

36 Hours St.-Tropez

By **SETH SHERWOOD**

FRANCE'S most famous summer playground can be captured in one word: indulgence. Once the June sun starts to heat its bougainvillea-draped lanes and Mediterranean beaches, mega-yachts pack into the harbor, Maseratis and Bentleys prowl the cobbled streets, gazillionaires arrive by helicopter at music-pounding beach clubs, and Middle East royals and Asian industrialists shell out tens of thousands of dollars on Champagne in celebrity-packed nightclubs. Recent years have been fertile for new indulgences — not all of them reserved for the seven-figure set — thanks to new hotels, party spots and restaurants. Whatever your income bracket, there's a place to play in St.-Tropez.

Friday

5:30 p.m.

① St.-Tropez 101

Where does Paris Hilton crash when she's in town? How much does it cost to rent a multideck yacht for a week? How many cats and dogs has Brigitte Bardot crammed into her seaside house? For a crash course in the St.-Tropez lifestyle and lovely views of its coastal mansions, book a one-hour cruise on Brigantin II (Vieux Port, in front of Café de Paris; 33-6-07-09-21-27; taxi-bateau.com; 9 euros, about \$12.50 at \$1.40 to the euro) and let Captain Stéphane regale you (in English and French) with anecdotes.

8 p.m.

② An Indian Interlude

The sunset apéro — short for apéritif — is a St.-Tropez ritual. Like bulls to a matador's cape, tourists charge for the red terrace of the Sénéquier cafe. Instead, seek out the Pan Dei Palais hotel (52, rue Gambetta; 33-4-94-17-71-71; pandei.com), whose carved wooden screens and statues of Hindu gods feel right out of Rajasthan. Surrounded by chaise longues and four-poster beds,

the colonial-chic pool bar is a rarified spot to sip a Red One (Monkey Shoul-

IF YOU GO

With its impeccably sourced retro furniture and panoramic terrace restaurant, the 27-room **Hôtel Ermitage** (Avenue Paul Signac, 33-4-94-97-52-33; ermitagehotel.fr) is the most effortlessly cool new hotel in town. Doubles from 120 euros (low season) or 260 euros (high).

Renovated in 2007, the 15-room **B. Lodge** (23, rue de l'Aioli; 33-4-94-97-06-57; hotel-b-lodge.com) swapped country décor for modern gray and white tones. A pleasant bar and restaurant sweeten the deal. Doubles starting from 80 euros (low season) to 140 euros (high).

der Scotch, amaretto, lemon, strawberry juice, fig syrup; 21 euros) while nibbling curried nuts and nuggets of Emmenthal.

9 p.m.

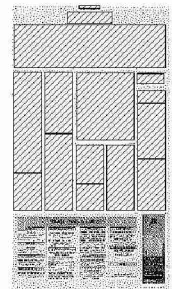
③ Star-Studded Supper

Stars are everywhere at Colette (Hôtel Sezz, Route des Salins; 33-4-94-44-53-11; hotelsezz-sainttropez.com). They're overhead, glimmering down on the minimalist patio. They're on the clever neo-Mediterranean menu, which was dreamed up by the Michelin-starred chef Pierre Gagnaire. (Chef Jérôme Roy does the actual cooking.) And at the Hotel Sezz, one of the town's poshest new crash pads, there might be some stars of screen or boardroom lurking. Under Mr. Gagnaire and Mr. Roy, sea bream is given finesse via a carpaccio-thin preparation, cubes of red pepper gelatin and Mideast spices. For the coda, lush black-currant mousse is topped with pear sorbet and spiked with caramelized sugar. A three-course dinner for two, without drinks, runs about 170 euros.

Midnight

④ The Caves or the Quay?

The stars also fill Les Caves du Roy



(Hotel Byblos, Avenue Paul Signac; 33-4-94-56-68-00; www.lescavesduroy.com). Like a 1970s Las Vegas casino, this den of celebrities, princes and corporate titans is outfitted with pile carpet and electric palm trees. And, like a casino, you can lose your fortune there in 20 minutes, courtesy of expensive Champagne. Far more wallet-friendly high jinks await at Le Quai (22, quai Jean Jaurès; 33-4-94-97-04-07; lequai-st-tropez.com), with its black carpet, black banquettes, black glass tables and dolled-up crowd sipping mojitos (8 euros) while dancing to funk, soul and R&B legends.

Saturday

10 a.m.

⑤ One-Stop Shopping

If your shopping list includes horse-meat sausages, camouflage bikinis and Iranian carpets, the Saturday morning market in the central Place des Lices is a must. Everyone from Ferrari-driving hotshots to stooped old women converges there, snapping up paella (14 euros per kilo), soap blocks and linen clothing. Olive hounds should seek Le Kemia (33-6-63-46-79-61), which sells regional olive oil (12 euros) and jars of olive tapenade (3 euros). Sweet teeth will prefer the biscuits flavored with anis, lemon and orange-flower water (2.90 per kilo) at Chez Cathy (33-6-14-30-39-19).

Noon

⑥ Small Plates, and Prices

Buddha-like statues decorate Le Dit Vin (43, rue du Portail Neuf; 33-4-94-79-85-09), but this new tapas restaurant is no place for ascetics. A welcome addition to a gastronomic scene full of tourist traps and obscenely priced see-and-be-seen restaurants, this affordable establishment has a rustic, whitewashed dining room and terrace where you can sip the house rosé while dining on small plates of local delicacies. Especially good are the thin filets of marinated anchovies paired with zesty tomato bread. Lunch for two, without wine, runs about 45 euros.

2 p.m.

⑦ Afternoon à la Plage

Choosing a beach club here is as much a philosophical issue as a practical one. Club 55 is for the self-styled elite; Aqua is popular with gays; bikini tops are op-

tional at Nikki Beach (Plage de Pampelonne, Route de l'Epi, 33-4-94-79-82-04; nikkibeach.com/sttropez; 35 euros for a sun bed). So are sobriety, frugality and timidity — all of which are in ever shorter supply as the afternoon advances, the house music booms louder and the bottles of Champagne flow more freely. Stylish but more chilled-out, year-old New Coco Beach (Plage de Pampelonne, Route de l'Epi; 33-4-94-79-83-25; newcoco.fr) is almost next door. Equipped with a restaurant and bar, it provides music whose volume won't rattle your fillings and purple chaises (23 euros) that fill with a more bourgeois crowd.

5 p.m.

⑧ Shirts, Hats and Robots

You can scarcely hurl a diamond in St.-Tropez without hitting an international luxury boutique. Fortunately, a crop of independent shops has sprouted up. La Chemise Tropezienne (23, rue Gambetta; 33-4-94-79-59-75; lachimisetropezienne.com) sells locally designed dress shirts (120 to 180 euros) that pair well with the panama hats at Truffaux (5, rue des Commerçants; 33-4-94-56-51-38; truffaux.com). And if you're furnishing a party pad, Luxury Stuff & Toys (1, place de la Croix de Fer; 33-4-94-97-51-55; luxurystuffandtoys.com) stocks two-foot-high Daft Punk robots (3,950 euros a pair) and clear crystal foosball tables (11,900 euros).

8 p.m.

⑨ An Italian Evening

You know you're entering Italian territory when you spot breadsticks and hear the staff members rolling their r's: "T-r-r-r-r-e-s bien, monsieur-r-r-r!" Since setting up last year in a tiny passageway, Cristina Saulini (13, rue des Feniers; 33-4-94-97-46-10; cristinasaulini.com) has become one of

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the town's hottest tables. Here, you'll find eggplant, sliced thin and topped with zippy tomato sauce and hot Parmesan. Plump as dinner rolls, the tortelli are sunk in Bolognese sauce and spill out a jackpot of molten cheese. For the strong, house-made cannoli beckon

from the finish line. A meal for two, without wine, costs around 100 euros.

10 p.m.

⑩ A Boozy Quartet

With its four bars, two-year-old Kube hotel (Route de St.-Tropez, Gassin; 33-4-94-97-20-00; muranoresort.com) is essentially a party complex. The underground Ice Kube is a subzero room lined with ice; 38 euros gets you 25 minutes in a parka and four vodka cocktails. The rooftop Skybar specializes in Champagne and gulf views. In between, the poolside Terrasse Martini has white couches that highlight the clientele's tans; the fourth bar is a sci-fi lobby lounge a few steps away — if you can still walk.

Sunday

10 a.m.

⑪ Village of Yore

It's easy to forget that there's a charming fishing village hidden underneath the tides of Porsches and tourist throngs. Climb the hill to the 17th-

century citadel (33-4-94-97-59-43; www.sainttropez.fr) and gaze down at the blue Mediterranean, the green hills across the bay, the orange roofs of the village and the sunflower yellow dome of Notre-Dame de l'Assomption church. Then hit the Musée de l'Annonciade (Place Grammont; 33-4-94-17-84-10), a 16th-century church turned museum with exhibitions dedicated to the painters — from Matisse to Andre Derain — who found inspiration along the Côte d'Azur.

Noon

⑫ Lunch on the Sand

Media types, BMW-driving lawyers, hipster parents with their children, and others congregate at La Cabane Bambou (Plage de Pampelonne, Route de Bonne Terrasse; 33-4-94-79-84-13; cabanebambouplage.com), a laid-back beach club for Sunday lunch. The menu offers seafood and Gallic sweets like a crackly crème brûlée. Afterward, collapse on a beach mattress (17 euros) or into the massage cabin (30 minutes for 45 euros)— for a final indulgence. ■



FROM LEFT The Pan Dei Palais hotel is decorated with a Rajasthani theme; private yachts line the harbor; the Saturday market in the Place des Lices sells everything from paella to Iranian carpets. PHOTOGRAPHS BY NICOLE TUNG FOR THE NEW YORK TIMES

