

Rail holidays to France

Expressions



Nice by train, tour
Provence and French
Riviera by car



Nice by train, tour Provence and French Riviera by car

10 NIGHTS / 11 DAYS

Nice

Provence countryside

Gorges du Verdon

Mougins



This 10-night touring holiday by train and car combines effortless travel by rail to Nice, and then you can enjoy the freedom and flexibility for sightseeing and exploring the vast hinterland behind the glamorous French Riviera that a hire-car allows. You start your journey by Eurostar in London on an early morning train, which goes directly to Marseille without a change on 3 or 4 times a week from May until mid-September (out of this season, you would change trains in Paris). You reach Nice in the early evening, allowing you time to check-in to your hotel where you spend three nights, and venture into the city for dinner. You have two full days to enjoy the flavours of Nice with its mix of rustic and chic, explore the fragrant flower market, visit the art galleries and museums and dine in local fish restaurants. On the fourth day you collect a hire-car from the centre of Nice and make for the open roads of the Riviera into Provence. We recommend stops along the way, perhaps in the artists' village of St Paul de Vence and in Grasse, at the heart of the perfume industry. There is time to rest and relax as well, perhaps to play some golf or to rent a pedalo on the Lac de Saint-Cassien, before navigating the hairpin beds of the roads around the spectacular Gorges du Verdon. You spend three nights in the village of Moustiers Sainte-Marie, with opportunities to explore the Gorges du Verdon in more depth, or to marvel at the acres of lavender fields on the Valensole plateau nearby. Your final stop brings you back towards the coast and the sparkling Cote d'Azur to stay in one of the most desirable hill-villages near Cannes, Mougins. From here you can enjoy a promenade along the Croisette in Cannes, visit the harbour and old town or relax in the grounds of your hotel with its panoramic views of the hills around. On the last day you are just 30 minutes' drive from Nice airport.

PRICES

From £1,845 per person

Based on two people sharing a double or twin room and including standard class rail travel. Supplement for standard premier about £280 per person.

DATES

The direct London to Avignon service operates May to September on certain days each week. At other times, the holiday works with a change of train in Paris or perhaps Lille.

WHAT'S INCLUDED

- Standard class Eurostar and second-class TGV from London to Nice return (standard premier can be booked at a supplement)
- Hire of a Group B car for 8 days (not during your stay in Nice)
- 3 nights' bed and breakfast in a Classic double room at La Perouse, Nice
- 2 nights' bed and breakfast in a Deluxe suite at Terre Blanche resort, near Tourrettes
- 3 nights' bed and breakfast in a Superior room at La Bastide de Moustiers, Moustiers Sainte Marie
- 2 nights' bed and breakfast in a Superior double room at Le Mas Candille, Mougins
- Concierge service and Expressions Holidays regional helpful hints

WHAT'S NOT INCLUDED

- Early check-in or late check-out at any hotels (although we can arrange this on request at additional cost)
- Any other services not mentioned above, such as transfers and meals except breakfast at hotels
- Personal holiday insurance. This is essential and cover should be in place from when you book the holiday.
- Local tourist tax, usually between Euros 1 and 3 per person per night, and payable locally to the hotel
- Transfers in Paris if required

DAY-BY-DAY ITINERARY

All train times are approximate and may vary depending on travel dates.

Expressions

Day one London to Nice by train

This touring holiday by train and car to Nice, Provence and the Cote d'Azur whisks you from London St Pancras to Marseille direct by Eurostar. The direct service operates from the beginning of May until mid-September, 3 or 4 times a week. At other times, the holiday can be done with a change in Paris. The train leaves London at about 07.15 and arrives in Marseille at 14.45 hrs. You then connect to Nice on a train at about 15.30 arriving in Nice just after 18.00 hrs. You spend three nights in Nice.

Days two and three in Nice

On the coast of the Cote d'Azur, also known as the French Riviera, enjoy two full days in the Mediterranean resort of Nice. There are plenty of cultural and active things to do both in Nice and nearby. Spend an afternoon walking along the Promenade des Anglais, which runs parallel to one of the most beautiful beaches in France, the Baie des Anges. Well-known for its artistic and cultural connections, Nice has over 20 museums and galleries, including the Musée Matisse, the Palais Lascaris, and several archaeological and historical museums. For something more modern, take a tour of the city's 13 examples of street art, painted by internationally-renowned artists, or simply tour the architecture and atmosphere of the town to the soundtrack of the street jazz music. The Marche aux Fleurs Cours Saleya is the site of some of Nice's best markets, selling flowers, fruit, and vegetables, as well as other local delicacies. Be sure to seek out and try some Socca, a pancake or crêpe made from chickpea flower, or Pissaladière, a kind of pizza topped with onions, olive, garlic, and anchovies. Wander round the Marché Artisanal Nocturne, lit atmospherically by the buildings around it, which runs from 18:30 to 00:30 every night apart from Monday, and displays the work of Nice's local artists. A self-guided tour of the city will bring you to Queen Victoria's Ancien Hôtel Régina, the Basilique Notre Dame, Le Cadran Solaire (a sundial which you operate using your own shadow), and the small squares of the Old Town. Take lunch on one of the café terraces. Voted the Green City of the Mediterranean, Nice has many hidden gardens ready to be explored; large or small, they are all perfectly maintained. For those looking for a more active experience of the Nice landscape, climb the Colline du Château, or head outside the city on one of the many trails that take you along the hillside, through oak woods and olive groves, to the hamlets and neighbourhoods of Bellet, the origin of Nice's famous Bellet wine. Other possible day excursions include trips to



Grasse, the perfume capital of the world, Monaco, the luxurious self-contained state famous for its connections with A-list stars and the Grand Prix, the seaside village of Beaulieu-sur-Mer, and the exclusive peninsula of Saint-Jean-Cap-Ferrat.

Day four Nice to Provence countryside by car

This morning collect your hire-car from an office in the centre of Nice and then make your way out of town. The driving time without a stop is just over an hour, but there are plenty of places to stop along the way. The first stop should be at St Paul de Vence, one of the prettiest perched villages in the hinterland of the Cote d'Azur. It is renowned as an artists' village and the winding main street is full of galleries and artisan goods to purchase. If you want to have lunch at the famous Colombe d'Or, a haunt for artists and writers who have left their mark with the vast collection of original works of art that adorns the walls. Pre-booking is essential. Near here, about 15 minutes on foot, or call in on your own in or out of the village is the Fondation Maeght, a museum of modern art with one of the largest collections of paintings, sculptures and works on paper of modern and contemporary art in Europe. Your next port of call should be in the village of Grasse, known for its long-established perfume industry. There is a museum exploring the history of perfume, and three historic perfume manufacturers, Fragonard, Galimard and Molinard provide guided tours to their factories. The town itself is a maze of winding alleyways and stairways, hiding some superb examples of 17th and 18th century private mansions. The local speciality is a 'fassoum', a courgette flower doughnut. The region around Grasse

has grown flowers for hundreds of years in a favourable climate and in rich soil. Originally the plants grown were jasmine, rose and tuberose, but now other flowers are used and grown locally including orange blossom, mimosa, lavender, violet and jonquil. To these locally grown flowers are added imported materials in a raw and natural state including iris or vetiver roots, oak moss, amber seeds, sandalwood, patchouli leaves, cinnamon bark and cistus. The rose is harvested in May, the flower of the orange tree from the end of April until the beginning of June and jasmine in July and August. The most spectacular fields are those of mimosa from January to March in the region of the Massif du Tanneron, then broom in June and lavender in July. From Grasse it's a drive of just 40 minutes to your stop for the next two nights.

Day five in the countryside

You are situated amidst the rolling hills, of shades of green, criss-crossed by small valleys and streams. You might want to relax at your hotel, enjoying walks, golf, the spa or the swimming pool. If you do want to venture out, then the Lac de Saint-Cassien is a few minutes' drive away. The lake offers all sorts of activities on the water, with fishing and pedalos, and walks around the lakeside. Also, just a few minutes away is the village of Fayence, one of 9 perched villages in the region. Fayence and these other villages have ancient stone buildings, shady squares, water fountains, stone staircases, pots of flowers, market stalls with abundant local fruit and vegetables, olive oils and spices, local fabrics and straw hats. At Seillans you can see stone shepherd huts called Bories.

Day six drive to the Gorges du Verdon

The most direct route to your next stop in Provence only takes just over an hour and a half but we suggest you take a route that follows the course of the Gorges du Verdon and approach the village of Moustiers-Sainte-Marie from the gorge itself. The road towards the gorge winds through valleys of varieties of pine and oak and then you reach the Gorges du Verdon, the deepest gorge in France and where waters from the Alps have carved into the limestone massif of the foothills of the Alps. The road follows both sides of the gorge and is hairpin in places. Also, worth noting in this area is the variety of birdlife, especially vultures, eagles and other birds of prey. From Trigance, a typical village of Haute-Provence with a castle and narrow streets, you can take the northern route to the 'point sublime' with a spectacular viewpoint looking down the gorge. You pass through villages of Rougon and La Palud sur Vernon. The area is also popular for hiking with kayaking in the lower part of the gorge and on the Lac de Sainte Croix. Your hotel for three nights is in the charming and popular village of Moustiers-Sainte-Marie.

Day seven and eight in the Gorges du Verdon

There are plenty of opportunities today to explore the area, perhaps on foot as there are numerous walks, or drive to the Lac de Sainte Croix, as well as driving through the dramatic Gorges du Verdon. The village is renowned for its earthenware tiles and there are several workshops and sales outlets for the tiles. There is also a pottery museum. Another option for a day's drive is to visit the area of the lavender fields near Riez (also known for its honey and truffles) and Valensole.

Day nine Gorges du Verdon to Mougins

Today we recommend driving to the coast at Saint Tropez, and then following the corniche along to Frejus and on to Cannes before arriving at your overnight stop in the hill village of Mougins behind the coast. You stay here for two nights.

Day ten in Mougins

Mougins is a village about 15 minutes' drive from Cannes and the coast. In the hills, it is a mediaeval village surrounded by the pines, olives and cypress trees of the Valmasque forest, but also offers visitors a panoramic view of the bay of Cannes, the Lerins islands and Grasse. Take time to explore the village on foot and seek out its narrow streets adorned with colourful flowers and ancient stonework. The village is linked with a number of artists



over the years including Picasso, and in the Musee d'Art Classique de Mougins (MACM), there is a private collection of Roman, Greek and Egyptian antiquities alongside works of modern and contemporary art. Spend today exploring the village on foot or venture to nearby Cannes. Cannes is renowned as a stylish beach resort, and famous for its long Boulevard de la Croisette that flanks the seashore. There is a charming port, a long stretch of sandy beach and numerous shops and restaurants.

Day eleven Nice to London

You drive back to Nice this morning in time to take the TGV departing at 11.23 to Marseille where you change trains for the Eurostar which takes you directly back to London to arrive just after 22.00 hrs. If the Marseille to London Eurostar is not operating at the time of the year or the day of week you want, you would travel from Nice to Paris, and then Paris to London by Eurostar instead.

GENERAL INFORMATION

this rail holiday is one of several suggested rail holidays we can offer you exactly as it is but also with any alterations you might want including extra nights in one or more places or adding in extra places. All our tours can be extended so that you can include a longer stay in one mountain or lake resort too, perhaps at the end of the itinerary. Do call to discuss the options with our travel consultants.



OUR TOURS

Our rail tours are for individuals travelling on their own or in their own family group. You do not join a group and you are not escorted.

FLEXIBLE ARRANGEMENTS

Our arrangements are very flexible in that you choose to travel on any day you want, subject to availability of trains and hotels. As mentioned above, additional nights can be added at any point.

EUROSTAR

A rail holiday to France starts with a journey by Eurostar from London St Pancras, Ebbsfleet or Ashford stations in the UK to either Paris Gare du Nord or Lille Europe. In summer months there are direct trains on Saturdays from London St Pancras to Avignon with no change required.

Eurostar offers almost hourly departures every day, allowing you to travel from the centre of London to the centre of Paris on the same train in three hours. Not all trains stop at the Ebbsfleet and Ashford stations in Kent, but parking is plentiful at both stations and it allows you to avoid London.

Check-in is 30 minutes prior to departure, customs formalities are completed before boarding and there is no limit to the amount of baggage that can be taken on board. The Eurostar trains themselves have 8 coaches which are split into Standard Class, Standard Premier and Business Premier as well as 2 cafeterias. Standard Premier customers are served a light cold meal and enjoy a more spacious environment than Standard Class, while Business Premier customers receive a hot meal and unlimited beverages as well as lounge access.

TRAIN TIMES

We have planned our itineraries based on train times that work day by day at the time of planning which can be up to a year before you travel. Usually train times stay more or less the same every day, season by season. The times we have planned will be discussed with you at the time you enquire about the holiday and they are detailed to you in your written holiday quotation. It may be that the timetable changes between the planning of the itinerary and when you come to book but we can always adjust the itinerary to suit the actual train times and any requirements you have for particular times of travel.

FIRST OR SECOND CLASS

We will automatically include travel in second class but lots of our clients do upgrade to first class service. On Eurostar this is called Premier Standard for leisure travellers as it gives you an upgraded on-board service and more spacious seating but without paying for the fully-flexible business tickets. On the TGV trains within France, upgrading to first class gives you more spacious seating with increased legroom. The price of upgrading varies from route to route but is something that is not always proportionately a lot more on the price of the overall holiday, so well-worth considering.

TRANSFERS

Transfers in Paris between stations and from the station to each hotel are not automatically included in the price of the holiday. In Paris most clients choose to take a taxi between the stations rather than go on the Metro but we can arrange a private car with driver to take you in between. This is quite useful if you are a family group that can't fit into one Paris taxi.

OUR PRICES

The sample prices mentioned in this leaflet are generally a 'from' price based on the cheapest season of travel. However, train fares and hotel rates can change (up and down depending on offers), so we give you an accurate price for your holiday when we provide you with a quotation. Our sample prices should be used as an indication of how much a particular combination will cost and to show the differences on average between the hotel categories on offer.

TOUR CODE

FRBR09

BOOKING CONDITIONS

Our booking conditions apply to all holidays. A copy can be found on our website and a copy is also sent to you with a written quotation and when you make a booking.

FINANCIAL PROTECTION

Expressions Holidays offers full financial protection for all holidays you book with us. If your holiday includes a flight, the ATOL (3076) covers the costs of the holiday. If the holiday does not include a flight, it is the ABTOT bond that protects the cost of the holiday. We are also members of AITO (the Association of Independent Tour Operators).

Expressions Holidays

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HOW TO BOOK

To make a booking, just phone us on

01392 441250

and we can take you through the details we need and start the booking process.