

DESTINATIONS

The best hotels in the French Riviera

Côte d'Azur resident Lanie Goodman shares her address book of secret places to eat and sleep

BY LANIE GOODMAN

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Henri Matisse summed up the appeal of Nice thus: “Do you remember the light through the shutters?” he said. “It came from below, as if from theatre footlights. Everything was fake, absurd, amazing, delicious.”

And while it's true that the coastal Riviera is still a show-off's paradise, a place of dazzling spectacle and bravura performance, inland the region is also home to quieter, more authentic pleasures. Last summer I braved the steep roads north of Menton to attend a sit-down feast celebrating a bountiful chestnut harvest. We consumed vats of creamy polenta, wild boar stew, sweet marron pastries and robust red wine. It was a joyous event, and only cost €10 per person.

As soon as temperatures rise, residents head for the hills, to walk through cool forests of truffle oaks, swim in waterfalls and sip *rosé en piscine* (with ice cubes) on a shady village square. One of my favourite escapes is to jump on a ferry to Ile Saint-Honorat for a lunch of fresh, grilled lobster, or go to Théoule-sur-Mer for a swim at one of the tiny inlets along the craggy coastline. The real French Riviera is still here, even in peak season. You will find it if you look beyond the glare of the bright lights; it just takes a little prompting to find it.

How we choose the best hotels in the French Riviera

Every hotel on this list has been selected independently by our editors and written by a *Condé Nast Traveller* journalist who knows the destination and has stayed at that property. When choosing hotels, our editors consider both luxury properties and boutique and lesser-known boltholes that offer an authentic and insider experience of

a destination. We're always looking for beautiful design, a great location and warm service – as well as serious sustainability credentials. We update this list regularly as new hotels open and existing ones evolve.



Christophe Coenon

La Pérouse, Nice

Talk about location. Carved into the rock, flush with Nice's leafy hilltop Parc du Château, this artfully reinvented 50-room landmark hotel sits above the seafront Promenade des Anglais from the city's most enviable vantage point. Steps away from the cobblestone labyrinth of Old Town, you wake to birdsong and a sweeping view — red-tiled rooftops, a dazzling swathe of turquoise and the cerulean sky. Add to that the stylish Riviera 50s-inspired uncluttered interiors by Studio Friedmann and Versace that bring the sea inside — coral-shaped ceramic lamps, shell-patterned tapestry headboards, beachy ocher and white striped curtains and armchairs — plus the new citrus-tree shaded Patio, a Mediterranean-style restaurant headed by chef Damien Andrews. Highlight: cocktails on your terrace at magic hour, when the lamps blink, and the curve of the Bay of Angels turns into a shimmering pearl necklace.

Price: From about £406 per night

Address: La Pérouse, 11 Quai Rauba Capeu, 06300 Nice

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