



Eze France: Medieval Splendor

Description

**“Follow me young man,
And you shall know
all of my secrets...almost”**

Jean-Phillipe Richard for the statue of Margot

I was on an extended European adventure that began with a gathering of friends from my gourmet cooking club. Eze was not even on my radar. I had just spent a fantastic week in Tuscany in the hilltop village of Montisi, Italy. However, one week was not nearly long enough after traveling so far. I invited my sister-in-law Lisa to join me in Italy and then continue to France to visit family. She suggested stopping in Monaco, where she was invited to visit a friend. Neither of us had ever been. It was the perfect incentive to go!

We focused our research on the immediate area of Monaco. Our plans included the Royal Palace, Monte Carlo, and the gorgeous beaches of the Cotes d’Azur. Upon our arrival, our kind and gracious hosts suggested we make a day trip to nearby Eze, France, to visit the medieval village and botanical gardens. It turned out to be one of the highlights of our whole trip.

This a perfect example of always allowing flexibility in your plans and seeking guidance from the locals.



Eze France

A bit about Eze France



Eze, France, dates back to the 1300s. It is between Monaco and Nice, France. If coming from Monaco, it is about a 5-mile trip. It takes about 10-15 minutes by car and is reachable by train and bus. The drive itself is quite beautiful as you climb Bastide Mountain. Parking is limited if you are driving, so arriving early is best, especially if it is hot.

The town is 1,400 feet above sea level on the stunning French Mediterranean. Because of its elevated location, it is referred to as the Eagle's Nest. Eze has a population of around 2,000 people.

Eze History



Eze France

The area around Eze has had inhabitants as far back as 2000 BC. The hilltop town has passed through many occupations: the Romans, the Moors, Turks, Spaniards, Italians, and the Phoenicians.

In 1388, it used to be ruled by the Savoias (Italian Royal Family); however, a few years later, the French took over control. During the medieval ages, Eze was utterly destroyed and rebuilt. The Eze that we see today was actually rebuilt in medieval times by the French, so it's not the original one created in 1100/

It has experienced much upheaval in its time, including King Louis XIV destroying the fortified wall in 1706 during the War of the Spanish Succession. It was not until 1860 that the people of Eze designated it a part of France by a unanimous vote.

Stunning Views

The medieval village and its castle are magnificent, but the view of the Mediterranean Sea has made it renowned. No matter how prepared you are for the views, they are even more breathtaking than you imagined. It is a top destination in an area already reputed for its beauty.

What made it extra special was the simplicity and genuineness of the town. Being so close to prestigious Monaco, it was lovely to see the efforts made to keep its charm, narrow streets, and

buildings preserved. The village is a pedestrians-only town with no car traffic. It can make an arduous walk up challenging, but it is worth it. I was in a boot after an Achilles tear, which was not ideal.



Wandering Eze



Eze France

Near the parking lot is the Eze tourist office. Stop in and grab a map to help guide your exploration of all the town's landmarks. As you leave the tourist office, walk up the hill towards the village. You will see the church on the hill ahead of you as you enter the streets of the historic center through the postern, a 14th-century gate.

You will begin wandering through the labyrinth of cobblestone streets and alleys of Eze. There are more than you can imagine, but don't miss Rue de Barri. It takes you to the beautiful and exclusive [Hotel La Chèvre d'Or](#). Take the time to visit the gorgeous hotel gardens!



Eze France

Eze's beautiful homes and buildings had us spellbound; many now are art galleries, shops, and restaurants. Several of the residents are artisans, and the shops reflect that. There were lovely courtyards to meander through and staircases to aid in your climb to the top. I suggest you take your time and explore every piece of this village that time allows.

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What not to miss



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The sites you should not miss include the Chapelle de la Sainte Croix, built at the beginning of the 14th century and the oldest building in the village. The interior is stunning.

There is a Porte des Maures, a gate out of the other side of Eze next to the Chateau d'Eza. A castle over 400 years old that is now a luxury hotel

The streets around Place Francis Blanche are picturesque, with many plants and bougainvillea flowers. The small fountains, interesting windows, and doorways add charm to the village. I took quite a few pictures of those doorways and windows!

The Notre Dame de L'Assumption church, with its neoclassical façade, was built in the second half of the 18th century on the edge of Eze's old village. Although the exterior may not impress you enough to enter, the interior has an array of beautiful paintings and frescoes.

Jardins Exotique de Eze



When you get close to the top of the village, you will see the Jardins Exotique de Eze entrance, which is on top of the ruins of a medieval castle. The botanical garden setting is incredible, offering astonishing panoramic views of the Mediterranean, the French Riviera, and the Italian coast. On a clear day, Corsica is visible. There is an entry fee to the gardens.



Once inside the award-winning exotic gardens, you will find a unique collection of over 400 exotic plants from around the world. The south-facing side of the park has numerous species of succulent plants and xerophytes from all over the world, while the north face has plants from the Mediterranean and other humid regions of the world.

Eze, France, is right near Monaco. Check out our [Monaco Travel Guide](#) for more info.

The Sculptures of Goddesses

Interspersed within are sculptor Jean-Philippe Richard's series of 15 stone statues of 'earth goddesses,' each with its own poem written by the artist. This adds a lovely poetic element to the experience. These stone works of art model Classical Greek sculptures.

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The poem on the sculpture of Justin or Isis, the Egyptian goddess of motherhood and fertility, reads:

“You have recognized me...

**I am the same
And yet different”**
Jean-Phillipe Richard



The sculptures are interspersed among the succulents and cacti, along with what remains of the castle. The goddesses seemed to take on a life of their own. The artist was able to portray their strength and gentleness simultaneously.

The idyllic gardens were beyond our expectations and very unique. The sculptures had a presence that captured the imagination. They celebrate femininity and the relationship between the beauty of both the physical and ephemeral world.

After all, you are in France

On the way out, we dined at one of Eze's many restaurants and eateries. It is France, so plan for a long, leisurely, and delicious meal at lunch, even if you only hope for a quick bite.

Of course, wine must accompany that meal. You are in south Provence, after all; choose one from the region to complement your meal.

You can walk to the Sea from Eze



Eze France

Do you want to add more exercise after that rather tiring trek to the top? There's a trail down to Eze-sur-Mer, but it will take you more than an hour to hike from the village downhill to the sea.

Many visitors take the public bus from Monaco to Eze and then walk down the hill to the bus stop at the bottom of the mountain for the return public bus ride.

Stay the night



We only visited for a day, but spending the night and enjoying all Eze offers would be fun after the crowds leave. There are two exceptional high-end hotels: Chateau d'Eza, a 12th-century castle, and Hotel La Chèvre d'Or. Both are very expensive, out of the range for most of us! Other accommodations are less costly in and near the village.

We have not stayed at any of these, so we can't vouch for them. Please read the reviews carefully.

Final Thoughts

Eze is at least a two-hour visit without a break or food, but that still won't give it the time it deserves. The Jardins de Eze should be an hour alone, allowing time to take in the views. Start early during the summer, as the heat can be pretty rough during the day. Bring water with you, even if it isn't hot.

Eze was not on our agenda, but what a find! If you are in the region, take the time to visit the Jardins Exotique and the delightful medieval hilltop town of Eze. It is one of my favorite hilltop towns in France, and I have traveled a lot!

It will likely steal your heart as it did mine.



Check out Eze, France's [Official Tourism Site](#), for even more details

Eze France Photo Gallery

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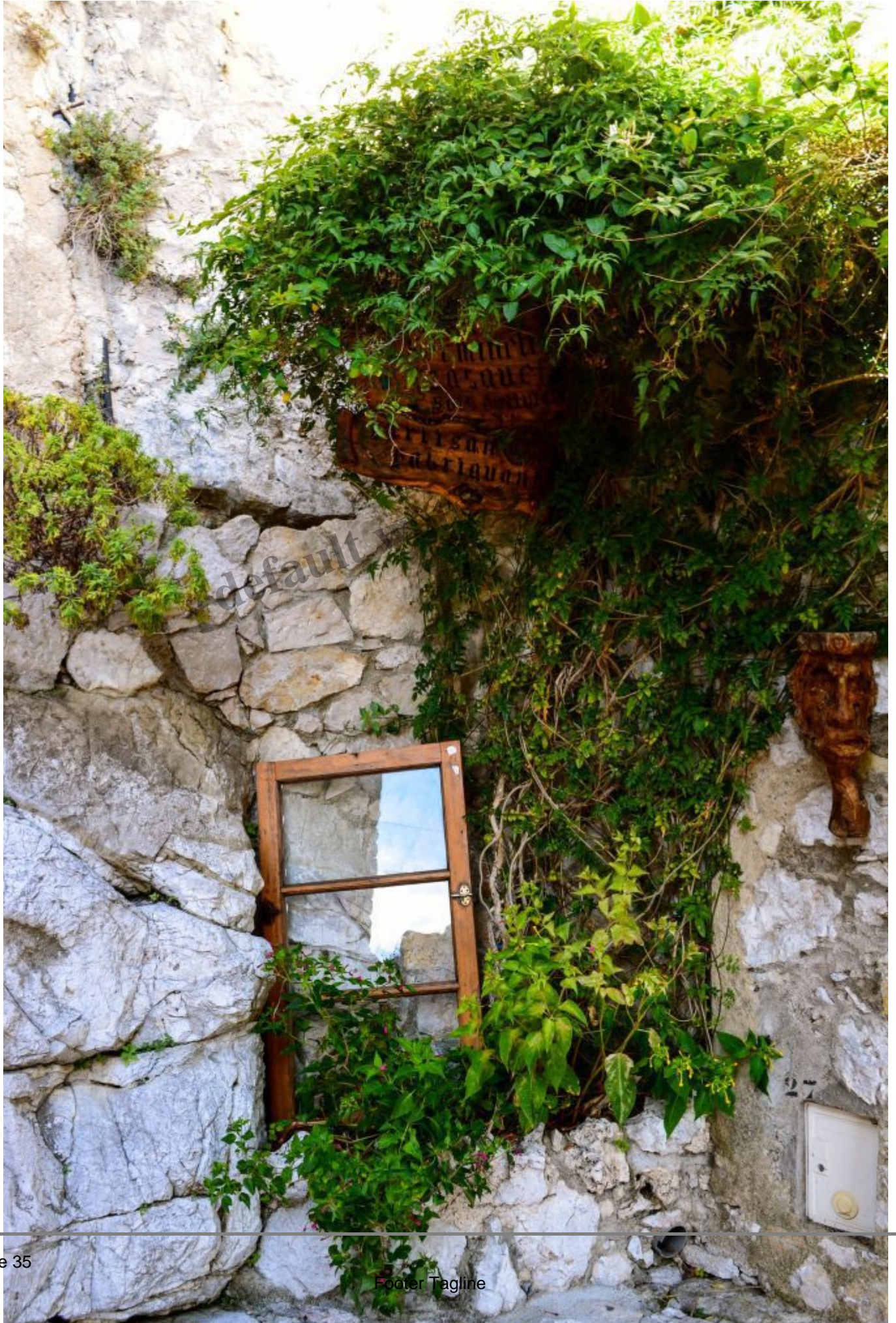
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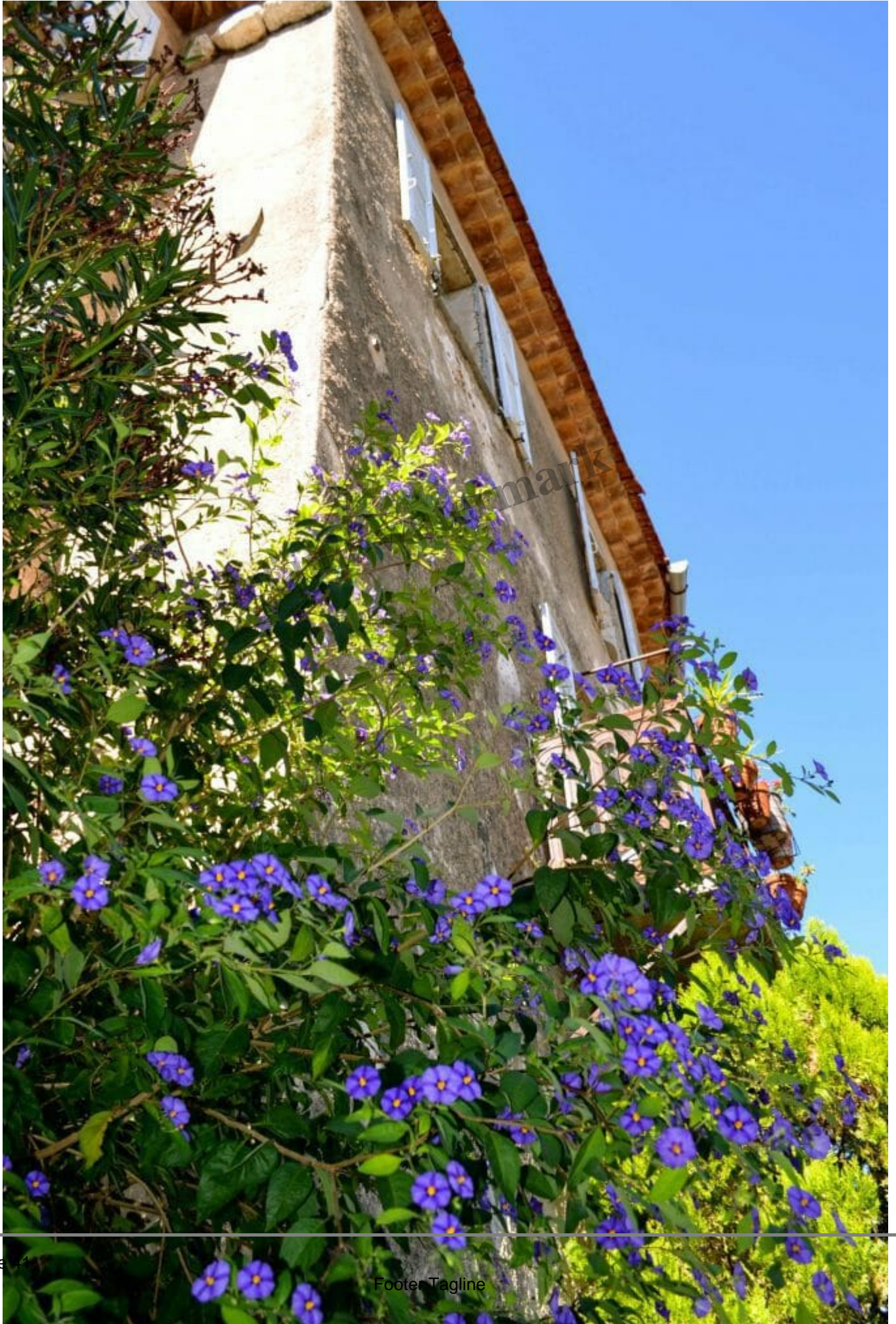
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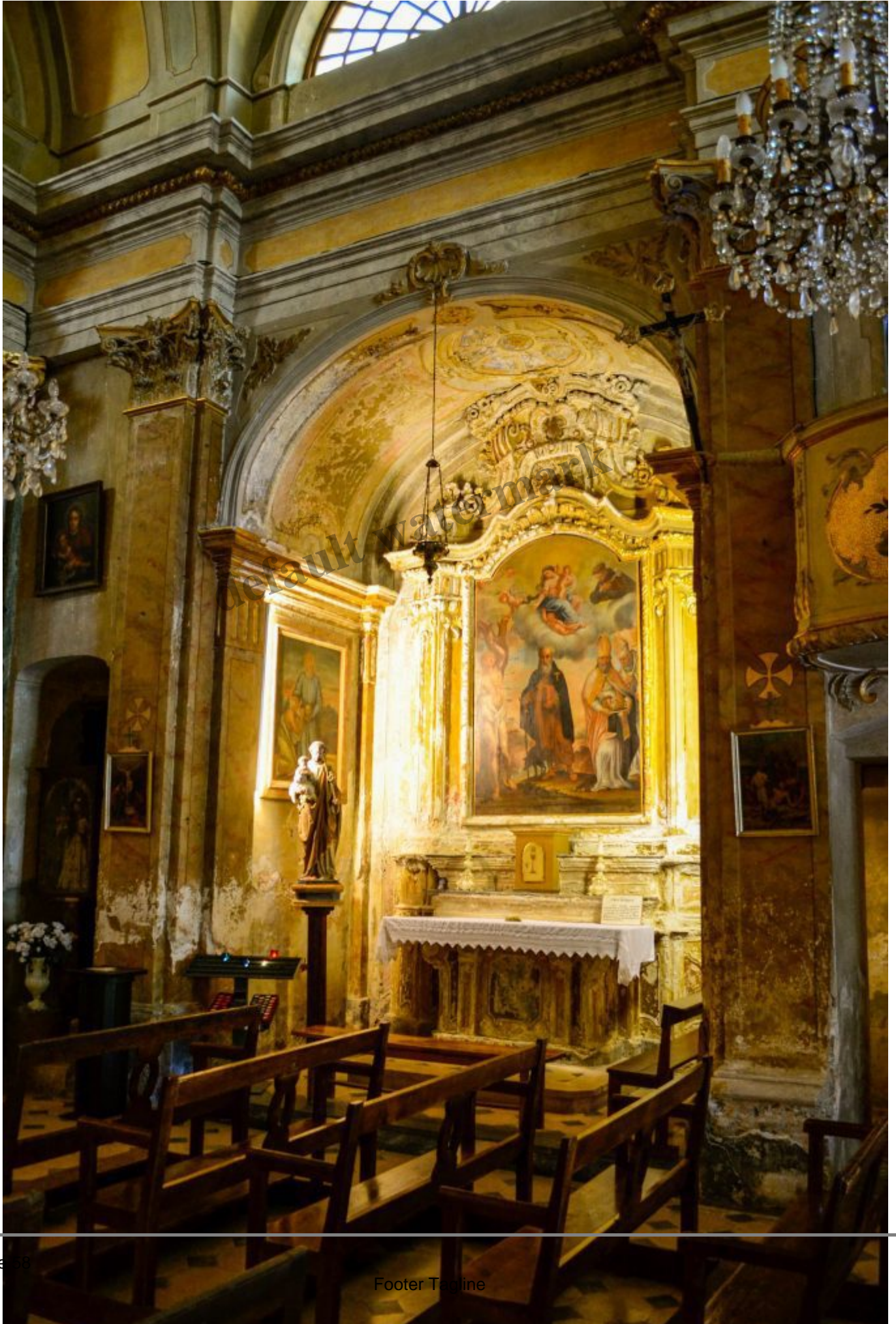


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