The Surprising Allure of Nice, France

Posted by Kwin Mosby | Jul 7, 2022 | Cities, Destinations, France, Nice, Travel Interest | 0

Promenade de Anglais in Nice, France (Photo Credit: valentinama / iStock)

It's not uncommon for queer travelers to automatically think of Paris when it comes to planning a trip to France, but Nice is also a travel destination to be considered, too. And even more so now that the all-business-class airline, **La Compagnie** has a direct flight to Nice from Newark International Airport, but for the summer only.

The real incentive to visit the city is its welcoming queer-friendly vibe. As part of the French Riviera (or Côte d'Azur), Nice does have a sizable LGBTQ+ community. A community that includes a local LGBTQIA+ Center that houses several queer organizations, provides social services, educates locals via a robust resource library, and offers a safe space for social gatherings.

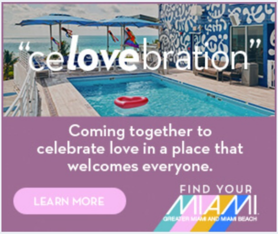
CARAM'ELLES

LGBTQIA+ Center in Nice, France (Photo Credit: Kwin Mosby)

In addition to a vibrant queer community, Nice is home to several interesting historical sites, beautiful beaches, and unique travel experiences you won't find anywhere else. Here are a few recommendations you may want to consider if you're planning a trip to Nice, and if you're not, these are reasons why you should**.**

Hotel Boscolo Nice

If you want to splurge a little, I'd recommend staying at the 5-star **Hotel Boscolo Nice**, which is centrally located a block from Nice's new Tramway, and within walking distance of several shops on Jean Médecin Avenue as well as bustling Place Massena.



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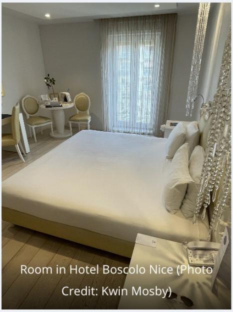
The luxury hotel has spacious rooms and suites, some with balconies. But they don't, guests can take the elevator to the top floor to hang out at the Rooftop B Club which features a pool with a small sundeck, a bar, and incredible city views.

At the 5,381 square foot spa, guests can indulge in a regular menu of treatments and facials, which incorporate high-end Biologique Recherche products. The hotel has two restaurants: Genesi Italian Restaurant, where a buffet-style breakfast is served, and Angelo Terra d'Italia, where most menu items are prepared with truffles, including the Signature Truffé cocktail.

Lobby in Hotel Boscolo Nice (Photo Credit: Kwin Mosby)

Rooftop B Club at the Hotel Boscolo Nice (Photo Credit: Kwin Mosby)


Room in Hotel Boscolo Nice (Photo Credit: Kwin Mosby)

Things to Do

Old Nice (Vieux Nice)

From the Hotel Barcelo, vacationers have easy access to Old Town (Vieux Nice) to pop into the small boutique shops, local artists' galleries, and cafés, where they can grab a cup of coffee or glass of wine to enjoy people-watching, a favorite pastime pleasure.

If you're a chocolate lover, you have to stop at **Maison Auer**, an old traditional artisanal shop that makes delicious confections, including chocolates and candied fruits.

MAISON
AUER
NICE
DE PÈRE EN FILS
DEPUIS 1820
MIXTES

Maison Auer (Photo Credit: Kwin Mosby)

Marché Aux Fleurs Cours Saleya

From Maison Auer, I recommend walking a few blocks east along Rue Saint-Francois de Paule (and a slight left) to experience one of the city's oldest traditional outdoor markets. At Marché Aux Fleurs Cours Saleya, vendors sell fresh cut flowers, produce and live fowl from neighboring farms. And depending on the time of day or day of the week, the market switches out the flowers and produce vendors with vendors selling art and handmade crafts.

While you're here, if you're hungry, stop by the Chez Theresa cart to sample the local favorite, *socca*, a thin, unleavened pancake or crepe made from chickpea flour. Give it a taste at the market, but before you leave the area, don't forget to take an Insta-worthy pic at the top of a nearby staircase to get a bird's-eye view of the market.

10€ le Bouquet
10€ les 10
8€ les 10
15€ les 20

Marché Aux Fleurs Cours Saleya (Photo Credit: Kwin Mosby)

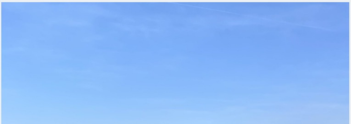
SOCCA
FAITE AU FEU DE BOIS

Chez Theresa's Socca (Photo Credit: Kwin Mosby)

Promenade de Anglais

From the Market, walk south to see Nice's star attraction, Promenade des Anglais, a four-mile pedestrian walkway with an uninterrupted view of the Bay of Angels. The Promenade, a UNESCO World Heritage Site, always draws a crowd, so get there early to claim your space on the beach or to pay a few euros to snag a beach lounger and umbrella.

Hungry beachgoers and pedestrians can head to the **Plage Beau Rivage** for a bite to eat. I recommend the sea bream ceviche with ginger, peppered mango, and sweet coconut. It's delicious!



PREMIUM GINGER ALE

Kwin on Promenade de Anglais (Photo Credit: Kwin Mosby)

Sea Bream Ceviche at Plage Beau Rivage (Photo Credit: Kwin Mosby)

Le Sunset

While you're in the area, you can support the only LGBTQ+-owned restaurant on the Promenade. **Le Sunset** serves up a variety of dishes, including a vegan tapas platter. The restaurant-bar is the perfect spot to watch the sunset while listening to divas belt out your favorite tunes. Le Sunset is usually the starting place for queer revelers, who want to have a fun night out.

Before heading back to the hotel to rest up for your bar crawl to explore the city's nightlife, I recommend taking a stroll around Port Lympia, if for no other reason, to see the sleek, expensive yachts and colorful boats in the marina.

Le Sunset (Photo Credit: Kwin Mosby)

Promenade de Anglais at Sunset (Photo Credit: Kwin Mosby)

Best Places to Buy Wine

For wine connoisseurs who want to take a bottle of wine or two back home or to keep in their room, I suggest making a stop at **Caves Caprioglio**, which has an incredible selection of French wines and champagnes.

For a more immersive wine experience, I encourage vacationers to visit **La Cave Bianchi**, a family-owned business open since 1860 that blends wine tastings with music for immersive VIP experiences. If Franck Obadia is your guide through a wine tasting, you should expect to receive a fun, in-depth lesson about France's popular wines and its wine regions.

ES CAPRIOG
VINS
SPIRITUEUX

Caves Caprioglio (Photo Credit: Kwin Mosby)

CAVE BIANCHI
Depuis 1860
Pierre Bianchi & Cie

La Cave Bianchi (Photo Credit: Kwin Mosby)

Franck Obadia educates group on French wine and regions during a wine tasting. (Photo Credit: Kwin Mosby)

Vigna Book Store

Finding a brick-and-mortar bookstore anywhere is rare, but queer bibliophiles visiting Nice will be happy to know that there is a lesbian-owned library where patrons can check out or buy a wide selection of LGBTQ+ books and magazines primarily written in French. **Vigna Book Store** also supports local causes and events, including the annual **In & Out Festival** in Nice.

PAUL HAMY
L'ORNITHOLOGUE
UN FILM DE JOÃO PEDRO RODRIGUES
UN FILM DE JOÃO PEDRO RODRIGUES
MOURIR COMME UN HOMME
MORRER COMO UM HOMEM

Vigna Book Store (Photo Credit: Kwin Mosby)

Queer Nightlife

As an avid traveler, I have never heard Nice mentioned in the same breath as other queer-friendly European cities such as Paris, Barcelona, or Berlin. In Nice, people don't really head to the bars until around 11 p.m. and it's usually a staggered-timed bar crawl, meaning locals tend to start at one bar and close out the night at **Le Glam**, where I caught transgender DJ Lucy Ward spinning.

In total, Nice has 15 gay bars and clubs, including **Le Swing**, the **Eagle Bar** (a cruisy sex club), and **Malabar Station**, a small bar, but you'll find most patrons seated on an outdoor patio that's usually packed around by 10 p.m.

Le Six has a fun vibe with numbers associated with landline phones located around the bar for patrons to connect with their admirers. The bar also has a shower for strippers to bathe nude and a ladder that leads to a small second-floor terrace overlooking the ground level.

Queer locals and tourists who enjoy dancing usually head to **L'Omega Club**, where the doors open at midnight and don't close until 7 a.m.

Unfortunately, Nice does not have a lesbian bar. While walking around the city with a group, we did make an unexpected trip to visit the lesbian-owned Hacienda Bar Y Cocina. The newly owned bar has a Latin-inspired décor, cuisine, and cocktails like the delicious Mezcal Julep made with mezcal, basil, cucumber, and chili pepper. It's spicy and delicious!

SIX
LE SIX
LE SIX
LE SIX
LE SIX

Le Six (Photo Credit: Kwin Mosby)

Lesbian owners Solene Canpion and Dorris Carabetta with Chef Marco Antonio (Photo Credit: Kwin Mosby)

Le Glam (Photo Credit: Kwin Mosby)

Day Trips from Nice

LGBTQ+ travelers who feel a little adventurous should consider traveling further afield to experience other small towns that are considered part of Nice and the greater metropolitan area. Each trip mentioned below is approximately a one to 3-hour car ride away from the city.

Spend a day traveling to explore the towns nearby like the quiet quaint town of Vence, where you can have lunch at lesbian-owned **Restaurant CheZ'elles**, and although they serve Armenian cuisine – think Mediterranean fare – it was hands down one of the most memorable meals while visiting Nice. Everything was so good!

Terrasse à 20 m
Chez'elles
Chez'elles

Restaurant CheZ'elles in Vence (Photo Credit: Kwin Mosby)

Food at Restaurant CheZ'elles (Photo Credit: Kwin Mosby)

I should mention that one thing most people don't know about Nice is that the city is located near the France and Italy border, which means you may see the two different cultures overlap. So, it's common to see pasta dishes like gnocchi on restaurant menus.

In addition to a day trip to explore Vence, vacationers who are art aficionados can visit the **Renoir Museum** in Cagnes-sur-Mer. The museum – the artist's home before he died in 1919 – includes his drawing room, bedroom, and studio with his easel and brushes. Keep in mind that the **Matisse Museum** is located in Nice proper if you're looking for culture without renting a car.

Villefranche-sur-Mer (Photo Credit: Kwin Mosby)

Villefranche-sur-Mer is probably one of the most photographed coastal towns in the Côte d'Azur. Add it as another stop on your road trip to Éze, a seaside commune that sits atop a mountain with only one doorway to get in!

Most residents actually work as the owners of the small shops and restaurants within the commune. The shops sell upscaled art, jewelry, clothes, and more – beyond the regular souvenirs and trinkets you'd normally find elsewhere. The piéce de résistance here is **Le Jardin d' Éze**, where the fun is trying to navigate your way through statues and the meticulously landscaped cacti garden to stand at the top for great views of the coastline as far as the eye can see.

View at the top of Le Jardin d' Éze (Photo Credit: Kwin Mosby)