



Jim Ring

—
Riviera

**The Rise and Rise of the
Côte d'Azur**

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Riviera

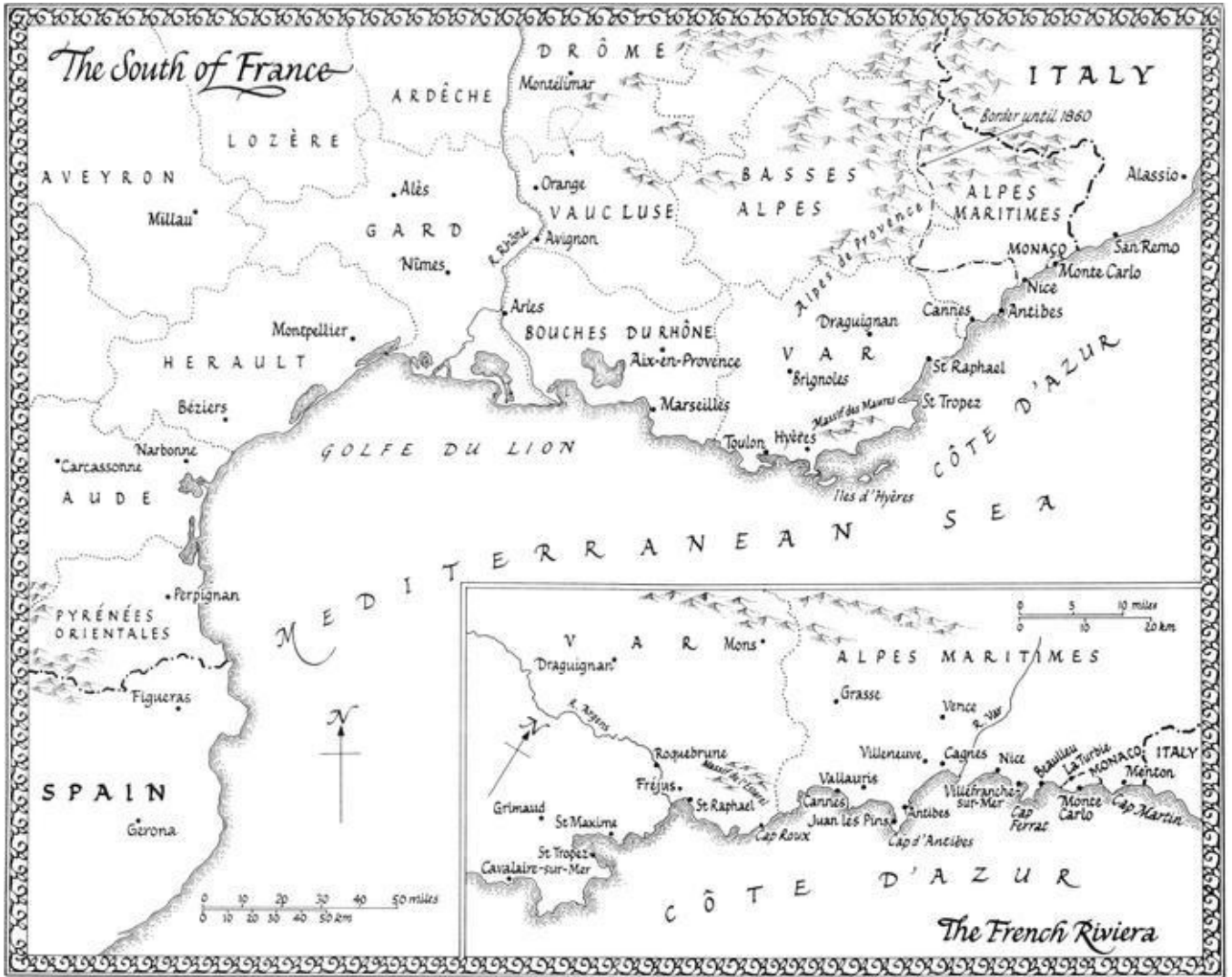
The Rise and Rise of the Côte d'Azur

JIM RING

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—‘What do you do with a place that is beautiful? Destroy it.’—

Claus von Bulow



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Foreword

When I first visited the Riviera as an undergraduate twenty-five years ago, I was aghast.

I had little enough experience of the Continent, let alone gone further afield. My parents were both London doctors who rarely allowed themselves a week's holiday a year. It was not spent abroad partly because they had little truck with foreigners, and also because it was just before the time when the British made it their habit to holiday beyond their own shores. The 'jet-set', those who travelled by the pioneering de Havilland Comet and the Boeing 707, were celebrities – the actors Richard Burton and Elizabeth Taylor, the Beatles on their way out to Shea Stadium, the racing driver Jackie Stewart, Presidents Khrushchev and Lyndon Johnson. We were not.

As a consequence, destinations like St Moritz, Acapulco, Barbados, Capri, Florence and Mustique had an infinite romance and allure, Shangri-las of unattainable luxury, sophistication, glamour, culture, exoticism and romance. Brought up as I was in Bexley, Sidcup, Redhill and Croydon, they might have been Prospero's enchanted island.

The jewel in the crown of my imagination was the Côte d'Azur. Largely ignorant of French history, manners, achievements and people, I took France at its own estimate as the byword for Continental no, global – sophistication, culture and taste. It was not long after President de Gaulle's refusal to admit the United Kingdom into what was then the European Common Market. Paris was the capital of the world's imagination, art, beauty, women and, of course, cuisine. No wine other than French was drunk. As for the South – the Riviera, the Côte d'Azur – it was the *ne plus ultra* of the world's resort. The golden chain of Monaco, Nice, Antibes, Juan-les-Pins, St Raphael and St Tropez was a Promise Land of warmth, natural beauty, hospitable people and, presumably, jolly good five-star hotels like the Hilton.

So when I eventually visited it in 1978 I was surprised by the agglomeration of tower block dilapidated Edwardian hotels, estate agencies, fast-food restaurants and shopping centres that I discovered littering the hundred-mile stretch of pebble-stone beaches from Hyères to Menton and the Italian frontier. Surprised, too, by a coast that seemed little more than a strip of polluted sea, bordered by a few yards of burning human flesh, a railway and an autoroute. Surprised by the French who – as I might have guessed from de Gaulle – were Anglophobe, choosing to remember Napoleon, Trafalgar and Waterloo rather than their liberation at British and American hands in two world wars.

I was not to return to the Riviera for almost twenty years.

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I was then working on a book about the contribution made by the English to the development of the Alps. Without the mountaineer Edward Whymper, the travel agent Thomas Cook, the pioneer skier Arthur Conan Doyle and Arnold Lunn, I argued, the range today would have been little better than the East Anglian fens. Research on this took me first to the alpine resorts that, until 1939, had been virtually English enclaves: places like Wengen, Mürren, Kandersteg and Zermatt. Then I visited two resorts created by English entrepreneurs after the Second World War: Colonel Robert Lindsay's Méribel in the Haute Savoie and Peter Bournemouth's Isola 2000 in the Alpes Maritimes, high above Nice. As the post-war French high-altitude resorts, like Flaine, Courchevel and Val d'Isère, represented some of the worst acts of architectural vandalism ever perpetrated in the Alps, I wanted to see if the English had managed any better. As I discovered in the course of my 1997 trip, they had not.

From Isola I drove down into Nice. On this occasion my expectations of the city were low, and not much about it surprised me. True, its setting between the Alpes Maritimes and the azure sea was

incomparable, and the labyrinthine old town had a vitality, character and pleasing squalor of its own, sort of Soho-en-Mer. But other than that and the weather, what with its stony beach and *belle époque* hotels, it was reminiscent of Brighton. Two things surprised me, though: first, the people – the concierge in my hotel said that the Riviera attracted more than eight million visitors each year and, far as I could see, they were all in Nice – and second, that the palm-fringed motorway along the front was named Promenade des Anglais. The English made the Alps: had they made the Riviera too?

I had a book to finish and I cannot say I troubled myself much with the question then. In due course though, the paradoxes of the coast began to interest me. As cursory research suggested – not least Patrick Howarth's *When the Riviera Was Ours* – it was indeed foreign tourists rather than the French who had developed the coast. The English were prominent among them, subsequently the Russians and the Americans. The locals did not reclaim their own coast until after the Second World War. And for the huge popularity of a destination that by any rational estimate was decades past its sell-by date, grossly polluted and spoiled, that was a puzzle and the second paradox. What was it about the Côte d'Azur that made it a Shangri-la?

Of the Alps, Arnold Lunn wrote: 'Men lifted up their eyes to the hills to discover the spiritual values which were clouded by the smoke and grime of the industrial revolution.' It was difficult to imagine that Victorian Englishmen would have felt the same about the Riviera. What had attracted them to the coast? What had they done to develop it? And what continues to attract people from all over the world to it in such numbers?

In trying to answer these questions I have not attempted to write a comprehensive social – or indeed, Social – history of the coast. Rather, I have drawn together a series of incidents and a collection of people who seemed emblematic, illustrative or symptomatic of the way in which the Côte d'Azur developed, as well as being of particular interest to a right-thinking English audience.

I thought it a curious, entertaining and rather salutary story.

Jim Ring, Burnham Overy Staithe
January 2000

Prologue:

The Blue Train

London's great railway termini are our gates to the glorious and unknown, through which we pass in adventure and sunshine. Or so E. M. Forster thought during the infancy of air travel and in the days when people still took holidays in Britain. In Paddington all Cornwall was latent; from the inclines of Liverpool Street lay fenlands and the Norfolk Broads; Scotland was beyond the pylons of Euston; Wessex behind the poised chaos of Waterloo. But through stolid Victoria lay a land of infinitely greater promise: that of the snow-capped mountains, blue seas and palm trees of the Riviera – or, if you had the misfortune to be French, the Côte d'Azur.

The novelist Evelyn Waugh found plenty of reasons to make such an escape from London in February 1929. In *Labels*, his journal of a Mediterranean voyage, he wrote that 'almost every cause was present which can contribute to human discontent'. The government was about to fall, the introduction of talking pictures at the expense of silent cinema had set back twenty years the most vital art form of the twentieth century, and there was not even a good murder case. Above all, though, 'It was intolerably cold. People shrank, in those days, from the icy contact of a cocktail glass, like the Duchess of Malfi from the dead hand, and crept stiff as automata from their draughty taxis into the nearest tube railway station, where they stood, pressed together for warmth, coughing and sneezing among the evening papers.' Waugh, with an enthusiasm for speed and modernity that was soon to abate, flew from Croydon to Paris. Commercial air services were still a novelty. Most travellers to the Riviera took the morning boat train from Victoria, out through the grey suburbs of Battersea and Dulwich, past the hunched winter landscape of Kent to Dover. Then they hazarded their stomachs on the steel grey seas to Calais. It was there that their adventures began, for at the Gare Maritime the Blue Train awaited them.

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The Paris–Lyon–Méditerranée railway had reached the Riviera in the 1860s. At a stroke, it transformed a journey that had taken twelve days from Paris into one of thirty hours. 'Railways have written one of the early advocates of the Riviera, Dr J. Henry Bennet, 'have all but annihilated space'. A traveller may leave the London Bridge Station at 7.40 on a Monday morning, by mail train for Paris and be at Nice or Menton for supper the following day.' It was miraculous, and even in the early days standards of comfort, as well as speed, on these expresses were high. *Coupe-lits* were compartments with four seats, three of which were convertible into beds. The fourth concealed a closet, characterised by Dr Edward Sparks as 'well trapped'. Parties could hire private carriages with separate sitting, smoking- and bedrooms. Proper sleeping cars, the invention of the American George Pullman, appeared in 1877 in the form of *wagons-lits* running from Paris. In 1883 the service was extended to Calais, while 1893 saw the inauguration of the weekly Mediterranean Express, composed entirely of sleeping and dining cars, as though there was nothing else in life to do. It ran on Thursdays throughout the traditional Riviera season from December to April, and connected with the boat train from London.

There were various minor improvements in comfort and speed in the years until 1914 and the outbreak of the First World War, but the train introduced on 8 December 1922, the Blue Train, represented the apotheosis of railway travel. The thirty-foot, four-wheel carriages that had jolted, shaken, rattled and rolled along the tracks were replaced with smooth double-bogied cigar tube

almost twice as long as their predecessors – much the same as those used today. Rather than packing the passengers in like ninepins, each carriage accommodated only ten sleepers and had its own attendant. The dining car, with its movable scenery, upstaged Maxim's, the Café Royal, Simpson's and the Savoy. Standards of craftsmanship and joinery made the carriages seem a creation of the cabinet-maker rather than the railway works. The teak ones on the Paris–Lyon–Méditerranée had generally been varnished brown. Uniquely on the French railways, the new steel carriages were painted blue, picked out with gold. To the official title of the Calais–Mediterranean Express was soon added the colloquialism that even an Englishman could understand: Le Train Bleu. It sounded much better than *train brun*.

The Blue Train built its reputation not simply on its physical entity but on its clientele and the destinations it served. The accommodation was exclusively first class and patronised principally by the famous – or so the Paris-Lyon-Méditerranée publicity would suggest. Royalty was represented by the Prince of Wales, subsequently King Edward VIII and – less happily – the Duke of Windsor, who had his own private carriage attached to the train; the big screen by Charlie Chaplin, at the height of his fame; glamour by the gamine couturier Coco Chanel, who designed the costumes for Sergo Diaghilev's ballet inspired by the express, so named, and premièred in Monte Carlo in 1924. There was the tennis player Fred Perry, who won both Wimbledon and the United States Open single championships three times. Winston Churchill was so frequent a traveller that he might have deserved a discount, if such a thing had existed. Agatha Christie came to research *The Mystery of the Blue Train*. The Duke of Westminster, the richest man in Britain, travelled on it to meet his yacht at Cannes, the four-masted *Flying Cloud*. James Gordon Bennett, the American newspaper magnate, once tipped the *conducteur* twenty thousand francs. During the height of the season the service was grossly oversubscribed, and it became a privilege – albeit one that could be bought – to procure a seat and a berth. No wonder some called it the millionaires' train.

At 1 p.m. sharp, with all the ceremony of an ocean liner, the express would draw out of the grey, windswept Gare Maritime and was soon thundering along the fast line to Amiens. Dusk would already be falling at the Gare du Nord in Paris, where a few passengers alighted. Then, the train took the *ceintre* line round the eastern side of the capital to the Gare de Lyon, where it was coupled to more carriages. It was early evening when it pulled out to begin the long haul to Dijon, Châlons and Lyon with cocktails and dinner ahead of the passengers. So far did the dining car aspire to *haute cuisine* that the feast served to Charles Ryder and Rex Mottram in Evelyn Waugh's *Brideshead Revisited* might well have been on the menu: soup of *oseille*, sole in white wine sauce, *caneton à la presse*, and lemon soufflé, all washed down with a 1906 Montrachet and, to accompany the duck, a 1904 Clos de Bèze. Diners ate to the muffled roar and steady beat of the train plunging south, rain and sleet slashing the windows. Brandy followed, then bed in the exquisite miniature cabins of the sleeping car.

To draw up the blind the following morning was to experience deliverance. The spectral cold, the gloom, the damp, the fog, the grey had vanished, replaced by a sunlit world of terracotta roofs, white houses, blue Mediterranean bays, high green hills with a glint of alpine snow, and vegetation reminiscent of the tropics – mimosa and eucalyptus, Mexican yucca, bougainvillaea and palm trees. Here, after the English winter, was the light, warmth and vitality of what the Victorians had discovered to be the best climate in Europe. 'It was like passing from winter to summer,' wrote the feminist and philanthropist Frances Power Cobbe in 1864. 'We feel that we have left behind the atmosphere of black frosts, moral and physical, and may expand ourselves happily in a much milder medium.' Yet, as Cobbe implied, the climate was only the most obvious attraction of the South. For the Victorians and their successors the Riviera was also a realm of peace, freedom, self-indulgence and self-expression, a glorious escape from the ethical and social irons of the North.

The train that brought them to such a promised land reached the coast at Marseille, the ancient

Greek port at the western end of the Riviera. There it turned east and headed towards the principal resorts of the seaboard: ~~St Raphael, Juan-les-Pins, Antibes, Cannes, Nice, Monaco~~. These were the stations served by the train *en route* to its terminus at Menton, the eastern extent of the French littoral beyond which lay Italy and its own, inferior riviera. By Evelyn Waugh's time these places had become synonymous with glamour, exclusivity, luxury, beauty and pleasure. For Waugh, writing much later in the persona of his *alter ego* Gilbert Pinfold, it was a land of lost content: 'The sea might have been any sea by the look of it, but he knew it to be that splendid enclosure that held all the world's history and half the happiest memories of his own life.' No wonder that a favourite description of Le Train Bleu was 'Train of Paradise'.

The Riviera was the world's first major tourist destination. Ever since its 'discovery' in 1834 by the former Lord Chancellor, Lord Brougham, it had been developed – largely by the British. Its capital, Nice, soon became the fastest growing town in Europe. The arrival of the railway turned a trickle of winter visitors into a torrent. By the turn of the century Nice had grown from a pre-revolutionary city of 12,000 to one ten times that size. With the people came roads, villas, hotels, *pensions*, restaurants, tennis courts, dust, sewage, rubbish, noise and the motor-car. The coast's traditional sources of income had been derived from fishing and olive oil, the perfume industry in Grasse, the oranges and lemons of Menton, the cork trees of the Esterels and the great salt pans at Hyères, but soon gave way to the provision of services of almost every sort imaginable to winter visitors. By the time Waugh stepped off his train in Monaco in late February 1929, the remote, penurious, sun-drenched winter coast where Brougham and his English contemporaries had sought warmth was fast disappearing. At Monaco, Waugh hated 'the newness and neatness of the buildings; the absolute denial of poverty and suffering in this place, where sickness is represented by fashionable invalids and industry by hotel servants, and the peasants in traditional costume come into town to witness in free seats the theatrical ballets of *Le Pas d'acier* and *Mercur*. All these things make up a Principality about as real as the pavilion at an International Exhibition.' Waugh's contemporary and – periodically – friend, the critic Cyril Connolly, pronounced that 'Nice is never worthy of the Blue Train.'

Indeed, 1929 was a turning-point for the coast, arguably its crux. Behind it lay a century of development, which had culminated in the pre-war *belle époque*, when from December to April the Riviera was the most fashionable destination on earth. The years since the war had seen the beginning of a summer season, pioneered principally by Americans. There were few signs yet, though, that it might ever rival winter. Immediately ahead lay the Wall Street crash of November 1929, which would devastate the world's capitalist economies and cut a swathe through the Riviera tourist industry. Soon the socialist Front Populaire would introduce paid holidays – *congés payés* – for the French workforce and large numbers of French – of a class hitherto rarely seen in the South other than as local peasants and *vendeuses*, cabbies, maids, waiters, washerwomen and footmen – would pour in by train. Despite those declarations of equality and fraternity, the French *bourgeoisie* thought this deplorable: 'opening the way to the red trains,' they said, 'we close it to the famous Blue Train.' The rise of Fascism would cast a further shadow that deepened as the decade drew on. Mussolini's Italy bordered the coast to the east, Hitler's Germany lay further to the north. Even from the windows of the Blue Train, the prospects looked uncertain.

'There was gold on the Côte d'Azur', wrote the biographer of François Blanc, the genius behind Monte Carlo, 'and everybody hoped to have a share in it.' Yet the story of the Riviera's rise is about more than greed. It is the story of those people, many famous, some gifted, who sought warmth, fun, health, peace, escape, sex, leisure, companionship, wealth, artistic inspiration and, perhaps above all, happiness on a coast that seemed to promise all those things. It is the story of the search for earthly paradise.

PART ONE

Augustans on the Riviera

‘The ruins of trophies, aqueducts, triumphal arches and public monuments, are proud testimonies of the enlightened policy and gigantic resources of the victors, while the present condition must necessarily awaken melancholy reflections on the fragility of human labours, and on the inevitable ravages which time makes on the architect, as well as his works.’

J. Bunnell Davis, *The Ancient and Modern History of Nice*

The conspirators gathered early on the morning of 15 March, 44 BC. Their leaders Gaius Cassius and Marcus Brutus were among them – Brutus, by some accounts, Caesar’s son by Servilia, one of his favourite mistresses. It was said that the augur Spurinna had warned Caesar to beware the Ides of March; that at dinner the night before, when asked what sort of death he would prefer, the *dictator perpetuus* had replied, ‘A sudden one.’ This all seemed propitious. The assassination was to be attempted at the Theatre of Pompey, behind the Campo dei Fiori, where the Senate was meeting. The conspirators, senators all, armed themselves with daggers and set off for the theatre.

Caesar, on his way there that morning, had encountered Spurinna, to whom he remarked lightly that the Ides of March had come. Spurinna retorted: ‘Aye, Caesar, but not gone.’ Before Caesar had gone many steps further, a scroll was thrust into his hand disclosing the conspiracy. He did not give it a glance.

As the ruler of the known world entered the assembly room in the theatre, the conspirators crowded round him mouthing requests. Publius Servilius Casca unsheathed his dagger, and struck the first blow from behind. His fellow murderers crowded round, leaving Caesar facing a circle of daggers. He realised that his time had come. On seeing Brutus among the assassins, he said, in Greek, ‘And you too, my son?’ Then he pulled his toga over his head, offering no resistance to the attack.

Seconds later he lay dead at the foot of Pompey’s statue, in a slowly widening pool of blood.

Gaius Octavius Thurinus took control of the Roman Empire, and in so doing became the father of the Côte d’Azur.

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Octavius, subsequently known as Augustus, was Julius Caesar’s great-nephew, the son of his niece. Caesar, having no children himself, had taken a fancy to the boy and appointed him his heir. This started Rome talking about catamites – Caesar’s bisexuality being known to all. When he was assassinated Augustus was barely eighteen and his legitimacy as the new emperor was soon questioned; opponents rallied round Caesar’s old companion in arms, Mark Antony. He had succeeded Caesar as Queen Cleopatra’s lover, and aspired to do the same with his empire. Augustus was confirmed as emperor only when he had defeated the combined fleets of Antony and Cleopatra at the battle of Actium in 31 BC.

Thereafter, he came into his own. He was short and plagued with chronic ill-health. Careless of his personal appearance, he was so impatient when having his hair cut that he would have three barbers snipping away simultaneously. Suetonius, his first biographer, admitted, ‘Not even his friends would deny that he often committed adultery.’ But his reasoning was unimpeachable: ‘He wanted to discover what his enemies were at by getting intimate with their wives and daughters.’ He had a taste for virgins, which he retained until old age, and his wife Livia acted as his procuress. He was also a fine general, an astute politician and – unlike several of his notorious successors – took seriously his duties to the empire and its peoples. It was under Augustus that the doors of the temple of the two-headed god Janus were often closed – they were open in times of war – and peace proclaimed. When he came to power Rome was built of brick, but he left it clothed in marble. He promoted colonisation, reviewed the system of provincial administration, and reinforced frontiers. He put his empire in as much order as it had ever been, presiding over what has come down to us as the Augustan age, a byword for peace and plenty.

The backbone of Augustus’s empire was its system of roads, of which there were eventually 54,000 miles. The Greeks had not fully appreciated their value as a means of communication with, and control of, far-flung outposts. In 312 BC Appian extracted funds from the Senate to inaugurate the

Roman system: the roads had to be sufficiently robust to carry ox-carts weighing up to 1200 pounds, so a trough was excavated to a depth of three feet, filled with rubble and topped with stones that fitted together so well that a knife blade could not have been slipped between them. The first such paved road, the Appian Way, ran 132 miles from Rome south-east to Capua. It was followed by four more: the Via Flaminia, the Via Valeria, the Via Latina, and the Via Aurelia. Work started on the Via Aurelia in 241 BC: it ran north-west from Rome straight up the coast to Genoa, the northernmost point of the Ligurian Sea. In the first century BC it was gradually extended until it reached the foothills of the Alpes Maritimes, a few miles to the east of the settlement that is now Nice.

Augustus was a military strategist who understood the contribution that rapid communications with southern Gaul and the Iberian peninsula could make in unifying his empire. When he came to power in 31 BC he was determined to force the road further round the coastal strip running from Italy to the Pyrenees, and into the Gallo-Roman Provincia, later known as Provence. Here, though, the route was blocked both by the Alps and by their warlike indigenous inhabitants, the Ligurians. According to the Roman historian Livy, there was

everything to put soldiers on their mettle: positions to scale in themselves difficult enough, without having to oust a force that is already in possession; hard marching through defiles lending themselves to constant surprises, an enemy extremely dashing and light-footed, rendering every spot and hour insecure; wearisome and perilous blockadings of fortified strongholds in a country barren of resources and yielding no plunder worth mentioning, with no camp followers and no long line of beasts of burden; no hope but in cold steel and individual pluck.

Between 15 and 14 BC Augustus's forces conquered the Ligurians in a series of bitter skirmishes, so opening up a secure road into Provincia and Gaul. In 12 BC the Senate voted to celebrate this with one of the greatest monuments in the Roman world: the Tropaea Augusti (Trophy of Augustus) was built on the crest of the 1300-metre pass that marked the boundary between Italy and Gaul. Set in a walled enclosure, it was a magnificent tower some 160 feet high, clad in dazzling white Carrara marble, surmounted by a heroic statue of Augustus. Twenty-four Doric columns carried statues of the Imperial Family, and on the west face of the rectangular podium were inscribed the names of the forty-five conquered tribes. Today, its remains standing close to the village of La Turbie, the name a corruption of Tropaea.

The defeat of the Ligurians meant that Augustus could extend the road further west along the coastal strip now called the French Riviera. From the pass, the road looked down on what the Romans called Monoeci (Monaco). (A Victorian doctor described this settlement as 'a fashionable health resort ... the Condamine, Monte Carlo, Roquebrune and Cap Martin were dotted with elegant Roman villas.') From there the road plunged down towards a fine natural harbour, the Baie des Anges. Five hundred years previously, the Greeks of Massalia (Marseille) had landed there, conquered the defending Ligurian tribes, and founded a city on the waterfront. They called it Nike (Nice), after the Greek goddess of victory. Later, the Romans established an adjoining community called Cemenelum (Cimiez) on the hills above the waterfront. It boasted an amphitheatre, baths, aqueducts and some fine houses, and became the capital of the Roman province of Alpes-Maritimes, and at its height in the second century AD supported a population of 20,000.

The road continued west from Cemenelum, halted on the banks of the river Varus (Var), and continued on the far side to Antipolis (Antibes). Originally another Greek colony, this seems to have meant the 'city opposite' – across the bay from Nice. Antipolis had appealed for Roman help against the Ligurian tribes as early as 154 BC, and by Augustan times was Romanized: writers like Martial and Pliny celebrated it as a tuna-fishing port. Then, as the Alpes Maritimes began their retreat, the land opened up and was relatively flat until the river Siagne, some ten miles west. The road continued easily down the coast towards Neapolis (La Napoule). In Roman times this was Ad Horrea – at the granary – suggestive of a grain port. Here the road encountered the eastern massif of the Esterels, the extraordinary range of volcanic peaks composed of red porphyry, described by a Victorian clergyman as 'flame-red crags shooting out of a sea the colour of a peacock's neck'. Today the major road turns

due west, but the via Aurelia followed the coast to Forum Julii (Fréjus). This was the port founded by Julius Caesar, and to which Augustus despatched Antony and Cleopatra's captured fleet of three hundred galleys after the battle of Actium. In Augustan times it grew rapidly – the road appears to date from the late 1st century BC — until it was much the same size as the town today. It was here, at Forum Julii, that the via Aurelia, long a companion of the coast, finally turned away from the sea and headed west towards the great Roman centres of Aix and Arles, leaving the Massif des Maures to the south. Another twenty-five miles south-west lay what was originally the Greek port of Olbia, which the Romans renamed Hyeres Almanare. Beyond lay the Greco-Roman port of Telo Martius (Toulon), then the western end of the Riviera, marked by Marseille and the mouth of the Rhône.

When it was completed, Augustus's road – sometimes called the Via Julia Augusta – linked a series of semi-independent and largely self-sufficient communities along the coast, and permitted a level of trade between them hitherto limited by the uncertainties of sea communication. At the same time, by allowing the rapid movement of military forces, the areas through which the road passed could be effectively policed against barbarian hordes. It also enabled the Riviera to be reached conveniently from Rome: as one of the imperial post roads, travellers would find on the via Aurelia fresh relays of horses once every ten or twelve Roman miles and overnight accommodation at twenty – the distance normally covered in a day. The road brought the order, stability and prosperity of Rome to the coast; it conferred and symbolised civilisation. As a consequence, in Augustan times Romans settled on the Riviera in large numbers and on the widening plains to the west of Nike. There was more than just colonisation, though; there was also tourism.

In the summer, the metropolis of ancient Rome became too hot, and too subject to epidemics and malaria, for the rich to wish to remain. With Augustus came the sustained peace, prosperity and ease of movement that encourages travelling for pleasure. In the great days of the empire, guidebooks and travel itineraries found a ready market. Plutarch spoke of 'globe-trotters who spend the best part of their lives in inns and boats'. In the summer many Romans fled south to the Bay of Naples – Julius Caesar and Mark Antony had been among the first to do so. By the first century AD, the northern coast of the bay, and in particular the island of Capri and the resorts of Cumae, Misenum and Baiae, had established itself as something recognisable on today's Riviera: of Baiae, the scholar Varro complained that 'unmarried women are common property, old men behave like young boys, and look like young boys like young girls'. Seneca was so appalled by what he saw that he left the day after his arrival, complaining that it was almost as if 'the location itself demanded vice'. To the north of Rome at Monoeci, Cemenelum, Antipolis, Forum Julii and Hyeres Almanare, the Victorians also found evidence of such revels, of travellers who came and stayed for pleasures that later became tradition in these parts. A stable, civilised Riviera, with good communications, a dramatic combination of sky, mountains and sea, and an unrivalled climate was established under the auspices of Augustus almost two thousand years ago.

In 1873, C. B. Black sang the praises of the view from La Turbie in his guide to the coast – a prospect that can have scarcely changed since Augustus came to inspect the great symbol of his achievement at about the time of the birth of Christ: 'The whole coastline lies before us ... as far as the hills above San Remo, headland after headland running out into blue water, white little towns nestling in the depths of sunny bays or clinging to the brown hillsides, villas peeping from the dark olive masses, sails gleaming against the purple sea.'

The *Pax Romana* ensured an extended holiday on the Riviera that lasted until the collapse of the Western Empire in the fifth century AD.

The Dark Ages on the coast were dominated by the barbarian hordes of Visigoths, Ostrogoths, Burgundians and Vandals. In the eighth century the Saracens arrived, and with them the bare, inaccessible inland settlements built by those fleeing the coast from the raiders. These were the *villages*

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