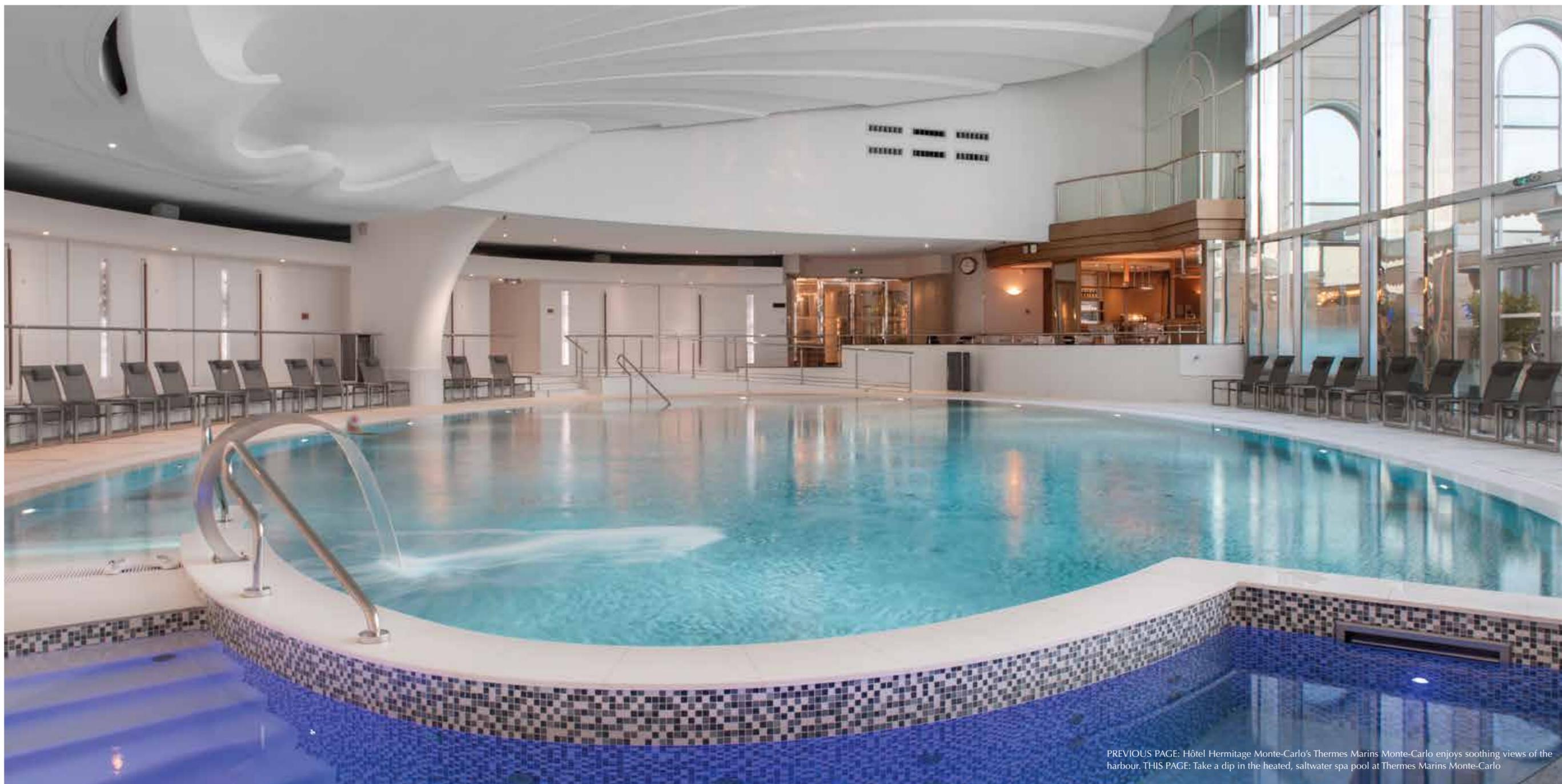


REGAL RESORTS

Stellar spas in the Riviera

Writer Irvina Lew



PREVIOUS PAGE: Hôtel Hermitage Monte-Carlo's Thermes Marins Monte-Carlo enjoys soothing views of the harbour. THIS PAGE: Take a dip in the heated, saltwater spa pool at Thermes Marins Monte-Carlo

The scenic, sunlit Riviera attracted European royalty in the mid 1800s. Vibrant luminescence lured 20th-century artists Bonnard, Chagall, Dufy, Leger, Matisse, Picasso, Renoir and Signac, whose works still dominate local museums. Ancient ports and perched villages, stone houses and grand villas facing the Mediterranean enticed the beau monde and international elite. Agapanthus-lined

driveways, avocado-treed terraces and oleander and rose courtyards captivated me in 1990, when a French publisher's book advance sponsored the first of my dozen subsequent trips. Peerless places, art museums and gastronomic meals, made with market-fresh ingredients, keep tempting me back.

Recently, a three-week stay on the Côte d'Azur introduced superlative spa services

at seven stellar resort spas from Monaco westward along the coast and among the hillsides. From Nice Côte d'Azur Airport, all except Saint-Tropez are within an hour's drive. The first is connected to a belle époque hotel overlooking the harbour in Monte Carlo; others are at a seafront Palace hotel and a gracious villa both on Cap-Ferrat; in a historic chateau in the hills above Vence; at a legendary seafront resort on Cap d'Antibes;

at an expansive, backcountry golf and spa resort in Tourettes, and within a magical replica of a petit port village in Saint-Tropez.

THERMES MARINS MONTE-CARLO AT HÔTEL HERMITAGE MONTE-CARLO

The gorgeous Hôtel Hermitage Monte-Carlo is part of the Société des Bains de Mer and a member of The Leading Hotels

of the World. Indoor corridors connect it to the Hôtel de Paris Monte-Carlo, the fabulous, four-storey, 75,000sqft spa facing the ship-shaped yacht club and mega yachts in the harbour. A heated, saltwater indoor spa pool is surrounded by reception, a fitness club, lounge, juice bar and l'Hirondelle, the spa restaurant and terrace. Three fixed menus and à la carte Cuisine Minceur, or

wellness cooking, are available along with a coded chart illustrating items containing gluten, milk, eggs, fish, seafood, nuts or soy. Elegant truffle-topped scrambled eggs and tabbouleh arrived at the table; entrées, including grilled fish, are served under a silver dome. Along with La Prairie skincare, Phytomer products are used for the many Thalassotherapy, or seawater, therapies. www.thermesmarinsmontecarlo.com

LE SPA AT THE GRAND-HÔTEL DU CAP-FERRAT, A FOUR SEASONS HOTEL

A path carved through rock and a funicular descend to the heated, seawater pool complex on this 17-acre, terraced-garden estate. The majestic 74-room hotel on exclusive Cap-Ferrat, between Nice and Monaco, dates from 1908, is a member of The Leading Hotels of the World and one of France's few Palace Hotels. Constructed in 2009, La Residence has eight suites, each

with a private pool. The comprehensive 8,000sqft, recently refurbished spa features a boutique, sound-proofed cabin, nail salon, Technogym-equipped fitness studio, indoor pool, hammam, ice fountain, Jacuzzi, sauna and sensation shower. The sublime duo-suite, the Grand Salon has its own whirlpool tub, hammam, sauna, shower, bathroom and private lounge. Outside three cardio-cabanas, one with a rowing machine, offer sea views. Treatments use French products

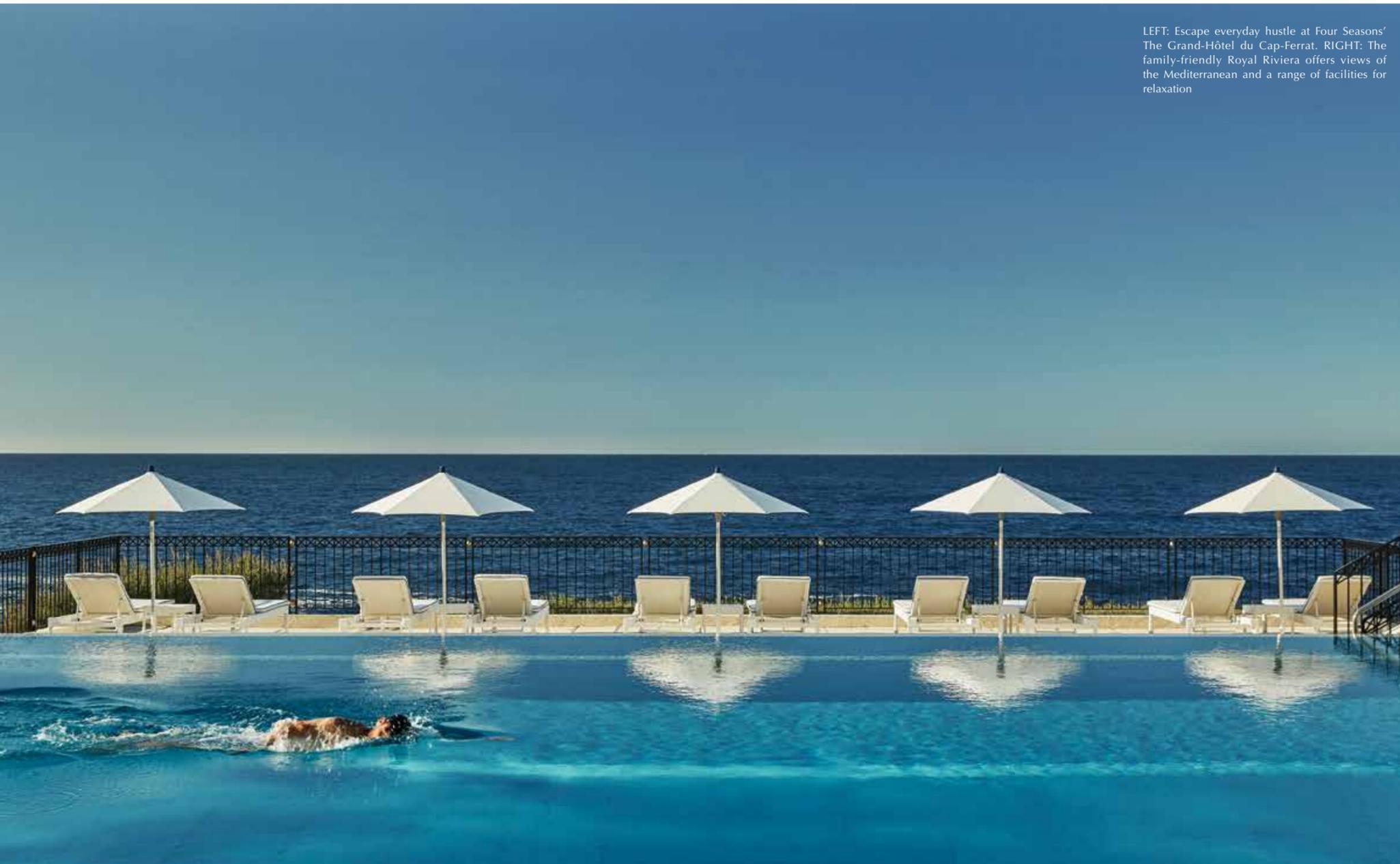
by Biologique Recherche, the natural Australian botanical product Sodashi and innovative Swiss Pauline Burgener Haute Couture concept. The latter begins with a skin diagnosis, after analysis at its Swiss lab and then clients receive a summary of the results with recommended products and a customised protocol. Chef Yoric Tièche adds to the wellness agenda with a locally sourced menu with vegan, veggie and gluten-free options.

www.fourseasons.com

WELLNESS CENTER AT ROYAL RIVIERA

The Royal Riviera, a gracious villa at the entry of Saint-Jean-Cap-Ferrat offers views of both the Mediterranean and the Alps. The five-star, 94-room hotel, a member of The Leading Hotels of the World, has a family-friendly feel. Its location offers guests direct access to the 12-mile walking trail around Cap-Ferrat, leisurely strolls to the waterfront village of Saint-Jean, the Villa Euphrussi de Rothschild, with its magnificent gardens, the

LEFT: Escape everyday hustle at Four Seasons' The Grand-Hôtel du Cap-Ferrat. RIGHT: The family-friendly Royal Riviera offers views of the Mediterranean and a range of facilities for relaxation



pastel port of Villefranche-sur-Mer and the chic town of Beaulieu-sur-Mer. New stone flooring and warm grey walls highlight the recently renovated wellness centre on a lower level; high windows let sunlight into the lounge and one of the two spa cabins. Plus there's a sauna, hammam and a 24/7 fitness centre with Matrix and Technogym equipment. Thalgo treatments incorporate a variety of natural and Ecocert-certified organic products, such as chamomile and rose essential oils in the Mediterranean-

infused Terre & Mer treatment, Polynesian white sand to exfoliate in the Tahitian vanilla scrubs and Monoi-scented oil for massages. Steps lead directly from the spa to the garden, with its heated swimming pool, private beach and Jasmin Grill. A seafood lunch on the indoor/outdoor seafront terrace boasts healthy menu choices: Thai, niçoise, Mediterranean and Greek Buddha bowl salads, tandoori prawns and fresh grilled fish first presented raw, later fileted tableside. www.royal-riviera.com

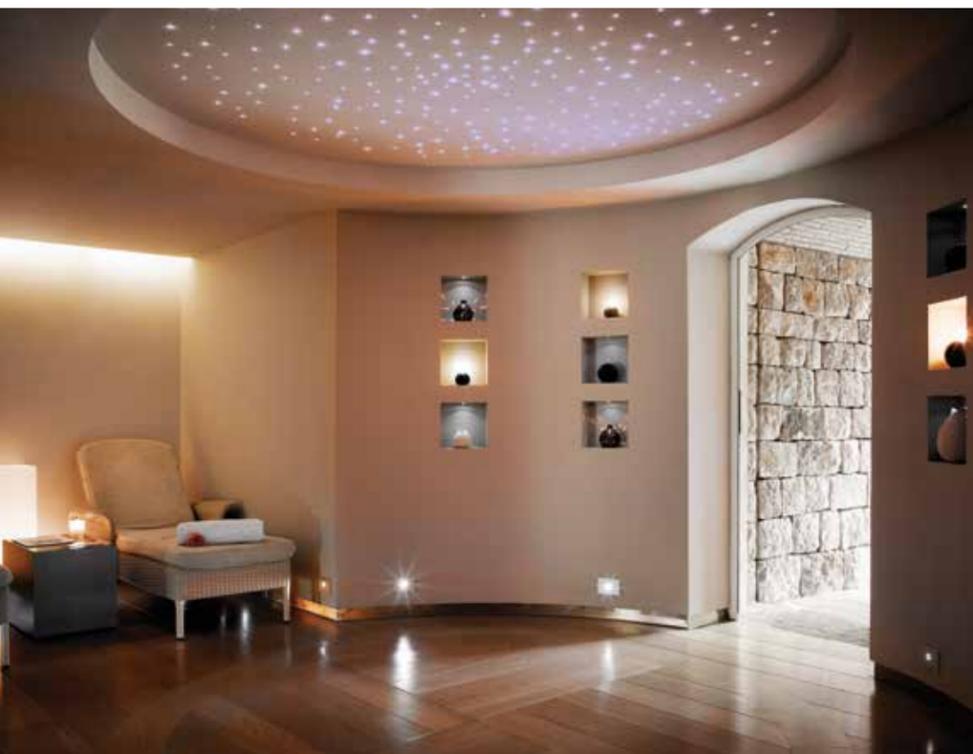


SPA EDEN-ROC BY LA PRAIRIE AT HÔTEL DU CAP-EDEN-ROC

This legendary destination presides over a 22-acre, private park on the tip of Cap d'Antibes, between Nice and Cannes. A separate seafront complex, where Executive Chef Arnaud Poëtte reigns at Eden-Roc Restaurant, the Eden-Roc Grill and its new rooftop bar overlooks the heated, seawater infinity swimming pool and ocean. With a diving board and swings

jutting into the Mediterranean, moored yachts, a Kids Club, boutique and five tennis courts, this favourite playground is one of the Oetker Collection Hotels and a member of The Leading Hotels of the World. The Spa Eden Roc by La Prairie, with its Swiss Cellular Anti-aging Facial and caviar-infused line of products, is reached via a floral trellis-topped path and houses reception, hammam, sauna, showers and an outdoor lounge. Down outdoor steps, the duo cabin boasts a salt wall for Halotherapy, a holistic way to relieve

respiratory issues. Two of the 33 rustic cabanas, some sand-fronted and footsteps from the sea, are reserved for the spa and one is dedicated to Bamford treatments. Bamford's 90-minute signature treatment, from footbath to body scrub, uses shiatsu and Swedish massage techniques. Yoga master, Sreejith Gopi, offers hatha yoga, Ayurveda massage and in-water Woga, during which the floating client receives shiatsu. www.oetkercollection.com



SPA SAINT-MARTIN BY LA PRAIRIE AT CHÂTEAU SAINT-MARTIN & SPA

Château Saint-Martin & Spa, a stone-walled, red-tile roof constructed on the foundations of the Knights of the Templar, offers panoramic vistas from a 35-acre park. Perched high in the rocky hillside above the medieval village of Vence, famed for the exquisite Chapelle du Rosaire by Henri Matisse, it offers 39 newly revamped junior suites, six secluded villas, two tennis courts and a swimming pool. This Oetker Collection Hotel is affiliated with Leading Hotels of the World and its bi-level spa features a sauna, hammam, nail and make-up salon and four treatment rooms, one a duo suite with a large arched window. Downstairs there's a relaxation lounge and access outside through an arched, stone wall passage to a floral-covered allée and rotunda used for both massages and marriages. The Bien-être package includes a refined lunch by Chef Jean-Lux Lefrançois and a 60-minute La Prairie or Bamford spa treatment. www.oetkercollection.com



OPPOSITE PAGE: The Spa Saint-Martin by La Prairie features a duo suite with a large arched window and a relaxation lounge. THIS PAGE: Hôtel du Cap-Eden-Roc stands on the tip of Cap d'Antibes, offering activities to both spa and adventure enthusiasts



TERRE BLANCHE SPA AT TERRE BLANCHE

Terre Blanche is located in Tourrettes on a hilly 750-acre backcountry estate. This member of The Leading Hotels of the World is like a Provençal village, complete with an art-filled main house, suites and villa accommodations, a golf club and an amazing spa. Its dedication to environmentally friendly values starts with local ingredients, creatively transformed by Michelin-starred Executive Chef Philippe Jourdin. The centrepiece of the 34,400sqft manor-like Terre Blanche Spa is a 70ft indoor pool surrounded by soaring columns and swim-out glass doors to a vitality pool. Adjacent, there are changing rooms, a fitness centre, hammam, sauna and laconium (dry heat detoxifies) and two VIP duo-suites with a double-whirlpool, steam shower and a large outdoor terrace. Upstairs, some of the dozen treatment rooms include hydraulic beds, heated blankets and showers. Services incorporate KOS Paris, a high-end, organic product and Valmont skincare. www.terre-blanche.com

SPA BYBLOS AT BYBLOS & SAINT-TROPEZ

Lebanese billionaire businessman Jean-Prosper Guy-Para, extravagantly constructed Byblos to seduce Brigitte Bardot, but eventually sold it to Sylvain Floirat, whose family preserves its status as a Palace-designated hotel. Helicopters, ferries and a two-hour drive reach the colourful replica of a Mediterranean village surrounding a stylish pool. At Rivea at Byblos, Executive Chef Vincent Maillard combines the purity of style à la Alain Ducasse, adding his own creative albeit healthy market menu. The Sisley spa boasts an interior courtyard with a boldly designed, ceramic-tiled floor, its defining feature The Salon Libanais, a stone-by-stone recreation of a parlour at the Beittedine Palace in Beirut. It has been transformed into a couples' treatment room resembling an *Arabian Nights* stage set with upholstered pillows atop marble banquettes, inlaid tables and authentic bronze decorative elements. www.byblos.com



OPPOSITE PAGE: The manor-like Terre Blanche Spa features a 70ft indoor pool and treatment rooms with all the luxurious extras. THIS PAGE: Byblos & Saint-Tropez has been designed like a colourful Mediterranean village