



## THE SPELLBINDING *Mediterranean Riviera*

Revered for sunbleached villages, refreshing waterfronts and a bursting arts scene, the Italian and French Rivas are an enchanting blend of formal and relaxed. The perfect summer vacation varies for everyone, but we would take a gamble that this luxurious playground rich in casinos, culture, adventure – or simply lounging - is sure to deliver a memorable holiday no matter your taste! **BY LINDSAY MAHER**

**PORTOFINO** : On the Italian Riviera is Portofino, a village of sunset-painted homes and time transcendence. It exists in a mid-20th century frame and from the promontory hums like a love song. Take a hike through the National Park of Portofino to San Fruttuoso. A two-hour trek brings you to the Benedictine Abbey, only accessible by foot or boat, and a sight with rich history. We dare you to plunge into the crystal sea; here is the popular Christ of the Abyss dive, where below the surface you'll find a bronze statue of Christ, arms and eyes raised in praise. Explore the Villa Durazzo Pallavicini, a villa and park fashioned in 19th-century English romance. What's more is the garden is a series of scenes that form three acts. The marriage of tranquility and theatre is a sweet one. In the afternoons, cool off by kayaking, canoeing or paddleboarding. At the Museo del Parco, admire the works of more than 100 contemporary artists, and at Galleria d'Arte, find Italian

artists' work cast in both natural and indoor lighting. Be sure to also pay a visit to the Church of San Giorgio. From its cliffside perch can be seen the whole of Portofino, a sight that your mind will return to for years. Portofino is for the people-watchers, the piazza is a must, so make sure to settle into one to let the world circle around you and lure you back in time. To top off your trip to the nicknamed "Pearl of the World," take a taxi boat and enjoy a sunset aperitif tour. The sun's descent into the sea will remind you that there is nothing quite as special as the trail into nighttime, a close on the day's glory and the promise of tomorrow's. Maybe you aren't wrapping up your vacation lying on a beach, but the views are enough. If not, a cocktail will be.

For a stay that matches Portofino's fairytale build, look no further than the Belmond Hotel Splendido.





**SANREMO** : Known as the City of Flowers for hosting Italy's largest flower market, Sanremo is subtly a tourist hub. The Casino Sanremo is its singular nod to opulence, an entertainment complex to bring something flashy to your days here. What it lacks in glitz it makes up for in a gorgeous old town: narrow paths that wind around the brightly painted facades of homes and medieval walkways and converge at piazzas, such as San Siro and Bresca. At its base, a 25-kilometer biking and walking path that trails the outline of the town and passes its two harbors. You'll be too inclined to remain lost in the charm (and probably within the tangle of streets) to want to while all your days away at the beach. A climb to the Santuario Madonna Della Costa is rewarded with a view of the city and sea from above, and an experience in itself as you work your way up past the exquisite stonework. For sailors, it has stood as a beacon guiding them home; for you, it will ring with the same comfort and ease. Sanremo is a resting place for the eyes, a town that bursts with color in the summer months; one that tricks you into thinking you are relaxing as you amble and hike along its curves. Don't leave without a dip in the sea—though by now, you will hopefully have done that—followed by a rest on the shore and a bath in Italy's warm rays. Remember to get back to town, though. Oceans are plentiful, la belle époque architecture is not! Stay at the Royal Hotel Sanremo, a cherry on top of the town's decadence.

**ST-TROPEZ** : St-Tropez transformed drastically after the fishing port became the hotspot for French filmmaking in the 1950s. It is a well-beloved marriage of oceanside views and old world grandeur that keeps generations past and present returning for more. And that's what keeps it feeling so fresh--its youthful and mature atmosphere. Promenade along the Quai Jean Jaurès and it's impossible not to notice that wealth abounds in five-star restaurants and high-end yachts in the harbor. But don't let that throw you off, because St-Tropez demands that you see it, and all of it. The coastal town, historically at risk of attack for its location, became fortified and now allows visitors into its three remaining medieval towers: the Tour du Portalet, the Tour la Vieille and the Tour de Suffren. Built a few centuries later was the citadel, which is a must to climb to, as it overlooks dreamy views of the city beyond. Getting there is equally as splendid as the spot itself, a wooded walk to escape the vibrancy of city-dwelling. Once your feet have touched the ground again, stop by some of St-Tropez's museums, including the Musée de l'Annonciade, a nod to artists inspired by Saint Tropez, and the Musée de la Gendarmerie et du Cinema, for a taste of Saint Tropez's on-screen allure and what paved its golden road. And, of course, no trip is complete without a visit to the storied Cinquant Cinq, a.k.a. Le Club 55, made famous by Brigitte Bardot in 1956. Then, work your way through the narrow pathways of the old town--or, take a trip to Ramatuelle, near St-Tropez, with a beautiful narrative of their own to be found in its winding roads and views of the Plage de l'Escalet. Mark your territory there, or at the Plage de Pampelonne for hours wasted away by the water. No bathing suit? No problem. Here, nobody cares what you do, or don't, dive in with.

La Résidence de la Pinède, with its private beach and high-quality hospitality, will keep you lost in paradise.

**MONTE CARLO** : Much of Monte Carlo's allure is off the waterfront, but its energy lingers inland. It is a Paris by the sea, a town heavily influenced by Classicism, the French Renaissance and Gothic architecture. Each May, the Monaco Grand Prix takes over and fills the place and its inhabitants with a fantastic energy. Don't worry: long after the winners have been medaled, Monte Carlo retains the joyous buzz. Fitted into its hub is Jardin du Casino, an oasis to restore inner peace when the slot machines no longer go your way. The Oceanographic Museum of Monaco hosts an impressive 90 tanks of sea fauna and chronicles the expeditions of Prince Albert as he sought rare fossils and treasures, all to educate visitors on protecting the ocean. It has been built at the edge of the coast, doubling as a vantage point for exquisite sights. At the Palais du Prince, former home of Princess Grace and current residence of Prince Albert II, tour the state rooms or walk the exterior and wait for the changing of the guard, which takes place just before noon daily. Refined Mediterranean cuisine and fresh seafood are two highlights to take in before attending an opera, ballet or symphony concert at the Opera de Monte-Carlo. Monte Carlo is not for the sole beachgoer: you'll have to accept that it is showy and culture and history far outweigh any leisurely pleasures.

The Hôtel Hermitage Monte-Carlo is as beautifully rendered as a work of art, perfectly in line with Monte Carlo's Parisian flare.



Monaco Press Centre Photos



**CANNES** : Cannes is, in one word, glamorous. With origins as a small fishing village, its status as a celebrity getaway is mirrored in the boutiques and five-star hotels, the red carpet affairs and beaches strung with sunloungers. Although the city's real claim to fame is the Cannes Film Festival, the resort town beckons your visit all summer with its dazzling sandy beaches and upmarket boutiques so you can happily and guiltlessly do nothing and be making the most of your time. Amble along the Promenade de la Croisette and Port de Cannes, between the yachts and waves rocking along the horizon, and pretend for a while that this A-list spread is yours to claim. Visit the Centre d'art La Malmaison with their constantly rotating exhibitions, or the Musée de la Mer for a collection of artifacts from the sea. Or, take a day trip to the Îles de Lérins, off the coast of Cannes and without diamond encrustment, to explore the monastery (still in use today) and vineyards of Île St-Honorat or the Royal Fort on Île Ste-Marguerite. They are a nature lover's paradise, both car-free and well-preserved and begging for you to traverse the length of the islands to discover the flourishing flora and fauna. Go snorkeling and then, on Île Ste-Marguerite, look out for the floating drinks bar. Just wave to the captain and wade into the water to grab a drink, an idea two steps ahead of the rest of us. Back in Cannes, under the light of the stars, take a ballroom dancing lesson or two, and for a few days live out your star-studded fantasies.

Considered the best-kept secret in Cannes, the Five Seas Hotel reaches far above boutique status and—dare I say?—makes you feel like royalty.