

TRAVEL

Where in the World is Kristi Kelly ???

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Contributor

As winter quickly approaches, I find my thoughts wandering to warmer times. No jackets needed, merely sandals and a beach towel. Undoubtedly, one of my most memorable trips was to the GORGEOUS and famous, French Riviera.

Littered with celebrities, palm trees and beautiful people, the French Riviera has a reputation for being a party hot spot and a beach dweller's paradise. With something like 300 sunny days per year, no wonder everyone is in such a damn good mood! All I have to say is what the hell have I been doing in the freaking NORTH OF FRANCE?! The people are friendly, the service was prompt and our Villa was outstandingly beautiful! We arrived on a hot day of 31 degrees, no wind - and baby it was scorching!

The second I stepped off the train, I place my over sized sunglasses on my face and could barely contain my excitement over finally arriving at Europe's play land. So, this wasn't a typical trip - I had no real plans for sight seeing, and to tell you the truth... I was only there for the beaches! Enough of this backpacking thing for a while! I wanted to spend the week

direction. The closer you are to the water, the more expensive accommodations are going to be - so stick with the hostels. You'll be pleasantly surprised if you do your research, as there are some nice ones out there.

So, completely by chance... I managed to catch the infamous Cannes Film Festival. It was in full force by this point and this city was a complete and utter zoo! Stars, star-wannabes and people with important "press passes" were everywhere, and I have never seen so much Coco Chanel in my life! Trying to even walk on the side walk was truly a challenge - it was insanely busy! Due to all the commotion, it was hard to get a real "feel for city" itself, but heck, I actually got to see the happenings of film festival (though all the movies were sold out or reserved for the impossibly rich and famous). Bonus, I saw a real model (actually two) being interviewed. I didn't really care who they actually were, I was just impressed ... beautiful, graceful, ridiculously tall and impossibly thin — I was almost tempted to abandon the ice cream I was eating at the time! ALMOST. I just about got ran over



Photo: Kristi Kelly

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all sorts, however my favorite was undoubtedly one called Cap d'Ail. Okay, so it was definitely not as easy to find as we originally thought! Upon descending the train, a simple sign noted the way to the beach - little did we know that the path would take us over steep cliffs and water-sided narrow pathways. What a freaking adventure! All the hard work was well worth it, as we descended upon beach... and ladies and gentleman, this is what the Riviera was all about! In the middle of no where, there was this crazy oasis of a beach, filled with beach side bars/restaurants, beautiful people and crazy waves. I was in love before my feet even hit the rocky shore. Now, I am not exactly the most mature individual around ocean waves ... rather, they seem to send me back to a goofy child-like state. So, as beautiful, perfect women would gracefully strut to the ocean, topless, to stand "model-like" in ankle deep water - I was bounding into the water like a mad-woman, giggling ridiculously and losing my bikini top not by choice. Yeah, whatever... I still think I'm cool. Only complaint about the beaches? No freaking sand... its all these iddy biddy little rocks that kill your feet - its not so bad once you are in the water, but getting in and out? Make sure you have your sandals close by. If not, you end up hobbling out, hunched over, cursing along the way - then you REALLY won't look cool.

I couldn't visit the Riviera and not make a stop in Monaco - just saying the name, I get this rush of energy. This independent city state oozes of wealth and gold. I have NEVER seen so many amazing cars in my life. Add to the fact that the Monte Carlo Grand Prix (formula one) was in town, this city was absolutely buzzing! Not that we could afford to stay in this glamour spot for long, we did what any classy tourist would do while in the city — GAMBLE! We headed to the casinos to try our luck. My goal was to win enough money to pay for a small villa somewhere along the coast, and maybe a yacht or two. *Siiiiiiigh* Soooo... I lost all my money (the whole 20E I budgeted to spend) and left empty handed. Bah, who needs a villa anyways.

After spending a few more days exploring and enjoying some beach time- further adventures called, so I had to say goodbye to the French Riviera once and for all. It was a tough one to leave behind as it's the kind of place that whole heartedly welcomes you in, and you cannot help but fall in love people and the way of life. You would never get anything done there mind you, but as an escape from the real world, the Riviera could do just nicely. As I hopped on the TGV (highspeed train) to Paris, I said my last goodbye and so long. As packed my sunglasses neatly back into my suitcase, I was already silently hoping to get back one day soon.

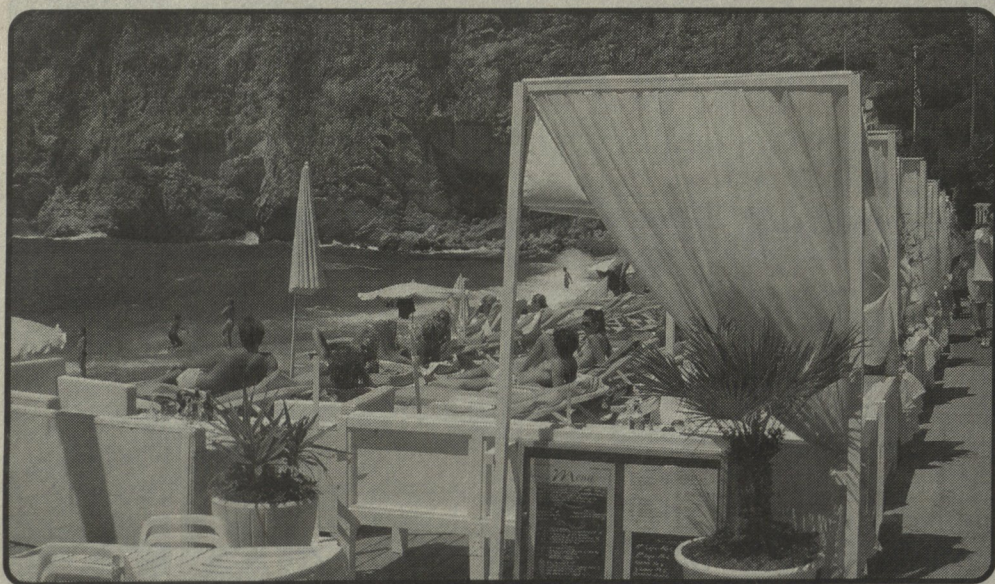


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eating oranges and checking out as many beautiful men... errr, I mean, beaches, as I could! Now, for those of you planning to one day visit the Riviera, the best advice I can give you is to set up base in Nice, and from there, take train rides to St.Tropez, Monaco, and Cannes, which are literally 30 minutes away in either

by a Rolls Royce (which could have either nicely paid for the rest of my education, or in fact, could have killed me) but overall, the festival experience an exciting one!

After the stress and commotion of the Film Festival, some rest and relaxation time was in order. The Riviera was littered with beaches of