

First a ducal palace, then residence of the sovereigns of the Savoy States, to whom Nice belonged since 1388, when they were staying in Nice, this palace was later the seat of the Governor of the Nice Earldom.

It was a “prefecture” for the first time during the First Empire. After Nice was united with France on 14 June 1860, it became officially, on 21 November 1860, the “prefecture” of the new Alpes-Maritimes department, which was thereby called into existence. During the same year, it was visited by Napoleon III and Empress Eugénie.

From that time on, it served as a residence for sovereigns from all over Europe on the occasion of their winter stays on the French Riviera.

Between 1867 and 1907, the palace took on its final aspect. In 1960, on the occasion of the 100th anniversary of the union of Nice with France, General De Gaulle resided in the palace and presided over an official dinner. In February 2001, the Treaty of Nice was signed by the foreign ministers of the European Union.

Main staircase. Rebuilt from 1821 to 1825, it was renovated in 1999-2000: the initial setting was restored. The works done also revealed, on the second floor, the fresco decoration in Turin style.

The antechamber. The order placed with Jean-Charles Blais in 1998 resulted in an art work: “Trois mots, trois couleurs” (three words, three colours). Frames surround three colour gouaches, which reflect in mirrors in which appear the words Liberté, Égalité, Fraternité (liberty, equality, fraternity), carved reversed in the opposite mirror.

The ballroom and the mirrors gallery. Corinthian columns support the neo-baroque ceiling. The ceiling paintings, representing “Phaeton’s fall”, are surrounded by the coats of arms of the cities in the Alpes-Maritimes department. Seventeen paintings illustrate dancing through history and the continents. On the west wall, the baroque niche contains a sculpture by Henri Lombard titled “Nice giving itself to France”.

The main living room. Redesigned in 1905, in the Belle Époque manner, its furniture ranges from the 17th to the 19th centuries. Carpets and mirrors complete the decoration. A clock made by Masy-Perez sits on the mantelpiece. On the wall, paintings by Nicolas-Antoine Taunay (1775-1830) and Giuseppe Bisi (1787-1869) represent Saint-John the Baptist preaching and the siege of Cuneo in 1748.

The winter garden. Landscape paintings decorate the room in an eclectic baroque style.

The music room and the smoking room. On the walls, landscape paintings by Paulin Bertrand and Cyrille Besset represent the Estérel and Cagnes. A collection of china pieces from the Sèvres manufacture and a Louis XV wall clock are shown.

The small and large dining room. In rococo style, the large dining room was restored in 1958-1959 by Jansen in a composite “Venetian” style.

The Jules Chéret gallery. Jules Chéret (1836-1932) was a French painter and lithographer, master in the art of the poster. It seems as though he had lightness and motion as his slogan. Completed in 1908, the gallery illustrates celebrations in Nice during the Belle Époque in six panels.

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