

# Parler Nice

**Your taste of life in Nice and the Riviera!**

A *Free Nouvellettre*® Written by *Adrian Leeds*®

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The Cours Saleya Market, Nice



## Twenty-One Blasts Over

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**Dear Parler Nice Reader,**

Sunday morning, sitting at a café at the Cours Saleya having breakfast in the full sun, the noonday cannon on the castle hill went off at 10:30 a.m. a number of times...as many as 21 to be exact, although I didn't count at the time. No one blinked, no one ran. Only the birds flew away.



**The Nice Cannon**

Margo Lestz describes the history of the cannon-firing best in [The Good Life France](#) as a "remnant from Victorian days, when a British wife couldn't remember to go home for lunch when she holidayed in Nice." Even after the British couple stopped coming to Nice, and the council stopped the cannon-firing, the residents of Nice revolted and the council reinstated it.



I must admit, it punctuates my day perfectly and I'd miss it, too. Nice wouldn't be the same without it. I can hear it distinctively from my apartment, about a kilometer away from the cannon, but I hear it best on Sundays. That's when I take my traditional excursion to the



**San Remo**

open-air market to peruse and indulge in the beautiful Provençal fresh produce and flowers, have breakfast or lunch, people watch and revel in the day of rest. The café I frequent is at the far eastern end and therefore just near the hill, the cannon and the big boom.



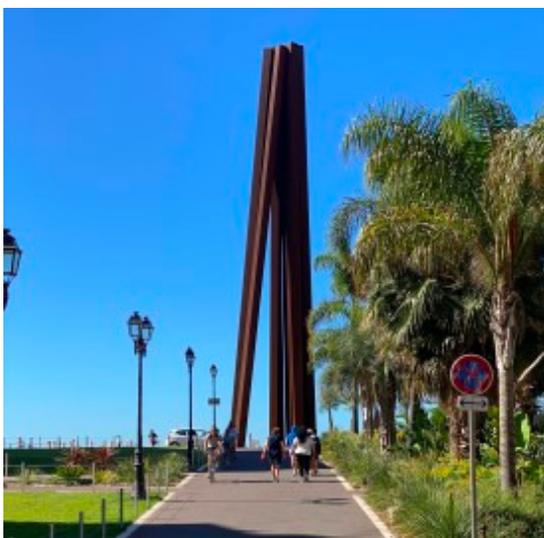
**San Remo**

I learned why it boomed so many times that morning from my friend, Robert Levitt of [Via Nissa Excursions and Discoveries](#). While driving to San Remo (in Italy not far from the border with France) for dinner on Sunday night, he gave me a synopsis of the history of the region between Italy and France, one that most people don't really know. He explained that Sunday was the 160th anniversary of the Union of Nice with France. The 21 cannon blasts that morning marked the moment 160 years ago when the county of Nice officially joined the Alpes Maritimes region with the French flag replacing the Sardinian flag.



**Historical County of Nice**

No, Nice was never part of Italy, which is what I stupidly thought. The history is a complex one, but Robert, being a historian of note, was able to explain it in great detail during our drive. I will never be able to relate it to you as well, nor as succinctly, but [Wikipedia.org explains it here](#). In essence, it was a "deal" between Napoleon III and Sardinia in exchange for French military assistance during the war against Austria, which controlled the regions of Lombardy and Venetia. Now 160 years later, we can revel in their "deal" by enjoying Nice and the region for all it has to offer France. Thank you, Napoleon III.



The "Neuf Lignes Obliques" sculpture (in English, Nine Oblique Lines), that sits proudly on the Promenade des Anglais at the western end of Vieux Nice, is a steel monument created by French artist Bernar Venet commissioned by the Mayor of Nice, Christian Estrosi, to mark the 150th anniversary of the 1860 annexation of the County of Nice by France. It symbolizes the nine valleys of the old County of Nice as well as the surrounding mountains pointing to the sea. (Who would have known?)

Work to improve the famous market street is being done along the Cours Saleya and the adjacent [La Place Pierre Gautier](#), so



**The Neuf Lines Obliques sculpture**



**Place Pierre Gautier**



**Cours Saleya Under Construction**



**Cours Saleya Flower Seller**



**Bistrot d'Antoine entree**

some of the usual stands have been displaced, but many are still there serving up the visitors...which are mostly the locals now, not tourists, during deconfinement. Last Sunday I spotted a very long line of willing buyers, somewhat social distanced, to a particular flower-seller on the Place. None of the other flower-sellers could boast of such popularity. It was curious why, but clearly the locals knew something I didn't know about the quality and price of its offerings compared to the others.

Now that the restaurants and cafés have reopened, I took the opportunity to dine at one of my favorites Friday night...Le Bistrot d'Antoine, the first of four restaurants in Vieux Nice owned and operated by chef, Armand Crespo. The others include Le Comptoir du Marché, Le Bar des Oiseaux and Peixes, all in the old town. Regardless of my affinity to Café Charlot and Chez Omar in Paris, his restaurants rank at the top of my list of amazing quality for the price and hold them as the benchmark for all bistros France-wide. That's saying a lot.

During confinement, it was obvious that M. Crespo had been very busy to completely revamp his offerings so that every item on the menu was a new creation. The staff were outfitted with new aprons and matching masks, the tables were spread a bit further apart and while it felt like coming home, it was a new and exciting experience thanks to the revamped menu. I don't know how to describe the innovative flavors and textures of my dishes, other than to say that I didn't want the experience to end and literally licked my fork and knife and scraped the plates until it was sparkling clean (hopefully unnoticed by the other diners). Three courses, with coffee and wine was just over 35€, a price that rivals just about any restaurant, but incomparable in quality. You will not find a website for M. Crespo's restaurants and getting a table takes advance planning because they all stay booked up. Plus, he closes them all for three weeks mid-summer so don't dally to reserve at any one of them next time you're on your way to Nice.

The Nice tramways have changed the lives of the city's residents by providing easy

and fast access in an axis covering the north, south, east and west of the city, connecting the airport with the Vieux Port. It's inexpensive — 1.50€ per "solo" ride or 1€ when you buy a book of ten tickets, or passes are available, too). I have complained in the past about the difficult method of ticket-buying at the automatic stands at the tramway stops, which seem terribly old-fashioned and non-intuitive. Once, as I was buying tickets, the tram came along, so I opted on aborting the effort to catch the tram instead and take my chances not to be controlled by the authorities. Just my luck; there they were in all their force and no matter how I tried to explain that I had tried to get the tickets, only to fail, they didn't care and delivered a hefty fine on me — about 65€. I vowed never to be caught without tickets again.



Fortunately, there is a [brand new app](#) for buying tickets on your smartphone, so that there's nothing to do but buy them using your credit card, and on the app canceling out one each time you ride. If a controller comes along, you just have to show your canceled ticket on your phone. How cool is that? I signed up immediately.

Nice is also providing Covid-19 free testing that began this past week to anyone and everyone at three sites: the Palais Nikaïa, the Théâtre de Verdure and the Palais des Expositions. Masks are being distributed free of charge as well. Residents of Nice can register online or by telephone to take the test from Monday through Saturday from 8 a.m. to 6 p.m. with slots reserved as a priority for families on Wednesday and Saturday. When you register, you'll receive a summons to present yourself on the day of the test — a blood test taking only a few minutes carried out by nurses from the Nice University Hospital and two laboratories in Nice. The results are then sent to you by email 48 hours after the test is taken and are completely confidential. Those who are willing, will be able to answer a questionnaire anonymously during the test, as part of a study on the pandemic conducted at Nice University Hospital. I registered, but the date they bestowed on me is past my stay, so I'll have to reschedule it...not a big deal to do. Learn more and [register here](#).



The weather had been cloudy and rainy all week and not conducive to going to the beach. But, Sunday was glorious. The water was a clearer lighter aqua than usual; the darker, deeper part further out than what I remembered and have documented in the past. That was puzzling since I've always assumed the depth of the water is what affected the color, so why would the depth of the sea change so dramatically so suddenly?

The scientific truth is that the water is clear, of course, but if the water is very deep, there are no reflections off the sea floor and therefore the water appears as a very dark navy blue. The blue color is due to the absorption and scattering of light. Wavelengths of light are scattered, but almost all sunlight that enters the ocean is absorbed, except for water very close to the coast where it's shallow. If there are any particles suspended in the water, they will increase the scattering of light. So, now I understand that the gorgeous aqua color that dazzles my eyes, is a reflection of the particles in the water — a resuspension of sand and silt that changes the color of the particles must have been closer to the surface further out from the shore than normal, or at

least what I can recall.

And now I know why the Baie des Anges is so stunningly beautiful...we have the sediment and silt to thank.

A la prochaine...



**Adrian Leeds**  
Editor of Parler Nice

[Respond to Adrian](#)



**P.S.** If you would like to plan a visit or get more detailed information about Via Nissa, contact Robert Levitt at [robert.levitt@vianissa.com](mailto:robert.levitt@vianissa.com), +33 6 59 87 96 69

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