

THE BEST OF NICE

RIVIERA RESIDENTS REFER TO SEPTEMBER AS 'THE GOLDEN MONTH'. THE TOURIST CROWDS HAVE THINNED, YET THE DAYS ARE STILL LONG AND THE SEA BLISSFULLY WARM. FROM BEACH CLUBS AND WEEKLY MARKETS TO EVENING APERITIFS AND HIDDEN NIGHTCLUBS, LONG-TIME LOCAL **KATHRYN TOMASETTI** FILLS YOU IN ON HER FAVOURITE PLACES

PHOTOGRAPHY | TIM WHITE





BEST PAVEMENT CAFÉ

Tucked into the strip of pavement cafés that lines the Old Town's pedestrianised cours Saleya, the totally-local, resolutely old school **La Civette** is a touch more authentic than its pretentious neighbours. Snag a spot on the sunny terrace for an early morning *noisette* (espresso with a splash of milk), swing by for lunch (when you may have to wait for a table for your bruschetta, crêpes or salad) or drop in for an anise-flavoured pastis as the sun lowers toward the horizon. By night, this is one of Nice's most gay-friendly spots.
1 cours Saleya; +33 (0)4 93 80 80 59

BEST BEACH CLUB

Nice's six-kilometre seafront is punctuated by no less than 15 gorgeous beach clubs. Late summer's pick of the bunch is **Florida Beach**, where gauzy white curtains billow around an Indonesian-inspired thatched bar, canopied day beds and woven pod-chairs. Stretch out on a sunlounger (€10/day), plump for a dip in the Jacuzzi (€12/30 minutes) or splash around on the Med's turquoise shores. You don't have to leave to eat as Lunch@ FloridaBeach offers salads, pastas, risotto and fish.
71 promenade des Anglais; +33 (0)4 93 44 72 86; florida-beach.fr

THE BASICS
Nice's international airport is about six km west of town. **Bus No.98** from the airport stops at Nice's Old Town and the Gare Routière; a one-way ticket costs €4. A **local taxi** will cost about €30. Getting around town, fares on **local buses** are €1.30 or €4 for a day pass. All tickets can be purchased on the bus. After you time-stamp your ticket, it's valid for one hour and can be used for one transfer or return.

BEST FREE MUSEUM

Nice is home to more museums than any French city outside of Paris. For local inspiration, stop by the **Musée d'Art Moderne et d'Art Contemporain (MAMAC)** to see 'La couleur en avant' (Contemporary Art & the Côte d'Azur, 1951-2011), a temporary exhibition showcasing Riviera aficionados Marc Chagall, Pablo Picasso and Raoul Dufy. The museum's permanent collection takes in sparkly sculptures by Niki de Saint-Phalle and Yves Klein's brilliant blue paintings. Open 10am-6pm Tue-Sun.
Promenade des Arts; +33 (0)4 97 13 42 01; mamac-nice.org

BEST TREASURE HUNTING

Each Monday between 8am and 6pm, thousands of visitors flock to Nice's **cours Saleya for the city's famous brocante market**. It's a fusion of pricey antiques and flea-market finds. The striped canopies of this secondhand extravaganza shade around 200 stalls displaying colourful 1950s telephones, old snapshots, heavy silver cutlery, Italian-designed homewares, vintage clothing and art deco holiday posters.

Cours Saleya

BEST LATE-NIGHT BUZZ

Partly because it's just a little bit hard to hunt down, **Bliss Bar** endures as one of the most popular clubs in town. Although the roster of hip international DJs – who favour a mix of funk, RnB, dub and hip hop – helps too. Join the cool kids perched at the long bar, sipping cocktails and nibbling on gummi bears (really!), or elbow your way onto the miniscule and hence permanently packed dance floor. Open 10pm-2am Wed-Sat.

12 rue de l'Abbaye; +33 (0)4 93 16 82 38

BEST TOUR

The super-cute, bubble-like electro-bike rickshaws operated by **Cyclopolitain** offer personable tours around Nice's Old Town and along the seafront. They also function as eco-friendly taxis: flag one down to zip along the Promenade des Anglais, through the shopping streets surrounding avenue Jean-Médecin, up to the train station or around the headland to Nice's picturesque port. A 30-minute tour costs €15 per person, while taxi rates are a flat fee of €3 plus €1.50 per person per kilometre. The service operates 10am-7pm Tue-Sat.

+33 (0)4 93 81 76 15;

nice.cyclopolitain.com ▶



BEST TREASURE HUNTING
Cours Saleya



THE AUTHOR

Based in Nice since 2005, Kathryn Tomasetti is a freelance food and travel writer, contributing to the likes of *National Geographic* and *The Guardian*. 'I love that Nice toes the line between being a working town and a seaside resort. I can spend the morning at the beach – or quickly lose the tourists in the city's more obscure back streets.' Kathryn is the author of Footprint's new guidebook, *South of France with Kids*.

excavation, but the main reason to visit this pretty park is for its jaw-dropping views. Aspiring photographers should visit early morning or late afternoon to make the most of the rosy panoramas that stretch from Cap Ferrat to Cap d'Antibes. Open dawn to dusk daily. *Between Nice Old Town and the port*

BEST SUNDOWNER

Totally off the tourist radar, **Seven Blue Bar** sprawls over the seventh floor of the distinguished **Clarion Grand Hôtel Aston** on the Espace Masséna. Yet there are few more beautiful places in Nice to enjoy an aperitif. Sip a cocktail or a glass of organic wine as the sun plummets on the horizon, illuminating the Old Town rooftops, the Colline du Château and the shimmering Mediterranean Sea. Open 5pm-midnight daily. *12 avenue Félix Faure; +33 (0)4 92 17 53 00; hotel-aston.com*

BEST FOR SOUVENIRS

Occupying part of an 18th-century stable, **Cabane** is a heavenly little boutique just off the Old Town's place du Palais. Laced among its ancient stone columns is an eclectic range of Mediterranean-inspired gifts, including Album di Famiglia kids' clothes, rainbow-

BEST PHOTO OP

Teetering between the Old Town and Nice's pleasure port, the **Colline du Château hilltop park** rolls across the site of the city's former castle. Today, a few crumbling ruins are under slow



BEST PHOTO OP
Coline du Château hilltop park



'OUR PETITE CONCEPT STORE IS TOTALLY UNIQUE: IT'S A PERFECT PLACE WITH UNUSUAL PRODUCTS – AND IT'S UNLIKE ANYWHERE ELSE IN NICE'
Brigitte Jourdan-Gassin, owner

BEST FOR SOUVENIRS
Cabane



BEST HISTORY LESSON
Musée Masséna



BEST LOCAL GRUB
Chez Pipo

BEST LOCAL GRUB

Socca, a savoury pancake made with chickpea flour, is the Riviera's original fast food. For a taste of Nice's finest, head to the neighbourhood behind the port, where corner eatery **Chez Pipo** (13 rue Bavastro; +33 (0)4 93 55 88 82; chezpipo.fr) has been thriving since 1923. The simple snack is best topped with a few cranks of black pepper, then devoured while still piping hot. Open 11.30am-2.30pm and 5.30-10pm Tue-Sun but come early or queue. If you can't get in at Pipo, try the slightly less good **Chez René Socca** (2 rue Miralheti; +33 (0)4 93 92 05 73), another Nice institution, open 9am-10pm Tue-Sun.

BEST FOR CELEBRITY-SPOTTING

Book well in advance for a terrace table at **La Petite Maison**: you may find yourself competing for space with the likes of Jay-Z, Beyoncé or President Sarkozy himself. The restaurant's dishes are classically Niçois, such as olive tapenade, deep-fried courgette flowers and the signature *loup en croûte de sel* (sea bass in a salt crust). Staff can be downright surly (no matter who you are), but win their respect and they'll plonk down a help-yourself bottle of limoncello at the end of your meal. Open lunch and dinner Mon-Sat. 11 rue Saint François de Paule; +33 (0)4 93 92 59 59; lapetitemaison-nice.com ▶

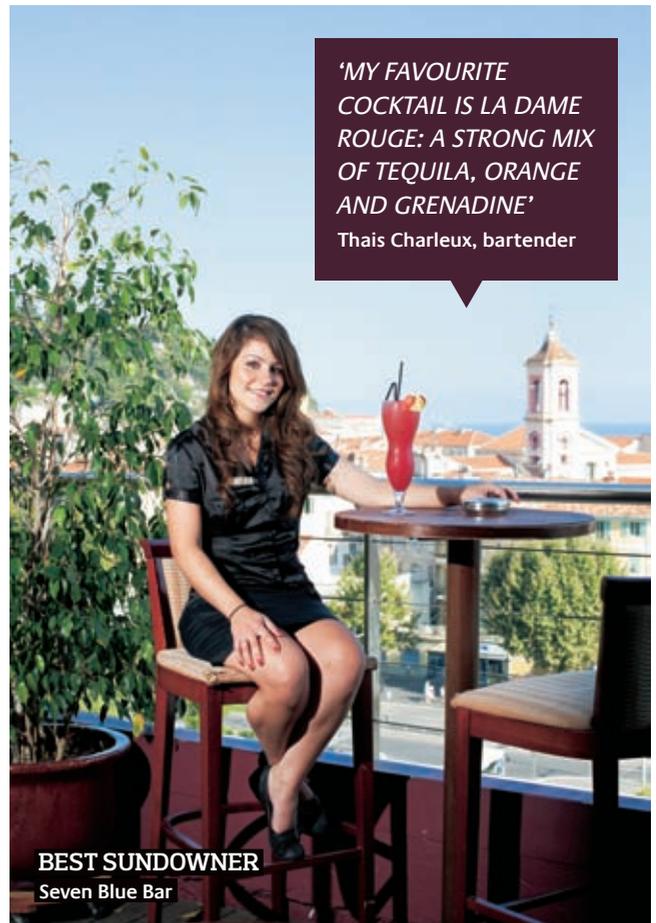
hued washed linens, Kraft leather bags, designer camping accessories and Turkish hamam towels. Perfect for spoiling your loved ones back home. Or yourself.

15 rue de la Préfecture; +33 (0)4 93 79 29 88

BEST HISTORY LESSON

For a crash course in the Riviera's über-glamorous history, spend an afternoon at the **Musée Masséna**, housed in a Belle Époque villa opposite Nice's promenade des Anglais. After you are done gawping at the villa's elaborate mosaics and friezes, ornate carvings and lashings of marble and gilt-work, you can turn your attention to the museum's collection, which catalogues the Riviera's rise as a tourist destination with menus, mementos and maps, charting Queen Victoria's winter visits in the late 19th century to the region's perennial popularity in the post-war 1950s. It has beautiful gardens too. Open 10am-6pm Wed-Mon and, like all museums in Nice, free to enter.

65 rue de France; +33 (0)4 93 91 19 10



'MY FAVOURITE COCKTAIL IS LA DAME ROUGE: A STRONG MIX OF TEQUILA, ORANGE AND GRENADINE'
Thais Charleux, bartender

BEST SUNDOWNER
Seven Blue Bar

BEST DAY TRIP

Get out of town with a walk around the nearby peninsula of **Cap Ferrat**. Touted as the world's richest promontory, Cap Ferrat is edged by a deliciously scenic, moderately challenging and entirely public footpath. Allow around three and a half hours to complete the loop; picnicking, snorkelling and lazing around will make it a full day out. The public footpath is accessed via bus no.81 from Nice Port to Saint-Jean-Cap-Ferrat (then walk to Paloma Plage) or the Cap's Plage de Passable.

BEST SECRET GARDEN

If you're not staying at the **Hotel Windsor**, chances are you'd never stumble upon this gorgeous

garden. Not that the locals would complain! A lush oasis graced by both a petite swimming pool and a chatty parrot, this slice of Tropicana – served by an indoor bar – is an idyllic spot for a romantic glass of rosé à deux.

11 rue Dalpozzo; +33 (0)4 93 88 59 35; hotelwindsornice.com

BEST €1 SPEND

Scooting along the Riviera's jaw-dropping Basse Corniche, the no.100 bus connects the delightful seaside dots that are Villefranche-sur-Mer, Cap d'Ail and Monte-Carlo. Better still, go any distance between Nice and Menton, on the Italian border, and any ticket remains one singular price: an amazingly cheap €1. Bus no.100 departs every 20 minutes from ▶



BEST SECRET GARDEN
Hotel Windsor



View of the Espace Masséna
from the Clarion Grand Hôtel
Aston (see **BEST SUNDOWNER**)

rue Catherine Ségurane, on the corner of place Garibaldi.

BEST BAGUETTE

Dream of starting every day with a warm baguette, slathered in France's finest butter? Make the trek over **Boulangerie Lagache**, a locals-only bakery north of the port for fabulously fresh daily breads ranging from simple country-style boules to olive-studded loaves; the multi-céréales baguette (€1.60) is highly recommended. Open 8am-7pm Wed-Sun.

20 rue Arson; +33 (0)4 93 19 04 38

BEST SUGAR RUSH

A confectionary on the site of a former chocolatier, **Confiserie Florian** is part sweet shop, part Willy Wonka factory (they change flowers into sugary treats!). Free tours allow you a first-hand peek at the creation of chocolate-covered almonds and crystallised flower petals, plus free nibbles and deep discounts at the wholesale store. Open 9am-noon and 2-6.30pm Tue-Sun.

14 quai Papacino; +33 (0)4 93 55 43 50; confiserieflorian.com



'MY JOB IS TO CREATE NEW CHOCOLATE RECIPES – NEW PRALINE FILLINGS, CREAMY GANACHE CENTRES – AS WELL AS TO SUGAR-COAT AND CRYSTALLISE ROSE, VIOLET AND VERBENA PETALS. I HAVE A SERIOUSLY SWEET TOOTH'

Christophe Pettini, chocolate artisan

BEST SUGAR RUSH
Confiserie Florian



BEST GRAVEYARD EXPERIENCE
La cimetière du Monastère de Cimiez

BEST GRAVEYARD EXPERIENCE

Henri Matisse swapped his native northern Picardy in favour of the French Riviera in 1917, spending the rest of his life in the south. The great artist may have died in 1954, but he's far from forgotten. Take a wander up to **Le cimetière du Monastère de Cimiez** for a peek at Matisse's grave, which is covered with flowers, notes and other souvenirs left by fans. The **Matisse Museum** (musee-matisse-nice.org, free) is just a short stroll away. Le cimetière du Monastère de Cimiez, avenue du Monastère; bus no. 15 from rue Gioffredo (just off place Masséna) to Cimiez's Arènes/ Musée Matisse. ✪



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