

## ***Nice-Monaco: A Night Walk***

***It was a tender April 20s night, like one of those I imagine Scott Fitzgerald wrote about: a gentle wind blowing from the sea, a full moon above Nice, the bustling of restaurant visitors on Place Garibaldi getting quieter already after 11PM. It was an off-season Wednesday, after all. It was around this time that I decided to take a walk from Nice to Monaco. Well, I had no choice. I had left my card and phone charger in my friend's car, who had left for Monaco much earlier. I had spent more than one hour waiting for the night bus in vain. As I discovered with a help of passerby, there is no night bus from Nice airport to Monaco on Wednesday night! Meanwhile, I had missed the last train leaving around 11PM.***

***I figured it would take me around 5 hours to make the 22-25 km journey. "If I get really tired, I will try to get a taxi," I thought. I left from the port Quai Cassini, where the night bus' stop is. I didn't have a map, and remember, my phone was off. But I figured, if I stay by the seaside, it should take me to Monaco.***

*The port area is not nice. There are many shady people there. One Arabic looking man stopped a car while I was waiting in a bus stop and, with a nod of his head, indicated that he had taken me for a hooker. "Oh, God, do I really look like that?!" Wearing trousers made me feel safer. I would not have walked if I'd had on a skirt or a dress. My guess was that traffic intensity would stop as soon I go out of the city, and I was right. Just as I walked past the ferry station, an upscale area of Mont Boron, with nice apartment blocks facing the sea, appeared. When looking back, I could see the lights of Promenade des Anglais flashing in the warm evening air. It was prior to the July 14th events. There was still some innocence about this view.*

*Walking past the cap of Mont Boron, I took Boulevard Princesse Grace de Monaco towards Villefranche-sur-Mer. The walk was easy and pleasant, with not many cars on the road. From there, I continued towards the Cap Ferrat. After Villefranche-sur-Mer, the road became almost deserted, and it was late, too, getting close to 2AM. After passing Royal Riviera Hotel, I sat for the first time and thanked my Tommy Hilfiger ballet slippers. No blisters, no nothing after a 10 km walk.*

***I walked towards Beaulieu-sur-Mer. As I was approaching the Beaulieu Casino, I met the only passerby on this road. The casino was open.***

***From there on, the most difficult, yet also most interesting part of the walk began. The motorway passing the rocks below Eze is long and steep and there is nothing much to see, except for the fact that, for me, it was a chance to experience the majestic quality of the place in its primordial state. Those overpowering rocks standing dark in the quiet of the full moon, with only the gentle sea rustling below, no human sound. This is how this place was long before human settlers, and this is how it will remain. Forever. Impossible to comprehend! I oftentimes sat down on some sideways, invisible from the main road, and soaked in this sublime experience. I understood why Bono has his villa here.***

***I was starting to get tired and a bit sleepy, but the road's turns didn't seem to end. There were always passageways for walkers, yet in some places, it could be less than 50 cm wide. When walking through two tunnels (approx 300 m long), I ran. The idea of a car passing by in such a narrow, closed environment was***

***scary. There were two moments on the way when I got scared.***

***On one of the rocks, at the very top of it, there was a parking lot with some kind of a cafe in a transportable wagon. There were several lorries there. Men were standing next to the cafe chatting. They must have been very surprised to see a girl walking by at 3 in the morning, but, thank God, they didn't shout or say anything.***

***Soon after I passed this place, I noticed a sign in front saying that no walking was allowed in the tunnel, and the road next to the tunnel was closed. I got really scared that I would need to turn back and search for another road, but there were no other roads--only a huge rock. No houses, no nothing. But as I approached, I saw that the side road was closed only for cars, not walkers. I took the road, and, on the very edge of this grandiose cliff, there stood a magnificent, Riviera-white building. I think I even slowed my walk as if I didn't want to frighten this Bird of Paradise. As I walked to its gilded gates, I discovered it was Cap Estel Hotel. I had read about its beauty and luxurious design, and was amazed to discover it here on the darkest hour of the night, standing so remote, so mysterious... I sat on the fringe of its fence and marveled for a while.***

***Soon after, I was so happy to see the sign of Cap 'd Ail, I started to sing. But as I was approaching Mala Beach, my feet started to feel like stones, and the wind was getting warmer and warmer. It was almost difficult to breathe. I noticed, however, many two story buildings almost untouched since they were built in the late 19th century on both sides of the road, with their yellow facades romantically worn by the salty air of the sea and the pollution of cars. Cap d'Ail in its original beauty!***

***I sat on a bench at the fountain in Cap d'Ail city center at 4AM. I didn't feel like a runaway anymore, avoiding any approaching car and passerby. When I was entering Monaco a while later, it felt as if I was entering a small fishing village, not a global center of glamour and luxury. So quiet, so sleepy. Place d'Armes, so quiet a coin dropping would wake all of the town. Only at the the Port area I did meet the first cleaners on the street.***

***Taking the Avenue d'Ostende up the hill towards the Hotel de Paris was the toughest, and a walk towards Boulevard des Moulins through the gardens of Casino - a torture. I counted every step I took. Shorty after 5AM, I dropped in my bed, exhausted.***

***On the following morning, my French friends were shocked and impressed at the same time. No one they knew had ever walked this route, let alone at night. They called me a hero and said now I had been initiated for the French Riviera. And indeed, by taking this crazy walk, I discovered the Riviera from an angle invisible to tourists. I had felt every little rock with my feet.***

***I definitely recommend this walk. Just do it during the daytime. You won't be able to avoid tunnels, though.***

***Anda Klavina, 2016***



**Mesmerizing Cap Estel Hotel**





**Me on another mountain road above Monaco**



**Beaulieu - Eze-sur-Mer Road Below Limestone Cliffs**





**Bono's Villa les Roses in Eze-sur-Mer**



**Beaulieu-sur-Mer Yachts Port with a Coastal Road in the Background**

All photos are from the internet sources except for my portrait.