

Adapting to a new life here after Canada

AFTER a year of careful planning, my wife, teenage daughter and I immigrated to France in the summer of 1997.

We live in the old mediaeval quarter of Nice. One of the many advantages of living in the old city is that, thanks to mediaeval civic planning, just about everything can be found within walking distance - including the beach.

From the windows of our apartment here in the old city, we can see the bell tower of the cathedral, Sainte Reparate and, in the far distance, the foothills of the Alps. From May to October,



place Rossetti (the square in front of the cathedral) is full of restaurant tables and in the evening, the music of jazz trios drifts softly in through our windows.

On weekends, after we have made the rounds to the boulangerie and the fruit and vegetable stalls in the Cours Saleya (the location for the world-famous flower market), we spend a couple of hours every afternoon at the beach.

In the evening, after dinner, we often go for a walk along the Promenade des Anglais and then sit on the blue chairs looking out at the sea and, behind us, past the Italian-influenced architecture of the city,

towards the hills of Provence.

After too many years of cold Canadian winters, we know precisely just how lucky we are to live in such a place.

And then there's the bread, the wine, the cheese, the coffee, the local black olives and oil, the tomatoes and (did I mention the wine already?) The skies are almost always blue and clear, coating everything here in a beautiful azure-golden glaze.

Of course, not everything about adapting to life among the French on the Côte has been as easy. We've had to learn to accept (or tolerate) a number of idiosyncrasies.

Originating I'm sure, in historical necessity, the

French have learned to eat anything that will keep still long enough; the fact that there are apparently no traffic laws - only traffic suggestions, and the way little dogs are permitted to foul anywhere.

DURING our first few months here, we visited many of the region's ancient perched villages as well as some of the famous coastal towns. Saint Tropez is very pretty, and you can just smell the money.

In Cannes for the annual film festival, we were surrounded by thousands of people (and never mind what

you can smell), all straining for a chance to see The Famous People.

Although we were warned against going by those-who-know-better, it was a phenomenon we were curious to see for ourselves.

Friends who are long-term residents of the Côte warned us to beware the invading hordes of unexpected visitors who will show up once word gets out that you live here. We had our first North-American visitors last March.

Booked into the extra seats of an organised tour, and mistaken by all for part of the group, they spent ten days in a bus full of New Yorkers who were touring France on some

sort of trans-Atlantic mission of cross-cultural antagonism. I never realised these things were organised.

Driving quickly past all the major sights supposedly en route to another, they managed to arrive at each place of interest - the Louvre, Versailles - on the one day of the week it was closed to the public. This is not the way to see France.

But at least they weren't in any one place long enough to step in dog mess. At the end of their tour, they came down to spend a few days with us here in Nice where we had the chance to steer them towards some good ones.

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