Proposal Locations on the French Riviera

Guide by photographer Pete Horton

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Introduction...

There are plenty of opportunities on the French Riviera to blow significant sums of money in exchange for organized proposal packages – which generally begin at 1,000 Euros. These usually include the use of a private space, beautiful views, and things like picnics with flowers, silk cushions, and champagne for cheaper packages. More expensive ones include things like helicopters and boats.

There’s nothing wrong with this approach but if it rains during your allotted time slot or your partner suspects what’s about to happen (as you randomly lead them over some scattered petals into a luxurious private space...) then it could ruin the surprise, and the moment.

The proposal locations listed in this guide are more suited for surprise proposals – the locations are public so there are no issues with photo permissions (unlike the Exotic Gardens of Eze village, for example – where I’ve been spoken to by the head gardener for not having prior permission to photograph there). Partners can be led to these locations without suspicion, and they’ll be no problems with access.

I live on the French Riviera in Nice so I use my local knowledge to advise on the best time to go there, depending on the light, how many tourists are likely to be there, transport, weather, and other factors. I have a flexible approach with photoshoots, so if it rains and I have availability, we can re-arrange at short notice at no extra expense.

How I work

I generally organize quite closely with the proposing partner so they know everything: how to get to their chosen location, where to stand, which way to face, and how to spot me. Sometimes I make them videos a day or two before so they can see a panoramic view of the exact spot and know where it will be so they don’t feel lost or disorientated when they arrive there.

For surprise proposals, I usually hide in plain sight, looking disinterested and like any other random person with a camera on the Riviera. Once the proposal begins I react very quickly – my camera will already have been switched on, set up, and all I will have to do is press a button to get some wide shots, and in the blink of an eye I’ll zoom in to capture the facial expressions.

Once in place, the person doing the proposing can forget I’m there and just be in the moment. Once the excitement has died down and the proposal’s finished, I’ll introduce myself. I never hang around too long as I know people are eager to get on with the rest of their day.

Quick Guide:

- Generally the harder the place is to get to, the more you’ll be rewarded with privacy and photos with fewer people.
- But this all depends on the time of day and the time of year.
- In summer, it is hot - assume it’s too hot to walk very far!
- The fastest way to iron out many complicated decisions is usually via a call with me, I can usually advise what’s best quickly given where your staying and your travel preferences.

Pricing:

- For 199 Euros I provide all the help with organisation you’d need, then photos of the proposal itself (normally 20 or so images). I’m happy to take close ups of the ring and some photos of you both afterwards on my camera, or your phone/camera. Help organising may include hand-held videos of locations I take on my phone to help orientate you and describe where to go and what to do.
- For 299 Euros I provide all the above plus a 30 minute/1 hour photoshoot after the proposal.
- For 349 Euros you can have the photoshoot held at a different location and on a different day. This option exists because if the proposal’s a surprise, one partner usually won’t be wearing their favourite clothes or necessarily have their hair the way they prefer it. The separate photoshoot allows this to happen and yourself and your partner can select the time and location according to your taste, vision, and plans.
- Images are always edited and are delivered in HD, in digital, via a download link. Fast-turnaround images for social media or the proposal itself can be made available in 24 hours, sometimes sooner, this type of informal flexibility is included.
- A drone and video shot on mobile phone (a Google Pixel 6a) is available, but usage depends on location and weather.

About Me:

- I’m a British wedding photographer who lives in Nice. I’m from Warwickshire in the UK and I’ve lived in Nice since 2021. I’m bilingual and live with my wife and our two children.
- +33 753 721 892 (if you’re abroad)
- 07 53 72 18 92 (if you’re in France)
- pete.horton@live.com
- @peterhortonphoto
The Lighthouse, Cap Ferrat (phare de cap ferrat)

There is a beautiful coastal path around the edge of Saint Jean Cap Ferrat, which is an amazing coastal walk (but it would be impossible in high heels).

To get to the location below, it is about an hour's walk from train station Beaulieu Sur Mer, (which itself is about 10 minutes train from Nice). Half way on the walk is the coastal village of Saint Jean Cap Ferrat, which can break the walk up with a glass or two of wine. Alternatively from Nice you can take a train, then arrange an Uber ride to a specific road nearby (I can give you the exact location), from which there is a public path down to the path to a spot that's somewhere in the background of the pictures below.

Advantages:

- Genuinely stunning location means beautiful photos. The sun will set behind the lighthouse as in the pictures.
- Fewer people, and people that are there can easily be photoshopped out.
- A unique image: I’ve not seen an engagement photograph on this path, which is crazy but I guess it’s because it’s slightly difficult to get to.

Disadvantages:

- Possibly slightly annoying to get to, but I know a path, not marked on Google Maps, that leads down from a public road to the pathway pictured on this page, this means you can get there and back via an Uber. This way, return transport for two from Nice, all in, should be less than 30 Euros.
- The train station, Beaulieu Sur Mer, is about 45 minute walk away, but the walk is beautiful - if it’s not too hot!
Coco Beach*, Nice

*not actually a beach, more of a winding, rocky coastal path

Click to see location on Google Maps

Coco Beach is not a beach, but a coastal path about 20 minutes’ walk from Nice’s Port Lympia port (which has its own tram stop).

It’s beautiful, but could be crowded-ish and with only one or two obvious places to propose – that usually already has people milling around at sunset.

A better idea could be to propose during morning or lunchtime - fewer people and the position of the sun would mean that looking out towards Nice, the sea would be a stunning blue colour. Avoid proposing here mid-late afternoon before sunset, as the sun’s position will bleach the blue colour from the sea.

Advantages:

- Easy to get to via Nice’s tram, by the 96 bus, or by foot
- A very beautiful, wind-swept, romantic setting
- Perfectly-positioned for or sunset
- I’ve had many photoshoots here, but not once has it been busy enough to cause problems.

Disadvantages:

- If the sea’s rough, or the weather’s generally stormy, access will be closed off by the authorities.

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Menton Panoramic View-point

Menton is 45 minutes on the train east of Nice, and this spot pictured right is a 20-30 minute walk or so through Menton. But again, the walk is beautiful. Menton has some beautiful things to see, lots of places to stop by for a drink, and a really beautiful old town. It’s worth seeing in its own right.

The proposal spot is located on some rocks, which means no high-heels.

Advantages:

- Menton is worth seeing, anyway
- The view is stunning
- No one will get in the background if you can get to the exact spot below...
- Cafés and bars are near-by

Disadvantages:

- 45 mins from Nice (but the train is cheap, I’d say no more than 20 Euros all in for the two of you), then a pleasant 30 min walk through Menton
- You’d have to persuade your partner to go down onto the rocks, but that’s not a problem and not difficult as there are stairs, but they may wonder why and what you’re up to (and avoid high-heels!).

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Nice Castle Hill

AKA: The Mound, la Colline de Chateau

Click to see location on Google Maps

A 20 minute walk from Nice old town, in fact you’re still in the heart of Nice when you’re there - albeit 200 or so meters up.

There is a lift, accessible from near the Promenade, but is notoriously unreliable. If you take the stairs in the summer, take your time, you’re going to get hot, but the views on the way up are beautiful.

Castle Hill is very close to Nice’s touristy old town and there are viewing platforms looking over the Promenade des Anglais, and Nice’s Port Lympa. These photos are looking over the promenade.

Avoid proposing mid to late afternoon - the sun’s position will mean the sea and sky will lose their blue hue. Morning, lunch, and sunset would be better - although sunset could be crowded. The best time would be 8-9AM (as is the picture on the right, taken in February).

The only motorised way up is on Nice’s little white tourist train (which is a road train, not a real, rail-way train).

Advantages:

- It’s very easy to get to, being in the middle of Nice
- If you can get there between 8:30 and 9am it’s probably going to be clear of tourists.

Disadvantages:

- There may be a lot of people around, this is a very popular viewpoint. The pictures here were taken at 9am in the winter.
- Because of the appearance of that black iron fence, people are very hard to photoshop out because each time I do, I have to re-build the fence - AI isn’t that good... yet!
A n hour or two’s hike from Port Lympia, but don’t do that if it’s hot as it’s a 300-odd meter ascent and will be tough if you’re not used to the heat.

Usually best way to get here is via an Uber, I’d say it’s 15 or so minutes’ ride from the centre of Nice, but geographically it’s pretty much in the city.

To get the blue sky and sea you need to get there before mid-afternoon or else the bright sun will bleach everything. I’d encourage you to go here with a couple of stalling tactics in mind incase you have to wait for crowds to clear. Avoid coming here on Sunday morning as loads of private tour buses arrive. It’s best on a weekday, late morning or early afternoon.

**Advantages:**

- In an Uber it’s easy to get to and close
- The photo can be beautiful
- People can be easily photoshopped out

**Disadvantages:**

- Unfortunately, there are often people milling around – to be safe you’d do it at 9am. Sometimes I can ask them to step aside before the couple arrive, but once, at around 11am, three minibuses of tourists turned up, they stayed for 15 minutes, before departing en masse.