; ♿ ☒ ☒) This opulent edifice is spectacularly recessed behind the massive pillars of its majestic 1929 art deco facade. Rooms are comfortable and well-appointed if a tad chain-like at times, but the staff are genuinely warm and helpful. There's a mosaic indoor/outdoor swimming pool, good wheelchair access and a private beach.

Hôtel Hi (☎ 04 97 07 26 26; www.hi-hotel.net; 3 av des Fleurs; s from €195, d €210-395; ♿ ☒ ☒) Think of what the most techno-funk, whacky, futuristic designer place would look like in your wildest dreams – now quadruple that, and you have Hôtel Hi. The downstairs lounge doubles as an übertrendy bar open to all, but you'll have to be a client to attend the rooftop, pool-side cocktail parties with panoramic views of the Med and the Alps. Oh, and you can also ask for a goldfish in your room, if you're feeling lonely.

Hôtel Beau Rivage (☎ 04 92 47 82 82; www.nicebeau-rivage.com; 24 rue St-François de Paule; d €210-700; ♿ ☒) This designer pad is one of Nice's oldest hotels, though with its modern, Asian Zen decor you'd never guess that Matisse and Chekhov used to be regulars. Its private beach is the biggest on the promenade but winter guests won't feel deprived thanks to the pebblelike armchairs in the bar.

Hôtel Negresco (☎ 04 93 16 64 00; www.hotel-negresco-nice.com; 37 promenade des Anglais; r €285-570; ♿ ☒) The pink-domed Negresco features some highly original rooms mixing kitsch, modern

and period decors. It also houses priceless art and architecture, such as one of only three Hyacinthe Rigaud Louis XIV portraits – the others are in the Louvre and Versailles – and the Gustave Eiffel–designed stained-glass Salon Royal, bearing a one-tonne Baccarat crystal chandelier. Two hundred and fifty staff await, and so does the private beach.

Eating

Niçois nibbles include *socca* (a thin layer of chickpea flour and olive oil batter fried on a large griddle, served with pepper), *salade niçoise*, ratatouille and *farcis* (stuffed vegetables, each with a unique filling).

Restaurants in Vieux Nice are a mixed bag of what the French call *attrape touriste* (tourist trap) and genuine good finds. Follow your instincts, or our recommendations.

RESTAURANTS

Budget

Chez René Socca (☎ 04 93 92 05 73; 2 rue Miralhéti; dishes from €2; ☎ 9am–9pm Tue–Sun, to 10.30pm Jul & Aug, closed Nov) Forget about presentation and manners; here, it's all about taste. Grab a portion of *socca* or a plate of *petits farcis* and head across the street to the bar for a *grand pointu* (glass) of red, white or rosé.

Lou Pilha Leva (10–13 rue du Collet; dishes from €3; ☎ 10am–10pm) With its outdoor wooden tables crammed under a tight awning, this is Nice's version of a fast-food joint: courgette fritters, sugar-beet pie, or a bowl of *soupe au pistou* (soup of vegetables, noodles, beans, basil and garlic) – chop-chop!

Nissa Socca (☎ 04 93 80 18 35; 7 rue Ste-Réparate; mains from €8; ☎ lunch & dinner Tue–Sat) This inexpensive joint in Nice's ambient old town is a good bet for authentic *niçoise* cuisine, from the eponymous *socca* to a slice of *pissaladière* (a thick crust covered with puréed onions and garlic, topped with anchovies and olives) or its Italian ancestor, the pizza.

La Table Alziari (☎ 04 93 80 34 03, 4 rue François Zanin; mains €8–14, ☎ noon–2pm & 7.30–10pm Tue–Sat) Run by the grandson of the famous Alziari olive oil family, this citrus-coloured restaurant off the busy rue Pairolière is not here to brag about anything, though. The day's menu is chalked on a blackboard, with local specialities such as *morue à la niçoise* (cod served with potatoes, olives and a tomato sauce), *daube* (stew) or grilled goats' cheese washed down with regional wines.

La Merenda (4 rue Raoul Bosio; starters from €9, mains €12–15; ☎ lunch & dinner Mon–Fri) You'd think that being closed at weekends, and not having a phone number or a credit card machine would be a recipe for disaster, but La Merenda is doing just fine, thank you very much. In fact, you'll have to be pretty determined to bag one of the house's 26 seats (queuing is what it comes down to) and feast on the unusual fare scribbled on a blackboard. Try tripe, stockfish (a local speciality soaked for days in running water, then simmered with onions, tomatoes, garlic, olives, peppers and potatoes), polenta with gorgonzola or *andouillettes* (mini sausages made from pork tripe).

Pasta Basta (☎ 04 93 80 03 57; 18 rue de la Préfecture; mains €13; ☎ noon–2pm & 7–11pm) Choose a pasta, pick a sauce and – hey presto! – a plate of amazing pasta made on the premises. Enjoy it or a *supremo* pizza on the street-side terrace, and finish off with any of the Italian goodies on offer.

Midrange

Escalinada (☎ 04 93 62 11 71; 22 rue Pairolière; mains €12–20; ☎ lunch & dinner) Lunch under a stripy awning or dine on the candle-lit terrace with a decent bottle of wine and good, unpretentious local fare such as *daube*, delicious homemade gnocchi, or, if you're game, the house speciality – *testicules de mouton panés* (sheep's testicles in batter).

Delhi Belhi (☎ 04 93 92 51 87; 22 rue de la Barillerie; mains €13, menus from €23; ☎ dinner) For a change from Mediterranean flavours, Delhi Belhi is an absolute godsend: this is Indian food at its best. Biryanis, thalis, tandoori specialities and a raft of vegetarian options are served in a couple of dark-lit, wonderfully scented rooms just off cours Saleya. Locals have taken a shine to the place, so book.

Acchiardo (☎ 04 93 85 51 16; 38 rue Droite; mains €14–20; ☎ lunch & dinner Mon–Fri) Going strong since 1927, locals flock to Acchiardo for the *plat du jour* (daily special), a glass of wine and a load of gossip served straight up on the counter. The food is simple and tasty – think lamb chops with a pile of green beans or a fine piece of steak with homemade French fries.

Zucca Magica (☎ 04 93 56 25 27; 4bis quai Papacino; lunch/dinner menus €17/27; ☎ lunch & dinner Tue–Sat) The 'Magic Pumpkin' is a rare thing in France: a vegetarian restaurant that nonvegetarians actually like to visit. Bring an appetite: *menus* (fixed-price meals) comprise four set dishes

plus dessert (five for dinner), depending on what green giant and chef Marco Folicaldi finds at the markets. Children under 13 eat for free.

Les Épicuriens (☎ 04 93 80 85 00; 6 place Wilson; mains €18-45.50; ☎ lunch & dinner Mon-Fri, dinner Sat) This aptly named elegant establishment is Nice's rising star. Famous for its *cocottes* (casseroles cooked in cast-iron dishes), it also excels in pretty much everything else: from the *pâté de foie gras* (duck or goose liver pâté) with grape compote to *brandade de cabillaud* (cod cooked in the oven with crème fraîche, olive oil, garlic, lemon juice and herbs), and whatever daily special takes the chef's fancy.

Le Comptoir (☎ 04 93 92 08 80; 20 rue St-François de Paule; mains €20-30; ☎ lunch & dinner Mon-Fri, dinner Sat) The bottle-lined wall at the end of the room is ominous: eating and drinking are serious business in this art deco-meets-ancient Greece establishment. Its proximity to the opera means it's especially popular for pre- and post-theatre sustenance.

Terres de Truffes (☎ 04 93 62 07 68; 11 rue St-François de Paule; mains €30; ☎ lunch & dinner Tue-Sat) At this small, exquisite place, head chef Arnaud Leclercq uses Provençal truffles to create seasonal sensations ranging from pastry-wrapped pigeon stuffed with *foie gras* and truffles to brie layered with truffles, to caramel of truffles. Obviously not the place to go if you're not a fan of the *Tuber melanosporum*...

Top End

Chanteder (☎ 04 93 16 64 00; 37 promenade des Anglais; mains €45-130; ☎ lunch & dinner Wed-Sun Feb-Dec) In a sumptuous Regency dining room, the Negresco's Michelin-starred restaurant, run by locally trained Jean-Denis Rieubland, is no ordinary restaurant. Make sure you're in a grand mood if you're going to splash out: the menu features treats such as sea bass in an almond crust with artichoke mousse or double-roasted veal cutlets served with a potato and black-pudding millefeuille.

CAFÉS

Fenocchio (☎ 04 93 80 72 52; 2 place Rossetti; ice cream from €2; ☎ 9am-midnight Feb-Oct) The best place to beat Nice's heat is this *glacier*, serving 50 flavours of ice cream – including beer and tomato-and-basil (both as scary as they sound).

Multari (☎ 04 93 92 01 99; 58bis av Jean Médecin; dishes from €3; ☎ 6.30am-7.30pm Mon-Sat) Now a small bakery empire, this Corsican family-run business has opened a couple of cafés where you can sit

down and enjoy its scrumptious pastries with an espresso or a cup of tea. Its crêpes, sandwiches and salads also get the thumbs up.

Les Distilleries Idéales (☎ 04 93 62 10 66; 24 rue de la Préfecture; platters €2.90-4.40; ☎ 9am-12.30am) Whether you're after an espresso on your way to cours Saleya or a sundowner accompanied by a plate (chopping board, actually) of cheese or charcuterie, the atmosphere in this brilliant bistro is infectious: you're bound to leave with a skip in your step.

Cave de la Tour (☎ 04 93 80 03 31; 3 rue de la Tour; mains €8-12; ☎ 7am-8pm Tue-Sat) An old-town institution that combines a wonderful wine shop and a café/bar serving a couple of dishes a day, prepared from ingredients sourced at the nearby markets.

SELF-CATERING

Pack the ultimate picnic hamper from cours Saleya's fruit and vegetable market (part of the food market; see Shopping, opposite), and pick up freshly caught fish from the **fish market** (place St-François; ☎ 6am-1pm Tue-Sun).

Supermarkets and minimarkets abound:

Casino (20 bd Gambetta; ☎ 8.30am-8pm Mon-Sat) On the western side of the city.

Monoprix av Jean Médecin (42 av Jean Médecin; ☎ 8.30am-9pm Mon-Sat); place Garibaldi (place Garibaldi; ☎ 8.30am-8.45pm Mon-Sat)

Drinking

Vieux Nice's little streets runneth over with local bars and cafés: from a morning espresso to a lunchtime pastis (the tippie of choice in the south of France), a chilled evening beer or a midnight cocktail, the choice is yours.

Irish pub **Ma Nolans** (☎ 04 93 80 23 87; 2 rue St François de Paule; ☎ noon-2am Mon-Fri, 11pm-2am Sat & Sun) is a backpacker favourite with its Monday night pub quiz, televised sport, nightly live music, and full-English brekkie. Raucous watering hole **Chez Wayne's** (☎ 04 93 13 46 99; 15 rue de la Préfecture; ☎ 2.30pm-12.30am every day) also has live bands every night. A tad less rowdy is the beer-tastic **De Klomp** (☎ 04 93 92 42 85; 8 rue Mascoïnat; ☎ 5.30pm-2.30am Mon-Sat) with its 18 draught and 50 bottled beers. All three close around midnight on weekdays and around 3am on Friday and Saturday night.

If you're above those sorts of shenanigans, head for the rarefied rooftop bar at the **Grand Hotel Aston** (☎ 04 92 17 53 00; 12 av Félix Faure; ☎ 8am-11pm, closed Sun & Mon in winter), which has champagne views over Nice and the Med. Cocktail connoisseurs quaff at Hôtel La Petite Sirène (p870) with

half-price cocktails from 5pm to 7pm Tuesday to Sunday, or at Hôtel Beau Rivage (p870), where the house special is sex-on-the-beach, as indicated by the pebble-themed bar.

Entertainment

The tourist office has info on Nice's cultural activities, which are listed in its free publications – *Nice Rendez-vous* (monthly) and *Côte d'Azur en Fêtes* (quarterly) – or consult the weekly *Semaine des Spectacles* (€1), available from newsstands on Wednesday. All are in French. Event tickets can be purchased at **fnac** (☎ 08 25 02 00 20; 44 av Jean Médecin).

CINEMAS

Catch nondubbed flicks at **Cinéma Nouveau Mercury** (☎ 08 36 68 81 06; 16 place Garibaldi) and **Cinéma Rialto** (☎ 08 36 68 00 41; 4 rue de Rivoli). Art films (usually in the original version with French subtitles) are screened at **Cinemathèque de Nice** (☎ 04 92 04 06 66; 3 esplanade Kennedy; ☎ Tue-Sun), which is at the Acropolis conference centre and concert hall.

LIVE MUSIC

Opéra de Nice (☎ 04 92 17 40 00; 4-6 rue St-François de Paule; ☎ box office 9am-5.45pm Tue-Sat, to 7.45pm Fri, closed mid-Jun–Sep) Built in 1885 and recently renovated, this grande dame hosts operas, ballets and orchestral concerts. Tickets cost €7 to €85.

Le Bar des Oiseaux (☎ 04 93 80 27 33; www.bardesoiseaux.com, in French; 5 rue St-Vincent; ☎ lunch Mon-Fri, dinner Thu-Sat) Artistic types flock to this bohemian bar (and adjoining theatre) for live jazz, *chanson française* (French songs) and cabaret nights. There's a cover charge of about €5 when entertainment's on the bill; you can also dine here (*menus* around €20).

La Havane (☎ 04 93 16 36 16; 32 rue de France; mains €15-20; ☎ 2pm-2.30am) For sultry Latin vibes, this exotic bar-restaurant alternates live salsa and Latino jazz nights with *merengue* and *bachata* (two types of Latin American music) from Tuesday to Saturday. Musicians play three sets of 45 minutes, starting at 9.30pm.

NIGHTCLUBS

Happy Bar (☎ 04 97 07 26 26; www.hi-hotel.net; 3 av des Fleurs; ☎ 10pm with DJs to 2am Fri & Sat) The heart and soul of the hip Hôtel Hi hosts the gurus of the DJ world.

Les Trois Diabes (☎ 04 93 62 47 00; 2 cours Saleya; ☎ 5pm-2.15am) 'The Three Devils' tempts a

mainly local crowd with trip-hop, house and electro beats. Thursday is student night – don't forget your student ID to get in.

L'Odace (☎ 04 93 82 37 66; 29 rue Alphonse Karr; ☎ midnight till late Thu-Sat Jul & Aug, Fri & Sat Sep-Jun) The vast industrial-style party temple has struggled to find its mojo, but it is the only place in town to party until dawn.

Other party options:

Le Klub (☎ 06 60 55 26 61; 6 rue Halevy; ☎ 11pm-5am) A thriving gay nightclub with a busy party schedule.

Le Nova (☎ 04 93 26 54 79; 26 quai Lunel; ☎ 6.30pm-2.30am) Party on at the port.

Shopping

Cours Saleya is split between its famous **flower market** (☎ 6am-5.30pm Tue-Sat, to 1.30pm Sun) selling bucketfuls of blooms in the western half, and a magnificent **food market** (☎ 6am-1.30pm Tue-Sun) at the eastern end, with long trestle tables displaying exotic spices, shiny fruit and veg, pastries, *fruits glacés* (glazed or candied fruits such as figs, ginger, tangerine and pears) and more. On Mondays from 6am to 6pm, cours Saleya also hosts an antiques market.

The best-value place for tasting and buying wine is a traditional wine cellar; try Cave de la Tour (opposite).

Designer names abound above the beautiful fashion boutiques along rue Paradis, av de Suède, rue Alphonse Karr and rue du Maréchal Joffre (all east of av Jean Médecin).

The massive **Nice Étoile shopping mall** (av Jean Médecin) spans a city block.

Getting There & Away

AIR

Nice's international airport, **Aéroport International Nice-Côte d'Azur** (☎ 08 20 42 33 33; www.nice.aeroport.fr), is about 6km west of the city centre. Its two terminals are connected by a free **shuttle bus** (☎ every 10min 4.30am-midnight). The airport's served by numerous carriers, including the low-cost **BMIBaby** (www.bmibaby.com) and **easyJet** (www.easyjet.com).

For the shortest and most stylish transport to Monaco, board a **helicopter** (☎ 04 93 21 34 95; www.helairmonaco.com). Seven-minute flights departing from Nice airport start at €99 per person, one way.

BOAT

The fastest and most expensive ferries from mainland France to Corsica depart from Nice (see p907). The **SNCM office** (☎ 08 25 88 80 88;

www.sncm.fr; ferry terminal, quai du Commerce) issues tickets – otherwise, try a travel agency in town. Italian-run **Corsica Ferries** (☎ 08 25 09 50 95; www.corsicaferries.com; quai Lunel) also sells tickets at the port. Take buses 9 or 10 off av Jean Médecin (stop Médecin/Pastorelli) to the Port stop.

BUS

Buses stop at the **bus station** (gare routière; ☎ 08 92 70 12 06; 5 bd Jean Jaurès).

A single €1 fare can take you anywhere in the Alpes-Maritimes *département* (with a few exceptions, such as the airport) and includes one connection, provided it is made within 74 minutes. There are services until about 7.30pm daily to Antibes (one hour), Cannes (1½ hours), Grasse (1½ hours), Menton (1½ hours) and Monaco (45 minutes). Buses also run to Vence (one hour) and St-Paul de Vence (55 minutes).

For long-haul travel, **Eurolines** (☎ 04 93 80 08 70), at the bus station, serves various European destinations.

TRAIN

Nice's main train station, **Gare Nice Ville** (av Thiers) is 1.2km north of the beach.

There are fast and frequent services (up to 40 trains a day in each direction) to coastal towns including Antibes (€3.80, 30 minutes), Cannes (€5.70, 30 to 40 minutes), Menton (€4.30, 35 minutes), Monaco (€3.20, 20 minutes) and St-Raphaël (€10, 50 minutes). Direct TGV trains link Nice with Paris' Gare de Lyon (€110, 5½ hours), with additional connecting services.

From July to September, the SNCF's Carte Isabelle (€12, available from train stations) lets you make unlimited trips in a single day (except TGV trains) from Fréjus to Ventimiglia in Italy, and from Nice to Tende.

Lost luggage and other problems are handled by **SOS Voyageurs** (☎ 04 93 16 02 61; ☎ 9am–noon & 3–6pm Mon–Fri).

For an enchanting train trip through the scarcely populated back country, **Chemins de fer de Provence** (www.trainprovence.com; ☎ 04 97 03 80 80) chugs four times daily from Nice's **Gare du Sud** (4bis rue Alfred Binet) to Digne-les-Bains (p857).

Getting Around

Travelling on the regional **Ligne d'Azur** (☎ 08 10 06 10 07; www.lignedazur.com; 3 place Masséna; ☎ 7.45am–6.30pm Mon–Fri & 8.30am–6pm Sat) transport network (including all local and intercity buses and

the tram) costs just €1 per trip (except to the airport); the fare includes one connection. Tickets can be purchased from the driver or from ticket machines located at tram stops. An unlimited-travel day pass costs €4.

TO/FROM THE AIRPORT

Ligne d'Azur runs two airport bus services (€4). Route 99 shuttles approximately every half-hour direct between Gare Nice Ville and both airport terminals daily from around 8am to 9pm. Route 98 takes the slow route and departs from the bus station every 20 minutes (every 30 minutes on Sunday) from around 6am to around 9pm.

A taxi from the airport to the centre of Nice will cost €25 to €30, depending on the time of day and the terminal.

BUS

Walking or taking the tram (below) is the best way to get around the centre. But for anywhere beyond the station–Masséna–Garibaldi triangle, buses are the way to go. Four night buses (N1, N2, N3 and N4) run north, east and west from place Masséna every half-hour from 9.10pm until 2am.

CAR & MOTORCYCLE

All major car rental companies (Avis, Budget, Europcar, Hertz etc) have offices at the train station. The best deals are generally booked via their websites, and the earlier you do so, the better.

If you want to go native, go for two wheels. **Holiday Bikes** (☎ 04 93 16 01 62; 23 rue de Belgique; ☎ closed 12.30–2.30pm & Sun Oct–May) rents out bicycles/50cc scooters/125cc motorcycles for €14/26/57. There's a hefty security deposit.

TAXI

To avoid getting taken for a ride (as it were), make sure the driver is using the meter and applying the right rate, which is clearly outlined in a laminated card that drivers are required to display. There are taxi stands outside the Gare Nice Ville and on av Félix Faure close to place Masséna; otherwise, you can order a taxi on ☎ 04 93 13 78 78.

TRAM

Nice's much awaited (and delayed) tram finally launched in November 2007. Line 1 runs a V-shape northwest-south-northeast itinerary from 4.30am to 1.30am, taking in useful

areas such as the train station, the old town, and the Acropolis in the centre.

Fifteen international artists contributed to customising the trams' funky look, from original soundbites at each stop, to local artist Ben's stop-name calligraphy and futuristic art installations along the tram's itinerary.

ANTIBES-JUAN-LES-PINS

pop 75,000

Antibes is a concentrate of Mediterranean history. The town's sea walls bear witness to a defensive past (neighbouring Nice had switched allegiance to rival Savoy). Golfe Juan staged Napoléon Bonaparte's triumphant return from exile in Elba. Picasso painted in the Château Grimaldi and F Scott Fitzgerald wrote his seminal novel *Tender is the Night* based on life in Antibes.

Today, the town hasn't finished making its mark on history: its marina is the second biggest in Europe, attracting throngs of 'yachties' in search of seafaring adventures. Juan-les-Pins, Antibes' neighbouring town, with which it has more or less merged into one Riviera entity, holds an internationally-acclaimed jazz festival, and in the last decades, Antibes has enjoyed the presence of an affluent crowd of yuppies working in the nearby Sophia-Antipolis high-tech hub, keeping its population surprisingly young for this bit of the coast.

For visitors, Antibes provides a year-round buzz within its old walls. The cape is a perennial walking heaven and in summer, Juan's seamless 2km of sandy beach is a godsend for tender bottoms that have received the pebble treatment in Nice.

Orientation

Across the Baie des Anges from Nice, Antibes centres on place du Général de Gaulle, linked to Juan-les-Pins by bd du Président Wilson (1.5km) and to Cap d'Antibes by bd Albert 1er (700m). Av Robert Soleau links Antibes' train station (300m) with place du Général de Gaulle. The bus station is just a few steps away, linked by rue de la République, which continues east to the old town.

Information

Antibes Books-Heidi's English Bookshop (☎ 04 93 34 74 11; 24 rue Aubernon, Antibes; ☞ 10am-7pm) One of the best on the Côte.

Antibes Tourist Office (☎ 04 92 90 53 00; www.antibesjuanlespins.com; 11 place de Gaulle, Antibes;

☞ 9am-7pm Jul & Aug, 9am-12.30pm & 1.30-6pm Mon-Fri, 9am-noon & 2-6pm Sat Sep-Jun) In the town centre.

Eurochange (4 rue Georges Clémenceau, Antibes;

☞ 9am-6pm Mon-Sat)

Juan-les-Pins Tourist Office (☎ 04 92 90 53 05; 55 bd Charles Guillaumont, Juan-les-Pins) Keep similar hours to those of the Antibes Tourist Office.

Post Office (2 av Paul Doumer, Antibes)

Worstation Cyber Café (☎ 04 92 90 49 39; 1 av St Roch, Antibes; per hr €4.80; ☞ 9am-7.30pm Mon-Fri & 10am-6pm Sat & Sun)

Sights & Activities

Picasso used the 12th-century Château Grimaldi as a studio in 1946. It's now home to the **Musée Picasso** (☎ 04 92 90 54 28; Château Grimaldi, Antibes; adult/concession/under 18yr €6/3/free; ☞ 10am-noon & 2-6pm Tue-Sun mid-Sep-mid-Jun, 10am-6pm Tue-Sun mid-Jun-mid-Sep), which, following an extensive three-year refurbishment program, finally reopened at the time of going to press.

The light-hearted **Musée Peynet** (☎ 04 92 90 54 30; place Nationale, Antibes; adult/concession/under 18yr €3/1.50/free; ☞ 10am-noon & 2-6pm Tue-Sun Sep-Jun, 10am-noon & 2-6pm Tue, Thu, Sat & Sun, to 8pm Wed & Fri Jul & Aug) displays more than 300 humorous pictures, cartoons and costumes by Antibes-born cartoonist Raymond Peynet, as well as brilliant temporary exhibitions.

Antibes' small, sandy beach, **Plage de la Gravette**, gets packed; you'll find the best beaches in Juan-les-Pins, including some free beaches on bd Littoral and bd Charles Guillaumont.

Cap d'Antibes' 4.8km of wooded shores are the perfect setting for a walk-swim-walk-swim afternoon.

Festivals & Events

Next to the casino, Antibes' La Pinède park swings during mid-July's Jazz à Juan (also known as the Festival de Jazz d'Antibes-Juan-les-Pins). Book tickets at the tourist office or online from the tourist office's website, or try at the gate an hour before show time.

Sleeping & Eating

Relais International de la Jeunesse (☎ 04 93 61 34 40; www.clajsud.fr; 272 bd de la Groupe, Cap d'Antibes; dm incl breakfast €17, sheets €3.10) In the most perfect of Mediterranean locations, with sea views the envy of neighbouring millionaires, this friendly hostel is particularly popular with 'yachties' looking for their next job in Antibes' port.

Le Relais du Postillon (☎ 04 93 34 20 77; www.relaisdupostillon.com; 8 rue Championnet, Antibes; d €46-89) Housed in a 17th-century coach house at the heart of the old town, Postillon's 16 rooms all have easy-on-the-eye decors; try for the Capri room and its sunny private patio. The buffet breakfast (€7), by the fire in winter or on the small terrace in summer, is good value.

Hôtel La Jabotte (☎ 04 93 61 45 89; www.jabotte.com; 13 av Max Maurey, Cap d'Antibes; d incl breakfast from €81) A hotel with *chambre d'hôte* (B&B) feel, La Jabotte is Antibes' hidden gem. A mere 50m from the beautiful Plage de la Salis, its 10 Provençal rooms all look out onto an exquisite patio where breakfast is served from spring to autumn. As for your hosts, you'll get a singing welcome from the reception's parakeets and Tommy the dog, while Yves and Claude will make you feel like long-lost friends.

Auberge Provençale (☎ 04 93 34 13 24; www.aubergeprovencale.com; 61 place Nationale, Antibes; d €120-200) Famed for its fabulous Provençal cuisine – seafood in particular (mains €26 to €60; open for lunch and dinner) – this *auberge* (inn) also features six grand, antique-filled romantic rooms, some of them the size of palatial suites. Rooms Céline and Emmanuelle will comfortably sleep four.

Hôtel Belles Rives (☎ 04 93 61 02 79; www.bellesrives.com; 33 bd Edouard Baudoin, Juan-les-Pins; d €255-740; 🍷) In the mid-1920s, F Scott and Zelda Fitzgerald rented this entire villa (then the St-Louis). Since the early 1930s it's housed this classic Riviera establishment with its private beach and pier, top-notch restaurants and sought-after jazz bar.

Dining recommendations:

Le Broc en Bouche (☎ 04 93 34 75 60; 8 rue des Palmiers, Antibes; mains €15-30; 🍷) lunch & dinner, closed Tue night & Wed) You'll melt for Flo and Fred's gourmet bistro, their *foie gras*, their *magret de canard* (duck breast) and whatever daily special they'll come up with. And if you like what you see in the fantastic bric-a-brac decor, you could be going home with it: it's all for sale.

La Cafetière Féléé (The Cracked Cafetière; ☎ 04 93 34 51 86; 18 rue du Marc, Antibes; mains €20-25; 🍷) lunch & dinner, closed Sun night & Mon) You'll eat things you've never even heard of at this Alice in Wonderland-like restaurant. But the presentation is a work of art and the fusion-style food is a knock-out.

Les Vieux Murs (The Old Walls; ☎ 04 93 34 06 73; 25 promenade Amiral de Grasse, Antibes; mains €30-40; 🍷) lunch & dinner, closed Mon & Tue lunch in winter) With its crystal chandeliers, silk curtains, panoramic views, sea-wall location and fresh Mediterranean food, this place is a complete and utter indulgence.

SELF-CATERING

Marché Provençal (cours Masséna, Antibes; 🍷) mornings daily Jun-Aug, Tue-Sun Sep-May) Antibes' heady Provençal marketplace is perfect for picking up picnic supplies.

Entertainment

La Siesta-Le Pearl (☎ 04 93 33 31 31; rte du Bord de Mer, Antibes; cover €15-20; 🍷 11pm-5am) This legendary establishment is famous up and down the coast for its beachside nightclub (Le Pearl) and all-night dancing under the stars. Open from early June to mid-September only, you can still party at the indoor bar-lounge (Le Flamingo) during the rest of the year.

Getting There & Away

Antibes is an easy day trip by train from Nice (€3.80, 30 minutes) or Cannes (€2.40, 15 minutes).

The **bus station** (☎ 04 93 34 37 60) has buses to surrounding towns such as Biot; buses also depart from adjacent to the tourist office.

BIOT

pop 9000

From the 16th to 18th century, the little hillside village of Biot was famous across the Med for the exceptional quality of its olive oil jars. But very little remains of that pottery hegemony. Biot is now famous for another much prettier, but far less pragmatic, art form: bubbled glass.

Biot's famous bubbles are produced by rolling molten glass in baking soda to create a chemical reaction, then trapping the bubbles with a second layer of glass; the latest frosted look uses acid dips.

You can watch work underway at the factory **La Verrerie de Biot** (The Glassworks of Biot; ☎ 04 93 65 03 00; www.verrieriebiot.com; Chemin des Combes; admission free, 45min guided tour in English €6; 🍷 9.30am-8pm Mon-Sat, 10.30am-1.30pm & 2.30-7.30pm Sun summer, 9.30am-6pm Mon-Sat, 10.30am-1.30pm & 2.30-6.30pm Sun winter), at the foot of the village.

Biot's **tourist office** (☎ 04 93 65 78 00; www.biot.fr, in French; 46 rue St-Sébastien; 🍷 10am-7pm Mon-Fri, 2.30-7pm Sat & Sun Jul & Aug, 9am-noon & 2-6pm Mon-Fri, 2-6pm Sat & Sun Sep-Jun) has info and maps, as well as a list of *chambres d'hôtes*.

The enchanting hotel-restaurant **Galerie des Arcades** (☎ 04 93 65 01 04; www.hotel-restaurant-lesarcades.com; 16 place des Arcades; d €50-90, mains €15-22; 🍷) lunch & dinner, closed Mon & dinner Sun) has become an institution in Biot: the 15th-century building is now home to a prestigious modern art

collection, the result of 50 years of friendship between André and Mimi Brothier (the owners) and the many artists living in Biot in postwar years such as César, Novaro, Vasarely and Léger. The more-expensive rooms, with their unique works of art, heavy oak furniture, monumental fireplaces and palatial bathrooms, are worth every penny.

Bus 10 (€1, 10 minutes) links the village and the Biot train station half-hourly. In summer, a free shuttle takes in the train station, the *verrière* and the village.

ST-PAUL DE VENCE & AROUND

pop 3300

What's distinguished the medieval hilltop village of St-Paul de Vence from every other medieval hilltop village around is its phenomenal art legacy. St-Paul attracted many seminal 20th-century artists who lived, worked and sometimes even died in the village, many of them leaving significant legacies behind, such as Matisse's masterpiece the Chapelle du Rosaire (Rosary Chapel). Russian painter Marc Chagall, who lived in the village for 25 years, is now buried in St-Paul's interdenominational cemetery. The nearby Fondation Maeght, considered by many as one of the world's best modern art galleries, showcases an exceptional collection of 20th-century works.

St-Paul de Vence's cobblestone streets and 16th-century fortifications, dramatically floodlit at night, are an attraction in their own right, one that draws 2.5 million visitors a year.

Orientation & Information

Inside the fortifications, St-Paul de Vence is delineated by its main pedestrian thoroughfare, rue Grande. To take the road less travelled, turn right just by the **tourist office** (☎ 04 93 32 86 95; www.saint-pauldevence.com; 2 rue Grande; ☎ 10am-7pm Jun-Sep, 10am-6pm Oct-May), follow the ramparts around to the far end, then turn left into rue Grande against the tide.

Matisse's stunning Chapelle du Rosaire and his former home Villa Le Rêve (see p867) are 4.8km north of St-Paul de Vence (800m north of the attractive medieval town of Vence; population 18,200), on rte de St-Jeanet (the D2210).

Sights

Browsing the gallery-lined village streets (64 galleries in total!) is a fine entrée for art lovers,

but the main course is the **Fondation Maeght** (☎ 04 93 32 81 63; adult/student €11/9; ☎ 10am-7pm Jul-Sep, 10am-6pm Oct-Jun), about 500m from the bus stop outside the old village. It was designed by architect Josep Luis Sert in conjunction with contemporary artists such as Chagall, who created an exterior mosaic. With an outdoor sculpture 'labyrinth' by Spanish surrealist Joan Miró, interspersed with reflecting pools and mosaics, it was inaugurated in 1964. Its extraordinary permanent collection of 40,000 works is exhibited on a rotating basis.

Sleeping & Eating

Chez Andréas (☎ 04 93 32 54 50; Rempart Ouest; tapas €5, mains €10; ☎ noon-midnight) Perched on the ramparts, this popular bar teems with locals who come to feast on chilled beer, tasty tapas and panoramic views.

La Colombe d'Or (The Golden Dove; ☎ 04 93 32 80 02; www.la-columbe-dor.com, in French; lunch mains €20-60, dinner mains €60-70; ☎ lunch & dinner) This world-famous inn could double up as the Fondation Maeght's annex: La Colombe d'Or (located outside the walls, at the entrance of the village) was the party HQ of many 20th-century artists (Chagall, Braque, Matisse, Picasso etc) who often paid for their meals in kind, resulting in an incredible private art collection. Don't expect to get a table (or room, €280 to €350) unless you book weeks in advance. And lucky you if you manage it: every room houses unique art and vintage furniture, the chance to see what an art collector's house would be like.

There's a seven-day grocery store immediately to your right after entering the village, and there are plenty of benches for picnicking along the ramparts.

Getting There & Away

From Nice, the frequent bus 400 stops in St-Paul de Vence (€1, 55 minutes) and Vence (€1, one hour).

CANNES

pop 70,400

Most people have heard of Cannes and its eponymous film festival. The latter only lasts for two weeks in May, but the buzz and glitz are there year round, mostly thanks to regular visits from celebrities enjoying the creature comforts of bd de la Croisette's palaces.

However, what people may not know is that, for all its glamour, Cannes retains a genuine small-town feel: just like anywhere in the

south, you'll witness pensioners hotly debating who won the last round of *pétanque* (a game not unlike lawn bowls) under the main square's plane trees (in this case, at Sq Lord Brougham). You'll also get a chance to escape to the miraculously unspoilt Îles de Lérins, and to become familiar with more than 2000 years of history – from Ligurian fishing communities in 200 BC to one of Europe's oldest religious communities (5th century AD), to the enigmatic Man in the Iron Mask and a stardom born out of antifascist efforts. Beat that!

Orientation

Cannes' glitter starts to appear along its main shopping street, rue d'Antibes, a couple of blocks south of the train and bus stations (rue Jean Jaurès). Several blocks further south, east of the Vieux Port (Old Port), is the huge Palais des Festivals et des Congrès, home to both the film festival and the tourist office.

The palm tree-lined waterfront promenade of bd de la Croisette begins at the Palais des Festivals and goes east along the Baie de Cannes to Pointe de la Croisette. Place Bernard Cornut Gentile, with the bus station that includes services to Nice, is on the northwestern corner of Vieux Port. The old town, Le Suquet quarter, is to the west of the Vieux Port.

Information

BOOKSHOPS

Cannes English Bookshop (☎ 04 93 99 40 08; 11 rue Bivouac Napoléon) Get your (English-language) summer reading from the lovely Christel and Wally.

INTERNET ACCESS

Cap Cyber (12 rue 24 Août; per hr €3; ☎ 10am-9pm Mon-Sat) Very central, with several QWERTY keyboards and Asian language software.

LAUNDRY

Laverie du Port (☎ 04 93 38 06 68; 36 rue Georges Clemenceau; per 7kg load €5.50, drying per 10min €1.50; ☎ closed Sun & from noon Sat) Multilingual staff on-site.

MONEY

Scads of banks line rue d'Antibes and rue Buttura.

Crédit Lyonnais (13 rue d'Antibes) Has an ATM.

POST

Post Office (22 rue Bivouac Napoléon; ☎ 9am-7pm Mon-Fri, 9am-noon Sat) Has an ATM.

TOURIST INFORMATION

Tourist Office (☎ 04 92 99 84 22; www.cannes.travel; bd de la Croisette; ☎ 9am-8pm Jul & Aug, 9am-7pm Mon-Sat Sep-Jun) On the ground floor of the Palais des Festivals.

Tourist Office Annexe (☎ 04 93 99 17 77; ☎ 9am-7pm Mon-Sat) Next to the train station.

Sights & Activities

CANNES

Perched at the top of the Suquet old town, you could spend as long studying the beautifully presented ethnographic collections of the **Musée de la Castre** (☎ 04 93 38 55 26; place de la Castre, Le Suquet; adult/concession/student & under 18yr €3.20/2/free; ☎ 10am-7pm Jul & Aug, 10am-1pm & 2-6pm Tue-Sun Apr-Jun & Sep, 10am-1pm & 2-5pm Tue-Sun Oct-Mar) as you would admiring the view of the Baie de Cannes from the museum's grounds.

The central, sandy **beaches** along bd de la Croisette are sectioned off for hotel patrons (some accept day guests for prohibitive sums). A microscopic strip of sand near the Palais des Festivals is free, but you'll find better free sand on **Plages du Midi** and **Plages de la Bocca**, west from the Vieux Port along bd Jean Hibert and bd du Midi.

WORTH A TRIP

The conglomerated city of Cagnes-sur-Mer (population 45,000) comprises Le Haut de Cagnes, a medieval hill town; Le Cros de Cagnes, a former fishing village by the beach; and Cagnes Ville, euphemistically referred to as a 'modern town'. Amid the urban and semi-industrial sprawl are two pilgrimages for art devotees.

On the Haut de Cagnes hilltop, 14th-century **Château Grimaldi** (☎ 04 92 02 47 30; place Grimaldi; adult/child €3/1.50, combined ticket with Musée Renoir €4.50; ☎ 10am-noon & 2-5pm Wed-Mon Oct & Dec-Apr, to 6pm May-Sep) houses a museum showcasing contemporary Mediterranean art.

Near Cagnes Ville is Renoir's home and studio from 1907 to 1919, now **Musée Renoir** (☎ 04 93 20 61 07; chemin des Collettes; adult/concession/under 18yr €3/1.50/free; ☎ 10am-noon & 2-5pm Wed-Mon Oct & Dec-Apr, to 6pm May-Sep), set in dappled olive groves with original decor and several of Renoir's works on display.

STARRING AT CANNES

For 12 days in May, Cannes becomes the centre of the cinematic universe. Over 30,000 producers, distributors, directors, publicists, stars and hangers-on descend on Cannes each year to buy, sell or promote more than 2000 films.

At the centre of the whirlwind is the surprisingly ugly Palais des Festivals (Festival Palace; dubbed 'the bunker' by locals), where the official selection is screened. Celebrities usually get their big moment climbing its stairs in an electric storm of flashes (for your own red-carpet moment, the said carpet is there most of the year).

The first Cannes Film Festival, on 1 September 1939, was organised as a response to Mussolini's fascist propaganda film festival in Venice. Hitler's invasion of Poland abruptly halted the festival but it restarted in 1946. Over the years the festival split into 'in competition' and 'out of competition' selections. The goal of 'in competition' films is the prestigious Palme d'Or, awarded by the jury and its president to the film that best 'serves the evolution of cinematic art'. Notable winners include Francis Ford Coppola's *Apocalypse Now* (1979), Quentin Tarantino's *Pulp Fiction* (1994), and documentary maker Michael Moore's anti-Bush-administration polemic *Fahrenheit 9/11* (2004). The 2008 winner was *The Class* by Laurent Cantet, a chronicle of life in a tough Paris school.

Tickets to the festival are generally restricted to film-industry high fliers, but you may get tickets to see films outside of the official selection by going to **La Malmaison** (☎ 04 97 06 44 90; 47 bd de la Croisette) and checking what's available. Tickets cost €1.50. For the film-festival program, consult the official website: www.festival-cannes.org.

If the town's 12 massive **Hollywood-inspired murals** have piqued your curiosity, the tourist office's free *Murs Peints de Cannes* has a map and explanations.

ÎLES DE LÉRINS

Although just 20 minutes away by boat, the tranquil Îles de Lérins feel far from the madding crowd.

The closest of these two tiny islands is the 3.25km by 1km **Île Ste-Marguerite**, where the mysterious Man in the Iron Mask was incarcerated during the late 17th century. Its shores are an endless succession of perfect castaway beaches and fishing spots, and its eucalyptus and pine forest makes for a heavenly refuge from the Riviera heat.

As you get off the boat, a map indicates a handful of rustic restaurants as well as trails and paths across the island. It also directs you to Fort Royal, built in the 17th century, and now harbouring the **Musée de la Mer** (Museum of the Sea; ☎ 04 93 38 55 26; adult/concession/student & under 18yr €3.20/2/free; 🕒 10am-5.45pm Jun-Sep, 10am-1.15pm & 2.15-5.45pm Tue-Sun Apr & May, to 4.45pm Oct-Mar). The door to the left as you enter leads to the old state prisons, built under Louis XIV. Exhibits interpret the fort's history, with displays on shipwrecks found off the island's coast.

Smaller still, at just 1.5km long by 400m wide, **Île St-Honorat** has been a monastery since the 5th century. Its Cistercian monks wel-

come visitors all year round: you can visit the church and small chapels scattered on the island and stroll among the vineyards and forests. Camping and cycling are forbidden.

Boats for the islands leave Cannes from quai des Îles (along from quai Max Laubeuf) on the western side of the harbour. **Riviera Lines** (☎ 04 92 98 71 31; www.riviera-lines.com) runs ferries to Île Ste-Marguerite (adult/child €11/5.50 return), while **Compagnie Planaria** (☎ 04 92 98 71 38; www.cannes-ilesdelerins.com) operates boats going to Île St-Honorat (adult/child €11/5.50 return).

In St-Raphaël, Les Bateaux de St-Raphaël (see Tours, p886) also has daily excursions to the islands.

Tours

The most serene way to see the coast is gazing back from out at sea. In summer, **Trans Côte d'Azur** (☎ 04 92 98 71 30; www.trans-cote-azur.com; quai Max Laubeuf) runs day trips to St-Tropez (adult/child €37.50/24 return), Monaco (adult/child €40/24 return) and the stunning red cliffs of the Massif de l'Estérel (adult/child €20/12 return).

Sleeping

Hotel prices in Cannes fluctuate wildly according to the season, and soar during the film festival when you'll need to book months in advance. Many places only accept 12-day bookings during this time.

BUDGET

Parc Bellevue (☎ 04 93 47 28 97; www.parcbellevue.com; 67 av Maurice Chevalier, Cannes-la-Bocca; powered site per 2 adults, tent & car €26; ☒ Apr-Sep) About 5.5km west of the city, this is the closest campsite to Cannes, with a near-Olympic-sized pool and facilities galore. The 9 bus from the bus station on place Bernard Cornut Gentille stops 400m away.

Hôtel Albe (☎ 04 97 06 21 21; www.albe-hotel.fr; 31 rue Bivouac Napoléon; s/d from €35/45; ☒) The rooms are nothing to write home about, but this hotel is right in the heart of the action: the street is about to become pedestrianised, which should bring some fancy neighbours and guarantee a good night's sleep. Wi-fi and friendly service are on the house.

Le Chanteclair (☎/fax 04 93 39 68 88; 12 rue Forville; d from €48; ☒ closed mid-Nov–mid-Jan) Right in the heart of Le Suquet and just moments from the Forville Provençal market, this sweet, simple 15-room place has an enchanting courtyard garden, and is handy for the harbourside restaurants.

Hôtel de Bourgogne (☎ 04 93 38 36 73; 11 rue du 24 Août; d from €50) Well placed for easy access to both the train station and the centre of town, this tired-looking hotel was planning some much-needed refurbishment at the time of research. Prices are likely to increase, but the same kind lady will be running it.

Hôtel Le Florian (☎ 04 93 39 24 82; www.hotel-leflorian.com; 31 rue Commandant André; s/d from €48/53; ☒) It's simple, but Le Florian is sensationally located smack bang between rue d'Antibes and the beachfront bd de la Croisette. Its 20 rooms and 11 apartments are impeccable, and the super-kind owners will bend over backwards to help you out during your stay.

Hôtel des Allées (☎ 04 93 39 53 90; www.hotel-des-alles.com; 6 rue Émile Négrin; s/d €49/68; ☒) You can be welcomed in four languages at this Swiss family-run hotel located on a vibrant pedestrian street. But you won't be lost in translation with the rooms: the spotless and brightly furnished courtyard rooms are blissfully quiet, while street-side rooms and their balconies make perfect vantage points from which to watch the world go by.

MIDRANGE

Hôtel Le Mistral (☎ 04 93 39 91 46; www.mistral-hotel.com; 13 rue des Belges; d from €77; ☒ ☒) Wanna feel like a VIP without breaking the bank? Head straight to this small boutique hotel – 10 rooms

with designer bathrooms, flattering plum and red tones, LCD TV screens, wi-fi, ace location, helpful staff and sea views for a couple of rooms on the top floor. Bring it on!

Hôtel des Orangers (☎ 04 93 39 99 92; www.hotel-orangers.com; 1 rue des Orangers; s/d from €74/81; ☒ ☒ ☒ ☒) Perched at the edge of the old town, the water views from the bright west-facing rooms on the 2nd and 3rd floors are an unexpected treat. You'll also be able to work up an appetite in the pool before lazily ambling southeast down to rue du Suquet (5 minutes) for restaurants galore.

Hôtel Splendid (☎ 04 97 06 22 22; www.splendid-hotel-cannes.com; 4-6 rue Félix Faure; s/d from €115/128; ☒) This elaborate 1871 building has everything it takes to rival the nearby palaces: beautifully decorated rooms, fabulous location, stunning views. But what the owners have also added is a touch of pragmatism: 15 of the 62 rooms are equipped with kitchenettes, your chance to make the very best of those balconies and sea views!

TOP END

Hôtel 3.14 (☎ 04 92 99 72 00; www.3-14hotel.com; 5 rue François Einesy; d from €155; ☒ ☒) *Trois-quatorze* (three-fourteen) takes its status as Cannes' hottest design option *très* (very) seriously: themed 'world' decoration, a profusion of velvet and low lighting, Zen spa, trendy organic restaurant, weeknight DJ parties and a vertigo-inducing rooftop jacuzzi – make sure you hold on tight to that sparkling wine flute.

In a stratosphere of their own, there are the amazing beachfront palaces garlanding bd de la Croisette:

Palais Stéphanie (☎ 04 92 99 70 00; www.softel.com; 50 bd de la Croisette; d from €170; ☒ ☒ ☒) On the historic site of the original Palais des Festivals. The views from the rooftop panoramic terrace (and pool) will take your breath away. Rooms are what you would expect from a four-star hotel: plush, with no comfort spared.

Hôtel Martinez (☎ 04 92 98 73 00; www.hotel-martinez.com; 73 bd de la Croisette; d from €260; ☒ ☒ ☒) The *crème de la crème*, with an on-site Givenchy spa and two-starred Michelin restaurant (two-/three-course menus €79/104, open 12.30pm to 2pm and 8pm to 10pm Tuesday to Saturday).

Eating RESTAURANTS

Generally, you'll find the least expensive restaurants on and around rue du Marché Forville, northeast of Vieux Port. Hipper and

slightly pricier establishments line the buzzing rues St-Antoine and du Suquet.

Aux Bons Enfants (80 rue Meynadier; menu €23; ☎ lunch & dinner Tue-Sat) This familial little place doesn't have a phone, and there are no plans to get one any time soon: it's always full. The lucky ones who get a table (get there early or late) can feast on regional dishes made from ingredients picked up at the adjacent market.

Auberge Provençale (☎ 04 92 99 27 17; 10 rue St-Antoine; mains €24-55; ☎ lunch & dinner) Pesto-butter *gambas* (king prawns), roasted sea bass in fennel, beef medallion in foie gras sauce and a distinguished wine list – Cannes' oldest restaurant punches very high with its sun-drenched cuisine. Its rustic decor hasn't changed much in a century, to the delight of the locals who just keep coming back for more.

Le Pastis (☎ 04 92 98 95 40; 28 rue Commandant André; mains €25-30; ☎ 7.30am-11.30pm) With a name like this, it would be a crime if you didn't have an *apéritif* or two at this establishment. But you'd miss out if you stopped there – Le Pastis serves fabulous brasserie food (creamy risottos, tender steaks, delicious fish) in a setting of stone walls and vintage posters.

ourpick Mantel (☎ 04 93 39 13 10; 22 rue St-Antoine; lunch menus €25, dinner menus €36-58; ☎ lunch & dinner, closed Wed & lunch Tue & Thu) The Italian maître d' will make you feel like a million dollars and you'll melt for Noël Mantel's divine cuisine and great value prices. Best of all, you get not one but two desserts with your menu (oh, the pannacotta...). Never mind the Croisette's palaces, you'll definitely have a regal night at Mantel.

Barbarella (☎ 04 92 99 17 33; 16 rue St-Dizier; mains €25-35; ☎ 7-11.30pm Tue-Sun) You've seen the film, now go to the err...restaurant. It is definitely as surreal as the movie (trompe l'œil-painted building, see-through chairs, psychedelic lighting, groovy atmosphere) and its fusion food is top notch.

Astoux & Brun (☎ 04 93 39 21 87; 27 rue Félix Faure; menus from €28; ☎ 12pm-1am) Seafood connoisseurs seldom need an introduction to this world-renowned place. And for those less familiar with bivalve mollusc consumption (read: shells), this is *the* place to try a fabulous seafood platter (oysters in particular).

Le Méditerranée (☎ 04 92 99 73 02; 2 bd Jean Hibert; lunch menu €42, dinner menus €52-72; ☎ lunch & dinner) On top of the port-side Sofitel hotel, adjoining the rooftop pool, it's hard to say which makes more of an impression – this contemporary French restaurant's cuisine or its 360-degree

views across the Med to the red Massif de l'Estérel mountains.

CAFÉS

Cannes has copious numbers of coffee houses, cafés and *salons de thé* (tearooms).

La Tarterie (☎ 04 93 39 67 43; 33 rue Bivouac Napoléon; dishes €6-13; ☎ 8.30am-6pm Mon-Sat) Mega salads and fancy tarts, this place has gone one better than all the bakeries in town: think sit-down-meal at a fast-food price. We like it.

Volupté (☎ 04 93 39 60 32; 32 rue Hoche; snacks €4.50, mains €13-15; ☎ 9am-8pm Mon-Sat) This is *the* place to be seen in town. With its 140 types of teas, all neatly stocked in red and white tins spanning an entire wall, this elegant tearoom draws an all-happening crowd of young and beautiful things. Fashionistas aside, if you like what you're drinking, you can take some home from its retail outlet across the street, at 41 rue Hoche.

SELF-CATERING

The **Marché Forville** (rue du Marché Forville; ☎ mornings Tue-Sun) is where many of the city's restaurants shop and where you should get your picnic supplies. The **food market** (place Gambetta; ☎ morning) is another good address for fruit and veg.

Square Lord Brougham, next to the Vieux Port, is a great place for a picnic – watch the locals play *pétanque* while you bite into goodies bought at **Boulangerie-Pâtisserie** (12 rue Maréchal Foch). Locals go to **Ceneri** (22 rue Meynadier) for its wondrous cheeses.

Large supermarkets:

Champion (6 rue Meynadier; ☎ 8.30am-7.30pm Mon-Sat)

Monoprix (9 rue Maréchal Foch; ☎ 8.30am-8pm Mon-Sat)

Drinking

The party bloc in town is located between rue Macé and the Grand Hôtel, just north of La Croisette. But remember that popularity is a fickle thing, particularly in a town of stars: today's hot venue could be tomorrow's complete has-been.

To mingle with the rich and famous, Cannes' hotel palaces (p881) all have drop-dead-posh bars.

Mere mortals head to the following places.

Le Sun 7 (☎ 04 93 39 38 70; 5 rue du Dr Gérard Monod; ☎ 9pm-2.30am) The cocktail list is an arm long (literally), and it doesn't even include the 350 whiskies and many draught beers also served

at this happening bar. The crowd is young on weekend nights when DJs spin their stuff, but it's much more eclectic during the week.

Also recommended:

La Grosse Tartine (☎ 04 93 68 59 28; 9 rue Batéguier; ☎ hr vary) Fun local bistro that's not taking its Cannes location too seriously (any place that calls itself 'the big tart' wouldn't).

Le Loft (☎ 04 93 39 20 63; 13 rue du Dr Gérard Monod; ☎ 7pm-2.30am Tue-Sat) A very beautiful place for very beautiful people. Schmooze the night away with designer cocktails and get those stilettos going with the DJ's chosen vibes.

Entertainment

Ask the tourist office for a copy of the free monthly *Le Mois à Cannes*, which lists what's on, where.

Dress up or you won't get in, and warm up your credit card: Cannes' nightlife ain't cheap.

Le Palais (www.palais-club.com; Palais des Festivals, bd de la Croisette; ☎ midnight-dawn) Where else but in Cannes would you dance on 2000 sq metres of suspended gardens overlooking the sea? Going strong since 2006, this ephemeral nightclub (it's open only for 50 nights each year, in July and August) has become the hottest ticket in DJ land, a combination of the most happening names in music and its spectacular setting at the heart of the Palais des Festivals.

Le Must (14 rue du Batéguier; ☎ 6pm-2.30am Tue-Sat) Ladies, if you're wearing a skirt, you're advised not to dance on the tables at this fun, super-friendly bar: Le Must's favourite gadget is an air pressure hose that will blow anything out of its way.

Le Palm (www.lepalmbeach.com, in French; place Franklin Roosevelt; ☎ midnight-4am Fri & Sat, more often in summer) Located within the beautiful art deco Palm Beach Casino, anyone who's anyone will have partied at one of Le Palm's raucous nights. Its resident DJ also runs the coveted lounge nights at Hôtel 3.14 (see Sleeping, p881).

Le 7 (☎ 04 93 39 10 36; 7 rue Rouguière; ☎ hr vary) Don't sit in the front row of the drag shows at this disco-and-house gay club unless you're up for being part of the spectacle.

Getting There & Away

BUS

Regular bus services to Nice (bus 200, €1, 1½ hours), Nice airport (bus 210, €14.20, 50 minutes, half-hourly from 8am to 6pm) and other destinations leave from the bus station on place Bernard Cornut Gentille.

TRAIN

There's an information desk and left-luggage facility at the train station.

Destinations within easy reach include Nice (€5.70, 30 to 40 minutes), Grasse (€3.60, 25 minutes) and Marseille (€24.80, two hours), as well as St-Raphaël (€6, 25 minutes), from where you can get buses to St-Tropez and Toulon.

Getting Around

BUS

Serving Cannes and destinations up to 7km away is **Bus Azur** (www.busazur.com; ☎ 08 25 82 55 99; place Bernard Cornut Gentille; tickets €1). Bus 8 runs along the coast to the port and Palm Beach Casino on Pointe de la Croisette.

For €0.60 per day you can hop on the electric Élo Bus. It has no set stops, so just flag it down as it passes. Its itinerary is marked by a blue line on the road and includes useful locations such as the bus hub at Hôtel de Ville, the Croisette, rue d'Antibes and the train station.

CAR & MOTORCYCLE

Car-rental agency **JKL** (☎ 04 97 06 37 77; www.jkl-forrent.com; 59 angle de la Croisette) offers cars fit for a star. There are plenty of paying car parks, including the Palais underground car park (€2.60 per hour) right next to the tourist office, which lends out free bicycles if you park here. Parking is free on Pointe de la Croisette.

Mistral Location (☎ 04 93 39 33 60; www.mistral-location.com; 4 rue Georges Clemenceau) rents out scooters from €26 a day.

TAXI

Taxis (☎ 08 90 71 22 27) can be ordered by phone. There are various taxi stands across towns, including outside the train station and the Palais des Festivals.

GRASSE

pop 49,100

Surrounded by fields of lavender, jasmine, centifolia roses, mimosa, orange blossom and violets, Grasse is one of France's leading perfume producers. Oddly, this international clout hardly comes across as you walk about the tightly wound streets of its ill-loved (read: neglected) centre. There is still plenty to see, and the tourist office has put together a trail of highlights, identified across town by interpretive golden-plate signs. But to really understand what makes this city tick, you'll have

CORINNE MARIE-TOSELLO, PERFUMER IN GRASSE

Corinne Marie-Tosello has two routes to work: one through olive groves, the other through fields overlooking the sea. Most people would revel in the view, but Corinne revels in their smells. Corinne is chief training officer at the prestigious Grasse perfumery Fragonard (see below). She is in charge of the 'olfactory education' of the perfumery's staff (scent identification, production process, types of perfumes etc) and she runs sought-after perfume workshops where perfume fanatics get a shot at producing their own scents. Life, therefore, revolves around her nose. She also works as an olfactory consultant (yes, they do exist), advising on scents destined to be used as incense, candles, air fresheners and so on.

So what's the best thing about living in Grasse? Grasse is very authentic – the perfumery industry is world famous but it remains very understated and hidden from the public. Many people don't believe us when we tell them it's so prominent. I also love Grasse's theatre; it puts on very original plays and films, although my teenage daughters prefer going out in glitzy Cannes! On the downside, driving is a nightmare because of the one-way system, and since the city is built on a hill, everything goes up and down; it's exhausting.

What do you like doing in the area? I love walking through flower fields (do the same at Domaine de Manon; see below): May roses and violets in the spring, lavender in early summer, and jasmine between August and October. I've taken Fragonard's staff on a couple of occasions so that they could see where the essences we work with come from. I also love going to Île St-Honorat (see p880): it's an olfactory paradise with eucalyptus, pine trees, dry wood and vine.

Favourite smells? Vetiver and galbanum (a resin produced from a Persian plant).

Least favourite smells? Anything that has been smoked, and artificial marine smells.

to visit one of its perfumeries and venture further out to its famous flower fields.

Orientation & Information

While the town of Grasse and its suburbs sprawl over a wide area of hill and valley, the old city is packed into the compact area formerly ringed by ramparts. The N85, better known as rte Napoléon (www.route-napoleon.com), runs right through Grasse, where it becomes the town's main thoroughfare, bd du Jeu de Ballon.

The town's **tourist office** (☎ 04 93 36 03 56; www.grasse.fr, in 7 languages; 22 cours Honoré Cresp; ☎ 9am-7pm Mon-Sat, 9am-1pm & 2-6pm Sun Jul-Sep, 9am-12.30pm & 2-6pm Mon-Sat Oct-Jun) is inside the Palais de Congrès, and has information on accommodation in the town and surrounding area.

Banks abound on bd du Jeu de Ballon, but there are no change facilities in Grasse.

Place aux Aires is the heart of the old town, and it hosts a flower-filled morning market from Tuesday to Sunday. You'll find plenty of good eateries in nearby streets.

Sights & Activities

Grasse has more than 30 **perfumeries**, creating essences sold primarily to factories (for aromatically enhanced foodstuffs and soaps) as well as to prestigious couture houses. Several

perfumeries offer free tours, taking you stage by stage through the perfume production process, from extraction and distillation to the work of the 'noses' (perfume creators who, after 10 years' training, are able to identify up to 3000 scents with one whiff). The perfumeries' showrooms sell fragrances for much less than traditional retailers, where you're mainly paying for the bottle.

Situated at the foot of the old town, **Fragonard** (☎ 04 93 36 44 65; 20 bd Fragonard; ☎ 9am-6pm Feb-Oct, 9am-12.30pm & 2-6pm Nov-Jan) is the easiest perfumery to reach by foot; the tourist office provides information about other perfumeries that can be visited further afield.

For the ultimate field trip, it's possible to visit the **flower-growing fields** to learn about the blooms' cultivation and harvest. The family-run **Domaine de Manon** (☎ 04 93 60 12 76; www.domaine-manon.com; admission €6) runs tours of its rose fields from mid-May to mid-June, and its jasmine fields from July to late October.

Getting There & Away

From the **bus station** (☎ 04 93 36 37 37; place de la Buanderie) you can get regular buses to Nice (€1, 1½ hours) and Cannes (€1, 50 minutes).

About 2km south of the centre, Grasse's train station is linked to the old town and bus station by the free Farandole shuttle buses

from 6.40am to 8pm. Regular trains leave for Cannes (€3.60, 25 minutes) and Nice (€8.20, one hour).

MASSIF DE L'ESTÉREL

Punctuated by pine, oak and eucalyptus trees, the rugged red mountain range Massif de l'Estérel contrasts dramatically with the brilliant blue sea.

Extending east from St-Raphaël to Mandelieu-La Napoule (near Cannes), a curling coastal road, the famous corniche de l'Estérel (also known as the corniche d'Or and the N98), passes through summer villages and inlets that are ideal for swimming. These include **Le Dramont**, where the 36th US Division landed on 15 August 1944; **Agay**, a sheltered bay with an excellent beach; and **Mandelieu-La Napoule**, a large pleasure-boat harbour near a fabulously restored 14th-century castle.

More than 100 hiking trails criss-cross the Massif de l'Estérel's interior, but for the more challenging trails you'll need a good map, such as IGN's *Série Bleue* (1:25,000) 3544ET. Many of the walks, such as those up to Pic de l'Ours (496m) and Pic du Cap Roux (452m), are signposted. Trails are open from 9am to 7pm – therefore, camping is not possible – and they're often closed in summer when fire danger's high.

FRÉJUS & ST-RAPHAËL

The twin towns of Fréjus (population 48,800) and St-Raphaël (population 32,700) bear the hallmarks of the area's history over the millennia.

The site of some exceptional Roman ruins, Fréjus was settled by Massiliots (the Greeks who founded Marseille) and colonised by Julius Caesar around 49 BC as Forum Julii. It was settled thanks to the extension of the Roman road Via Aurelia, which linked Italy with Arles. The town's commercial activity largely ceased after its harbour silted up in the 16th century. The Roman ruins are scattered in and around the lively pedestrianised town centre.

St-Raphaël is better known for its natural wonders. Sitting snug at the foot of the Massif de l'Estérel, it became a fashionable hang-out in the 1920s, when F Scott Fitzgerald wrote *Tender is the Night* here. With the development of diving activities, St-Raphaël sealed its fate as an adventure-prone destination.

Orientation

St-Raphaël is 2km southeast of Fréjus, but the towns' suburbs have become so intertwined that, essentially, they now form a single town. Fréjus comprises the hillside Fréjus Ville, about 3km from the seaford, and Fréjus Plage, on the Golfe de Fréjus. Most of the Roman remains are in Fréjus Ville.

Information

MONEY

Banque National de Paris (BNP; 232 rue Jean Jaurès, Fréjus) Just west of the tourist office; there's an ATM.

POST

Fréjus Post Office (av Aristide Briand)

St-Raphaël Post Office (av Victor Hugo)

TOURIST INFORMATION

Fréjus Tourist Office (☎ 04 94 51 83 83; www.frejus.fr; 249 rue Jean Jaurès; ☎ 9.30am-6pm Mon-Sat Sep-May, Sun 9.30am-6pm school holidays, 9am-7pm Jul & Aug)

St-Raphaël Tourist Office (☎ 04 94 19 52 52; www.saint-raphael.com; 99 quai Albert 1er; ☎ 9am-7pm Jul & Aug, 9am-12.30pm & 2-6.30pm Mon-Sat Sep-Jun) On the port, inside the futuristic-looking Palais des Congrès.

Tourist Office Kiosk (☎ 04 94 51 48 42; ☎ 9.30am-noon & 3-6pm Jul & Aug) By the beach opposite 11 bd de la Libération in Fréjus.

Sights

The most economical way to see Fréjus' Roman sights is to purchase the seven-day **Fréjus Pass Intégral** (€6.60), available from the tourist office, which includes entry to all the main sites.

ROMAN RUINS

Fréjus' Roman-times population is calculated at 10,000, based on the capacity of its 1st- and 2nd-century **arènes** (amphitheatres; ☎ 04 94 51 34 31; rue Henri Vadon; admission €2; ☎ 9.30am-12.30pm & 2-6pm Mon-Sat May-Oct, 9.30am-12.30pm & 2-5pm Mon-Sat Nov-Apr). It's hoped that current restoration projects and further archeological work will restore one of France's oldest entertainment venues to its previous glory, allowing it to house shows and concerts. The **Roman theatre** (rue du Théâtre Romain; admission €2; ☎ as for amphitheatre), north of the old town, houses theatre and music festivals in summer.

LE GROUPE ÉPISCOPAL

The jewel in the crown of the dramatic **Episcopal ensemble** (☎ 04 94 51 26 30; 58 rue de Fleury,

Fréjus; adult/18-25yr/under 17yr €5/3.50/free; ☎ 9am-6.30pm Jun-Sep, 9am-noon & 2-5pm Tue-Sun Oct-May) is the series of rare, intricate 14th-century painted cornices of the **doister** ceiling, depicting fabled as well as real animals and characters.

Built on the site of a Roman temple, the ensemble includes the 11th- and 12th-century **cathedral** and a unique 5th-century octagonal **baptistry**. The 12th- and 13th-century cloister acted as the antichamber of the cathedral. Some of its columns come from the podium of the Roman theatre. Admission includes a 10-minute film in multiple languages.

Adjoining the cloister is the small but fascinating **Musée Archéologique** (Archaeological Museum; ☎ 04 94 52 15 78; place Calvin; admission €2; ☎ 9.30am-12.30pm & 2-6pm Tue-Sun mid-Apr–mid-Oct, 9.30am-12.30pm & 2-5pm Tue-Sun mid-Oct–mid-Apr), whose unearthed treasures include a double-faced marble statue of Hermes, a head of Jupiter and a stunning 3rd-century mosaic depicting a leopard.

Activities

With its 36 kilometres of coastline, St-Raphaël claims no less than 30 **beaches** running the gamut of beach possibilities: sandy, pebbly, rocky, long, covelike, nudist...you name it, St Raph' has it.

Taking in 11km of this coastal wonder is the clearly marked **sentier du littoral** (coastal trail), with yellow markers. Starting at Port Santa Lucia, southeast of the city centre, and finishing at the Beaumette lighthouse, you can cut short at any stage by heading back up to the coastal road and catching bus 8 home (bus stops every 500m). The whole path takes about 4½ hours to complete.

St-Raphaël is also a leading **dive** centre, with numerous **WWII shipwrecks** off the coast. **Aventure Sous-Marine** (☎ 06 09 58 43 52; 165 quai Albert 1er, Galerie du Parvis, St-Raphaël) and **CIP** (☎ 04 94 52 34 99; www.cip-frejus.com; east port, Fréjus) organise night and day dives and courses for beginners.

Tours

A guided tour, run by the Fréjus tourist office (€5, two hours), available in English on request, is the best way to get the most out of Fréjus' rich heritage.

Les Bateaux de St-Raphaël (☎ 04 94 95 17 46; www.tmr-saintraphael.com; Gare Maritime, St-Raphaël) organises boat excursions from St-Raphaël to Île Ste-Marguerite (return adult €18 to €24, child €10 to €13) and the nearby Estérel mountains (return adult €14, child €8). It

also runs daily boats to St-Tropez (single/return adult €13/22, child €8/12); check for seasonal schedules.

Sleeping & Eating

Auberge de Jeunesse Fréjus-St-Raphaël (☎ 04 94 53 18 75; www.fuaj.org; chemin du Councillier, Fréjus; dm incl breakfast & sheets €15.70; ☎ reception 8am-noon & 5.30-11.30pm, closed mid-Nov–Feb) A rambling Hostelling International-affiliated hostel set in 10 hectares of pine trees where you can also pitch your tent in the summer. From St-Raphaël's train station, take bus 7. From the Fréjus train station, take bus 7, 10 or 13 to Les Chênes, cross the roundabout and take chemin de Councillier on your left (there's a supermarket on your right); the hostel's 600m ahead.

Holiday Green (☎ 04 94 19 88 30; www.holidaygreen.com; rte de Bagnols, Fréjus; camping €27-37; ☎ Apr-end Sep; 🚿) The extra-large swimming pool and lovely pine forest grounds more than make up for the 7km trip to the beach. Buses 1 and 11 stop right opposite.

Hôtel Cyrnos (☎ 04 94 95 17 13; www.hotel-cyrnos.com; 840 bd Alphonse Juin, St-Raphaël; d €40-95) You'll never want to leave once you arrive: the beautiful 1883 mansion has kept so much of its early-20th-century Riviera charm, with its grand staircase, terracotta-tiled floors, understated decor, spacious balconies and wonderfully cool garden. A mere 300m from the beach, it's also ideally located for the *sentier du littoral* walks.

Hôtel Provençal (☎ 04 98 11 80 00; www.hotel-provençal.com; 195 rue de la Garonne, St-Raphaël; d €55-80; 🚿) Centrally located near St-Raphaël's pretty port, the plain but clean and friendly Hôtel Provençal is good value, particularly if you bag a room with sea views. The breakfast buffet will keep you going all day, and you also get wi-fi thrown in for good measure.

L'Aréna (☎ 04 94 17 09 40; www.arena-hotel.com; 145 rue du Général de Gaulle, Fréjus; s €70-90, d €85-155; 🚿 📺 📺) This elegant hotel with its sienna-coloured walls and lush garden would not have looked out of place as a luxurious Roman villa a couple of millennia back. Nowadays, it's the perfect location from which to explore the neighbouring sites; the restaurant (mains €20 to €25; closed Monday and Saturday lunch) is also a favourite for alfresco Mediterranean dinners.

Les Potiers (The Potters; ☎ 04 94 51 33 74; 135 rue des Potiers, Fréjus; mains €20; ☎ lunch & dinner, closed Tue & lunch Wed) Not a potter in sight at this tiny

restaurant, but some very tasty regional food instead. You'll also get a peek at local artists' work on the walls.

L'Arbousier (☎ 04 94 95 25 00; 6 av de Valescure; lunch menus €28, dinner menus €36-59; ☎ lunch & dinner, closed Mon & Tue in winter) One of St-Raphaël's best restaurants, the cuisine is a subtle blend of French *gastronomie* and world influences best enjoyed under the shade of the *arbousiers* (strawberry trees).

Getting There & Away

Bus 5, part of the **AggloBus** (☎ in St-Raphaël 04 94 83 87 63) network, links Fréjus train station and place Paul Vernet (also in Fréjus) with St-Raphaël.

Fréjus and St-Raphaël are on the train line from Nice to Marseille. There's a frequent service (€10, 50 minutes) from Nice to St-Raphaël Valescure train station, with breathtaking views of the Med and red slopes of the Estérel.

ST-TROPEZ

pop 5635

In the soft autumn or winter light, it's hard to believe that the pretty terracotta fishing village of St-Tropez is yet another stop on the Riviera celebrity circuit. It seems far removed from its glitzy siblings further up the coast, but come spring or summer, it's a different world: the town's population increases tenfold, prices triple, and celebrities (particularly French, including crooner Johnny Hallyday) and their party apparatchiks monopolise town.

To get a glimpse of what attracted so many artists to these beautiful shores, avoid visiting in July and August. And take heart if you're only around in the summer: it's always fun to play 'I spy...' (a celebrity).

History

St-Tropez acquired its name in AD 68 when a Roman officer named Torpes was beheaded on Nero's orders in Pisa, and packed into a boat with a dog and a rooster to devour his remains. His headless corpse washed up here intact, leading the villagers to adopt him as their patron saint.

For centuries St-Tropez remained a peaceful little fishing village, attracting painters like pointillist Paul Signac, but few tourists. That changed dramatically in 1956 when *Et Dieu Créa la Femme* (And God Created Woman) was shot here starring Brigitte

Bardot (aka BB), catapulting the village into the international limelight.

Orientation

The beaches where A+-listers sunbathe, in the Baie de Pampelonne, lie 4km southeast of town. The village itself is at the tip of a petite peninsula on the southern side of the Baie de St-Tropez, across from the Massif des Maures. The old town sits snugly between quai Jean Jaurès (the main quay of the luxury yacht-packed Vieux Port), place des Lices (an elongated square a few blocks back from the port) and a lofty 16th-century citadel overlooking the town from the northeastern edge.

Information

INTERNET ACCESS

Kreatik Café (☎ 04 94 97 40 61; 19 av Gal Lerclerc; per hr €7; ☎ 9.30am-9pm Mon-Sat, 2-8pm Sun) Even the internet café looks fit for celebrities.

INTERNET RESOURCES

Bay of St-Tropez (www.bay-of-saint-tropez.com) A good information source for the surrounding towns and beaches.

LAUNDRY

Laverie du Pin (☎ 04 94 43 09 09; 13 quai de l'Épi; ☎ 8am-7pm, to 9pm in summer)

MONEY

Crédit Lyonnais (21 quai Suffren) At the port.

Master Change (18 rue du Général Allard) A *bureau de change* (exchange bureau).

POST

Post Office (place Celli) One block from the port.

TOURIST INFORMATION

The English-language brochure *Out and About* is available in tourist offices in the area.

Tourist Office (☎ 04 94 97 45 21; www.ot-saint-tropez.com; quai Jean Jaurès; ☎ 9.30am-8pm Jul & Aug, 9.30am-12.30pm & 2-7pm Apr-Jun & Sep-mid-Oct, 9.30am-12.30pm & 2-6pm mid-Oct-Mar) Keeps a useful list of hotels and restaurants that are open out of season.

Sights

Any amount of wandering about the historical quarter should dismiss any preconceived belief that St-Tropez is all glitz, no substance. For the sceptics (or the culture vultures), the tourist office organises 1½-hour **guided walking tours** (tours €6; ☎ 10am Wed Apr-Oct)

in French; call to see if an English-speaking guide is available.

Dramatically displayed in a disused chapel, the **Musée de l'Annonciade** (☎ 04 94 17 84 10; place Grammont, Vieux Port; adult/student €5/3, exhibitions €6/4; 🕒 10am-noon & 3-7pm Wed-Mon Jun-Sep, 10am-noon & 2-6pm Wed-Mon Oct & Dec-May) displays an impressive collection of works by Matisse, Bonnard, Dufy and especially Signac, who set up his home and studio in St-Tropez.

The panoramas of St-Tropez' bay from the elevated 17th-century **Citadelle de St-Tropez** (☎ 04 94 97 59 43; admission €2.50; 🕒 10am-6.30pm Apr-Sep, 10am-12.30pm & 1.30-5.30pm Oct-Mar) are definitely worth the climb. The citadel also houses regular exhibitions (€5.50).

Activities

BEACHES

The glistening sandy beach **Plage de Tahiti**, 4km southeast of town, morphs into the 5km-long **Plage de Pampelonne**, which in summer incorporates a sequence of exclusive restaurant/clubs. To get here, head out of town along av de la Résistance (south of place des Lices) to rte de la Belle Isnarde and then rte de Tahiti. Otherwise, the bus to Ramatuelle, south of St-Tropez, stops at various points along a road that runs about 1km inland from the beach. Beach mats can be rented for around €15 per day.

WALKING

Marked by yellow ('easy') blazes, a 35km **sentier du littoral** (coastal trail) starts from St-Tropez' sandy fishing cove to the east of the 15th-century Tour du Portalet, in the old fishing quarter La Ponche, and arcs around to Cavalaire-sur-Mer along a spectacular series of rocky outcrops and hidden bays. If you're short on time or energy, you can walk as far as Ramatuelle and return by bus. The tourist

office has a free, easy-to-follow map showing distances and average walking times.

Sleeping

BUDGET & MIDRANGE

St-Tropez is no shoestring destination, but there are plenty of moelstar camping grounds to the southeast along Plage de Pampelonne. Alternatively, during summer St-Tropez makes a scenic day trip by boat from St-Raphaël or Nice, which have hostels. Most hotels close at some stage in winter; the tourist office keeps a list.

Hôtel La Méditerranée (☎ 04 94 97 00 44; www.hotelmediterranee.org; 21 bd Louis Blanc; d low season €50-100, d high season €85-250; 🍷) It is remarkable that such authentic places still exist in St-Tropez. Solveig has beautifully renovated each of her 16 rooms with a simple but romantic decor. You may even be asked your opinion on her latest DIY during your visit! The garden of the bar-restaurant (mains €15) is pure summer evening bliss.

Les Palmiers (☎ 04 94 97 01 61; www.hotel-les-palmiers.com; 26 bd Vasserot; d low season €68-139, d high season €109-215; 🍷) Opposite the place des Lices, at the back of a lovely shaded courtyard, this friendly and comfortable hotel also has a handful of parking spaces (ie every inch of its front street space). Rooms in the annexe are noisy – choose those in the main building.

Hôtel Sube (☎ 04 94 97 30 04; www.hotel-sube.com; 15 quai Suffren; d low season €115-190, d high season €140-290; 🍷) This marine-style hotel has the most coveted location in town, right on the waterfront. Port-side rooms and their fabulous views provide the perfect excuse to stare unashamedly at the yachts moored below. The 1st-floor wood-panelled bar has a diminutive but popular balcony and an imposing stone fireplace for cosy winter evenings.

AU NATUREL

Not a fan of tan lines? The coastline from Le Lavandou to the St-Tropez peninsula is well endowed with *naturiste* (nudist) beaches. Naturism is also legal in some other spots in the area, like the secluded beach, **Plage de l'Escalet**, on the southern side of Cap Camarat. There's a bus to Ramatuelle from St-Tropez, but you'll have to walk the 4km southeast to the beach. Closer to St-Tropez is **La Moutte**, 4.5km east of town – take rte des Salins.

Most isolated is the oldest and largest *naturiste* colony in the region, which occupies half of the 8km-long island **Île du Levant** (p891).

The coast's laid-back, let-it-all-hang-out attitude was the premise of Jean Girault's cult 1964 farce film *Le Gendarme de St-Tropez*, in which Louis de Funès starred as the policeman of the title, who attempted to crack down on local nudists.

TOP END

La Maison Blanche (☎ 04 94 97 52 66; www.hotella.maisonblanche.com; place des Lices; d low season €180-290, d high season €240-390; ☹ closed Feb; ☹) Don't forget your sunglasses at the ode to minimalist design that is the Maison Blanche, and see how many shades of white you've counted by the end of your stay.

La Mistralée (☎ 04 98 12 91 12; www.hotel-mistralee.com; 1 av du Général Leclerc; d low season €190-390, d high season €460-790; ☹ ☹) The flamboyant former home of hairdresser to the stars, Alexandre (famously *sans* surname), this totally over-the-top 1960s-decorated hotel includes, for example, fabric presented to Alexandre by the king of Morocco. The restaurant (*menus* €50 to €60), tucked at the back of the luxurious garden by the mosaic-lined pool, feels like a 1001 Nights' palace at night.

Pastis (☎ 04 98 12 56 50; www.pastis-st-tropez.com; 61 av du Général Leclerc; d low season €200-350, d high season €350-600; ☹ ☹ ☹) This stunning hotel is the brainchild of an English couple besotted with Provence and passionate about modern art. If it doesn't sound like an obvious combination, one look at Pastis will dispel any doubt: you'll die for the pop-art-inspired interior and long for a swim in the emerald green pool and a snooze under the centenary palm trees.

Eating

Quai Jean Jaurès on the old port is littered with restaurants and cafés – they have mediocre menus, but strategic views of the opulent wealth of nearby yachts. More-appealing places can be found on Port des Pêcheurs at the northern end of rue des Remparts, and wedged in the pedestrian alleys running south of rue Allard.

Ô Vents d'Ange (☎ 04 94 43 31 33; 7 quai de l'Épi; mains €12-25; ☹ lunch & dinner) Right by the port, in one of the town's party corners, this cheap and cheerful place serves up grilled fish and meat, a good option for a lighter meal on a scorching summer day.

La Table du Marché (☎ 04 94 97 85 20; 38 rue Georges Clémenceau; mains €24-36; ☹ lunch & dinner) Chef Christophe Leroy's St-Tropez pad is a must, be it for scrumptious tea-time *pâtisseries* (pastries and cakes) or heavenly cuisine come dinner time. The lobster gratin is unforgettable, and, for once, vegetarians are properly catered for. Take a leaf of out Leroy's recipe book at one of his cooking lessons (5-person minimum, €100 per person).

La Nouvelle Bohème (☎ 04 94 95 12 63; 3 rue Charrons; menus €25; ☹ dinner Tue-Sun) With its corset-shaped fluffy cushions, candle-lit atmosphere, low-beamed ceiling and whitewashed walls, this irreverent, superfriendly restaurant serves the best seafood tagliatelle in town. Its chocolate cake is a chocoholic's dream come true.

Auberge de l'Oumède (☎ 04 94 44 11 11; Chemin de l'Oumède, Ramatuelle; menu €75; ☹ dinner Apr-Oct, closed Mon Apr–mid-Jun, Sep & Oct) Epicureans come from far and wide to savour Jean-Pierre Frezia's divine Provençal cuisine in the idyllic setting of his hilltop *mas* (traditional Provençal stone building). Red mullet and spinach cannelloni, grilled catch of the day and sensational desserts, all accompanied by some very fine wines; dining at l'Oumède is a once in a lifetime treat.

CAFÉS

Sénéquier (☎ 04 94 97 00 90; cnr quai Jean Jaurès & place aux Herbes; dishes €5-12.50; ☹ 8am-2am Apr-Oct, 8am-7pm Nov-Mar) This quintessential St-Tropez quay-side café opened in 1887, and Sartre worked on *Les Chemins de la Liberté* (Roads to Freedom) here. Its fire-engine-red terrace is a prized drinking spot, and our extensive field research has also concluded that its nougat is the best under the sun.

Le Café (☎ 04 94 97 44 69; place des Lices; mains €20, menu €30; ☹ lunch & dinner) If you've been itching to have a go at *pétanque*, Le Café will lend you a set of bowls to play out front while you sip a glass of rosé or an evening kir. And you could do worse than staying for dinner: the Provençal fare at this institution is of the finest variety.

SELF-CATERING

The **place des Lices market** (☹ mornings Tue & Sat) is a highlight of local life: people come for the gossip as much as the colourful stalls groaning under the weight of plump fruit and veg, mounds of olives, local cheeses, tasty chestnut purée and fragrant herbs. The **fish market** (☹ Tue-Sun, daily in summer) on place aux Herbes is joined by a fruit and veg market in summer.

A must-try is the local speciality, *tarte Tropézienne*, an orange blossom-flavoured double sponge cake filled with a thick cream, created nearby by a Polish baker and christened by BB in the '50s. **La Tarte Tropézienne** (☎ 04 94 97 71 42; 36 rue Georges Clémenceau; ☹ 7am-7.30pm) turns them out along with freshly filled sandwiches on home-baked bread.

For groceries, try **Monoprix** (9 av du Général Leclerc; ☎ 8am-8pm Mon-Sat).

Entertainment

The good news: most bars open from around 11pm to dawn. The bad? Drinks start at €15 and door policies are formidable. Try to look as famous as possible.

In winter, most bars only open on weekends; in summer, it's party central seven days a week.

Chez Maggy (☎ 04 94 97 16 12; 5 rue Sibille) Gay-friendly disco.

Le Pigeonnier (☎ 04 94 97 84 26; 13 rue de la Ponche) Small in size, big in reputation; run by the pioneer of *Tropézienne* nights.

Les Caves du Roy (☎ 04 94 97 16 02; Hôtel Byblous, av Paul Signac) Star-studded.

L'Esquinade (☎ 04 94 97 87 45; 2 rue du Four) *The gay bar in town.*

Papagayo (☎ 04 94 54 82 89; Résidence du Nouveau Port; ☎ summer & Christmas-time) Your best bet for gaining entry, and usually the most fun.

Shopping

The old-town streets and arcades are dripping with designer boutiques. For your chance to own a Prada or Gucci number, try the brilliant vintage **De L'une à l'autre** (☎ 04 98 12 66 14; 6 rue Joseph Quaranta; ☎ 10am-1pm & 3-8pm Jul & Aug, 10am-12.30pm & 2.30-6.30pm Tue-Sat Sep-Jun), St-Tropez's answer to charity shops. The lovely Anne will help you unearth hardly worn and infinitely cheaper (we didn't say cheap) couture treasures from her stocks.

Getting There & Away

BOAT

Les Bateaux Verts (☎ 04 94 49 29 39; www.bateauxverts.com; Ste-Maxime) operates a shuttle-boat service from St-Tropez to Ste-Maxime (one way adult/child €6.60/3.50, 20 minutes) and Port Grimaud (one way adult/child €6.50/3.50, 15 minutes), with reduced schedules outside peak season. In summer and autumn, Les Bateaux de St-Raphaël (see p886) runs boats from St-Tropez to St-Raphaël.

Trans Côte d'Azur runs day trips from Nice (see p868) and Cannes (see p880) between Easter and September.

BUS

St-Tropez' **bus station** (av Général de Gaulle) is on the southwestern edge of town on the main road. There's an **information office** (☎ 04 94 54 62

36; ☎ 8.30am-noon & 2-4.30pm Mon-Fri, 8.30am-noon Sat) at the station. **Sodetrav** (☎ 08 25 00 06 50) runs eight buses daily (15 in summer) from St-Raphaël Valescure train station to St-Tropez bus station (€10.30, 1¼ hours), via Fréjus. The eight daily buses from St-Tropez to Toulon (€19.70, 2¼ hours) also stop at Le Lavandou and Hyères. Bus 111 serves Toulon-Hyères' airport (€20.90, one hour) from Friday to Sunday, April to October only.

CAR & MOTORCYCLE

To avoid the worst of the high season traffic, approach from the Provençale Autoroute (the A8) and exit at Le Muy (exit 35). Take the D558 road across the Massif des Maures and via La Garde Freinet to Port Grimaud, then park here and take the shuttle boat that runs to St-Tropez from Easter to October.

Getting Around

If you'd like to retain some sort of inner peace while in St-Tropez, you're strongly advised to opt for two wheels rather than four: parking is the bane of Riviera life. **MAS** (☎ 04 94 97 00 60; 3-5 rue Joseph Quaranta) rents out mountain bikes and scooters. And if you must drive, there are several car-hire places lining av du Général Leclerc.

To order a taxi, ring ☎ 04 94 97 05 27. For a taxi boat call **Marine Service** (☎ 06 09 57 31 22; Le Pilon).

ST-TROPEZ TO TOULON Massif des Maures

Shrouded by a forest of pine, chestnut and cork oak trees, the Massif des Maures arcs inland between Hyères and Fréjus. Roamed by wild boars, its near-black vegetation gives rise to its name, derived from the Provençal word *mauro* (dark-pine wood).

Within the forest, the village of **Collobrières** concocts wonderful chestnut purée and *marrons glacés* (candied chestnuts).

Hiking and cycling opportunities abound, especially around La Sauvette (779m), the massif's highest peak. St-Tropez' tourist office distributes an English-language map/guide called *Tours in the Gulf of St-Tropez – Pays des Maures*, detailing driving, cycling and walking itineraries.

Îles d'Hyères

For some inexplicable reason, these paradisaical islands (also known as Îles d'Or –

Golden Islands – for their shimmering mica rock) have remained mostly unknown to foreign crowds.

The easternmost and largest of this trio of islands is the discreet **Île du Levant**, split into an odd combination of army land and nudist colony. **Île de Port-Cros**, the middle and smallest island, is the jewel in the islands' crown. France's only marine **parc national** (national park; ☎ 04 94 12 82 30; www.portcrosparcnational.fr, in French; 50 rue St Claire, Hyères), it boasts exceptional marine fauna and flora, which makes it a **snorkelling** paradise. The island is also covered with 30km of marked trails through thick forest, ragged cliff tops and deserted beaches.

The largest and westernmost island is **Île de Porquerolles** (www.porquerolles.com). Run as a hacienda in the early 20th century, it has kept many of its sprawling plantation features. There are plenty of walking trails, but the best way to get around is by cycling. There

are several bicycle-rental places, as well as a few restaurants and hotels.

For more information, contact Hyères' tourist office (see p892) or check www.provence-azur.com.

Boats to the Îles d'Hyères leave from various towns along the coast. **Vedettes Îles d'Or** (☎ 04 94 71 01 02; www.vedettesilesdor.fr) in Le Lavandou operates boats to all three islands (Porquerolles return adult/child €30.60/23.90, 40 minutes each way; Port-Cros and Île du Levant return adult/child €23.50/19.60, 35 and 60 minutes respectively). In summer, there are boats between Port-Cros and Porquerolles.

TLV-TVM (☎ for Porquerolles 04 94 58 21 81, ☎ for Port-Cros & Levant 04 94 57 44 07; www.tlv-tvm.com) runs services from Hyères' two ports: La Tour Fondue, at the bottom of the Giens Peninsula, is only 10 minutes from Porquerolles (return adult/child €16/14), while Hyères' port at the top of the peninsula has services to

HIDDEN VAR TREASURES

The Var *département*, which stretches from the Estérel mountains to Marseille, is packed with coastal gems. At the edge of the Massif des Maures, the 26km-long coastal road (part of the D559), also known as **Corniche des Maures**, snakes from La Croix-Valmer to Le Lavandou. In addition to stunning views, there are some superb spots for swimming, sunbathing, windsurfing and walking.

La Croix-Valmer's **Gigaro** beach is one not to miss, as is the walking path towards Cap Lardier, which is one of the most magnificent, least-trodden bits of the entire southern coast.

Le Lavandou (population 5825; www.ot-lelavandou.fr) is also famous for its 12km of fine beaches and 12 types of sand. The town has also retained a beautiful historical centre, and its 1000-boat marina is a prime evening-stroll venue. **Hotel Le Rabelais** (☎ 04 94 71 00 56; www.le-rabelais.fr; 2 rue Rabelais; d €45-105) is one of the best options in the area. Smack bang in front of the marina, the simply decorated rooms have prized views of the port and nearby islands, or of surrounding hills at the back. And what better place to discuss what beach or village to visit each day than on the sun-drenched breakfast terrace?

Up in the hills, you'll find the quintessential Provençal village of **Bormes-les-Mimosas**. The *vieux* (old) village is spectacularly flowered year round, with the eponymous mimosas in winter, and deep-fuchsia bougainvilleas in summer. Old cobbled streets are lined with artists' galleries, and with boutiques filled with traditional Provençal products, natural soap and essential oils.

For breathtaking views of the islands, the **rte des Crêtes** winds its way through maquis-covered hills some 400m above the sea. Take the D41 as you head out of Bormes-les-Mimosas past the Chapelle St-François; 500m up the hill on your right is Chemin du Landon, which then turns into the rte des Crêtes. Eight kilometres and many bends and picture stops later, you'll get to the sensational **ourpick Relais du Vieux Sauvare** (☎ 04 94 05 84 22; rte des Crêtes; mains €18-30; 🍽️ lunch & dinner May-Sep; 🚗), with 180-degree views you could only dream of. Owner Roland Gallo has been here since 1960 and clearly has no intention of ever going anywhere else (you'll understand why when you get there). The food is as sunny as the views: pizzas, melon and Parma ham, whole sea bass in salt crust – and there's even a swimming-pool in which to cool off. The rte des Crêtes goes back down towards Le Rayol-Canadel on the coastal D559 after the restaurant.

You'll need a car to travel along the rte des Crêtes, but the coastal road is on the itinerary of the Toulon to St-Tropez bus (see opposite), which stops in most towns, including Le Lavandou.

Port-Cros (40 to 60 minutes, summer only) and Le Levant (50 to 90 minutes; adult/child return trip €23.50/20.50).

Hyères

pop 53,700

The reason you come to Hyères seldom has to do with its small, neglected medieval town centre or profusion of palm trees. The city's real assets are the **Giens Peninsula** to the south and the three **Îles d'Hyères** stretching east along the coast.

A protected wetland area, the peninsula harbours amazing birdlife including pink flamingos, herons, terns, egrets, sandpipers, teals and cormorants. The **tourist office** (☎ 04 94 01 84 50; 3 av Ambroise Thomas; ☎ 8.30am-7.30pm Jul & Aug, 9am-6pm Mon-Fri, 10am-4pm Sat Sep-Jun) runs 1½-hour tours for €7.

On the peninsula's northwestern edge, the beaches of Almanarre are internationally famed for windsurfing and kitesurfing. For windsurfing lessons, contact **Funboard Center** (☎ 04 94 57 95 33; www.funboardcenter.com; rte l'Almanarre) or for kitesurfing lessons, contact **École Kite** (☎ 06 60 79 37 69; www.ecolekite.fr; Mahalo Surf Shop, rte l'Almanarre). Toulon-Hyères' international airport (p895) is on the other side of the peninsula.

TOULON

pop 167,400

Toulon still has a long way to go before it's a prime travellers' destination. The town has remained hermetically sealed against the Côte d'Azur's charms, mostly because of its naval activities and half a century of neglect.

To give the town its due, much has happened since mayor Hubert Falco was elected in 2002 (and re-elected in 2008). The opera house has been renovated, and there is a brand new bus station and the most energetic and proactive tourist office you'll find anywhere on the coast. The town has also made much of its 500-year-old arsenal and rich military history.

As the western gateway of the Côte d'Azur, Toulon has excellent train connections as well as ferry services and, at neighbouring Hyères, an expanding international airport.

History

Initially a Roman colony, Toulon became part of France in 1481 – the city grew in importance after Henri IV founded an arsenal here. In the

17th century the port was enlarged by Vauban. The young Napoléon Bonaparte made a name for himself in 1793 during a siege in which the English, who had taken over Toulon, were expelled. In 1942 almost the entire fleet scuttled in the *rade* (sheltered bay lined with quays) to escape German forces, and the city was practically razed following the 1944 Allied landing. Following the war, Toulon languished for much of the second half of the 20th century.

Orientation

Toulon wraps itself around a bay. To the west is the naval base and to the east the ferry terminal, where boats sail for Corsica. The city is at its liveliest along quai de la Sinse and quai Stalingrad (the departure point for Îles d'Hyères ferries) and in the old city. The train station is northwest of the old city.

Women travelling solo should take care at night in some of the old city streets, such as rue Chevalier Paul and the western end of rue Pierre Sémard.

Information

Many commercial banks flourish along bd de Strasbourg.

Arobase (18 rue Paul Landrin; internet access per hr €2.50; ☎ 9.30am-10.30pm)

Change du Port (☎ 04 94 92 60 40; 15 quai Cronstadt; ☎ 8.30am-noon & 1.30-4.45pm Mon-Fri) A bureau de change.

Laverie (10 rue Zola; ☎ 7am-9pm) One of several laundrettes in the old city.

Post Office (rue Dr Jean Bertholet) There's a second entrance on rue Ferrero.

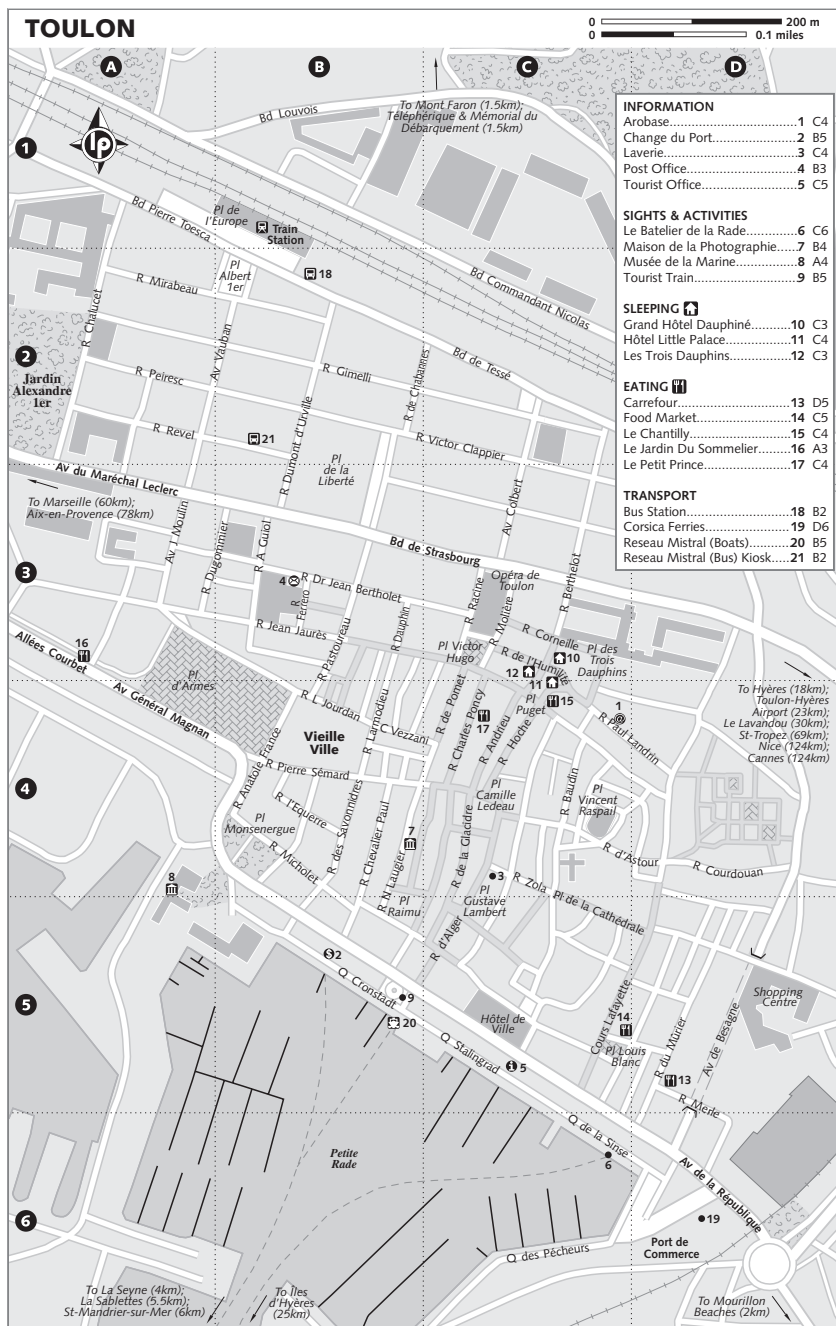
Tourist Office (☎ 04 94 18 53 00; www.toulontourisme.com; 334 av de la République; ☎ 9am-6pm Mon-Sat, 10am-noon Sun Sep-Jun, 9am-8pm Mon-Sat, 10am-noon Sun Jul & Aug) Distributes a useful monthly agenda summarising museum opening hours and events in town.

Sights & Activities

Housed in an imperial arsenal building, the **Musée de la Marine** (Naval Museum; ☎ 04 94 02 02 01; place Monsenergue; adult/child €5/free; ☎ 10am-6pm Wed-Mon) has some intricate scale models of old ships and historic paintings of Toulon.

The compact but high-calibre photographic museum, **Maison de la Photographie** (☎ 04 94 93 07 59; rue Nicolas Laugier, place du Globe; admission free; ☎ noon-6pm Tue-Sat), exhibits contemporary works in a two-tiered, light-filled space.

Towering over the old city to the north is **Mont Faron** (580m), offering a fantastic



CORRENS, FRANCE'S FIRST ORGANIC VILLAGE

Stumbling across **Correns** (pop 800), a small Provençal village in the middle of nowhere (inland in the Var *département*, 50km north of Toulon), you'd be forgiven for thinking 'great, yet another small, Provençal village in the middle of nowhere'.

But there is more to Correns than meets the eye. The mayor, a wine producer, had the enlightened idea in 1997 of turning the village's 200 hectares of vineyards (part of the *Côtes de Provence* label) organic in order to boost the appeal of its vintage.

A decade on, the organic movement has gathered momentum: wines (30% white, 50% rosé and 20% red) have slowly established their reputation, and other productions have also switched to organic means of production: honey, chicken and eggs, olive oil, goat cheese and fodder. School children are also treated to organic meals at the canteen, and the town hall has developed in-house expertise in eco-friendly architecture to help villagers interested in 'greening' their houses.

To sample Correns' organic wonders, **L'Auberge du Parc** (☎ 04 94 59 53 52; www.aubergeduparc.fr; 34 place du Général de Gaulle; menus €25-35; 🍴 lunch & dinner Jul & Aug, lunch & dinner Wed-Sat, lunch Sun Apr-Jun, Sep & Oct) serves an innovative cuisine using mostly organic fruit and vegetables (good-quality organic meat is harder to come by) with a wine list featuring Correns' wines. Dishes are sizeable, as are the five elegant guest rooms (doubles €100 to €130, and there's a swimming pool). For a digestive walk, try the wonderfully cool **Vallon Soun** where the green waters of the Argens River peacefully meander.

For a spot of shopping, **Les Vignerons de Correns et du Val** (☎ 04 94 59 59 46; rue de l'Église; 🕒 3.30-7pm Mon-Fri, 10am-12.30pm & 3.30-7pm Sat) organises tastings and stocks the village's wines.

The **tourist office** (☎ 04 94 37 21 31; www.correns.fr; 2 rue Cabassonne; 🕒 9am-noon Mon-Sat) is awash with organic info and has a list of *chambres d'hôtes* (B&BS) in the area.

Worth a visit during your stay in Correns is the austere 12th-century Cistercian **Abbaye du Thoronet** (☎ 04 94 60 43 90; Le Thoronet; adult/under 25yr/child €6.50/4.50/free; 🕒 10am-6.30pm Mon-Sat, 10am-noon & 2-6.30pm Sun Apr-Sep, 10am-1pm & 2-5pm Mon-Sat, 10am-noon & 2-5pm Sun Oct-Mar). The church is famous for its exceptional acoustics – guides occasionally sing, to demonstrate. For guided tours in English, book ahead.

St-Maximim-la-Ste-Baume, further west, is also famous for its religious edifice. *Da Vinci Code* fans will remember that this is where Mary Magdalene came after Jesus' death and later died. Her relics are allegedly kept in the crypt of the **Ste-Madeleine Basilica**.

panorama of the bay. Near the summit is the **Mémorial du Débarquement** (☎ 04 94 88 08 09; adult/child €3.80/1.55; 🕒 10am-noon & 2-5.30pm Tue-Sun), a WWII museum commemorating the Allied landings that took place along the coast in August 1944. A **téléphérique** (cablecar; ☎ 04 94 92 68 25; return adult/child €6.30/4.50; 🕒 check with tourist office) ascends the mountain from bd de Vence. Take bus 40 from place de la Liberté and get off at the téléphérique stop. See opposite for a combined bus, boat and cablecar ticket.

Good **beaches** for soaking up some rays are 2km southeast at Mourillon or across the bay at Les Sablettes.

Tours

A little **tourist train** (☎ 06 94 36 01 32; adult/child €5/3; 🕒 Feb-Oct) departs from the port to the beaches every 30 minutes, with a commentary in French and English – call or check with the tourist office for departure times.

From the port, you can take a spin around the *rade*, with a commentary (in French only) on the local events of WWII (€9), or in the summer you can take a day trip to the Îles d'Hyères (p890) with **Le Batelier de la Rade** (☎ 04 94 46 24 65; quai de la Sinsse). The trip to Porquerolles (€22 return) takes one hour. It's another 40 minutes to Port-Cros, from where it's a 20-minute hop to Île du Levant (€30 return to tour all three islands).

Sleeping

You won't be spoilt for choice in Toulon: the clientele tends to be passing businesspeople rather than inquisitive tourists. Therefore, hotels tend to be soulless.

Les Trois Dauphins (☎ 04 94 92 65 79; 9 place des Trois Dauphins; d from €32) Near the opera house, this basic one-star hotel has a few rooms with bathrooms and a few more with shared toilets and shower. Many of the rooms smell of to-

bacco so ask to see rooms before you settle. It's run by the same family as at Little Palace.

Hôtel Little Palace (☎ 04 94 92 26 62; www.hotel-littlepalace.com; 6-8 rue Berthelot; s/d €45-54) The slightly over-the-top Italian-inspired decor lacks a little authenticity but its owners definitely don't. The energetic Madame Masson has become the neighbourhood's matriarch and the cute breakfast corner quickly fills with people on errands stopping by for coffee and gossip.

Grand Hôtel Dauphiné (☎ 04 94 92 20 28; www.grandhoteldauphine.com; 10 rue Berthelot; s/d €54/60; ☎) 'Life is like a box of chocolates. You never know what you're gonna get.' Forrest Gump's famous line could have been written for this hotel: rooms vary wildly in quality so ask to see one first (and ask for nonsmoking if you're not keen on the smell of stale tobacco). Thankfully, the staff is accommodating and the €8 buffet breakfast is superb.

Eating

Le Chantilly (☎ 04 94 92 24 37; place Puget; mains €10-25; ☎ 6.30am-11pm) Whether you're here for an early morning breakfast, a mound of *moules-frites* (mussels and chips) at lunchtime or an evening drink to wind down, you're certain to find this stalwart of local life packed with Toulonnais. Going strong since 1907, Le Chantilly's popularity shows no sign of receding any time soon.

Le Petit Prince (☎ 04 94 93 03 45; 16 rue Charles Poncy; mains from €15; ☎ lunch & dinner Mon-Fri, dinner Sat) A few doors down from the opera house, the sweet 'Little Prince' dishes up good ol' French staples such as *entrecôte* (rib steak), *souris d'agneau* (top of a leg of lamb) or *tagliatelles aux ceps et au foie gras* (tagliatelle with mushroom and foie gras) in a cosy atmosphere.

Le Jardin Du Sommelier (☎ 04 94 62 03 27; 20 allées Courbet; mains €25, menu €38; ☎ lunch & dinner Mon-Fri, dinner Sat) The less-than-inspiring location is saved by an impressive wine list (including a tasting formula of three different glasses of wine for €15), seasonally changing Provençal cuisine and elaborate desserts.

SELF-CATERING

Under the plane trees of cours Lafayette you'll find the elongated, open-air **food market** (☎ 7.30am-12.30pm Tue-Sun). Once the picnic-perfect food stalls have packed up for

the day, bric-a-brac and clothes traders take over. Two blocks east, there's a **Carrefour** (rue du Mûrier; ☎ 8.30am-9pm Mon-Sat) supermarket inside the Centre Commercial Mayol (mall).

Getting There & Away

The small international **Toulon-Hyères Airport** (☎ 08 25 01 83 87; www.toulon-hyeres.aeroport.fr) is located 23km east of Toulon, on the edge of the Giens Peninsula (5km south of Hyères). There are regular flights to/from Amsterdam, Brussels, London and Rome.

Ferries to Corsica and Sardinia are run by **Corsica Ferries** (☎ 08 25 09 50 95; Port de Commerce). See p907 for details.

From Toulon's **bus station** (☎ 04 94 24 60 00; bd de Tessé), next to the train station, bus 103 to St-Tropez (eight buses daily) runs east along the coast via Hyères (€1.40, 35 minutes) and Le Lavandou (€12.60, one hour).

There are frequent train connections to coastal cities including Marseille (€10.40, 40 minutes), St-Raphaël (€13.70, 50 minutes), Cannes (€17.80, 1¼ hours), Monaco (€22.90, 2¼ hours) and Nice (€21.40, 1¼ hours).

Getting Around

Bus 102 (five daily) links the airport with Toulon's bus and train station (€1.40, 40 minutes) and Hyères' town centre (€1.40, 10 minutes).

Local buses are run by **Réseau Mistral** (☎ 04 94 03 87 03; rue Revel; ☎ 7.30am-7pm Mon-Fri, 8.30am-12.30pm & 2-6pm Sat). Tickets cost €1.40 each, or €10 for a book of 10. Buses generally run until around 7.30pm or 8.30pm. Sunday service is limited. Bus 7 links the train station with quai Stalingrad.

Réseau Mistral also runs boats that link quai Stalingrad with the towns on the peninsula across the harbour, including La Seyne (line 8M), St-Mandrier-sur-Mer (line 28M) and Sablettes (line 18M). The 20-minute ride costs €2 (€3.90 for an all-day bus and boat ticket, or €6 including a cablecar return trip). Boats run from around 6am to 8pm; line 28M also has a couple of night boats at around 11pm.

WEST OF TOULON

Bandol

pop 8645

To many, the name Bandol conjures up images of rosés chilled to perfection and noble reds elevating meat dishes to new heights. The

seaside resort town of Bandol itself is lesser known, but with its 1600-boat marina, pretty beaches and steep hills proffering uninterrupted sea views, it's a long-standing favourite of French holiday-home owners.

ORIENTATION & INFORMATION

Bandol's centre is located on an anchor-shaped peninsula: the port, marina and historical centre run along an elongated eastern edge while the western side is carved by the picture-perfect Anse de Renécros. From the tip of the peninsula it's only a few breaststrokes to the tiny Île de Bendor. Bandol's train station is 10 minutes' walk north of the marina.

The energetic **tourist office** (☎ 04 94 29 41 35; www.bandol.fr; Allées Vivien; ☹ 9am-noon & 2-6pm Mon-Fri & Sat 9am-noon Sep-Jun, 9.30am-6.30pm Jul-Aug) hands out a comprehensive practical guide in French and English.

Banque Populaire (☎ 04 94 29 32 90; 31 quai de Gaulle), on the marina, has a *bureau de change*.

SIGHTS & ACTIVITIES

Bandol wines have enjoyed surprising popularity throughout their 2000-year history. In Roman times, the then Massilia wines were famous across Gaul; their ability to mature at sea meant they travelled far beyond their home shores in the 16th and 17th centuries (Louis XV was rumoured to be an insatiable fan). Nowadays, Bandol's 49 vineyards carefully manage their prized production (collectively held under the *Appellation d'Origine Contrôlée Vins de Bandol* label) of red, rosé and white. You can drive around the scenic **vineyards** (see opposite) or go to the **Maison des Vins** (☎ 04 94 29 45 03; Place Artaud; ☹ 10am-12.30pm & 3-6.30pm Tue-Sat), where Pascal Perier – aka living Bandol encyclopedia – organises tastings and keeps a well-supplied shop.

The tiny **Île de Bendor**, belonging to the Ricard family (of international pastis fame; pastis is an aniseed-flavoured *apéritif*), is an easy trip from the mainland. It takes just seven minutes by **boat** (☎ 04 94 10 75 93; return €8; ☹ 7.45am-5pm low season; 7am-7pm mid-season; 7am-2am high season) from Bandol, but in summer that's the difference between 'can't-even-see-the-sand-it's-so-overcrowded' beach and 'wow-space-to-breathe' (the beaches are artificial). On the downside, the buildings on the island look like a tacky movie set.

Much more authentic is the yellow-marked **sentier du littoral**, which runs 12km (allow 3½ to four hours) from Bandol's port to La Madrague in St-Cyr-Les-Lecques, with the stunning **Calanque de Port d'Alon** roughly halfway. The easiest way of doing it is to take the bus from Bandol to Les-Lecques (the tourist office has timetables) and walk back to Bandol at your own pace.

Wednesday's colourful **grand marché** (☹ mornings) in Sanary-sur-Mer is the area's main market, drawing crowds from miles around.

SLEEPING & EATING

Camping Les Girelles (☎ 04 94 74 13 18; www.lesgirelles.com; 1003 Chemin de Beaucours; tent per 2 people low/high season €15.90/25; ☹ Easter-Sep) On the Baie de Bandol, in the direction of Sanary, this campsite has bagged the best location on the coast, a mere 30m from the water's edge. There's plenty of shade for pitching your tent, and there's a pizzeria-bar on site.

Key Largo (☎ 04 94 29 46 93; www.hotel-key-largo.com; 19 corniche Bonaparte; d €49-99) Strategically located halfway between the port and the pretty beach of Renécros, the eight rooms with sea views (and private terrace for three of them) are an absolute steal. The remaining 10 still enjoy the same simple but stylish decor and look out on neighbouring gardens. And there are homemade cakes for breakfast no matter where you sleep.

L'Assiette des Saveurs (☎ 04 94 29 80 08; 1 rue Louis Marçon; mains €10; ☹ lunch & dinner) One street back from the busy marina, with its pretty street-side terrace, L'Assiette prepares classic recipes with a cheeky fusion twist – such as monkfish in orange sauce or satay lamb chops. It gets our vote for best value in town.

La Chipote (☎ 04 94 29 41 62; 12 corniche Bonaparte; menus €28; ☹ lunch daily, dinner Fri & Sat) Not content with its stunning location (right on the Renécros beach, with a terrace, panoramic dining room and massive sliding windows letting in the sea breeze), La Chipote also delivers on the plate: fresh fish, tip-top presentation and ace desserts.

GETTING THERE & AWAY

Bandol is on the train line between Toulon (€3.20, 15 minutes) and Marseille (€8.30, 45 minutes), with regular services year round.

Littoral Cars (☎ 04 94 74 01 35) operates a regular bus service between Bandol and Toulon (€4.30,

50 minutes) via Sanary (€1.80, 10 minutes) from around 6am to 7.30pm.

Around Bandol

Bandol's 1500 hectares of **vineyards** spread inland across scenic rolling landscapes and stunning villages (you'll need wheels to get around). The most famous village of all is the hilltop **Le Castellet**, a medieval wonder culminating in a 12th-century castle. Its steep, boutique-lined pedestrian streets are chock-a-block in summer, when the pace often slows to a crawl.

A few hairpin bends down from the village is the fabulous **ourpick Les Quatre Saisons** (☎ 04 94 25 24 90; www.lesquatresaisons.org; 370 montée des Oliviers, rte du Brûlat, Le Castellet; d incl breakfast €90-140; ♻️ 🚰). In their *mas* (traditional Provençal stone house), Patrice and Didier have decorated five exquisite rooms in the purest Provençal style. All rooms open on to a central swimming pool; some also offer breathtaking views of the area. Patrice's *table d'hôtes* (set menu; €40, including drinks) is worth every penny. Make sure you try his divine *vin d'orange amère* (bitter orange liquor). For a share of Patrice's culinary secrets, try his half-day cooking course (€40 per person).

Back on the coast, the pretty-as-a-picture seaside town of **Sanary-sur-Mer** is a stroller's dream. Watch the fishermen unload their catch on the quay, or admire the traditional fishing boats from one of the seafront's cafés. For a chance to eat your own catch, get on board the *Mistigri-Albacore* at the crack of dawn for a day of **deep-sea fishing** (pêche au gros; ☎ 06 07 39 05 48; port de Sanary-sur-Mer; per day €170; 🗓️ Jul-Oct), for usually tuna and swordfish. The port is opposite the town hall.

Sanary's charismatic portside **Hôtel de la Tour** (☎ 04 94 74 10 10; www.sanary-hoteldelatour.com; 24 quai du Général de Gaulle; d incl breakfast €76-103; 🍷) has cheerful rooms, all with brilliant views, to boot. On the downside, such central location comes with a fair amount of background noise.

For a divine meal amid the vines, the recently opened **La Parenthèse de Terrebrune** (☎ 04 94 88 36 19; Domaine de Terrebrune, 724 chemin de la Tourelle, Ollioules; lunch menu €32, dinner menu €55; 🍷 lunch & dinner) serves gourmet seasonal cuisine. Hurry, before Michelin stars start raining on young chef Jérôme Laffont and his wonderful cuisine becomes out of your reach.

NICE TO MENTON

THE CORNICHES

Some of the Côte d'Azur's most spectacular scenery stretches between Nice and Menton. A trio of corniches (coastal roads) hugs the cliffs between Nice and Monaco, each higher up the hill than the last. The middle corniche ends in Monaco; the upper and lower continue to Menton. (If you're in a hurry, you can take the uninspiring A8, a bit further inland.)

Corniche Inférieure

Skimming the villa-lined waterfront, the Corniche Inférieure (also known as the Basse Corniche, the Lower Corniche or the N98) sticks pretty close to the train line, passing (west to east) through Villefranche-sur-Mer, St-Jean-Cap Ferrat, Beaulieu-sur-Mer, Èze-sur-Mer and Cap d'Ail.

VILLEFRANCHE-SUR-MER

pop 6650

This picturesque pastel-coloured, terracotta-roofed fishing port overlooking the Cap Ferrat peninsula was a favourite with Jean Cocteau, who painted the frescoes in the 17th-century **Chapelle St-Pierre**. Steps split the steep cobblestone streets that weave through the old town, including the oldest, rue Obscure, an eerie vaulted passageway built in 1295. Looking down on the township is the 16th-century citadel. Beyond the port is a sandy **beach** offering picture-perfect views of the town.

ST-JEAN-CAP FERRAT

pop 2100

On the Cap Ferrat peninsula, the fishing-village-turned-playground-for-the-wealthy, St-Jean-Cap Ferrat, conceals an enclave of millionaires' villas, with illustrious residents both present and past. On the narrow isthmus of the town, the extravagant **Musée de Béatrice Ephrussi de Rothschild** (☎ 04 93 01 33 09; www.villa-ephrussi.com; adult/student €10/7.30; 🗓️ 10am-7pm Jul & Aug, to 6pm mid-Feb-Jun, Sep & Oct, 2-6pm Mon-Fri & 10am-6pm Sat & Sun Nov-mid-Feb) gives you an appreciation of the area's wealth. Housed in a 1912 Tuscan-style villa built for the Baroness de Rothschild, it's full of 18th-century furniture, paintings, tapestries and porcelain. A combined ticket with the Villa Grecque Kérylos in Beaulieu costs €15/10.40 for adults/students. The peninsula also has three **walking trails** with

glimmering seascapes, and secluded coves for swimming.

BEAULIEU-SUR-MER

pop 3720, boats 800

Some of the best-preserved belle époque architecture along the coast is in the seaside holiday town of Beaulieu-sur-Mer, including its elaborate 1904 **rotunda** with Corinthian columns capped by a cupola. Another belle époque beauty is the **Villa Grecque Kérylos** (☎ 04 93 01 47 29; www.villa-kerylos.com; av Gustave Eiffel; adult/student €8.50/6.20; ☎ 10am-7pm Jul & Aug, to 6pm mid-Feb–Jun, Sep & Oct, 2-6pm Mon-Fri & 10am-6pm Sat & Sun Nov–mid-Feb), a reproduction of an Athenian villa built by archeologist Théodore Reinach in 1902.

Moyenne Corniche

The Moyenne Corniche – the middle coastal road (the N7) – clings to the hillside. It was here that Alfred Hitchcock filmed *To Catch a Thief*, which starred Grace Kelly. The actress met Prince Rainier of Monaco at that time, and it was here that she later lost her life in a car crash. If you want to enjoy the views, the bus to Monaco takes this road, so bag a seat on the right from Nice to Monaco (on the left in the opposite direction). From Nice, the Moyenne Corniche travels past Col de Villefranche, through Èze and to Beausoleil, the French town bordering Monte Carlo.

ÈZE

pop 2930

At the pinnacle of a 427m peak is the medieval stone village of Èze. Once occupied by Ligurians and Phoenicians, today it's home to one-off galleries and artisan boutiques within its enclosed walls (there's only one doorway in or out of the village). The high point is the **Jardin Èze** (admission €5; ☎ 9am-sunset), a slanting cliff-side garden of exotic cacti with views of the Med all the way to Corsica (on a good day).

To explore the village's nooks and crannies after the tour buses have left, donkeys can cart your luggage uphill from the car park to **Château Eza** (☎ 04 93 41 12 24; www.chateaueza.com; rue de la Pise; d from €180; ☎ ☒), which also has a lofty gastronomic restaurant and terrace (lunch menus €45 to €55, dinner mains €45), with views of the Med on a plate.

On the seaside below is the village's coastal and very belle époque counterpart, Èze-sur-

Mer (where U2's Bono has a villa). Èze-sur-Mer and Èze village are connected by a spectacular (and steep!) walking path, where German philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche (1844–1900) mused about the theories that formed the basis of his work *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*. Now labelled **Chemin de Nietzsche**, the rocky path takes about an hour, and in winter it's the only link without your own wheels. In summer a shuttle bus meets every train (Èze-sur-Mer is on the train line between Nice and Ventimiglia, which also stops at Monaco and Menton). Year-round, buses 82 and 112 run direct to Èze village from Nice (€1, 20 minutes). There's a helpful **tourist office** (☎ 04 93 41 26 00; www.eze-riviera.com; place du Général de Gaulle) at the base of the village.

Grande Corniche

The Grande Corniche, whose panoramas are the most dramatic of all, leaves Nice as the D2564. It passes **La Turbie** (population 3150), which sits on a promontory directly above Monaco and offers vertigo-inducing views of the principality. The best views are from the town's **Trophée des Alps** (☎ 04 93 41 20 84; cours Albert 1; adult/child €5/3.50; ☎ 10am-1.30pm & 2.30-5pm Tue-Sun Sep-May, longer in summer), one of only two Roman trophy monuments in the world (the other's in Romania), built by Augustus in 6 BC. The corniche continues to **Roquebrune** (population 12,800), a hilltop village where architect Le Corbusier is buried.

MENTON

pop 27,300

To the east of Monaco, the pastel-shaded, palm-lined seaside town of Menton is within walking distance of the Italian border.

Protected by the surrounding mountains, Menton enjoys a warm, near-subtropical climate that has made its good fortune: 19th-century European royals moved their winter residences to its shores, and Menton was Europe's biggest lemon producer until the 1930s. Production is much smaller these days but the sun-coloured fruit is celebrated every year during the February Fête de Citrons.

The town's annual 316 days of sunshine have also made it a popular retirement destination, an image that Menton's authorities have tried to shake up in the last few years. But as a visitor, Menton's staid character might actually come as a welcome break from the hustle and bustle of the rest of the coast.

FRUITY FÊTE

Since the 1930s, Menton's lemon cultivation has been embraced during its **Fête du Citron** (Lemon Festival; www.feteducitron.com). Every February, kitsch lemon-adorned floats weave processions along the seafront, accompanied by marching bands, and giant wire-framed sculptures bearing thousands of lemons fill the Jardins Biovès.

Five metric tonnes of the total 150 are used to replace fruit that rots during the course of the festival. Undamaged fruit is sold off at bargain prices out the front of the Palais de l'Europe at the end of the festival, once sculptures have been dismantled. Ironically, the lemons used for the festival come from Spain because Menton's lemons are too irregularly shaped to fit neatly on the floats.

Year-round, you can view Europe's largest variety of citrus in the gardens of the **Palais Carnolès** (☎ 04 93 35 49 71; 3 av de la Madone; admission free; ☹ 10am-noon & 2-6pm Wed-Mon). The tourist office has bucketloads of info about the town's favourite fruit.

Orientation

Promenade du Soleil runs southwest to northeast along the beach. Av Édouard VII links the train station with the beach. Av Boyer, home to the tourist office, is 350m to the east. From the station, turn left and walk along av de la Gare, then take the second right; the tourist office is about halfway down av Boyer. The bus station is approximately 500m north along av Boyer from the tourist office.

Av Boyer and its parallel to the west, av Verdun, are divided by the Jardins Biovès, an elongated sequence of parks where the annual Lemon Festival displays are held.

On and around the hill at the northeastern end of promenade du Soleil is the old town; the Vieux Port lies just beyond it.

Information

BOOKSHOPS

Librairie de la Presse (25 av Félix Faure) Stocks a fine range of guides, travel books and foreign-language newspapers.

INTERNET ACCESS

Café des Arts (☎ 04 93 35 78 67; 16 rue de la République; per hr €6; ☹ internet access 7.30-11am & 2-8pm Mon-Sat, restaurant 7.30am-10pm Mon-Sat) Also a funky café with mains from €9 to €14.

MONEY

There are plenty of banks with exchange facilities along rue Partouneaux.

Banque Populaire Côte d'Azur (☎ 04 92 10 43 80; 31 av Félix Faure) Has an automatic exchange machine outside.

Crédit Lyonnais (☎ 04 92 41 81 11; 4 av Boyer) Two doors down from the tourist office. Has a 24-hour currency machine.

POST

Post Office (cours George V)

TOURIST INFORMATION

Service du Patrimoine (Heritage Office; ☎ 04 92 10 97 10; 24 rue St-Michel; ☹ 10am-12.30pm & 1.30-6pm Tue-Sat) Runs thematic organised tours (Jean Cocteau and Menton, artists, gardens etc) for €5 to €8 per person.

Tourist Office (☎ 04 92 41 76 76; www.menton.fr; 8 av Boyer; ☹ 9am-7pm mid-Jun-mid-Sep, 8.30am-12.30pm & 2-6pm Mon-Sat, 9am-12.30pm Sun mid-Sep-mid-Jun) In the Palais de l'Europe.

Sights & Activities

Step back in time in the peaceful **old town**, dominated by the **Basilique St-Michel** (☹ 10am-noon & 3-5.15pm Mon-Fri, 3-5.15pm Sat & Sun). The ornate, Italian-inspired early-17th-century basilica is accessed by a labyrinth of little staircases from the old town's narrow lanes.

In a seafront bastion dating from 1636, the **Musée Jean Cocteau** (☎ 04 93 57 72 30; quai Napoléon III; admission €3; ☹ 10am-noon & 2-6pm Wed-Mon) displays drawings, tapestries and mosaics by the multitalented poet, dramatist, artist and film director. You can view Cocteau's frescoes in the **Salle des Mariages** (Marriage Hall; place Ardoïno; admission €1.50; ☹ 8.30am-12.30pm & 2-5pm Mon-Fri) in the Hôtel de Ville.

Yes, Menton has a **beach**, along promenade du Soleil, and yes, it's free, but no, there's no sand, only pebbles. You'll find sandy private beaches directly north of the Vieux Port, and east of Port de Garavan, the main pleasure-boat harbour.

Sleeping

Camping Saint Michel (☎ 04 93 35 81 23; rte des Ciappes de Castellar; per 2 adults & tent €15; ☹ Apr-mid-Oct) This

two-star ground has dreamy views of town. Get here on bus 6.

Auberge de Jeunesse (☎ 04 93 35 93 14; www.fuaj.org; Plateau St-Michel; dm incl breakfast & sheets €16.20; ☎ reception 7-10am & 5-10pm, closed Nov–mid-March) Menton's HI hostel is a 1.5km hike uphill from the train station. Take the (infrequent) bus 6 to the campsite, situated 500m from the hostel.

Hôtel Richelieu (☎ 04 93 35 74 71; www.richelieu-menton.com; 26 rue Partouneaux; s €45-52, d €52-92) Many of the rooms in this central bourgeois hotel have kept beautiful period features such as grand fireplaces. The owner is a well of knowledge on the area, particularly inland and on the Mercantour national park (p858).

Hôtel Claridges (☎ 04 93 35 72 53; www.claridges-menton.com; 39 av de Verdun; s €47-52, d €56-71) This is the cheapest hotel in town, but sensitive design souls should abstain, or brace themselves for the festival of clashing patterned materials in the rooms. On the bright side, it's clean, there's free internet access and the train and bus stations are nearby.

Le Royal Westminster (☎ 04 93 28 69 69; www.vacancesbleues.com; 1510 promenade du Soleil; s €65-109, d €80-134; ☎ ☎) This shiny 1870 building right on the promenade is part of a chain, but you wouldn't know it. Rooms are fairly bog-standard but those with sea views definitely have some 'wow' factor. It has good wheelchair access.

Eating

Menton is very popular with groups (pensioners in particular), so it's well endowed with cheerful, inexpensive restaurants. Anywhere in the old town and the centre's pedestrian streets is a good bet.

Al Vicoletto (☎ 04 93 28 18 40; Impasse Bellecour, 40 rue Partouneaux; mains €9-14; ☎ lunch & dinner) With Italy being just a hop and a skip from Menton, the Italian food in town is guaranteed to be the genuine article. This is just one example, with lots of veal on the menu and great fresh pasta.

L'Occitan (☎ 04 93 41 67 76; 7 & 11 rue des marins; 3-course lunch menu €16, mains €15; ☎ lunch & dinner Tue-Sat, lunch Sun) The southern flavours in this popular brasserie's cuisine come from the southwest (foie gras, *magret* etc), but that doesn't seem to faze southeastern residents, who love coming here on market days.

A Braijade Méridionale (☎ 04 93 35 65 65; 66 rue longue; mains €17-25; ☎ lunch & dinner Thu-Tue Sep-Jun, dinner Jul & Aug) Unsurprisingly, lemons feature

prominently on the menu of this rustic, stone-walled restaurant, found in one of the old town's tiny lanes: stuffed lemons, red mullet fillet in parsley-and-lemon sauce, lemon-marinated chicken...even the menus are yellow!

If you're planning a beach picnic, fill your basket at the old town's covered market, **Marché Municipal** (Les Halles; quai de Monléon; ☎ 5am-1pm Tue-Sun), or pop into the supermarket **8 à Huit** (7 rue Amiral Courbet; ☎ 9am-7.45pm Mon-Sat, 12.30-7.45pm Sun).

Getting There & Away

The **bus station** (☎ 04 93 28 43 27, information office 04 93 35 93 60) is next to 12 promenade Maréchal Leclerc, the northern continuation of av Boyer. Services are run by **Bus RCA** (☎ 04 93 85 64 44), and all fares cost €1 (except to Nice airport, a trip that costs €18 and takes 1½ hours): Monaco (30 minutes), Nice (1¼ hours), Ste-Agnès (45 minutes) and Sospel (45 minutes).

Trains going to Ventimiglia cost €2.30 and take around 15 minutes. For more information on train services along the Côte d'Azur, see p874.

TUM (Transports Urbains de Menton; ☎ 04 93 35 93 60) runs nine bus lines in the area. Lines 1 and 2 link the train station with the old town. Tickets cost €1.

MONACO (PRINCIPAUTÉ DE MONACO)

pop 32,000 / ☎ 377

Your first glimpse of this pocket-sized principality will probably make your heart sick: after all the gorgeous medieval hilltop villages, glittering beaches and secluded peninsulas of the surrounding area, Monaco's concrete high-rises, reclaimed land and astronomic prices might come as a shock.

But Monaco has a surprising amount to offer, much more, in fact, than the customary spin at its casino's roulette table. In its 1.95 sq km, the world's second-smallest state (a smidgen bigger than the Vatican) has managed to squeeze in a thriving performing art and sport scene (Formula One, but also a world-famous circus festival and a tennis open), a world-class aquarium, a beautiful old town, stunning gardens, interesting architecture throughout and a royal family on a par with British royals for best gossip fodder.

In terms of practicalities, Monaco is a sovereign state but there is no border control. It has its own flag (red and white), national holiday (19 November), postal system (good for the card home to grandma) and telephone country code (377), but the official language is French and the country uses the euro even though it is not part of the European Union.

History

Originally from the nearby Genoa region of Italy (hence the Monégasque language's similarity with the Genoese dialect), the Grimaldi family has ruled Monaco for most of the period since 1297, except for its occupation during the French Revolution, and its loss of territories in 1848. Its independence was again recognised by France in 1860. Five years later, a monetary agreement with France and the opening of the Monte Carlo casino revived the country's fortunes. Today there are just 7800 Monégasque citizens, by either parentage or marriage, out of a total population of 32,000 (and 107 nationalities); they live an idyllic tax-free life of cradle-to-grave security. Alas, all other residents and businesses pay tax.

Ever since the marriage of Prince Rainier III of Monaco (who ruled between 1949 and 2005) to Hollywood actress Grace Kelly, Monaco's ruling family has regularly featured in gossip magazines. Albert II, prince since his father's death in 2005, hasn't escaped media scrutiny (he has no legitimate heirs but two illegitimate children), but his achievements as an athlete (he played for the Monaco football team and is a black belt in judo), his charity work and promotion of the arts have earned him favourable press.

Orientation

Monaco is made up of six main areas: Monaco Ville (also known as the old city or Rocher de Monaco), with its narrow, medieval streets leading to the Palais du Prince (Prince's Palace) on a 60m-high outcrop of rock on the southern side of the port; the capital, Monte Carlo, which is north of the port; La Condamine, the predominantly flat area immediately to the southwest of the port; Fontvieille, the industrial area southwest of Monaco Ville; Moneghetti, the hillside suburb west of La Condamine; and Larvotto, the beach area north of Monte Carlo, from where the French town of Beausoleil is just three streets uphill.

Information

BOOKSHOPS

Scruples (☎ 93 50 43 52; 9 rue Princesse Caroline) Well-stocked English-language bookshop.

INTERNET ACCESS

Stars 'n' Bars (☎ 97 97 95 95; www.starsnbars.com; 6 quai Antoine 1er; per 15min €2.50; ☎ 11am-midnight) There's a cybercorner and wi-fi inside this rockin' restaurant/bar (see Drinking, p904).

LAUNDRY

Laverie (1 Escalier de la Riviera, Beausoleil; ☎ 7am-7pm)

MEDICAL SERVICES

Centre Hospitalier Princesse Grace (☎ emergency 97 98 97 69, switchboard 97 98 99 00; av Pasteur)

MONEY

Monaco-imprinted euro coins are rarely spotted in circulation, and are quickly pocketed by collectors.

There are (of course!) numerous banks near the casino. In La Condamine, you'll find banks on bd Albert 1er.

Change Bureau (Jardins du Casino; ☎ 9am-7.30pm)

POST

Monégasque stamps must be used to post mail within Monaco and to countries beyond; rates are the same as for France. There are post office branches in each of Monaco's districts.

Post Office (1 av Henri Dunant) In Monte Carlo.

TELEPHONE

Calls between Monaco and France are international calls. Dial 00 followed by Monaco's country code (377) when calling Monaco from France or elsewhere abroad. To phone France from Monaco, dial 00 and France's country code (33), even if you're only calling from the eastern side of bd de France (in Monaco) to its western side (in France)!

TOURIST INFORMATION

Tourist Office (☎ 92 16 61 16; www.visitmonaco.com; 2a bd des Moulins; ☎ 9am-7pm Mon-Sat, 10am-1pm Sun) Across the public gardens from the casino. From mid-June to late-September additional tourist information kiosks open around the harbour and the train station.

Sights & Activities

PALAIS DU PRINCE

At 11.55am every day, guards are changed at Monaco's **Palais du Prince** (Prince's Palace;

(☎ 93 25 18 31), at the southern end of rue des Remparts in Monaco Ville. For a half-hour inside glimpse into royal life, you can tour the **state apartments** (adult/child €7/3.50; ☎ 9.30am-6.30pm May-Sep, 10.30am-6pm Apr, 10am-5.30pm Oct) with an 11-language audioguide.

A combined ticket, which also lets you view a display of Napoléon's personal effects in the southern wing of the palace at the **Musée des Souvenirs Napoléoniens** (☎ 10.30am-5pm Dec-Mar, to 5.30pm Oct & Apr, 9.30am-6.30pm May-Sep), costs €9 (children €4.50).

MUSÉE OCÉANOGRAPHIQUE DE MONACO

Propped on a sheer cliff-face, the graceful **Musée Océanographique de Monaco** (☎ 93 15 36 00; av St-Martin; adult/student €12.50/6; ☎ 9.30am-7pm Jul & Aug, to 6.30pm Apr-Jun & Sep, to 6pm Oct-Mar), built in 1910, houses a fantastic aquarium. There are eerie sharks and bemusing tropical fish, a tactile basin where you can touch a variety of sea creatures, and daily sessions with the aquarium's technicians to find out more about the ins and outs of running an aquarium. All signs are translated into English, Italian and German. One vast, columned floor explores the evolution of oceanography with amazing fossils and ship replicas. Even if you're not dining at the rooftop restaurant (mains €11 to €21, with lunch served from noon to 3.30pm, and a snack bar open from 9.30am to 6pm), come up for a squiz at the spectacular views.

CATHÉDRALE DE MONACO

An adoring crowd continually shuffles past Prince Rainier's and Princess Grace's graves, located on the western side of the cathedral choir of the 1875 Romanesque-Byzantine **Cathédrale de Monaco** (4 rue Colonel). Monaco's boys' choir, Les Petits Chanteurs de Monaco, sings Sunday Mass at 10am between September and June.

JARDIN EXOTIQUE

Flowering year-round, over 1000 species of cacti and succulents tumble down the slopes of the **Jardin Exotique** (☎ 93 15 29 80; 62 bd du Jardin Exotique; adult/student €6.90/3.60; ☎ 9am-7pm mid-May-mid-Sep, 9am-6pm mid-Sep-mid-May). For non-gardeners, the main draw is undoubtedly the spectacular vistas over the principality and endless Med. Admission also includes a half-hour guided visit of the stalactites and stalagmites in the **Observatory Caves**. From

the tourist office, take bus 2 to the Jardin Exotique terminus.

BEACHES

A few kilometres east of Monte Carlo, Monaco's nearest beaches are the free **Plages du Larvotto** and the €50-a-day **Monte Carlo Beach** the latter including a sun lounge, security for your accoutrements while you bathe, and parking.

Tours

A saviour from all those hills is the **Azur Express tourist train** (☎ 92 05 64 38; tour €6). Starting opposite the Musée Océanographique, multi-language, 30-minute city tours run every day from 10am to 5pm.

Festivals & Events

Brazilian triple-world champion Nelson Piquet famously likened driving Monaco's **Formula One Grand Prix** with 'riding a bicycle around your living room'. Monaco's cachet nonetheless means it's the most coveted trophy, and the narrow lanes, tortuous road layout and hairpin bends means spectators can get closer to the action than at most circuits. Trackside tickets (from about €70 standing, €270 seated) for the May event can be purchased from the Automobile Club de Monaco (www.formula1monaco.com), but get in early as demand is steeper than the near-vertical streets. If you're dead keen, you can walk the 3.2km circuit; the tourist office has maps.

Also death-defying, the **International Circus Festival of Monaco** (www.montecarlofestivals.com), held each year in late January, showcases heart-stopping acts from around the globe.

Sleeping BUDGET

If your shoestring budget's fraying, consider basing yourself at one of Nice's hostels or budget hotels and taking the quick 20-minute train trip to Monaco. The neighbouring French town of Beausoleil is also a good hunting ground for lower-priced accommodation.

Relais International de la Jeunesse Thalassa (☎ 04 93 78 18 58; 2 av Gramaglia, Cap d'Ail; dm incl sheets €17; ☎ closed Nov-Mar) If you're not up for the Nice-Monaco train trip, try staying at the closest hostel to Monaco, in a beautiful spot right by the sea on Cap d'Ail.

MIDRANGE

Hôtel Le Versailles (☎ 93 50 79 34; 4-6 av Prince Pierre; s €90-90, d €100-160; 🍷) Run by a gregarious family, this sun-filled hotel is good value for Monaco: refurbishment was coming to an end at the time of research and all rooms have wooden floors, simple but tasteful decor, flat screen TVs, wi-fi, and best of all, fridges to keep your grub budget.

Hôtel de France (☎ 93 30 24 64; fax 92 16 13 34; 6 rue de la Turbie; s/d/tr €80/90/108) This is the cheapest place in town, which unfortunately comes at the expense of friendly service. Centrally located in the Condamine district, you can also find nearby 24-hour parking for €7.50.

Hôtel Alexandra (☎ 93 50 63 13; fax 92 16 06 48; 35 bd Princesse Charlotte; s €100-125, d €120-160, tr €170-190; 🍷) This turn-of-the-20th-century hotel is conveniently located in Monte Carlo, close to the train stations, but its 56 spacious rooms are in need of a revamp. Breakfast is a hefty €15.

TOP END

Here are some world-famous places at which to blow your winnings.

Hôtel Hermitage (☎ 98 06 40 00; www.montecarloresort.com; sq Beaumarchais; d low season from €370, high season €460, grand prix and first two weeks of August €510; 🍷 🍷 🍷) This opulent fresco-cloistered Italianate landmark hotel with good wheelchair access features a stained-glass winter garden built by Gustave Eiffel, a sea-water swimming pool, and a gastronomic restaurant with arresting Med views serving wondrous seafood.

Hôtel Métropole (☎ 93 15 15 15; www.metropole.com; 4 av de la Madone; d low season from €400, high season €500, grand prix and first two weeks of August €590; 🍷 🍷 🍷) A sumptuously renovated 1889 palace in the heart of Monte Carlo, with black and white diamond-laid marble floors, huge walk-in showers and carpet so deep that your feet sink in. The restaurant downstairs is the playground of internationally famous Joël Robuchon (*menus* €70 and €170, open for lunch and dinner daily).

Eating

Decently priced restaurants congregate in La Condamine along place d'Armes and rue Princesse Caroline, and there's a raft of sandwich bars and cheap eateries along quai Albert 1er. In Monte Carlo, there are a few snack stops inside the Métropole shopping centre. However, if you're living it *way* up, head to the dining rooms of the sumptuous hotels.

Bilig (☎ 97 98 20 43; 11bis rue Princesse Caroline; mains €6-12; 🍷 11am-6pm Mon-Sat winter, to 10pm summer) A small café serving big portions of wonderful salads, tasty crêpes and the odd meat dish or two on a pretty sundeck.

Vecchia Firenze (☎ 93 30 27 70; 4-6 av Prince Pierre; mains €12-27; 🍷 lunch & dinner Tue-Fri, dinner Sat) This Italian brasserie is run by the same family as at Hôtel Le Versailles. The pasta and pizza could not be more authentic and there is seldom French spoken inside the art deco glasshouse.

Huit & Demi (☎ 93 50 97 02; cnr rue Langlé & rue Princesse Caroline; mains €13-27; 🍷 noon-3pm & 7-11pm Mon-Fri, 7-11pm Sat) Very chic and very popular. You can savour your Italian fare indoors amid crimson-coloured walls lined with celebrity B&W portraits, or on the street-side terrace from February to December, when the sun is shining.

Le Castelroc (☎ 93 30 36 68; place du Palais; mains €22-27; 🍷 9am-3pm daily, dinner Tue-Sat May-Sep) Right across from the palace, and behind the souvenir stalls, hides the authentic Le Castelroc. Its alfresco terrace is the perfect place to try genuine Monégasque specialities like *barbajuan* (a beignet filled with spinach and cheese) and *cundyun* (Monaco's version of *salade niçoise*).

SELF-CATERING

Pit stops for self-catering include a **food market** (place d'Armes; 🍷 7am-2pm) and a **Casino Supermarket** (bd Albert 1er), both in La Condamine. The principality's parks have plenty of benches for picnicking.

Drinking

Café de Paris (☎ 98 06 76 23; place du Casino; mains €17-53; 🍷 7am-2am) Adjacent to the opulent Monte Carlo Casino, this is a fabulous spot for a classy lunch or a decadent coffee with liqueur and pastry whilst limo-spotting from the sprawling 300-seat terrace.

Stars 'n' Bars (☎ 97 97 95 95; 6 quai Antoine 1er; mains €14.50-22; 🍷 noon-2.30am Tue-Sun) Any star worth his or her reputation has partied at this American western saloon: check out the gazillion pictures of in-situ celebrities and admire the Grand Prix paraphernalia while you tuck into humongous burgers and wash the lot down with bottled beers or heavy-duty cocktails.

Fusion (☎ 97 97 95 95; 6 quai Antoine 1er; mains €15-25; 🍷 7pm-2.30am Mon-Sat) A self-proclaimed specialist in 'mixology', Fusion's cocktails are

priced on a par with its Asian food, ie expensive. However, it gets points for removing the endangered red tuna off its menu and for the slightly surreal cruise liner-like interior.

Quai des Artistes (☎ 97 97 97 77; 4 quai Antoine 1er; mains €15-35; ☎ noon-1am) Another themed port-side restaurant/cocktail bar, this time devoted to acting's noble form – theatre. Fancy seafood platters and drinks are served under massive chandeliers, pictures of actors on stage and puppets in stage costumes.

Entertainment

Pack your evening wear for concerts, opera and ballet, which are held at various venues. The tourist office has a schedule of local events. Tickets for most cultural events are sold at **fnac** (☎ 93 10 81 81; Centre Commercial le Métropole, 17 av des Spélugues).

Flashman's (☎ 93 30 09 03; 7 av Princesse Alice; ☎ 8am-5am Mon & Wed-Fri, 7pm-5am Sat & Sun) The retro American diner-style decor with fluoro lights and chrome counter is rather funky at night. If you're not up for a boogie, there's a small outdoor booth in which to chill out.

CASINOS

Living out your James Bond fantasies just doesn't get any better than at Monte Carlo's monumental, richly decorated showpiece, the 1910-built **Casino de Monte Carlo** (☎ 98 06 21 21; www.casinomontecarlo.com; place du Casino; ☎ European Rooms from noon Sat & Sun, from 2pm Mon-Fri). You have to pay even before you play: admission is €10 for the European Rooms, with poker/slot machines, French roulette and *trente et quarante* (a card game), and €20 for the Private Rooms, which offer baccarat, blackjack, craps and American roulette. The jacket-and-tie dress code kicks in after 10pm.

Minimum entry age for both types of rooms is 18; bring photo ID.

CINEMAS

Cinéma Le Sporting (☎ 08 36 68 00 72; place du Casino; adult/student €9/6.50) often has movies in their original language. An **open-air cinema** (parking des Pêcheurs; adult/student €10/7) has nightly shows from June to September, specialising in crowd-pleasing blockbusters, mostly in English.

THEATRE

The 18th-century fortress-turned-outdoor theatre, **Théâtre du Fort Antoine** (☎ 93 50 80 00; av

de la Quarantaine; ☎ plays 9pm Mon Jul & Aug), is a great spot to while away a summer evening.

In winter, Monte Carlo's **Théâtre Princesse Grace** (☎ 93 25 32 27; www.tpgmonaco.com; 12 av d'Ostende; tickets €27-42), designed by the late princess, stages anything from magic shows to gospel music and comedy.

Getting There & Away

BUS

Buses to France leave from various stops around the city; the tourist office has schedules and maps.

CAR & MOTORCYCLE

Some 25 official paying car parks are scattered around the principality. One of the most convenient is the Parking des Boulingrins under the casino, from where you exit next to the tourist office. The first hour is free; the next six hours costs €2.40 per hour, and it's €0.80 per hour beyond that.

If you're driving (not really necessary in this compact little country), note that you can't take your car into Monaco Ville unless you have either a Monaco or a 06 (Alpes-Maritimes) licence plate.

TRAIN

Trains to and from Monaco's **train station** (av Prince Pierre) are run by the French SNCF.

A train trip along the coast offers mesmerising views of the Mediterranean Sea and the mountains. There are frequent trains to Nice (€3.20, 20 minutes), and east to Menton (€1.80, 10 minutes), and to the first town across the border in Italy, Ventimiglia (€3.20, 20 minutes).

Getting Around

BUS

Several urban bus lines traverse Monaco; bus 4 links the train station with the tourist office and also with the casino. Tickets cost €1.

LIFTS

About 15 *ascenseurs publics* (public lifts) whisk you up and down the hillsides. Most operate 24 hours; others run between 6am and midnight or 1am.

TAXI

Expect to pay around €14 for a 10-minute taxi ride. To order one, call ☎ 04 93 15 01 01.

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