

SUNFLOWER

walk & eat around

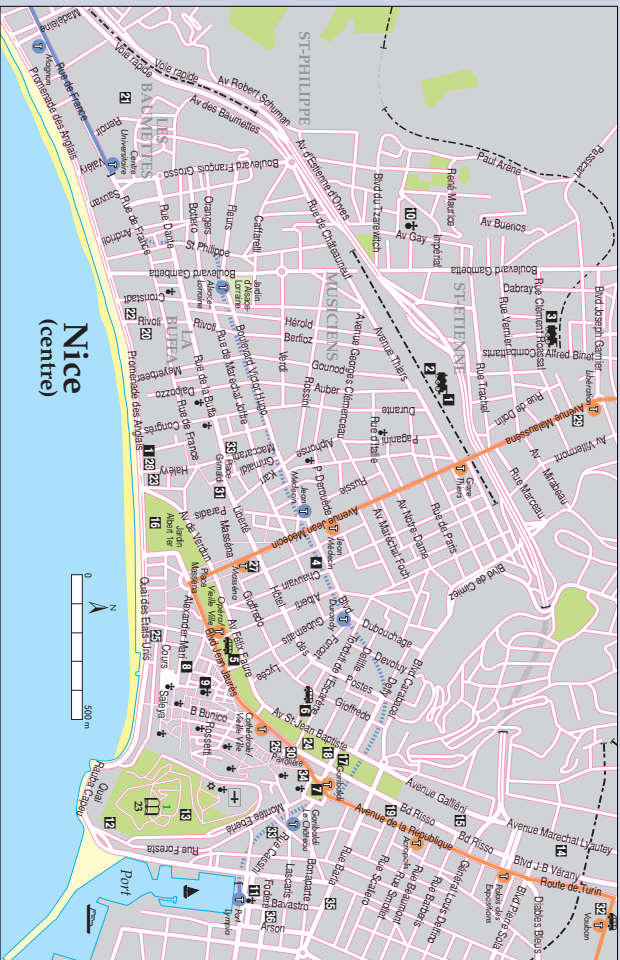
Nice



GPS

12 WALKS

RESTAURANTS



Nice (centre)

- 1 Tourist Offices
- 2 SNCF Railway Station
- 3 CFP Railway Station (from des Pignes)
- 4 ligne d'Azur office (Daboudjé)
- 5 J-C Bermond (bus stop)
- 6 Lycée Massena (stop for bus 15)
- 7 Place Garibaldi
- 8 Palais de Justice
- 9 Cathédral
- 10 Russian Cathédral
- 11 Notre-Dame du Port
- 12 War Memorial
- 13 Colline du Chateau
- 14 Sports Centre (Palais des Sports)
- 15 Acropolis
- 16 Outdoor Theatre (Théâtre de Verdure)
- 17 Library
- 18 Modern Art Museum
- 19 Natural History Museum
- 20 Musée des Beaux-Arts
- 21 Fine Arts Museum
- 22 Hotel Negresco
- 23 Casino Ruft
- 24 Theatre
- 25 Opera
- 26 St-François tower
- 27 Galeries Lafayette
- 28 Bonifacio
- 29 Marché de la Liberté
- 30 René Socca
- 31 Tower Massena
- 32 Vauhan tram stop/bus station
- 33 Branches of Le Marchand Bio
- 34 Café de l'urn
- 35 Temporary stop for 33
- 36 Temporary stop for 200

Tram line 1 stop (with name)
Tram line 2 stop (with name)

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This pocket guide is designed for short break walking holidays based on Nice, using public transport (or a car, if you prefer). The city is easily and inexpensively reached by several budget airlines, and the climate makes for brilliant walking and excursions all year round.

Hop on a plane or a train for a long weekend or a week. You have in your hand enough walks, excursions, restaurants and recipes to last almost two weeks — so you can pick and choose the most appealing. The highlights at a glance:

- 12 varied day walks, each with topographical map
- 2 fairly long excursions — one by train, one by bus, with walks from each
- recommended restaurants and hotels
- recipes to make at your self-catering base or back home
- special section with hints on wheat-, gluten- and dairy-free eating and cooking in the south of France

INTRO

THE WALKS

The walks range from almost flat coastal rambles a 15-minute bus ride from the city to 'balcony' routes high above the famed Riviera and mountain circuits. The book is specifically designed for visitors using public transport. If you've only a long weekend, you may not want to spend time filling in forms to hire a car. Of course, if you *do* want to hire a car, you will have many more options in the hinterland. Our wider-ranging book, *Landscapes of Eastern Provence* (see www.sunflowerbooks.co.uk), would take you from the Italian border to the Rhône via 11 car tours and 36 walks.

But rest assured that you do not need your own wheels to cut a large swathe through the 'Pays niçois'. Almost all the walks in this book are easily reached by bus or train, and getting there is half the fun. Sightsee while someone else does the driving. It's amazing how much ground you can cover in just a week.

THE EXCURSIONS

Two long trips are outlined. First is the wonderful rail journey on the 'Train des Pignes', a narrow-gauge railway built between 1890 and 1912. It begins right in the city centre, running on 'tram' lines, then spans 150km on its journey into the mountains. The scenery is awe-inspiring. The train is an ideal way to reach walks out of town.

The second excursion is by local bus up the Var Valley and then via the red-rock Cians Gorges, up to ski resort country, where you can take an idyllic circular walk.

THE RESTAURANTS

There are restaurants and hotels at the start or end of many of the walks, most of which we mention. But many of them close out of season — just when the walking is at its best! Unless we know that a restaurant will welcome you all year round, we suggest that you return to Nice for dinner — perhaps making a local recipe yourself. *No restaurant has paid, in cash or in kind, to be included in this guide.*

A few of our recommended restaurants are at hotels where you might like to spend the night, especially if you want to have dinner there and there is no late public transport back to base.

THE RECIPES

Most of our recommended restaurants were happy to share with us the *ingredients* used in their recipes, but the actual preparation remains their ‘secret’ (in truth, they are simply not written down, but just passed on from cook to cook over the years). So you can rest assured that we have cooked *all* of these recipes ourselves, to make sure they ‘work’!

What we cannot guarantee, of course, is that they will taste as good back home as they did in France! So many factors come into play to make food taste better when you are on holiday — from the intangibles (the atmosphere and the sense of relaxation after a day’s good walking) to the tangibles (hardness of the water, quality of the fresh market produce you can seek out when not pressed for time). So if you are in self-catering, why not try some of these recipes while you’re in Nice?

We've made most of these dishes on the simple kind of cooker usually found in self-catering (two rings and a decent oven) — or on a barbecue. Many of them are casserole-style, not only easily managed with limited cooking facilities, *but* also virtually impossible to overcook, and there is hardly any washing-up! What's more, they always taste better when reheated after a few days. And good news for anyone suffering food intolerances: all of the recipes can be **gluten- and dairy-free** (see page 138).

PLANNING YOUR VISIT

When to go

Climate change, of course, is altering all the seasons. The simple answer *was* — anytime outside mid-June to mid-September, when it's usually swelteringly hot, crowded to overflowing, and prices are at their highest. Moreover, trails in areas prone to forest fires (like the Esterel, Walk 5) are closed to visitors in summer, when the fire risk is very high.

We walk from Nice in all other months. Naturally late September and October are ideal for the mild temperatures and the autumnal colours in the hinterland. One has to take a chance with autumnal rains in October and November, but you can still expect temperatures in the 60s (17–20°C).

We often go at Christmas/New Year, to enjoy the festivities



New Year's Day lunch on the beach at Nice

and the clear winter skies. If you think it may be too cold, remember that New Year's Day lunch on the beach is a long-standing tradition in Nice!

February ushers in carnival, mimosa festivals, and more good walking — it's virtually spring. Plan on some rainy days in March and April, but rainy spells don't usually last very long. And at least when it rains in Nice, there's plenty to do indoors (apart from trying new recipes).

May and early June, with wild flowers galore, are simply glorious, as you would expect.

Where to stay

Of course there is a wide choice of hotels of all grades all along the coastal strip from Cannes to Menton. But the *best* public transport base is Nice centre.

Rather than an hotel, consider staying in private accommodation or one of the apart-hotels in the city. We cooked most of our recipes at an apart-hotel. To find an apartment, either go to airbnb.fr or just search 'apartments in Nice France'; Google, for instance, will come up with hundreds of sites, including many privately-owned second homes.

What to take

Remembering that this is to be a carefree week or weekend, pack simply! You don't have to 'dress' for dinner in Nice, no matter how elegant the restaurant.

We manage with a rucksack each, by wearing our walking boots on the flight. Apart-hotels have inexpensive laundry faci-



Dipping your toes into a Cote d'Azur walking holiday couldn't be easier — you can start in the city of Nice, by strolling round three mini-mountains with beautiful woodlands and gardens, ancient remains and breathtaking views.

on the rooftops of nice

WALK

Start the walk at the **bus terminus** on **Mont Boron** (●). Walk to the **area map** at the far side of the square. Two paths are just to the right of the map: take the tarred footpath to the left, the **Sentier du Cap de Nice**. This circles Mont Boron below the **old fort**, affording the fine views shown overleaf. Olive trees, holm oaks and pines shade the path-side benches. Soon views open out over Cap Ferrat (Walk 4) and its lighthouse.

When you come to a road, the path continues just to the left of it (but first cross the road, to another lovely **view-point** over Villefranche; ①). Return to the path and follow it to a barrier. You are just 100m/yds short of your starting point, but it cannot be seen from here. Now take the trail that goes off left at a 90° angle, and walk round another barrier. This trail

Distance: 9.3km/5.8mi; 3h

Grade: quite easy, with few ascents; descents (mostly on steps) of about 350m/1150ft overall. Some yellow PR waymarking. *IGN map 3742 OT*

Equipment: see page 9; stout shoes, sun protection, plan of Nice and information about the Colline du Château (from the tourist office).

Transport: 98 33 from 35 (*temporary stop!*) on the plan to Mont Boron; 3/4 hourly Mon-Sat, 1/2 hourly Sun; journey time 30min.

Refreshments: no refreshments available until you return to the port.

Points of interest: old forts, Colline du Château, Old Nice, views!

Alternative walk: Sentier Littoral. 4km/2.5mi; 1h15min. Fairly easy, but you must be agile and have a head for heights (many ups/downs, perhaps some scrambling over rocks). 98 98 (four hourly most days) to the 'Villa la Côte' stop past the port — or walk. Descend steps to Coco Beach and the coastal path (*Sentier du Littoral*). Follow it to Villefranche (half-way along, you have to climb steps up to the M6098 and go right until you can rejoin the path down more steps). Return on 80 80 from the port at Villefranche or 15 15 from the main road to Nice.



Nice from the Sentier du Cap de Nice

(**Circuit de Bellevue**) rounds the seaward side of the fort, circling the hill at a higher level.

When this second circuit is complete, go left on the road and follow it in a curve to the right, back to the square with the bus shelter (**35min**).

Continue along the road past the **area map**, following signs for 'Auberge de la Jeunesse'. When the road curves right, take a tarred path off left (ignore the Allée du Bois Dormant to the left a short way along). Rejoin the road and continue left uphill, passing the **maison forestière** on the left. At a Y-fork go right for 'Fort du

Woodland path on Mt Boron (left) and the fort on Mt Alban

Mt Alban', then cut a bend off the road by walking left through a **picnic area** (or keep to the road). In spring this road is a blaze of yellow-flowering tree-spurge (*Euphorbia dendroides*). From the **Fort du Mont Alban** (②; 55min) the views down over Villefranche and its bay are superb.

Return the same way to the **area map** in the square on Mont Boron (1h 15min). Now descend the concreted steps on the right (③; **Chemin des Crêtes**). Keep straight down through mixed woodlands, accompanied by wrens and robins, crossing straight over roads. In 10 minutes you pass to the right of the richly-decorated modern church (1927) of **Notre-Dame du Perpétuel Secours** (④).

When you reach the Boulevard Carnot/M6098 *cross carefully* (blind corners). The path continues just at the left side of the (closed) Hotel Marbella, heading towards the port and the Colline du Château. Make



your way to the **Club Nautique** (5) and continue opposite the **commercial port** along the lovely residential Boulevard Franck Pilatte (bus 98). Follow the road inland, but turn left after about 40m/yds and take steps down to the **pleasure port**. Circle the port on the quays, past the 'Port Lympia' terminus for tram line 2, then keep ahead to the Promenade des Anglais. You quickly come to the beautiful **memorial** to the dead of World Wars I and II on the right, its high arch carved into the **Colline du Château** (6; 2h).

Keep rounding the hill, until you come to the **lift** (*ascenseur*; 7), and pay the small fee to ride up to the top. (If the lift is out of action for repairs, you'll have to climb the adjacent steps; 90m/300ft.)



Colline du Château: foundations of the ruined cathedrals and artificial waterfall fed by the Vésubie River

Allow a good hour to potter about on the hill: take in the **Tour Bellanda** (a; Naval Museum), the **mosaics**, the **ruins** of two cathedrals (b; 10-12C and 14C) which once stood in the grounds of the Duke of Savoy's château, the beautiful **waterfall** (c) fed by the Vésubie ... and the views!

To return to town you *could* take the lift or adjacent steps or pick up the tourist train. We usually walk down via the cemeteries: take the steps below the waterfall, down to a road. Turn right, then take steps on the left signposted '**Cimetières, Vielle Ville**'. From the lowest (Roman Catholic) cemetery, take the road downhill to the right, then make a sharp hairpin bend to the left on **Montée Eberlé** (8). At the bottom, turn left for 100m/yds, to **Place Garibaldi** (3h; 7 on the town plan), from where you can explore Old Nice — and have some seafood at the Café de Turin (34) or a *socca* at René's (30).



Cafe de Turin

The place in Nice for fish — particularly shellfish — and conveniently located at Place Garibaldi (34 on the plan), where Walk 1 ends (also near the Old Town).

Everything from the popular sea bass to 10 varieties of oyster, even sea urchins in season. An institution; always full, ensuring the freshest of food. Very popular take-away business.

CAFE DE TURIN

5 Place Garibaldi ☎ 04 93 62 29 52

www.cafedeturin.com

daily, all year, 08.00-23.00 €-€€€

huge menu with dozens of different **fish** dishes prepared to order — grilled, baked, poached, sauced

oysters a speciality

seasonal seafood platters:

Atlantic lobster and crab, crayfish, snails, prawns, mussels, etc

for those who don't fancy seafood there are meat dishes and even pizza and socca

René Socca

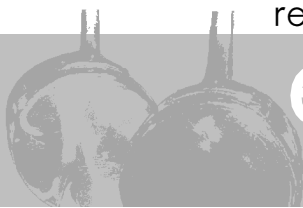
If you want to try *socca*, Nice's speciality dish, it's best to go to Old Nice, where it's widely available. We've been told that the best *socca* in the Old Town is to be had at **Chez Pipo** (13 Rue Bavastro, ☎ 04 93 55 88 82). We haven't tried it yet, because it used only to be open in the evenings and we prefer *socca* for lunch. They do *socca* garnished in many different ways ... and it is now open for lunch and dinner (*cl* Mon and Tue). If you *do* go, get there early; it's busy!

Our favourite place is **René Socca** (30); it has the advantage of being just a couple of hundred yards from useful bus and tram stops, at the top of Rue Pairolière, mentioned on page 18. There's a secret or two to eating at René's, because it is so crowded!

It's a simple place — an open-fronted shop on the corner of Rue Pairolière and Rue Mirhaletti, surrounded by thick wooden tables

restaurants

eat







A lull at René's just before noon: the socca window is at the left (Rue Mirhaletti); other food is showcased on Rue Pairolière (at the right).

RENE SOCCA

2, Rue Mirhaletti ☎ 04 93 92 05 73
daily ex Mon from 09.00-21.00 €

socca (chick-pea 'pancake')

petits farcis (stuffed courgettes, onions, peppers)

pizza and **pissaladière** (pizza with onion, black olives, anchovies)

deep-fried **courgette flowers**

aubergine and **courgette** fritters

cabillaud (spicy fritters made from dried cod — Fridays only)

fritures (whitebait)

sardines and lemon

daube (beef stew) with polenta

pan bagnat (thick sandwich; the bread is moistened with olive oil and vinegar)

tourte de blettes (chard pie)

sweet tartes (apple, etc)

and benches. Of course in Nice it's pleasant to eat outdoors, but if it's too sunny, too cold or raining, there is also *indoor seating* — the entrance is opposite the

socca window.

René's sells far more than *socca*, and here's our second tip. The *socca* is sold from the window on Rue Mirhaletti; all the other food is chosen from Rue Pairolière. *There are two queues, and the socca queue is by far the longer* — it stretches round the block into Rue Pairolière, so you have to try to find where it ends. Keep approaching *local* people with the word '*socca*'; if they nod, they are in the *socca* queue...

So the strategy is this: one person queues for the food,

restaurants
eat

while the others find a table and order the drinks (*it is compulsory to buy something to drink if you are sitting at any table, indoors or out*).

If you are *only* having *socca*, make for the *socca* queue. But why not try some of René's other specialities (a couple of which are shown overleaf)? Admittedly, the dozens of dishes stacked up in the window look cold and rather unappealing, but as soon as you have chosen (just point to what you want), they heat it up for you.

By this time you should have moved round to the *socca* window, and the *socca* should be served in a trice, as it's coming out of the fires every few minutes. *Petits farcis* and *fritures* go especially well with *socca*. And cola or rosé wine (by the glass) is the preferred drink of the locals, although there is also Normandy cider and beer.

As you can imagine, René's also has a very popular take-away service.



SOCCA AND PETITS FARCIS

Socca

This recipe requires a very hot oven, which must be preheated to the highest setting available for one hour. Just before placing the socca in the oven, change setting to grill.



Put 0.5 l of water and the olive oil in a bowl, add the flour gradually, and whisk until there are no lumps (strain if necessary). Season with salt and pepper.

Spread in a thin layer (2-3 mm) on a heavily greased baking tray and place just below the grill. Heat until dark gold (5min) — or even slightly burnt. Scrape into servings and season with freshly ground black pepper.

All too much work? An easier method is to prepare the batter and fry like a pancake.

Ingredients (for 4 people)

250 g chick-pea (gram) flour
2 tbsp olive oil
salt, freshly-ground black pepper



Petits farcis (top), deep-fried courgette flowers and fritters at René's

Stuffed vegetables (*petits farcis*)

Preheat the oven to 180°C, 350°F, gas mark 4. Cut the vegetables into quarters. Scoop out all the flesh and set it aside. If you are using cooked, leftover meat, poach the vegetables for about 8 minutes.

Mince the vegetable innards and mix together with the meat, eggs, garlic, parsley and cheese. Season to taste.

Fill the vegetable 'shells' with the stuffing, sprinkle the top with breadcrumbs and drizzle with olive oil. Bake for only 15-20 minutes if using pre-poached vegetables and pre-cooked meat. Otherwise bake for 30-35 minutes.

The *farcis* may be eaten either hot or cold. At René's the meat used is mostly ham, but some recipes call for minced steak, others veal or chicken. There's no reason why you shouldn't use any stuffing — or indeed vegetables — of your choice, as long as the proportions are right.



Ingredients (for 4 people)

2 large red peppers
2 large onions
2 small aubergines
2 medium courgettes
500 g mild sausage meat or
any mince or minced
leftovers you fancy
2 cloves garlic, minced
2 eggs, beaten
50 g grated parmesan
fresh parsley
salt and pepper to taste
breadcrumbs (optional)
olive oil

For walkers who also love food. Walks and excursions in the **Nice countryside**, with **restaurants** en route. Ideal for short breaks using the excellent public transport network

- 12 walks and 2 excursions into the mountains (one on a narrow-gauge railway)
- large-scale maps; city plan; timetables
- city and countryside restaurants, with menu highlights
- local specialities; markets; health food shops
- 21 recipes for local dishes, with an emphasis on *naturally healthy* ingredients available in Nice or back home