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The French Riviera region has been liberally sprinkled through the pages of history for its culture, art, landscape, gastronomy and festivals but one of its best known attractions is a superb **Mediterranean climate**, with sunny, dry summers and mild winters.

It was partially due to this climate that the region exists as it does today with clusters of towns dotted along the coast vying for prime positions to capture the joys of the sun and sea.

A brief history of the French Riviera as a Health Resort destination

Scots novelist **Tobias Smollett**, a tuberculosis sufferer, visited **Nice** in 1763 and brought Nice and its warm winter climate to the attention of the British aristocracy with *Travels through France and Italy*, written in 1765. Around the same time, a Scottish doctor, **John Brown**, became famous for prescribing what is known as *climatotherapy* – relocating to a more favourable climate to aid in the recovery of (or cure) a variety of diseases including **tuberculosis**, known then as consumption.

So began an intense period of time where the climatic benefits of southern France created a niche market as a winter health destination for the British upper class at the end of the 18th century. Visitors flocked to the region, particularly Hyères and Menton, where many were convinced the improved weather would offer respite or cure their ailments by the force of a bracing mistral or exposure to the Mediterranean sun.

With the arrival of the railway in the mid-19th century, the French Riviera became both the playground and convalescing spot of British royalty, Russian Tsars, wealthy Americans and other aristocrats. Over the next century, the region became a honeypot for artists and writers –

Pablo Picasso, Henri Matisse, Somerset Maugham – and among them Robert Louis Stevenson, Renoir, D. H. Lawrence, and Katherine Mansfield who all came for health-seeking remedies.

Why the French Riviera is a top Health and Wellness destination

Nice is home to **Nice Côte d'Azur Airport**, France's third-busiest airport (after **Paris-Charles de Gaulle Airport** and **Paris-Orly**) and with excellent road, rail and sea links the French Riviera jostles aside many European destinations as one of the most popular places to visit.

France is known for its bread, cheese and pâtisseries however healthy dining is a big drawcard with Provençal cuisine making use of fresh seafood and seasonal Mediterranean produce. Market stalls topple with the weight of rainbow-hued fruits and vegetables, Michelin chefs whip up the finest plates of gourmet fare and bio-organic-superfood menus are creeping onto the gastronomy radar.

As a Health and Wellness destination, the region enjoys 300 sunshine days a year resulting in prime conditions to enjoy a range of fitness activities and outdoor pursuits (hiking, mountain biking, sailing, roller blading, skiing etc). You can visit the thermal station at Berthemont-les-Bains in the Vésubie Valley where the combination of thermal water and mountain air gives a sense of well-being, spend a day pampering yourself at one of the region's many world-class Spas or call on nutritionists, fitness trainers and massage therapists for tailored services in the privacy and comfort of your own luxury villa or yacht.

Bien-être : A French Riviera lifestyle choice

If you're visiting the French Riviera or Monaco, or residing here permanently, choosing a recommended company or individual for home-related services is easy with Live on Riviera's useful **Company Catalog**. Sourcing a Health and Wellness professional requires appraisals and advice on who is certified, insured and delivers the best service to exceed your needs.

We spoke to Roel Van Kuijk, Co-Owner and Founder of Blue Tree Massage on the highlights of working in this industry and how his company aligns with the French Riviera lifestyle.

The French Riviera continues to flourish as a top Health and Wellness destination as visitors recognize the benefits of taking care of your mind, body and soul. In your opinion, why do you believe the environment of a private yacht, villa or hotel room is ideal for a bespoke massage?

"You can create your own 'cocoon' by staying in your own secure, comfortable environment whether it be your private residence or a superyacht or hotel suite. By staying on location you can choose to go straight to bed afterwards or relax in a warm environment which is especially appealing in winter; your massage experience is not interrupted by leaving the clinic etc. We take our bespoke massage service to our clients, therefore we eliminate the stress of worrying about transport or traffic. For female clients, there is also the added benefit of limiting preparation as you do not need to prepare your makeup/hair as you would for a spa/salon".

What is your top piece of advice for enhancing relaxation for first-time clients on the French Riviera?

"It's natural to feel trepidation using any service professional for the first-time! However, Blue Tree Massage's strength is we complete an initial consultation before each massage to establish rapport and respect, and we are always listening and attentive from the consultation through the massage process to the end. We are adaptable to the client's comfort (level of undress, pressure, variety of massage) and all clients can choose their preference with made-to-measure oil, incense and music to enhance their massage experience".



Bluetree massage © accessriviera

Why would you recommend regular massages for clients?

“Massage is often seen as a luxury or special treat, but the benefits are immense when you have a regular massage. The mind and body adjust to this moment of relaxation, it is beneficial for inducing sleep, it is superb for stress release (corporate clients recognise the effect on work productivity in employees) and you recharge the batteries. Our massages relax and/or rejuvenate; they are not medical or therapeutic/healing massages”.

Describe your most memorable massage (a special location, celebrity client etc...)

“Most memorable client was 4 months ago – a top chef of a French Riviera restaurant who works long, demanding hours. His wife booked the massage at their home and he was instantly relaxed and felt on holiday so we exceeded his expectations”.

To book a bespoke massage on the French Riviera or in Monaco, please contact Roel Van Kuijck or Joël Patureau from **Blue Tree Massage**. Massage types they offer include Californian, Swedish, Deep Tissue, Shiatsu, Foot Reflexology, Sitting Amma and Korean Relaxation and they will be introducing Anti-Cellular.

This article was written by Rebecca Whitlocke from Access Riviera, who with over 10 years travel industry experience loves to share ‘must-do’ destination tips and hidden spots to discover in France and beyond. Thank you to Roel for his time for the interview.