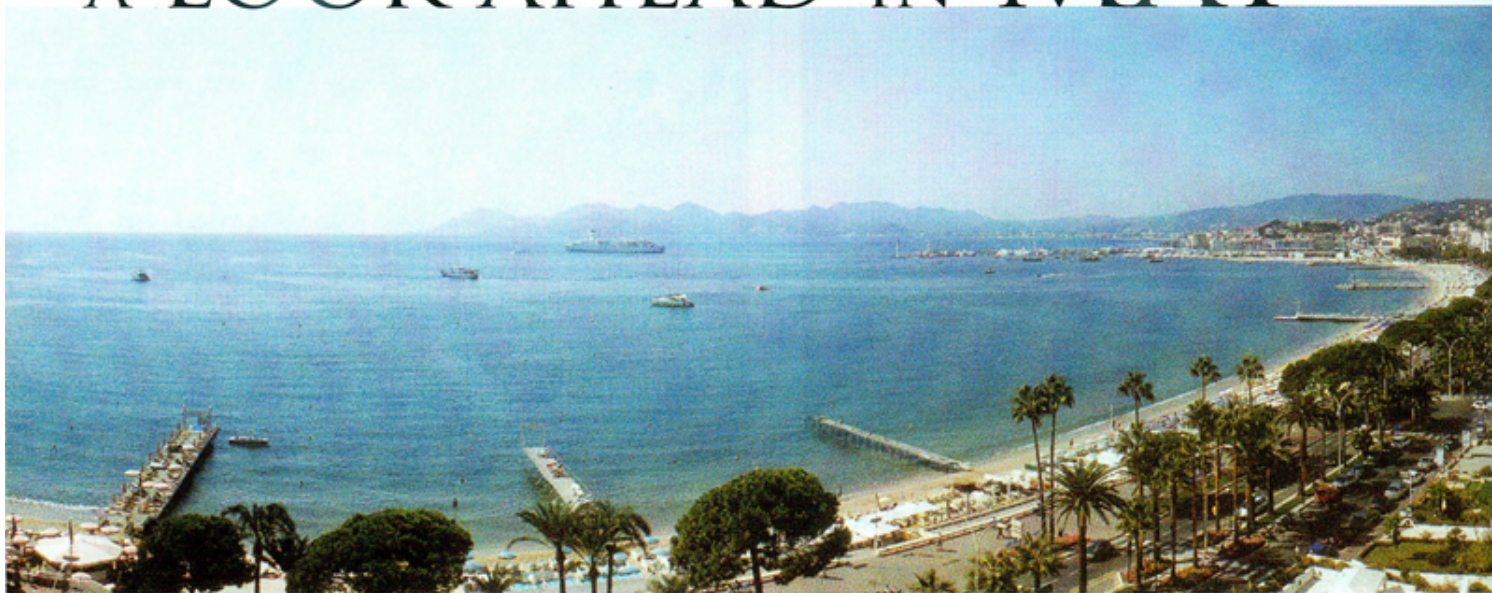


THE LIVELY FRENCH RIVIERA – A LOOK AHEAD IN MAY

TEXT BY MONICA VARRI



DON'T MISS THE EXCITEMENT in the French Riviera as two wonderful events quickly approach! The famous Cannes Film Festival, where the most influential filmmakers compete for the Palm d'Or, and the Grand Prix Formula One in Monte Carlo where the fastest automobiles on earth roar through the streets.

What more can you ask for as you stroll La Croisette, a magnificent promenade lined by palm trees and designer boutiques, and catch sights of the rich and famous. Each year in May, Cannes' population more than triples due to the influx of stars, critics, journalists, and star-gazers arriving for this international event of cinematic proportions. One would never imagine a city such as Cannes ever hosting the most prestigious film festival. How did this relatively small resort come to host the most prestigious film festival? That is a story in itself going back to World War II.

As the Cannes Film festival is predominantly an event for film industry professionals and the press, which is held this year from May 11-22, it is also a glorious event for everyone. Book a room in one of the famous luxury hotels where celebrities stay, such as the Intercontinental Carlton or the Hotel Martinez. One can never book too early! Although hotel security keeps non-guests out of the celebrity hotels during the festival, you may try the hotel bars where many of the *tres chic* hang out or pass by. In the evenings, crowd the barricades near the red carpet for some celebrity spotting. There is always something to do – bask on the beach, enjoy people watching at sidewalk cafes, or shop along the Riviera.

How about another famous event in the world in one of the most exciting cities on earth! Experience the Formula One Grand Prix, the champagne of motor sports, in Monte Carlo in Monaco from May 19-22, 2005.

What does Formula One mean? It is simply a set of technical regulations for single-seat racing cars. In the early days of racing, cars always had two seats and the invention of the rear-view mirror contributed to the development of the single-seater by eliminating the need for the mechanic to warn the driver that someone was trying to overtake him. Today, the regulations define maximum and minimum dimensions, weight, engine capacity, safety measures, etc.

"Grand Prix" was the first race in 1906 to be given this title and it referred to the "Formula One" cars of the period. Today, only those races which count toward the Formula One World Championship can use the Grand Prix title. How fast do they go? In 2000, the fastest Grand Prix was the German one won by Ferrari at an average speed of 133 MPH. Only in the pit lane, are there speed limits and a Grand Prix always starts – rain or shine.

There is still time to join the Principality's non-stop celebration and stay at the luxury hotels, such as the Hotel de Paris or the Hermitage, visit the famous Opera House, play in the Casino, and dine in the highest rated restaurants! There are 3,000 seats available for sale on the circuit. Prices range anywhere from 46 Euro to thousands of Euro when Monaco residents rent out their terraces. Do not attempt to drive into Monaco during the four days of racing as access is very restricted and parking is non-existent. Imagine being able to watch the best drivers in the world piloting the fastest, most sophisticated and expensive racing machines through narrow streets at mind-numbing speeds! And Monte Carlo itself clinging to majestic cliffs over the spectacular Mediterranean Sea. It's fabulous and a *must* at least once in your life!!

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