

leisure



FIRST CLASS | THE SAINT-TROPEZ WAY

LUXE AND LAX COMBINE AT THIS SEASIDE PLAYGROUND OF THE RICH, FAMOUS AND HOPELESSLY CHIC.

BY KIMBERLEY LOVATO

The mere mention of the name Saint-Tropez conjures up images of chilled Champagne and hot spots, like Club 55 and La Voile Rouge along Pampelonne Beach, that lure star-studded crowds throughout the summer. And of course, Saint-Tropez brings to mind its most famed leading lady, Brigitte Bardot. But despite its hard-earned status as one of the most glittery holiday destinations in the world, Saint-Tropez remains a genuine village at heart, which makes it the perfect blend of relaxed Provençal lifestyle and glamorous getaway.

The Mediterranean port on the French Riviera was put on the jet-set map in 1971, when Mick and Bianca Jagger wed at the town hall with more than 100 reporters in tow. Thirty-plus years later, Hollywood elite and mere mortals alike still lounge in this relaxed oasis where every need is met with a smile.

The Saint-Tropez way is to intertwine luxe and lax, and nowhere do these two worlds mesh more seamlessly than at the

hotel Byblos. Today, a man reads a newspaper, barefoot under a billowing white umbrella at B, the hip and minimalist name given to the pool terrace, bar and restaurant at the core of the hotel. Nearby, two young girls splash in the sparkling pool. Byblos welcomes children, with many rooms equipped for families.

The hotel is open from April to October, a period that sees about 5 million visitors descend upon Saint-Tropez, a village of

approximately 5,000 permanent residents.

Each of the hotel's rooms and suites are uniquely decorated and the hotel buildings resemble Provençal-style houses, in hues of terra cotta and yellow, with shutters of lavender blue and lush gardens, all of which give the hotel its reputation of a village within a village. Luxury additions include the restaurant Spoon at Byblos, a lantern-lit version of French culinary icon Alain Ducasse's restaurant in Paris, and the Byblos Spa by Sisley Cosmetics, which offers couples massage rooms and a private sanctum that is a 1,001-nights fantasy come to life.



Guests can enjoy culinary delights at Spoon, Alain Ducasse's restaurant at the hotel Byblos.

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Byblos' colorful buildings ramble down a hillside.



a delicious cream-filled cake of the same name.

The swirling streets that extend from the Places des Lices to the sherbet-colored port are dotted with international haute couture labels and uniquely local items, including Saint-Tropez-born Vilebrequin, a chic line of men's swimwear with a bent for colorful patterns and matching father-son trunks.

Byblos also is home to Les Caves du Roy nightclub, the "see and be seen" place on the Riviera. The line frequently stretches out to the street. Hotel guests are always admitted, but others may not be, no matter how famous their name. (Tom Cruise once showed with 25 people in his party and was turned away because the club had reached capacity and did not have enough security guards.)

If one actually decides to leave the

haven of Byblos, the leafy plane trees of Saint-Tropez's main square, Place des Lices, are just steps away. Here, locals play endless games of *pétanque* (a type of bocce ball), and Tuesday and Saturday mornings mean a bustling market that attracts crowds of tourists and locals. Taste a slice of Saint-Tropez at La Tarte Tropicéenne, the original location of the now ubiquitous pastry shop, and home to

A stop at the 100-year-old Hôtel Sube, whose guest registry has included artists like Picasso and Matisse, is ideal for taking in Saint-Tropez' past while watching local artists sell their masterpieces along the quay in front of megayachts so huge that one can understand why Saint-Tropez has earned the nickname Saint Trop (French for "too much"). *byblos.com*, *ot-saint-tropez.com* ♦



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