



## Vegan Gorilla

Willy Berton, chef at Vegan Gorilla restaurant in Nice, has just become the first-ever vegan to be awarded the prestigious title *Maitre Restaurateur* by the French state. The son and grandson of chefs who hunted, he worked for 20 years in traditional restaurants until his wife Camille, herself a baker, inspired him to gradually go vegan. Last year they opened Vegan Gorilla together, with Camille running front of house, and trademark creations include cashew fauxmage (*fromage*), vegan 'oysters' and chia-seaweed caviar.

'I used to be a huge meat-eater. It was my job,' says Willy. 'Nowadays I no longer eat it by conviction and choice - I also shed my excess 12 kilos! I gave up the core of my old career, but retained the techniques.'

An imposing gorilla guards the wood-paneled restaurant, with its three tables for couples and one very long one where up to 24 tourists from around the world trade tales. The organic food is so pretty it demands to be savoured, with offerings such as yellow beetroot hummus and crunchy veg, followed by pad Thai courgette spaghetti with peanuts, and finishing with coffee and three mini-desserts.

[www.restaurant-vegan.fr](http://www.restaurant-vegan.fr)



FRENCH RIVIERA

# Travel journal

Alex Bourke enjoys a jaunt to France's glorious southeast coast, which boasts over 300 days of sunshine a year.



## Q What are the meat-free must-sees on the Côte d'Azur?

**A** Nice is far and away the top spot, with many veggie eateries. The airport bus runs the entire length of the Promenade des Anglais beach, there is plentiful accommodation, and health food shops and supermarkets packed with picnic supplies.

Nearby Antibes has a huge marina full of luxury yachts and billionaire super-yachts. Dine at Graze vegan café by the marina and beach, and Chez Helen organic vegetarian restaurant in the centre.

For a glamorous day out, take the coast road from Nice to Monte Carlo. Wander down past James Bond's favourite casino for lunch at Novak Djokovic's gourmet vegan restaurant, Eqvita. The raw lasagne is exquisite. Afterwards stroll down to the sandy, free public beach.

**Facebook: Graze Artisan Café**  
[www.chezhelen.fr](http://www.chezhelen.fr)  
[www.eqvitarestaurant.com](http://www.eqvitarestaurant.com)

## ESSENTIAL EATING

Nice offers four vegan and two veggie eateries in and around the pedestrianised old town.

### Light bites

At Caju, a casual vegan café in the old town, young French chef Julien Gregoire



and his English partner Callie Roberts specialise in smoothies, beetroot burgers, noodle dishes and luscious cakes like chocolate almond.

[www.cajuvegan.fr](http://www.cajuvegan.fr)

### In the raw

Another young couple, French Melina and Kiwi Nick,



turned their health around with vegan raw food then opened Koko Green. Breakfast on 'grawnola' or an açai bowl and return for the dish of the day, such as spring rolls with kelp and raw pad Thai noodles and mango paté. Plus organic wine!

[www.kokogreen.com](http://www.kokogreen.com)

### Port side

Badaboom Vegetarian Bistro & BeJuice Bar, near the yacht port,



specialises in vegan plates, and has guest chefs on Friday nights, such as Japanese Etsuko preparing a macrobiotic spread.

[www.bejuice.fr/badaboom](http://www.bejuice.fr/badaboom)

## IN THE KNOW

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[www.flixbus.com](http://www.flixbus.com)  
[www.ouibus.com](http://www.ouibus.com)  
[www.ouigo.com](http://www.ouigo.com)

## TO WHET YOUR APPETITE...

The HappyCow free app lists veggie-friendly restaurants with opening times, maps and links to their websites.

[www.happycow.net](http://www.happycow.net)