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LUXURY TRAVEL & LIFESTYLE

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**Signature Exclusive** with Emily VanCamp

**Nice celebrates** Tour de France

**Superyacht charters** Opulence at Sea

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**MICE** Heading into space

# Le Grand Tour de Luxe

This year marks the 100th edition of the Tour de France. Kathryn Tomasetti follows the race route through Nice, hitting the French Riviera's best restaurants and residences en route.

Nice's Promenade des Anglais arcs along the Mediterranean. It weaves its way westwards from the splendid superyachts berthed in the city's pleasure port, rippling between a 5km fringe of palm trees and a cobalt blue sea. I've been a resident of this elegant city for a decade, but this month I've shared this seaside boulevard with more Lycra-clad cyclists than an Olympic velodrome.

It's clear that the 'Prom' is hosting more than its regular mix of rollerbladers, pram-wheelers and weekend peddlers. Indeed, as the 2013 Tour de France gears into action, my city is witnessing a fervour for two-wheels like never before.

## 100 years of two wheels

This year marks the Tour de France's 100th edition. Kicking off in the island of Corsica on 29 June, 'Le Tour' – as it's known in the land of baguettes and Bordeaux – will criss-cross 3,360km of French countryside before finishing up on Paris's Champs-Élysées on 21 July. Corsica may be a newbie on this legendary route, but Nice – which holds the race's fourth stage on 2 July – has proudly hosted the Tour de France 35 times. This year the city is the venue for the prestigious Team Time Trial too, an event that allows visitors to see more of

the action than almost any other stage.

All along the French Riviera, it seems that everyone is getting into the spirit. On Sunday mornings the Corniches – the three sublime seafront roads that connect Nice with the likes of hilltop Eze and chic Monaco – are dense with cyclists. These riders may simply be part of casual clubs, but as they puff their way past beach after beach, there's no doubting their heartfelt devotion to the two-wheeled cause. And on June 15, the Tour de France's official Fête du Tour sees cyclists of all levels take to the streets in gran fondos, which are mass participation cycle celebrations held across the country.

When I factor in the region's clutch of sumptuous hotels, Michelin-starred restaurant and decades of Hollywood-kissed history, it's little surprise that both keen cyclists and luxury travellers are making a beeline for the Riviera this summer – and a wonder anyone could ever bear to leave.

## Contemporary flair

Nice's eco-friendly Hi Hotel will host visitors keen to stay at the heart of the sporting action. Laurence Shuktor, director of communications for the hotel assures me that "it is a very special moment for Nice. Niçois are truly passionate about sport and everyone



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runs, cycles, rollerblades. The race will be welcomed here with a lot of enthusiasm.”

Designed by Mathali Crasset, a protégée of Philippe Starck, Hi Hotel’s 38 rooms are sectioned into nine colourful concepts, such as Rendezvous, with its freestanding lava stone bathtubs, or Techno Corner, with surround-sound media systems. Pick of the bunch are the White & White suites, which boast their own private terrace and Jacuzzi. Hi Beach, the hotel’s beach club, is minutes away on the Promenade. Here patrons may savour sushi and watermelon mojitos just metres from the cycle race.

#### Historical heritage

Equally well located is Nice’s landmark Hotel Negresco. Opened in 1912, the hotel’s ornate white façade – crowned by an unforgettable coral-pink dome – overlooks the Promenade des Anglais, as well as the luxury yachts bobbing on the Riviera’s southern horizon beyond. Frank Sinatra, Michael Jackson and the Beatles have all stretched out in the Negresco’s

guestrooms, furnished with antiques that span four centuries of French history. The hotel’s double Michelin-starred restaurant Le Chantecler, headed up by chef Jean-Denis Rieubland, is renowned for both its gastronomic Provençal cuisine and its decadent 5,000-bottle cellar.

#### Urban indulgence

As the Riviera sun dips in the late afternoon, a meander through Nice’s boutique-trimmed Rue Paradis and Rue Alphonse Karr is an event in itself. Pick up luxurious 20s-inspired bijouterie at Les Néréides’ flagship store. Or stop into Nice’s very own Façonnable, originally tailors to Cannes Film Festival, now favoured for its sleek, nautical style.

A short stroll away, young Niçois brothers Gaël and Mickaël Tourteaux are head chefs at their own experimental restaurant, Flaveur. The establishment picked up its first Michelin star in 2011, and the cuisine is a far cry from what Cadel Evans and team dine on when they cycle through the city. The Tourteaux brothers infuse classic French ingredients, such as candy-striped chioggia beets and Menton lemons, with exotic flavours from a youth spent on the tropical islands of Réunion and Guadeloupe.

On a recent visit I tucked into turnip ravioli drizzled with a citrusy yuzu dressing, followed by local monkfish topped with Japanese sesame gomasio.



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#### Star-studded elegance

However, it’s the Grand Hotel du Cap Ferrat, a ten-minute drive or 20-minute cycle east of Nice, which caters to guests seeking absolute decadence. This dazzling hotel and its 17 acres of Provençal gardens are perched on the tip of Cap Ferrat, the world’s priciest peninsula of land. Gustave Eiffel designed the foyer’s Rotunda in 1909. Pablo Picasso, Henri Matisse and Brigitte Bardot were regulars. Swimming

instructor Pierre Gruneberg – still teaching lucky guests today – assisted Somerset Maugham, Paul McCartney and Ralph Lauren in perfecting their strokes at the hotel’s Dauphin beach club.

The Grand Hotel’s rooms and suites are swathed in beige Persian and white Calcutta Cream marble. But the ultimate in relaxation must be a stolen hour or two in award-winning Le Spa’s al fresco treatment cabanas, tucked into lush

08 Nice beach  
09 Flaveur Restaurant

manicured gardens. Marc Leveau, the Grand Hotel's resident manager, confides to me: "We are very excited about the Tour de France. It is a wonderful and important part of the summer season." Worried you may miss out on the cycling action back in Nice? Not to fret: the hotel can arrange a chauffeur-driven Rolls Royce Ghost or Bentley Flying Spur to spirit you back into the city.

#### Back on the bike

For cycling fans who wish to pair the Nice stage of the Tour de France with French food and wines, French cycling experts SportsPulsions are hosting the Etape 4 Nice Team Time Trial VIP Luncheon. A gourmet three-course lunch will be held on the Hotel West End's private terrace, right on the Promenade des Anglais, offering panoramic views just 600m from the Team Time Trial's start and finish lines.

SportsPulsions' Operations Manager, Will Maley, describes the scene to me: "The Team Time Trial is one of the most beautiful arts in cycling. When you have a team of nine riders all working in unison and only millimetres separating each one as they power at speeds of over 50km an hour, it is a wonderful sight."

"Add hundreds of thousands of spectators lining the race route," adds Maley, "and with the backdrop of the blue waters of the Mediterranean Sea, it will be a memorable stage for the 100th edition of Le Tour." ●



**Getting there:** Qantas offers daily flights via Dubai, [www.qantas.com.au](http://www.qantas.com.au); as does Emirates, [www.emirates.com](http://www.emirates.com) **Tour de France 2013:** [www.letour.fr](http://www.letour.fr)  
**Hi Hotel:** +33 4 97 07 26 26; [www.hi-hotel.net](http://www.hi-hotel.net) **Hi Beach:** +33 4 97 14 00 83; [www.hi-beach.net](http://www.hi-beach.net) **Hotel Negresco, Le Chantecler:** +33 4 93 16 64 00; [www.hotel-negresco-nice.com](http://www.hotel-negresco-nice.com) **Les Néréides:** +33 4 93 82 18 00; [www.lesnereides.com](http://www.lesnereides.com) **Façonnable:** +33 4 93 87 58 14; [www.faconnable.com](http://www.faconnable.com) **Flaveur:** +33 4 93 62 53 95; [www.flaveur.net](http://www.flaveur.net) **Grand Hotel du Cap Ferrat:** +33 4 93 76 50 50; [www.grand-hotel-cap-ferrat.com](http://www.grand-hotel-cap-ferrat.com) **SportsPulsions:** +33 6 66 87 47 96; [www.sportspulsions.com](http://www.sportspulsions.com) **Nice Tourist Office:** +33 892 707 407; [en.nicetourisme.com](http://en.nicetourisme.com)

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