



01



02

01 Le Negresco, a five-star hotel and Nice icon 02 Stop by Nice's port for some yacht spotting and antique shopping

NICE SURPRISE

France's fifth-largest city serves up some delightful off-the-beaten-track discoveries, as local resident Chrissie McClatchie shares.

Attractions such as the sweeping Promenade des Anglais and atmospheric Italianate old town have long made Nice a favourite European escape in the sun. Away from the waterfront, the city brims with an authentic charm that is lacking among her more glamorous neighbours, Monaco and Cannes, as these lesser-known highlights will show the French Riviera visitor.

DRINK *Le Vignoble de Bellet*

It's the terraced vineyards of Bellet, at the western edge of the city, that produce the true local wine of Nice, not the salmon-hued rosé from Provence

more commonly served by waiters along the Cours Saleya. The urban location of this boutique appellation is unique in France, yet its very existence remains a well-kept secret from residents and tourists alike. What was 1,000 hectares of vines in its 19th-century prime has shrunk to 50 as contemporary real estate demands push land prices up.

Thankfully, a determined group of 10 producers are maintaining a viticultural tradition that includes the cultivation of two grape varieties not grown anywhere else in the world (Braquet and Folle Noire). Sometimes that means wine is made in the backyard of the family home, such as at the charming brother-and-

sister-run Domaine de la Source. Château de Bellet, with its atmospheric private chapel-turned-tasting room, and Château de Crémat – allegedly the inspiration for Coco Chanel's iconic interwoven 'C' logo – offer two of the most comprehensive visitor experiences.

Good to know Bus 62 goes from Nice centre to the Bellet vineyards, but pack your walking shoes as there are some distances to cover by foot. vindebellet.com

SHOP *Le Quartier des Antiquaires*

Juxtaposed against the sleek superyachts



03

that line the docks of Nice port, the antique quarter is a treasure trove of souvenirs that tell a story, some even small enough to fit in your suitcase. Along with the more upmarket boutiques that brim with statement pieces and one-off collectors' items, the real charm lies in browsing the Marché aux Puces (flea markets) on Place Robilante, where many of the stallholders have spent up to two decades curating a collection of curios to accompany an impressive assortment of vintage chandeliers. In a lovely meeting of old and new, the walls are decorated in colourful street art, including the signature strokes of local favourite Patrick Moya. The art continues at nearby Village Ségurane, where a blink-and-you'll-miss-it entrance belies the Aladdin's Cave of discoveries inside.

Good to know At the Marché aux Puces, prices are displayed but gentle bartering is accepted practice.

Where Place Robilante, rues Gautier, Ségurane, Philibert and Forestier.

EAT *Restaurant Simon*

The 10-kilometre journey inland towards Restaurant Simon in Rimiez winds past the Excelsior Régina Palace, Queen Victoria's address of choice during her frequent visits to the French Riviera, and Les Arènes de Cimiez, where the ruins of a Roman amphitheatre sit alongside olive groves and the colourful originals that decorate the walls of the Matisse Museum. In the shadow of Mont Chauve, the 'bald mountain' that sits protectively atop the city, Restaurant Simon has been the table of choice for generations of niçois families. Whether seated on the vine-covered terrace or in the sophisticated-yet-cosy interior, the atmosphere is Sunday-best



04



05

03 Château Saint-Martin & Spa, a luxury escape less than 30 minutes from Nice 04 The charming fishing village of Villefranche-sur-Mer 05 Nice's Italianate old town is a vibrant palette of pastel-coloured buildings 06 Château de Bellet's pretty chapel-turned-tasting room



06

and the menu is a lesson in regional specialities done right; after all, they've had generations to perfect each recipe here. Depending on the season, classic dishes include *les petits farcis* (stuffed vegetables), *beignets de fleurs de courgettes* (fried zucchini flowers) and its signature *petits ravioles maison* (handmade pasta), best enjoyed as an accompaniment to a rich, slow-cooked *daube niçoise* (beef stew).

Good to know Save space for the array of indulgent homemade patisseries; the selection changes daily. restaurant-simon.com

VISIT *Observatoire de la Côte d'Azur*

Surrounded by wild rosemary at the start of the Grande Corniche, the highest of three parallel coastal roads that link Nice and Monaco, the purpose of Nice's observatory may be to study the sky above us, but from up here the views of the city below are unbeatable. On clear days the start of the Gulf of Saint-Tropez can be made out in the distance as, in the foreground, another plane comes in to land at Nice's airport. Charles Garnier (of Paris' Palais Garnier opera house fame) was the architect in charge of designing what was destined to be

France's most important astronomical observatory in 1879. It's a title that has barely changed since, with a permanent team of 110 and an influence that is felt around the world. Every Wednesday and Saturday afternoons the gates of the 35-hectare estate are thrown open to the public for a two-hour-long walking tour. One of five cupolas, Gustave Eiffel's main dome, may be closed for renovation until later in the year, but the real stars of the show are the passionate guides and that incredible view.

Good to know The tours are in French, but the guides can translate into English along the way if required. oca.eu/fr

STAY *Le Negresco*

This pink and white palace on the Promenade des Anglais has been a landmark of Nice since opening in 1913. Each of its 100 rooms and 25 suites effortlessly blends the historic with the contemporary for a vibrant, eclectic aesthetic. Its eccentric art collection is just as impressive, ranging from a portrait of Louis XIV to Niki de Saint Phalle's mosaic sculpture of Miles Davis. hotel-negresco-nice.com/en

Château Saint-Martin & Spa

Less than half-an-hour from Nice Côte d'Azur Airport in the hills of Vence, this romantic château commands stunning views of the Mediterranean. While the 13.8-hectare estate dates back to the 12th century and the Knights Templar, its design is chic and contemporary, and the 52 rooms and suites feature those fabulous patterned textiles for which Oetker Collection is renowned. Michelin-starred cuisine and Spa Saint-Martin by La Prairie add extra touches of indulgence. oetkercollection.com ♦