

Infos **Presse** Côte d'Azur Tourisme

# Côte d'Azur Tourisme

## Historical & Remembrance Tourism

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@OT of Roquebrune-Cap-Martin – Fort du Cap-Martin / OT of Vallauris – Route Napoléon / Le Pont du Loup

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# Historical and Remembrance Tourism on the French Riviera

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With the celebration of the Centenary of the beginning of World War I in 2014, Remembrance Tourism is at the heart of events and communication for France and its Regions. For the French people, commemoration of the two World Wars is at the top of the list of the year's major events. And the French Riviera is no exception!

The two World Wars obviously affected the Alpes-Maritimes Département very differently: a land of hospitality during World War I, it was largely occupied in World War II, first by the Italians, then by the Germans.

Here, the "Righteous among the Nations" protected many Jewish families and, like the rest of France, the Département experienced the Résistance and suffered serious losses.

The Alpes-Maritimes General Council and the communes of the Alpes-Maritimes are all working to preserve the memory of these tragic times.

We decided to include a few historical reminders in this press kit of the presence of major figures on the Côte d'Azur.

Thus, Tourism and History are combined to highlight sites, buildings and landscapes... to recount the history of the French Riviera, which goes back to Early Man.

We hope you will find this of interest.

**Many significant facts have punctuated the Côte d'Azur's history, which begins virtually with the origins of Man.**

Vallonnet Cave in Roquebrune-Cap-Martin has preserved the presence of one of the earliest human occupations in Western Europe, over a million years ago. There are many other prehistoric remains in the Département, the most emblematic being the **rock carvings of Vallée des Merveilles** in the Mercantour National Park.

The many **mediaeval castles, citadels** and **other fortified structures** have undergone transformations over the years, to become today peaceful sites and excellent pretexts for Cultural and Remembrance Tourism with splendid panoramas!

In addition to the buildings described in these pages, and to be exhaustive, here are those that are also part of the history of the Alpes-Maritimes...

In 6/7 BCE, under the reign of the Emperor Augustus, the **Trophy of the Alps** was erected to celebrate the Roman conquest of local populations. Its ruins overlook the village of La Turbie from the highest point on Via Julia Augusta.

*Circa 400:* The monk **Honoratus** settled with some companions on the island that now bears his name, Saint-Honorat, one of the Isles of Lérins in the Bay of Cannes. Their monastic community thrived and grew to influence all of Provence, and especially what would become the "Côte d'Azur".

In **Nice**, works for the tramway recently uncovered the stone foundations of part of the city ramparts, now **an underground crypt** with a 2,000m<sup>2</sup> surface area for visitors to see the remains of 5 centuries of the fortifications of Nice (from 1380 to 1706). Also in Nice, on the hill of Cimiez, Roman ruins, in particular the Amphitheatre, date from the 2nd century.

In the 16th century, the **Citadel de Villefranche-sur-Mer** was built as part of a larger military complex, which includes Fort du Mont-Alban, Tour Saint-Hospice on Cap-Ferrat and the Battery of Beaulieu-sur-Mer, around the Port Royal de la Darse, a military and commercial port for the Duchy of Savoy, and the starting point of the Old Salt Road (*Route du Sel*) to the Piedmont.

Holy Roman Emperor Charles V stayed 40 days on an Imperial galley in the Bay of Villefranche.

Citadelle Saint-Elme in Villefranche-sur-Mer

To protect the Comté de Nice from invasion in the 16th century, the Duke of Savoy had the Citadel built along with the satellite forts of Mont-Alban and Saint-Hospice and the Port de la Darse which could accommodate galleys. This remarkable complex of bastioned fortifications was designed by Piedmontese engineers. Today, the Citadel (3ha/7.5 acres) is home to then Town Hall (Hôtel de Ville), the Volti and Goetz-Boumeester Museums, Collection Roux and a Convention Centre.

In **1538, French King Francis I** settled in the **Castle of Villeneuve-Loubet** for a 3-week stay, followed by his retinue made up of some 15,000 people. Every year, the village organises spectacular festivities around this historic event.

The Castle of Villeneuve-Loubet, owned by the Panisse-Passis family, is a superb defensive structure around a pentagonal keep built in the 13th century at the instigation of the Counts of Provence and Romeo de Villeneuve. The ramparts and parapet walks are punctuated with five round towers and a mediaeval drawbridge. French King Francis I stayed here in 1538 to sign the Truce of Nice with Holy Roman Emperor Charles V putting an end to the Italian Wars.

In the 17th century, the **Fort Royal de Sainte-Marguerite** (an island in the Bay of Cannes) was refurbished by Cardinal Richelieu, then Vauban. A Royal prison, the famous Man in the Iron Mask was incarcerated here and it remained a prison until the end of World War II.

In **March 1815 (The Hundred Days)**, **Napoleon** escaped from the Isle of Elba and **landed in Golfe-Juan** to regain his crown “without shedding a single drop of blood.” He was accompanied by 1,200 men and moved north to Grenoble (along what is known today as **Route Napoléon**) before heading for Paris with his army.

**The Bicentenary of this landing will be celebrated in 2015!**

#### **1914-1918 - World War I: “The Côte d’Azur, a land of hospitality”**

A prestigious tourist destination since 1860, the French Riviera attracted crowned heads, aristocrats and other noblemen to enjoy its mild winters. In 1914, it had 150,000 winter visitors.

With many hotels and hospitals, a reputedly mild climate and especially its location far from the battlefields, the French Riviera was truly a land of hospitality for both wounded soldiers and refugees, essentially French, Belgian, Serbian and Russian.

Many hotels and hospitals in the Riviera’s main towns and cities –accessible by rail– were thus requisitioned and 65 communes in the Alpes-Maritimes Département were directly involved in greeting families, orphans and soldiers.

**The Second World War** was very different from the first world conflict. Italy was allied with Germany, the border towns and villages and Roya-Bévéra, Vésubie and Tinée Valleys became largely Italian for many months and virtually the entire Département was abandoned by the French army along a virtual line from Cannes to Grasse.

The Résistance began to be really structured with the Italian capitulation and death blow to the Armistice.

But History did not stop there since, as soon as the War was over, the Côte d’Azur became a territory where the 20th century finally found its bearings. Architecture, painting, astronomy, literature, cinema, ballet, botany, gastronomy... All the 20th century’s major players flocked to this blessed land of plenty to contribute their genius and some of their history.

# The two World Wars

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A tourist destination since 1860, the French Riviera attracted crowned heads, aristocrats and other noblemen to enjoy its mild winters. In 1914, it had 150,000 winter visitors.

The World Wars of the 20th century clearly left their mark on the Côte d'Azur and the Alpes-Maritimes. Many men left to fight. The Alpes-Maritimes lost 6,915 soldiers in World War I and 819 in World War II.

## World War I

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With its many hotels and hospitals, renowned for the mildness of its climate and especially located far from the battle fields, the French Riviera was a genuine land of hospitality both for wounded soldiers and for refugees, essentially French, Belgian, Serbian and Russian.

Many hotels and hospitals in the main local towns and cities –accessible by rail– were thus requisitioned and 65 communes all over the Département were directly involved in greeting families, orphans and soldiers.

In 1918, over 11,300 refugees flocked to the French Riviera.

Russians and Americans: Because of the Russian Revolution in 1917, many Eastern Europeans sought refuge on the Côte d'Azur.

Wounded Americans, players in the Liberation, also came to convalesce, especially in 1918, and the main towns organised YMCAs to accommodate this flux of new visitors.

Quite soon, professionals on the French Riviera asserted that their distance from the battle lines justified the fact that they should continue their tourist activity in winter. Thus, some hotels were decommissioned despite the lack of personnel and difficulties in obtaining supplies.

Although occasionally frowned upon, the Côte d'Azur continued to organise festivities to fill the days and evenings of visitors from the outside. The slogan “The season on the Riviera is the season of the wounded” was particularly apt; Nice opened its Municipal Casino in 1916 and La Belle Otero and Mistinguett in particular performed on stage on the Côte d'Azur. La Belle Otero decided to move to Nice in 1915. She was so famous for her breasts that legend has it that they inspired the architect Charles Dalmas, when he designed the two cupolas of the hotel in Cannes.

Artists also found a pristine haven on the French Riviera, cinema studios were even created during the War and some films were shot here –Abel Gance in particular shot *J'accuse* in Cagnes-sur-Mer in particular.

In order to offset restrictions on food, the hinterland and mountains became a larder for the local population and family gardens were set up, with the Jardins du Piol among the most emblematic.

## World War II

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In the Alpes-Maritimes, World War II was very different from the previous World War.

Cannes was preparing to hold its first Film Festival, created in response to the award given, under German influence, to Leni Riefenstahl's 1938 film *Olympia* at the Venice International Film Festival. France and the US decided to create this new Festival under the presidency of Louis Lumière, but it was cancelled because of the War.

Indeed, the Côte d'Azur's proximity with Italy, Germany's ally this time around, made the requisite vigilance very different for the soldiers and civilians in the Département.

The border territories were directly impacted.

On 10 June 1940, Mussolini declared war on France. He wanted to conquer Nice and its region and reach Marseille. But his offensive was quickly stopped by the resistance of the Armée des Alpes.

At the end of the campaign of the Alps, from 10 to 25 June 1940, Italian troops occupied Menton, Fontan in the Roya Valley, Isola, the hamlets of La Blache and Douans in the territory of Saint-Étienne-de-Tinée, Le Bourguet, Saint-Sauveur-sur-Tinée and Rimplas in the Tinée Valley, Valdeblore, Saint-Martin-Vésubie, Roquebillière, Belvédère, Saorge, Breil-sur-Roya, Sospel and Castellar.

The battles for the occupation of Fontan and Menton took place from 10 to 25 June 1940. The people in Menton and the border villages of the Upper Tinée, Vésubie, Bévéra and Roya Valleys had been evacuated in early June to Grasse, Cannes, Antibes, Barjols (Var), Annot, Saint-André-les-Alpes, Barrême and Castellane (Basses-Alpes).

An armistice signed on 25 June with the Italians demilitarised most of the Département and the eastern part of the territory was annexed. On 10 August 1940, the Transalpine government issued a decree, dated 30 July, regarding the status of the occupied territories.

The territories thus annexed by Italy were subject to Transalpine obligations: Italian became the official language and the lira the official currency, while foreign postage rates applied to correspondence with France and Italian public services replaced those of France, which complicated administrative and commercial relations with France.

In 1944, Menton had 6,714 inhabitants 4,444 of whom were Italian.

Mid-1940, the French army withdrew to a line between Cannes and Grasse, abandoning the eastern Alpes-Maritimes, while, in May 1940, the first refugees continued arriving in the Alpes-Maritimes.

In 1941, nearly 2,500 Jews arrived from Italy.

In September 1943, the first roundups took place, in Cannes and Saint-Martin-Vésubie in particular. The Caserne Auvare (barracks) was ready to accommodate some 3,000 people for deportation: 560 Jews were sent by train to Drancy, 104 to Rivesaltes in the Pyrenees.

The Italian occupants were not particularly inclined to persecute Jews in the Département and local people did their best to protect them. In all, 3,612 Jews were deported.

The first traces of the Résistance were discovered in Grasse but it was not really structured until 1943, when Mussolini was overthrown and the first German units entered the Alpes-Maritimes (September 1943).

In 1943, the Germans prepared their defence against the American landing and took position the coast and beaches and transformed the entire Département into a fortified camp.

Various bombardments by German forces and the Résistance in particular on Cannes-la-Bocca, Antibes, Mougins, Cagnes-sur-Mer and villages in the hinterland damaged buildings.

After 6 August 1944, the Allies reached Théoule-sur-Mer by sea. The Port of Cannes was partly destroyed, and there was combat in perched villages: Levens, Gourdon.

The Germans occupied the Alpes-Maritimes until August 1944. The American army's progression succeeded nonetheless in routing the German army.

The great Résistance leader Jean Moulin, hiding his clandestine activities under his passion for painting, opened an art gallery in Nice in 1943.

French and Allied soldiers landed on the coast of Provence in August 1944, opening in Théoule the road to freedom for the Alpes-Maritimes.

The people of the hinterland and the eastern part of the Département suffered from the continuation of the War until April 1945.

François Ratto (1898-1914) of Roquebrune-Cap-Martin –27th Chasseurs Alpains Battalion– who died on the battlefield at the age of 16 was the youngest recipient of a World War I military medal. The district of Carnolès in Menton pays him tribute.

**NB:** In October 2013, the Town Council of Nice authorised the construction of a commemorative wall in *Allée des Justes parmi les Nations* (Righteous among the Nations), in the cemetery on the Castle Hill in Nice, listing the names of the Righteous in the Alpes-Maritimes, prepared by the French Committee for Yad Vashem.

“Righteous among the Nations” is an honorific title granted on behalf of the State of Israel by the Yad Vashem Memorial to men and women who showed courage –often very discreetly– to save Jews from Nazi persecution during World War II, at the risk of their own lives. This is presently the highest honorific distinction granted by the State of Israel to civilians. On 1 January 2012, there were 24,355 Righteous among the Nations from 46 countries honoured for having saved hundreds of thousands of men, women and children.

# Alpes-Maritimes, tourist itineraries around the military heritage

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## **Circuit de L'Authion**

This is a pilgrimage to the sites of bloody combats in 1794 and 1945. Access to the L'Authion-Turini Massif fortifications is from the Roya, Bévéra or Vésubie Valleys. Visitors enjoy breathtaking views: on the Massif des Merveilles, the Mercantour and Italian Alps to the North and the French and Italian (Riviera dei Fiori) Rivas to the South. From Redoute de la Pointe des 3 Communes (2,080m), a unique panorama opens on the Mercantour and Merveilles Massifs and the shores of the Mediterranean Sea. The Turini Route runs through fortifications built between 1920 and 1940: Les Mille Fourches, La Forca, Cabanes Vieilles and Plan Caval.

## **Route des Forts du Col de Tende**

This route provides for discovery of the French forts on the Maginot Line in the Alps and the Italian fortifications facing them. It features two itineraries across the Alpine grassland to the French and Italian forts.

On the French side: access via the Old Salt Road (Route du Sel) or Piste de Casterino

On the Italian side: access by the tarred road from the northern exit of the Tunnel of Tende; from the impressive Fort Central the panorama covers the entire valley

This route leads to Fort Pernante, Fort de la Margherie and Fort Giaure.

# The Maginot Line and forts on “Remembrance Trails”

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## The Maginot Line

The geography of the Alpes-Maritimes, very rugged between the Alps and the Mediterranean Sea, required a different strategy for devising protective sites, this is the case for the Maginot Line. The Alpes-Maritimes have 14 major structures, 17 smaller structures, 35 casemates and 14 outposts.

### **Mounier sub-sector**

- Isola outpost
- Saint-Dalmas-le-Selvage outpost
- Col de Crous petit ouvrage
- Col de la Valette petit ouvrage

### **Tinée-Vésubie sub-sector**

- Le Conquet (Conchetas) outpost
- Le Planet outpost
- Ouvrage de Flaut
- Ouvrage du Gordolon
- Col du Caïre-Gros petit ouvrage
- Col du Fort petit ouvrage
- Fressinéa petit ouvrage
- Valdeblore petit ouvrage
- Ouvrage de Rimplas

### **L'Authion sub-sector**

- La Déa petit ouvrage
- Col d'Agnon petit ouvrage
- Baisse de Saint-Véran petit ouvrage
- Redoute des Trois Communes
- Ouvrage du Plan Caval
- Fort de la Forca
- Fort des Milles Fourches

- La Béole petit ouvrage
- Casemate 7 (Tournefort)
- Casemate 30 (Guillaumes)
- Casemate 31 (Cians)
- Casemate 36 (Roquebillière)
- Casemate 40 (Abeliera)
- Casemate 41 (La Bollinette Nord)
- Chiuse de la Bauma-Negra
- Chiuse de Saint-Jean-la-Rivière

### **Sospel sub-sector**

- Croix de Cougoule outpost
- Casemate du Golf de Sospel
- Ouvrage du Barbonnet
- Ouvrage de St-Roch
- Ouvrage de l'Agaisen
- L'Agaisen firing range petit ouvrage
- Casemate d'instruction de l'Agaisen
- Ouvrage du Monte Grosso
- Breil-sur-Roya anti-tank barrier
- Ouvrage du Col de Brouis
- Col de Brouis Barracks
- Blockhaus 13 (O22-Bévéra)
- Blockhaus 14 (O52-Oreglia)

### **Les Corniches sub-sector**

- Baisse de Scuvion outpost
- Pierre Pointue outpost
- Col de Raus outpost
- Valabres-Sud outpost
- Valabres-Nord outpost
- Castès Ruines outpost
- Pont Saint-Louis outpost
- Ouvrage de Castillon
- Pic de la Garuche observatory
- Col des Banquettes petit ouvrage
- Ouvrage de St-Agnès
- Blockhaus du Suillet Est
- Central Téléphonique du Col-de-Bausson
- Col des Gardes petit ouvrage
- Mont-Agel observatory
- Mont-Gros observatory
- Ouvrage du Mont-Agel
- Croupe du Réservoir petit ouvrage
- Ouvrage de Roquebrune
- Ouvrage de Cap-Martin
- Casemate 34 (Èze Moyenne-Corniche)
- Casemate 36 (Èze Basse-Corniche)

## Remembrance Trails

The Alpes-Maritimes Département also has 15 fortified works listed by the Defence Ministry on the theme “**Remembrance Trails**”

**Complete information at:** <http://www.cheminsdememoire.gouv.fr/>

Below, we list the most emblematic military structures in the Alpes-Maritimes.

### **Fort de Sainte-Agnès**

The Fort of Sainte-Agnès on the Maginot Line was entirely excavated in the bedrock and aimed to defend the border between France and Italy.

The Fort of Sainte-Agnès on the Fortified Sector of the Alpes-Maritimes on the Maginot Line was built between 1932 and 1938. It is entirely excavated in the bedrock. Its purpose was then to defend the border between France and Italy. The village of Sainte-Agnès, the highest coastal village in Europe, clings to the cliffs of a peak towering at an altitude of 780 metres overlooking the Mediterranean Sea. This position incited its lords to make it a fortress as early as the 16th century.

### **Fort du Mont-Alban**

The Fort du Mont-Alban was built between 1557 and 1560 by order of Duke Emmanuel-Philibert of Savoy by the architect Domenico Ponsello, following the siege of Nice of 1543, by the French and their Turkish allies. It is one of the region’s rare surviving examples of mid-16th-century military architecture: in the context of fortification of the Coast of Nice, Gian Maria Olgiati, general engineer for the Holy Roman Emperor Charles V, proposed a defensive programme including the Castle of Nice, the Citadel of Villefranche-sur-Mer and Fort du Mont-Alban.

**Tour Bellanda** watches over Baie des Anges from the southern end of the Castle Hill of Nice

Originally a mediaeval tower built as part of the Castle of Nice, it was converted in 1825 to a simple belvedere. Berlioz is said to have composed his overture to *King Lear* there in 1831. The Tower housed the Naval Museum of Nice until 2006, but is currently closed.

### **Fort Royal on the Isle of Sainte-Marguerite**

Located on one of the Isles of Lérins in the Bay of Cannes, the Fort Royal is a State prison where the Man in the Iron Mask was incarcerated from 1687 to 1688, as was Marshall Bazaine after the Franco-Prussian War (1870).

Sainte-Marguerite still has remains of Roman occupation. For centuries, it belonged to the Monastery of Lérins. In 1617, the Duke of Guise entrusted Jean de Bellon with construction of a fort to control access to Cannes. Built from 1624 to 1627 on an ancient Roman site, it was little more than a modest fortified stronghold.

This small work was expanded and reinforced by Spanish forces occupying the Isles of Lérins after 1635. Two bastions and the first barracks were added to the existing structure. With a garrison approximately 800 strong on the Isle of Sainte-Marguerite, the Spanish troops were faced with the vital issue of access to drinking water and devised a system for collecting rainwater in a large well on top of impressive cisterns. Today, the four sedimentation tanks where the water was purified before flowing into one of the two cisterns under the well are still visible.

In 1637, the French won back the Isles of Lérins, and the citadel was renamed Fort Royal. It was considerably reinforced: the moats were deepened, the curtain walls raised, and two demi-lunes connected to the fort by small bridges, which have now disappeared. Governor Royal Guitaut also had a tenaille built a low-lying bastion in front of the access to the Fort – which bears his name today.

In the late 17th century, King Louis XIV's Commissaire Général aux Fortifications, Vauban, personally inspected the Fort, leaving instructions to reinforce it. The works conducted after his visit gave it essentially the appearance it has now. Built 26 metres above sea level, the work stands on a cliff on the north side of the Isle of Sainte-Marguerite, facing Cap Croisette. It is a small pentagonal fort, flanked with four bastions at its weak points, facing land. Facing the sea, the stone ramparts built against earthworks are remarkably integrated in the sheer cliff.

Inside the Fort, there remain the chapel and several hangars for housing troops and for artillery storehouses. They include the impressive building which was the powder magazine, surrounded by the walls of the Bastion Royal south of the Fort, probably to reduce the consequences of an accidental explosion. Minor changes were brought to the Fort later: a semaphore was added in 1862 by raising one of the fort's towers.

Later, under German occupation during World War II, a lookout was built on a triangular advance of the Fort.

The first prison cells were installed in the Governor's castle in 1637. But it was in 1685, when the Fort Royal had a large garrison, that the structure was fully dedicated to being a State prison. In 1687, the governor Saint-Mars, by order of Louis XIV, had a quadrangular stone building erected inside the walls, in which prison cells were built.

Famous prisoners locked up in the fort include in particular:

- The best-known, though yet unidentified Man in the Iron Mask who was held there for 11 years from 1687 to 1698;

- Six Protestant pastors, imprisoned after the Revocation of the Edict of Nantes, from 1689 until their deaths in 1713;
- Jean-Baptiste Suard, future Perpetual Secretary of the Académie Française, from 1751 to 1753;
- Abd al-Qadir and his Smala, after 1843;
- 600 Austrian prisoners, held in 1859 after the Battle of Montebello;
- Marshall Bazaine, the only prisoner to have escaped from Fort Royal, after a rather amazing evasion in 1873, and who has a terrace of the Fort named after him.

### **Fort Suchet – Fort du Barbonnet**

Built between 1883 and 1886, Fort du Barbonnet dominates the basin of Sospel 847 metres above sea level. The role of this complex, which included Fort Suchet, was to block the Bévéra Valley. The Fort is made up of powerful artillery with two turrets armoured with hard cast iron, two spare pieces of identical calibre, ten 95mm pieces distributed in five places, a mortar for close defence. The storage area enabled the garrison to withstand a six-month siege.

Today, the Fort still belongs to French National Defence; many regiments exercise there year round. Consequently, the Fort is open to the public in July and August, Tuesday and Saturday only at 3pm sharp, for a guided tour.

**The Paillon Basin** (Levens, L'Escarène, Contes) is a complex of rivers in the hinterland of Nice. This pre-Alpine limestone massif lies between 600 and 800 metres above sea level. Its North-South orientation makes it a natural obstacle to invasions from the West, and a corridor between Nice and Vésubie Valley. The dry-stone Fort was built by French troops invading the Comté de Nice in 1747. It extends from Mont-Férion to the Sea past Mont-Macaron and Plateau Tercier. The system comprises a double line serving as a banquette, punctuated with redoubts. The most interesting remains are located on Plateau Tercier.

### **Fort of Rimplas**

Named Fort de la Madeleine, it was the first of the Maginot Line, with construction beginning in 1928 by decision of the French government of 3 September 1927 effective immediately, following Mussolini's many declarations for a year on the Italian origins of Nice and its region.

The Fort of Rimplas was then acquired by the Alpes-Maritimes General Council to make it a "Place of Remembrance."

An Association founded early in 2008, "Les Amis de l'Ouvrage Maginot de la Madeleine," undertook rehabilitation works inside and out, and opened the Fort to the public for the 2009 Heritage Days.

This fort does not illustrate the concepts implemented in subsequent fortifications, since it is a mono-block structure surrounded by scarp walls whose blocks are in frontal action. They are true casemates armoured with 20cm thick steel embedded in the concrete and extending inside, enveloping the cannon; armoured shutters close the embrasure.

Construction of the Fort ran into many problems due to the friable nature of the soil, requiring reinforcement of the excavations in several places, and high-flow water seepage; in July 1936, fissures were observed in the concrete. The fort was officially handed over in August 1937 to the 74th Bataillon Alpin de Forteresse (BAF), before the works were actually completed.

From the Fort of Rimplas there are panoramas over the Upper Tinée Valley, to the North, and towards Saint-Dalmas and La Colmiane, to the West. It can thus cover the road in the Upper Tinée Valley and the road leading to Saint-Martin-Vésubie. It can also engage in frontal fire towards the border which, before the Rectification of the Franco-Italian border in 1947, ran less than 5km from the Fort along today's route D2565, at 1km at most, the village of Saint-Martin-Vésubie being practically three-quarters encircled by the border.

Between Isola, where there was a casemate, and Valabres, where the little Vallon de Mollières flows into the Tinée, the border quite simply followed the road.

### **Fort de la Forca**

Fort de la Forca was built between 1887 and November 1891. Some 250 men were grouped in barracks. It is a modern infantry fort of dressed stone with a roof made of special concrete able to resist new types of shells. It stands at the highest point on the South of L'Authion Massif, 2,078 metres above sea level, just 1km from Redoute des Trois Communes and 500 metres from Fort des Milles Fourches. Its role was to watch over the Roya Valley to prevent an invasion of Nice from Italy

### **Redoute des Trois communes**

La Redoute des Trois communes is an infantry fort built 2,080 metres above sea level, on the northernmost peak of L'Authion Massif ahead of the Milles Fourches and La Forca Forts to slow down infantry attacks.

Construction began in 1897 on the site of an old Sardinian artillery battery and was completed in 1900. The fort is built of reinforced concrete except for the entrance, which is of dressed stone. It can accommodate 60 men. Its armament is made up of rifles and machine guns.

In April 1945, the Germans occupied L'Authion Massif to slow down the Allied advance. The structures still retain traces attesting to the violence of combat.

### **Fort des Mille-Fourches**

Fort de la Forca: Built between 1887 and 1890, it functions with Fort des Mille Fourches which is identical. Both are protected by a later fort, La Redoute des Trois Communes.

Located essentially on the border between France and Italy and for observation and defence against attacks from the sea, the oldest forts may date from the 16th century.

**Two forts on the Maginot Line, overlooking the Sea, were built to complete the line of defence along the border with Italy: at Cap-Martin and Cros de Casté.**

### **Fort of Cap-Martin**

Located in the Commune of Roquebrune-Cap-Martin, construction of the Fort of Cap-Martin began in 1930 and is made up of three combat blocks.

Like all Maginot Line forts, it was made for men to live underground in perfect autarchy.

The defence system of the Maginot Line Fort of Cap-Martin was completely operational in 1939.

Its crew was made up of 343 soldiers and 11 officers belonging to the 96th Bataillon Alpin de Forteresse and the 157th Régiment d'Artillerie de Position, under the command of Captain Jacques Hugard and Captain Paris (Infanterie d'ouvrage).

After suffering greatly in the combat from 11 to 25 June 1940 against the Italian army, the Battalion was granted a Commendation to the Order of the Army.

It respected the motto of the Fort's troops "*On ne passe pas*" (They shall not pass) and contributed to saving the French army's honour. Its crew was part of the only undefeated army, L'Armée des Alpes, commanded by General Olry.

Guided tours:

Every Saturday at 2pm - Audioguides available in four languages: French, Italian, German, English.

For reasons of safety and because of the site's configuration, there can be no more than 18 visitors at a time.

### **Fort du Cornillat**

This is a former military base covering 8.3 hectares (20.5 acres) made up of 7.5ha (18.5 acres) of grounds, barracks (1,073m<sup>2</sup>) and a pavilion (884m<sup>2</sup>). A Maginot Line fort was built there, whose entrance can be seen along with three casemates, each equipped with two turrets. This fort was part of the French defence system, in the event of an attack from Italy. Hundreds of men could live there in complete autarchy.

Closed to the public

## **Other forts and castles in the heritage of the French Riviera...**

To be exhaustive, here are the other castles which also recount the History of the Côte d'Azur...

The Castle of Tourrettes-sur-Loup: In 1387, Guichard de Villeneuve received this fiefdom from the Counts of Provence. The Villeneuve family built the castle we know today in 1430 around the 12th-century tower.

The Fort Carré in Antibes: This defensive structure was originally a round tower built in 1550 on the site of a chapel dedicated to Saint Lawrence. The fort was updated according to the recommendations of the great French 17th-century military engineer Vauban and adapted to changes in siege techniques and firearms. Today, this listed Historic Building houses a museum.

Château de la Napoule in Mandelieu occupies a prestigious site on the seafront, known to the ancient Romans, over 2000 years ago.

Destroyed and rebuilt many times, the castle was restored in the 1920s by the American artist Henry Clews. This Historic Building offers a fascinating escapade into the history of architecture.

Château Grimaldi in Roquebrune-Cap-Martin was first built in the 10th century, as the keep of a castle which encompassed the entire village. Panorama on Monaco, the sea, Cap-Martin and the village.

The Castle of Tourrette-Levens is one of the last castles still standing in the Comté de Nice!

From its dominant position, it was possible to watch over the road for protection against enemy attack. It offers an exceptional panorama over both the Sea and Mountains.

## Preserving Remembrance! The Alpes-Maritimes General Council's actions

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Although World War I may seem very far back in time, and the disappearance of the last Poilus, War Memorials retain all their symbolic evocative value for a large fringe of citizens in France. They do express forcefully the timeless voice of a generation which suffered terribly to defend France.

The General Council of the Alpes-Maritimes Département supports many initiatives actions to this end:

**A book on Places of Remembrance of the War is in preparation.** It will focus in particular on the War Memorials in our territory, with their history, description, old and recent photographs superimposed.

**An exceptional issue in the *Passeurs de Mémoire* series will be dedicated to the heritage of the Alpes-Maritimes linked to World War I.**

Very fully documented, it will evoke War Memorials along with many toponymic Places of Remembrance – streets and places in our Communes bearing the names of famous soldiers or battles – and finally auxiliary hospitals.

The setting up of **QR codes on War Memorials** aims to help communes enhance such Places of Remembrance. It will also make it possible to obtain historical information with a smartphone.

Making the records of conscription numbers available online on the site of the Départemental Archives will make it possible to consult old military documents concerning the men registered at age 20 one of the Département's Bureaux of Conscription.

Over 84,000 men are listed and 120,000 documents have been digitised.

To help raise awareness among children to History, the Alpes-Maritimes General Council has been implementing for 10 years school trips on the theme "10 years of travel for Remembrance to Auschwitz."

[www.cg06.fr](http://www.cg06.fr)

## Guided tours of towns, on the theme of War

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### **Saint-Martin-Vésubie**

There is a tour of the village dedicated to finding where Jews were hidden (5 Righteous among the Nations honoured in Saint-Martin) in village homes, and the presence of the old Hôtel Stéphany (a hiding place and venue for organising the Résistance), Carlton (where the Italian authorities were housed during the Occupation) and Victoria (where the German authorities were housed during the Occupation)

Information: OT of Saint-Martin-Vésubie

### **Villefranche-sur-Mer**

Fridays at 10am - start from the Office de Tourisme of Villefranche-sur-Mer

Tour of the Old Town and Citadel on the theme “Rue du Poilu, chronique d’une cité de l’arrière” (Poilu Street, chronicle of a city behind the Front).

With electronic tablets to illustrate what the guide says, discover the history de Villefranche and the traces left by World War I in our town.

Duration: 90 minutes - Price: €5 / person

Information: OT of Villefranche-sur-Mer

### **Cagnes-sur-Mer**

Tuesday 25 March: guided tour “Centenary of World War I in Cagnes-sur-Mer”

Discover part of the history of World War I in Cagnes-sur-Mer, in particular through a private collection of documents and old postcards.

Meet at 2pm at the OT of Haut-de-Cagnes (Place Maurel) for the guided tour (€3).

Information: OT of Cagnes-sur-Mer

### **Beuil-les-Launes**

Musée de la Mémoire

Open year round — admission free

Information: OT of Beuil

## 2014 - Calendar of celebrations linked to the centenary of World War I

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Until 31 August

Menton – Municipal Archive

Exhibition: *“Il y a 70 ans, les Mentonnais et leur guerre”* (70 years ago: the people of Menton and their war)

March 2014:

Antibes –Peynet Museum

World War I, said to be the first war of the Modern Era, presents frightening, morbid statistics. Nonetheless, in addition to the heroism of soldiers on the front, the press had a very special role as a precursor in this conflict in the eyes of the century to come, with full powers to the propaganda media and the “soldier from behind.” In France, humour is on the agenda.

The press then split into two distinct families: that of caricature and that of war illustration; each tending towards the same goal using very different means alternating caricature and allegory.

The display of Press Drawings and Patriotism, as from 1 March 2014, prints, caricatures, documents and period pieces help better understand the importance of these artists, players in the national war effort, artists celebrated as heroes after the end of the conflict and often decorated for their “feats of arms.”

Summer 2014:

In the Alpes-Maritimes

In the context of the Festival du conte & des mots (Festival of storytelling and words), an evening is dedicated to reading texts relating to World War I.

This is a particularly enriching experience since the War, at the limits of the human condition, led poets, novelists and playwrights to analyse fighters, their motivations and passions. The interest of literature entails plunging our imaginations into the heart, unfathomable and unspeakable, of a conflict depicted “in flesh and blood.”

Summer 2014:

Nice – Asian Arts Museum

Exhibition: *“Clémenceau, the ‘Tiger’ and Asia,”* in partnership with the Guimet Museum

It explores the spiritual, personal and political discovery of all Asia by one of the greatest men in French history. This will provide an occasion for the public to see works from his personal collection.

Summer 2014:

Nice – The Port

Outdoor exhibition dedicated to historical and human aspects of World War I, inaugurated on 2 August 2014

28 June 2014:

Nice - Opening of the exhibition at the BMVR (main public library) on the Year ‘14 in France and Europe. Every year, the BMVR library will organise an exhibition on events in the War outside Nice, forming a common theme to commemorate the Centenary.

- 29 June to 19 October 2014: Villefranche-sur-Mer  
Chapelle St-Elme - Citadel of Villefranche-sur-Mer  
Exhibition “Rue du Poilu, chronique d’une cité de l’arrière”  
The purpose of this exhibition —Poilu Street, chronicle of a city behind the Front— is to narrate how this duty of hospitality was practised here: receiving the wounded, greeting refugees and war orphans. And how daily life and the economy were structured in a time of generalised shortage. Finally the Duty of Remembrance will be evoked with the building of War Memorials and renaming of streets to the glory of the artisans of Victory.  
This exhibition aims to create an ambiance and emotion, be educational without being unimaginative to satisfy our duty of Remembrance towards our youngest citizens, since History is not a list of dates, but a reservoir of human experience.  
Game booklet available for our youngest visitors at the hospitality desk for the exhibition  
Open Monday to Friday, 8:30am to 4:30pm – weekends for groups, by reservation – Admission free
- Sunday 17 August 2014: Nice - Departure of the troops: 1,000 men from Nice in 1914 uniforms marching up the Avenue to the Thiers Railway Station, with the band playing and banners waving; historical reconstructions in front of the Station, to be negotiated with SNCF.
- Saturday 23-24 August 2014: Nice - commemoration of the Battle of Dieuze and the XVth Corps; these terrible combats were the first fought by soldiers from Nice, with others from Southern France, giving rise to a polemic on their courage which caused disquiet which was not purged until after the War.
- September 2014: Nice - Inauguration of the historical exhibition coordinated by the Municipal Archive: Nice 1914.
- October 2014: Cinéma Mercury – Nice  
A Festival of retrospectives of war films  
The General Council aims to enable audiences to discover or rediscover a century of cinematography in which the Grande Guerre (World War I) was often shown with passion, fairness and genius.
- In the course of 2014: Saint-Martin-Vésubie - Musée du Patrimoine  
Exhibition on “20th-century Wars”  
“Village Life during World War II”  
  
Salle Permanente – Mairie of Saint-Martin-Vésubie  
Remembrance of the Battle of L’Authion (10-13 April 1945)