



The Promenade des Anglais and famous beach at Nice



Chrissie McClatchie

# My Nice

While neighbouring Cannes and Monaco may sometimes steal the limelight from Nice, the capital of the French Riviera delivers charm and authenticity in abundance, says Chrissie McClatchie

WITH THE SWEEPING Promenade des Anglais as its centrepiece, France's fifth largest city is the real star of the Côte d'Azur, a vibrant destination with established tourist pedigree. Nice first stole my heart during a gap year in 1999, but I officially made the city home in 2007. There's something about the colour and light here – especially the brilliant magenta of bougainvillea in bloom against the sparkling Mediterranean Sea – that I find intoxicating.

While the constant hum of tramline construction attests to the dynamic nature of Nice today, most of the attractions here are easy to navigate on foot. The city is small enough to cultivate a sense of familiarity, yet large enough for locals and regular visitors alike to delight in new discoveries. The last five years have been particularly rich in an epicurean sense as a flurry of bars,

restaurants and speciality shops have opened, many centred on the trendy Rue Bonaparte.

When searching out local flavours, quintessential Niçois dishes to look for include pan bagnat (tuna, egg, and crudités served in a bread roll) and petits farcis Niçois (vegetables stuffed with mince and rice). The streets of Vieux Nice, the old town, are best for hole-in-the-wall eateries selling fresh snacks such as socca (a chickpea flour pancake). Many claim theirs is the best, but it's a title Chez Pipo ([www.chezpipo.fr](http://www.chezpipo.fr)), on the port, is almost universally acknowledged to hold. Tables here fill up fast, so arrive early and enjoy a serving piping hot, washed down with a glass of rosé.

The city's proximity to the vineyards of Provence means that, for many, the pink drink is regarded as the local tippie. Yet, while the mild Mediterranean climate means it's

always rosé season, the city has its own proud viticultural tradition. The 10 vineyards that make up the Bellet AP are hidden among the sprawling villas of Nice's western hills. Nestled between the Alps and the sea, this is France's only urban appellation. The predominately Rolle (Vermentino) based whites attract the greatest acclaim, although Braquet and Folle Noire, two varieties found nowhere else in the world, are the dominant grapes in appellation rosé and red respectively.

With just 50ha of vines in total cultivation, Bellet remains a fairly niche attraction, although awareness is definitely on the up as interest in local produce grows. The region's flourishing craft drinks scene is also helping drive this recognition.

*Chrissie McClatchie is a freelance writer who has lived in Nice for over a decade*

## MY TOP 10 IN NICE

### 1 Cave de la Tour

Cosy wine shop and bar on one of the prettiest squares in Vieux Nice. This is a must-visit for anyone interested in Nice wine, stocking every producer from the region and serving classic Niçois fare at lunchtime, including a traditional stockfish



Cave de la Tour

dish every second Friday that has a cult following. [www.cavedelatour.com](http://www.cavedelatour.com)

### 2 La Cave Bianchi

Founded in 1860, Nice's oldest wine merchant overflows with history. On the site of a former Dominican monastery, the vaulted cellars date from the 17th century and provide a magical setting for private tastings. The daily wine tasting, held around the street-level bar at 6pm sharp, is a relaxed affair. [www.cave-bianchi.fr](http://www.cave-bianchi.fr)

### 3 Les Compagnons de la Grappe

Renato Reno has weathered six years of

tramline construction on the doorstep of his Place Garibaldi wine shop and plans to celebrate its completion later this year by adding a gourmet food counter to the shop to complement his wine selection. Specialising in rare wines and old vintages, Reno is also lauded for his ➤



Les Compagnons de la Grappe

Photographs: Alphotographic/Getty; Hemis/Alamy; [www.lescompagnonsdelagrappe.com](http://www.lescompagnonsdelagrappe.com)



noteworthy whisky collection.

[www.lescompagnonsdelagrappe.com](http://www.lescompagnonsdelagrappe.com)

## 4 Vin sur Vin

This city centre bistro is a perennial favourite, with a well-stocked wine cellar that diners are encouraged to browse, and arguably the city's best steak-frites. The plat du jour at lunch is also great value. The sun-drenched terrace here fills up fast, while the tables inside enjoy a warm conviviality. [See Facebook](#)

## 5 La Cave du Cours

Armand Crespo continues to light up Nice's food and wine scene, opening this ultra-hip wine cave in late 2017. Stop here for little-known treasures from all over France, as well as light meals on Thursday, Friday and Saturday evenings. Just off the bustling Cours Saleya in the old town, it's hard to miss the trendy weekend crowd spilling onto the pavement. [See Facebook](#)

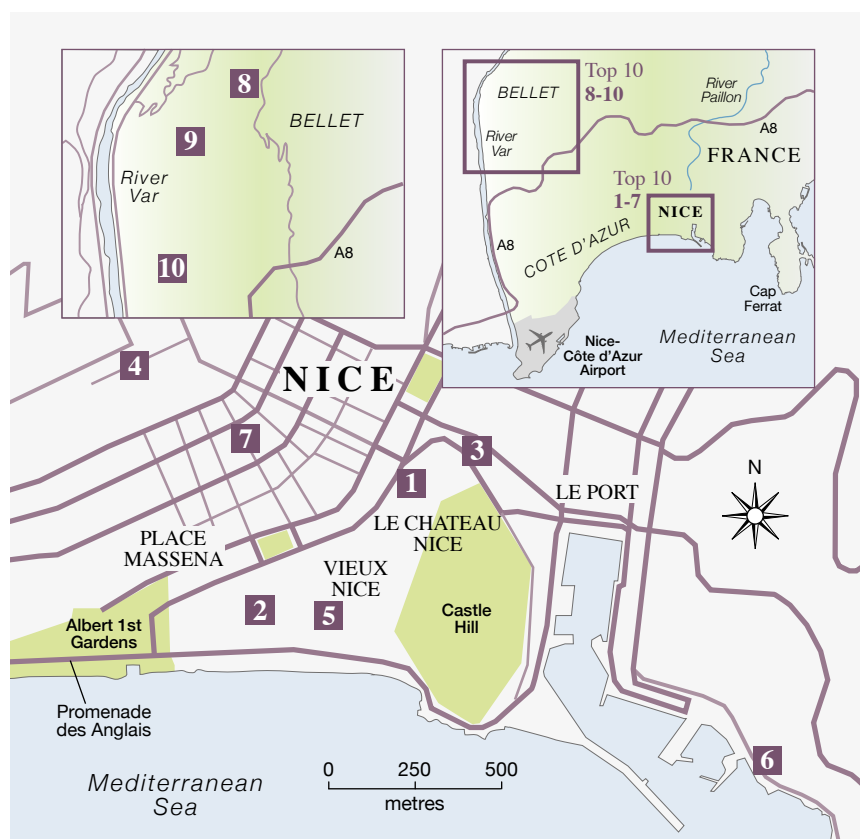
## 6 Le Plongeoir

Dramatically perched on a rocky outcrop six metres above the sea in Nice's port, it's easy to see why Le Plongeoir is the place to be during summer. This breezy outdoor restaurant and lounge bar specialises in fresh and modern Mediterranean cuisine; while the ferries steaming in from Corsica provide a memorable backdrop.

[www.leplongeoir.com](http://www.leplongeoir.com)

## 7 La Part des Anges

Since 1998 La Part des Anges has been a favourite address for local wine lovers, offering a veritable treasure trove of



organic and biodynamic wines to enjoy on- or off-premise. At lunchtime, the plat du jour draws a hungry crowd, as does the menu at La Mise au Verre, its sister bistro tucked conveniently around the corner.

[www.lapartdesanges-nice.com](http://www.lapartdesanges-nice.com)

## 8 Château de Bellet

Large by appellation standards, with 11ha of vine under cultivation, Château de

Bellet is Nice's oldest vineyard. Guided tours in English and French show off the terraced vines and modern cellar, and the bijou 18th-century private chapel and crypt, converted into an atmospheric tasting room in 2015, is an added treat.

[www.chateaubellet.com](http://www.chateaubellet.com)

## 9 Domaine de la Source

This 5ha vineyard typifies the boutique nature of the Bellet appellation. Carine and Eric Dalmasso are a dynamic brother-and-sister duo crafting charming wines from their family home. Passing visitors are encouraged to discover the range of wines and homemade olive oil in the gentle shade of their back garden.

[www.domainedelasource.fr](http://www.domainedelasource.fr)

## 10 Blue Coast Brewing Company

With sports star ambassadors and a trendy industrial estate address beneath the Bellet vineyards, Blue Coast is leading the local craft drinks revolution. On the first Saturday of the month its smart taproom opens to the public, its three boutique brews enjoyed with live music, a food truck and a chilled, family-friendly vibe. [www.bluecoastbrewing.com](http://www.bluecoastbrewing.com)



Château de Bellet