

NICE

Join the beautiful people in the timelessly chic French Riviera town, whose culture, gastronomy and azure coast boast some serious *va va voom*, says Tristan Rutherford

Why go? Niçoise call October the 'Golden Month'. The last of the summer crowds have departed with clinking bottles of olive oil and rosé, leaving Nice's 5km-long beach and palm-punctuated Promenade des Anglais flip-flop free. A cooling sun nourishes chanterelles and sees plump pumpkins piled high at the half dozen produce markets in town, while days are still balmy enough to enjoy life alfresco, with average highs tickling a pleasant 21C.

What to do Start in the ochre-hued Vieux Nice (old town), taking in boutiques, bars and baroque gems like the Cathédrale Sainte-Reparate and Palais Lascaris. Stop for an ice cream in one of 94 flavours at Fenocchio fenocchio.fr (opened in 1966), then stroll to Cours Saleya, usually a colourful flower market but a buzzy *brocante* on Mondays. Want the inside line on the city's food scene? Try a four-hour market tour and lunch with A Taste of Nice (£62pp) foodtoursofnice.com or opt for a class at the home of renowned chef Christian Plumail (£80pp) christian-plumail.com. Alternatively, head over to Nice's edgiest gourmet *quartier*, Rue Bonaparte, for pintxo joints, crêperies and Brazilian coffee houses, plus organic markets with pour-your-own bio wine spigots like O'Quotidien 2 Rue Martin Seytour. With more museums than any French city outside Paris, Nice's Musée Matisse musee-matisse-nice.org is the most bucolic, residing inside a Genoese villa flanked by olive groves. The £9 entrance fee grants access to all municipal museums over a 24-hour period, including Musée National Marc Chagall and art gallery MAMAC, though be aware, many close on Mondays and Tuesdays.

Where to stay The flamboyant pink edifice Hotel Le Negresco hotel-negresco-nice.com has been Nice's finest seafront hotel since 1913. Just a five-minute walk from the old town, the grand dame has hosted everyone from rock stars to royalty. In the neighbourhood around Place Garibaldi, Hotel Le Genève hotel-le-geneve-nice.com sits atop the hipster Café des Chineurs. Here a £13 breakfast of Provençal jams and boulangerie-fresh

brioche is served within a curated francophilia of Bordeaux wine crates and vintage ceramics. The city's newest bargain is Villa Bougainville villa-bougainville.fr opposite Nice railway station. Staff at this Polynesia-meets-Provence guesthouse will happily point you to local Japanese joints and tagine stops. Nice Pebbles nicepebbles.com has 140 prime apartments across the city, each with enough knives, colanders and garlic crushers to prep the perfect Niçoise salad and market lunch. One of the best kitchens can be found in Apartment Quebec (sleeps four), a stone's throw from the Café du Turin oyster shack on Place Garibaldi.

Where to eat and drink Chefs flock to the 200-stall Marché Libération (6am-12.30pm, Tue-Sun) three blocks north of the train station for its bounteous displays of figs, beetroot and Sète oysters. These cooks include Anthéa and Serge, who are behind nearby Polly and Cie pollyandcie.com. The canteen and concept store serves the likes of chicken brochettes with lime and bulgur and juicy steak burgers with Reblochon cheese. The market's seafood section is also the source for new cevicheria restaurant Peixes 4 Rue de l'Opéra where highlights include swordfish carpaccio. Cuisine Nissarde signatories (see 'Trip tip') include the Old Town's Lu Fran Calin 5 Rue Francis Gallo where chef Daniel Silvetti pairs local classics with AOC Vins de Bellet wine, produced on a tiny, 50ha vineyard above Nice Airport. The hottest news in town is the takeover of Michelin two-star Le Chantecler at Hotel Le Negresco by Virginie Basselot (from Geneva's La Réserve). Her October tasting menu (£116pp) will include Franco-global creations like Mediterranean langoustine in Turkish *kadayif* pastry.

Running out of time? Nice has 125km of cycleways, so hire a bike to whizz around on via Vélobleu. velobleu.org

Trip tip Want to eat certifiably local? Look for the yellow Cuisine Nissarde sticker in windows, which proves that the 20 signatory restaurants purvey Niçoise classics such as *petits farcis* (tiny stuffed vegetables) and *daube* (oxtail stew in local red wine).

Travel information

Currency is the euro (EUR). Nice is 1 hour ahead of GMT. Journey time from London is around 2 hours by plane; 10 hours by train.

British Airways offers direct flights to Nice from five UK airports including Gatwick and Heathrow. ba.com

Eurostar ply the same route with panoramic views over the Rhône Valley and Provence vineyards. Travellers can lug a total of six bottles of rosé aboard the journey home. eurostar.com

Resources

Nice Tourisme has information on everything from events to Niçoise cuisine, and a handy listings calendar. nicetourisme.com

Further Reading

High Season in Nice by Robert Kanige (Abacus, £6.99) describes a lucid history of France's sunniest city by way of the foodie Romans and boozy newshound Ernest Hemingway.

AVERAGE DAILY TEMPERATURES AND RAINFALL

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Min C	5	6	8	10	14	18	20	21	17	14	9	6
Max C	13	13	15	17	21	24	27	28	25	21	17	14
mm	2	1	1	2	1	1	0	1	2	4	3	3

Clockwise from top left: fresh langoustines at the market; cocktails with a view at Hotel Le Negresco; a Villa Bougainville guestroom; the legendary Côte d'Azur; flutes of bread; Cours Saleya; Port de Nice; apricots for sale; Café des Chineurs, above which is the upmarket Hotel Geneve; Nice's fairy-tale old town

