



*there magazine*

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# ART BRUSSELS

WELCOME TO THE ECCENTRIC NEW CAPITAL OF EUROPEAN ART

A STAR ALLIANCE MEMBER 



## OBSERVATION DECK: NICE

KATHRYN TOMASETTI RECALLS A MAGICAL TIME OF SUN, SEA AND ART IN THE SOUTH OF FRANCE

**T**he French Riviera has a flamboyant reputation. The Beckhams, Bono and Brangelina all have homes here.

Roman Abramovich and P Diddy lounge around on superyachts from Monte Carlo to St Tropez. The Cannes Film Festival and the Monaco Grand Prix mean that, come May, starlets are a *centime* a dozen.

Yet spend any extended period of time here and you'll quickly realise that the south of France is egalitarian, not elite. Coastal pathways are entirely public, often winding through the gardens of the world's most expensive mansions. Public transport throughout the region costs a flat €1 per ride – and thanks to dedicated traffic lanes the bus is often quicker than driving a Ferrari. And best of all, for an art lover like me, almost every single local museum – and there are more of them in Nice than other city in France outside Paris – is free.

Raised under Milan's all-too-grey skies, I first rattled into Nice on the little coastal train. I thought I would stay for three months, learn a little French, then head off to Paris for my next French adventure. But Nice had other plans for me. Three months morphed into a sun-kissed six months. Then a year, then two. This summer I will celebrate eight years living in this Mediterranean city.

Nice's free museums, from Musée Matisse to the Museum of Modern Art – and the lovely Musée Masséna, have me spellbound. But, from day one, I've always been particularly fascinated with the way world-famous art is part of the mainstream fabric of Niçois daily life: when I step outside my front door, it's like stepping into a painting.

Claude Monet's *Antibes seen from Salis*? I can check out that vista just down the road. Henri Matisse's *Fête des Fleurs*? These winter parades continue to cloak Nice's Promenade

des Anglais in mimosas and roses each Carnival season. Pierre-Auguste's *Still Life with Oranges and Apples*? I shop for these juicy citrus fruits each week – sometimes at sunrise when the sea glows pink – at Nice's Cours Saleya market. Marc Chagall's *Fiancés in the Nice Sky* is a very special picture for me: I met my husband at Nice's panoramic Colline du Château. Chagall's dreamy cityscape made the postcard-perfect background to our first encounter.

Today, artists continue with their own interpretations of these magical shores. Among the thriving local venues is the Maison Abandonnée, a formerly derelict 19th-century mansion now used for contemporary art, and La Station, which takes its name from its previous incarnation as a petrol pump. I love that Nice revels in art and can take these ordinary, everyday places and turn them into something beautiful.

**Next month: Rome**



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