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Abstract

**Wintering in the French Riviera.
The settlement of the foreign élite in Nice (1765-1885)**

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The work focuses on the emergence of winter resorts in the French region re-baptized *Côte d'Azur*, between the end of the 18th century and the end of the 19th.

This phenomenon relates with that practice, popular among the members of high society especially in Northern Europe, of moving in the winter months to small towns in the French Riviera, characterized by a mild climate and by natural and landscape conditions considered as exceptional.

In particular, the geographical scope is restricted to Nice, an emblematic case and a prototype of such *villes de saison*, seasonal cities created by and for high-class resort.

We wanted to analyze the impact, in terms of urban, architectural, economic consequences, that this practice had on a village that lived on fishing and agriculture and that, suddenly swept by a migratory flow of aristocrats, had to respond to the needs of comfort, housing, social distractions, of which it was lacking.

In the period of peace following the *Restaurazione sarda* (1815-60), Nice turns to a city of culture, *divertissement* and art, taking the road to fulfill its tourist destiny.

The seasonal *villégiature* has left, in fact, a successive stratification of elements that are today an integral part of the heritage of Nice. Urban arrangements, opening of large boulevards, gardens and public parks with an exotic ornamental plantation, bathing establishments, an internationally renowned *hôtellerie*, sumptuous private residences and villas. The seasonal presence of winterers has totally changed the urban fabric and directed its subsequent development. Nice grew up in the 19th century winters at an exponential rate, expanding along the hills and valleys just outside the *vieille ville*.



New neighborhoods for foreigners flourish in the city (e.g. Croix-de-Marbre) which filled with hotels, palaces, apartment buildings - the so-called rental *meublés* - and with magnificent villas on littoral promenades and on the hills. The city also provides new public spaces, while libraries, *cercles*, restaurants, boutiques, casinos and elite services begin to emerge all around.

This dichotomy between the city's leisure supply and the generally low socio-economic status of the native population makes Nice a city with a double personality that lives in the winter as a luxury resort and in summer in a degrading and static lethargy.



Structure

After an introduction to the phenomenon, the essential role played by the British colony in the spreading the practice in Nice will be presented. An excursus on the travel reports of travelers like Smollett and on the diffusion of the myth of the nissart landscape contextualizes the image of Nice as the "newfound Garden of Heaven".

A second chapter presents in quantitative terms the *hivernage*, the social composition and the provenance of the vacationers.

Then we examine the impact on the shape of the city, on its urban, social and cultural structure. The analysis of the metamorphosis of Nice deals with the offer of services, dedicated infrastructures, leisure for the winter guests. The subsequent chapter insists on the dynamics of the urban settlement of the foreign colony, dividing it into phases according to residential choice: stay in hotel, search for rented apartments, construction of their own private residence. The research ends on the residences built by winterers in the early 19th

century, up to the so-called *folies Belle Epoque*, before culminating in the 20th century boom, with its densification wave of construction that eventually led to the destruction of the paradisiac landscape Nice offered once discovered.

The sources used are mainly literary and iconographic, that contributed to spread the myth of Nice in the collective imagination and that allow us to recall a society that has clearly disappeared. These sources have therefore accompanied other resources - e.g. cartography, cadastral documents and legislation - as authoritative voice, guaranteeing a more correct contextualization and interpretation.



Figure 3: The residential choice of the winterers meublés, villas, hotel.

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