

Aix-en-Provence, St. Tropez & Villefranche

September 16 – 18

This was a very last minute trip to the south of France, one last attempt at drawing out the summer a bit longer....

Date	To	Flight/Hotel/Car Details	Cost	Comments
Fri, Sept 16	Train to Aix-en-Provence	<p><i>Train #6129: 19h16 PARIS GARE DE LYON/22h19 AIX EN PROVENCE TGV</i></p> <p><i>Hotel: L'Atrium</i> 15 Cours Gambetta - Espace Forbin Aix-en-Provence, 13100 +33413910066 dcros@soleilvacances.com Booking.com booking # 651347775</p>	<p>€169.40 each (round trip train)</p> <p>€104 total (hotel)</p>	<p>We arrived in Aix too late to have dinner there, but we still enjoyed an evening stroll around the old town and a glass of wine before bed.</p> <p>L'Atrium is a no frills hotel with a feeling akin to a fancy dorm room, but it was only €104 for a 2-room apartment with kitchenette and private bath that slept 4 people. It's only a 5 or 10 minute walk to the very center of Aix and extremely convenient if you are renting a car from Avis (see below). I have stayed at La Petite Maison de Carla (7, rue du Puits Neuf - 13100 Aix-en-Provence Tel : 33 (0)4 42 21 20 73 - Mobile : 33 (0)6 74 18 60 98, http://www.la-petite-maison-de-carla.com/) in the past and would highly recommend it for its charm and great breakfast, but if you are looking to save some money and especially if you are 3-4 people, L'Atrium is a great deal. Booking.com listed singles/doubles at €64.</p>
Sat, Sept 17	Day in St. Tropez; evening in Villefranche-sur-mer	<p><i>Rental car: Avis, 11 Cours Gambetta, Aix-en-Provence, 13100</i></p> <p><i>Hotel: Hotel Provençal</i> 4 avenue du Maréchal Joffre 06230 Villefranche-sur-mer Tel : 04 93 76 53 53 provençal@riviera.fr http://www.hotelprovençal.fr/index.html</p> <p>Hotel Provençal is a great find for those who want some charm, want to be central, but do not want to blow the budget. The hotel lobby and rooms have been recently renovated. We had a large room with 2 queen-sized beds and private bath, and even a balcony with sea view. The Welcome Hotel (http://www.welcomhotel.com) right on the old port has also been recommended to me but it is significantly more expensive.</p>	<p>£42 (total, rental car, or about €50)</p> <p>€131.50 (triple room, includes breakfast)</p>	<p>Without even planning it, we reserved a car (through http://www.autoescape.com/) with pick-up just a few doors down from our hotel. And €50 is an amazing price, but there was one little catch: we were limited to 250 km/day or pay more. In the end, we went about 100km over, which came to about €39 extra. Still, €39 is not bad for a weekend's car rental. Not a bad tip to remember for the future: decide more or less how much driving you will be doing and if it's not a lot, pay less for a limited number of kilometers/miles per day. We only filled up the tank once on this trip but that once came to €63.</p> <p>We had lunch at Le Quai (22 Quai Jean Jaurès, +33 (0) 494 970 407, lequaisainttropez@gmail.com, www.lequai-saint-tropez.com, which is not surprisingly on the quai in the old port area in St. Tropez. While it is expensive (everything in St. Tropez is expensive) and appeared a bit too trendy for my taste, the food was actually quite good and the service extremely friendly. After our visit to St. Tropez, we stopped off at Gassin, 6 kilometers up into the hills, to continue my never-ending campaign to visit all of the prettiest villages in France (Les Plus Beaux Villages de France: www.les-plus-beaux-villages-de-france.org/).</p> <p>We ate dinner on the old port in Villefranche at the L'Oursin Bleu on the port in the old town (11, Quai Amiral Courbet, Tel. 04 93 01 90 12). I am also a fan of Au Claire Obscure (1 rue Obscure, Tel: 04 93 01 84 88) just a block off the water in one of Villefranche's old vaulted passageways.</p>

Sun, Sept 18	Day in Villefranche, Eze Village, Sanremo, Nice, drive back to Aix; Train to Paris	<p><i>Train #6142: 21h43 AIX EN PROVENCE TGV/00h52 PARIS GARE DE LYON</i></p> <p><i>It took us about 2 hours to drive from Nice back to Aix, but that was with no traffic and going at a pretty fast clip...</i></p>	<p>Sunday, our plan was to walk to and around the peninsula of St.-Jean Cap-Ferrat, following the trail along the water. Unfortunately the morning was a bit rainy, so we visited the picturesque Eze Village instead. Then knowing we were just a short drive from the Italian border, we could not pass up the opportunity to have lunch in Italy. Following Tripadvisor's recommendation, we ate at Camelot Osteria in Sanremo (Via Morardo, Tel. 01 84 59 14 45) and it was well worth the trip (I especially recommend the pesto gnocchi). Sanremo is a colorful town on the coast about 18km from the border, with a less-than-perfect waterfront but a wonderful maze of streets and passageways in its old town built into the mountain. After lunch, we drive back to Nice. (We did not eat there this time, but if you do stop for food, I recommend La Voglia (http://www.lavoglia.com/) in the old town for Italian).</p> <p>Note that if you enjoy hiking, stop at any tourist office along the Côte d'Azur for a free guide to 60+ hikes in the area. If you have more time to drive around, also pick as many of the other nearby towns to visit as time allows (all accessible by bus and/or train): I especially like Menton and Saint Paul de Vence.</p>
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