

# Cognoscenti

## magazine

### Hotel Negresco Nice

Tired of staying at cookie-cutter hotels? Then you'll rejoice at the **Hotel Negresco**: there's only one in the entire world. A member of Leading Hotels of the World, listed as a "Historic Building" since 1974, this unique property has 119 luxurious rooms and 23 elaborate suites. Take a journey back into the Belle Époque at this grand hotel—a palace in the true sense of the word—where staff wear splendid uniforms (with brilliant feathers or epaulets marking subtle gradations in rank, with the doormen looking like grenadiers in blue and red, and the restaurant's service team elegantly liveried in long brown topcoats and black waistcoats).

"This isn't a typical hotel, it's a living museum-hotel," says Deputy General Manager André Charpentier. The art is everywhere—in the hallways, in the rooms, and in the hotel's magnificent Royal Salon, displaying beautiful carpets by Raymond Moretti as well as one of Niki de Saint Phalle's famous "Nanas"—the "Nana Jaune," a statue of a very ample dancing woman coated in bright yellow polyester resin. (For owner and chairman Jeanne Augier, this Nana marks "the epitome of exuberance.") We admired the dar-

ingness of its inclusion in this otherwise formal classical setting, even though the Nana contrasted very sharply indeed with the Barracat crystal chandelier glittering on the ceiling. (A smaller crystal chandelier

made a lovely appearance in the hotel's fabulous antique Otis elevator, its walls padded in rich red-satin cushion.)

The room occupied by visiting **Cognoscenti Magazine** editors was solidly equipped with antique furniture and included every imaginable amenity

(although at this level of luxury we wished they would do away with the signs warning guests that they will be charged for towels and bathrobes if they make off with them!). The views of the Mediterranean were spectacular, and the 24-hour buzz along the traffic-clogged Promenade des Anglais only added to the feeling that *you have arrived*.

Any hotel this famous has its share of amusing anecdotes, of course—of Michael Jackson, who turned one of the rooms into a kitchen for his personal chef, and dressed alternatively as a hippie, an English gentleman, and a delivery boy to leave the hotel unnoticed;



*Step back into the Belle Époque at the unique Negresco hotel.*

**Because life is short**

or movie idols Alain Delon and Romy Schneider, who spent “many a moment gazing at each other hand in hand”; and Richard Burton, who left behind a priceless ring meant for Liz in the hotel bar after a drinking session there (the ring was recovered for him by the barman).

In **Le Chantecler**, the hotel’s gourmet restaurant, chairs covered in fushia-colored fabric and a brightly colored carpet perfectly offset the sober elegance of the superb 18<sup>th</sup> century carved wood paneling that lines the walls. Playing in the background, recordings of Eric Satie variations on harp gradually gave way to more plodding musical standards.



*Chef Alain Llorca*

Chef Alain Llorca is considered one of the *wunderkinds* of France’s culinary scene—after 7 years at the Negresco, the boyishly handsome chef is still only 35 years old! He brings the tastes of his native Barcelona to the Côte d’Azur in offerings like his popular *tapas* tasting menu, created, he said in an exclusive interview with Cognoscenti Magazine, to “bring a little fun to a traditional restaurant.” In the *dome de foie gras, caviar d’aubergines*, eggplant proved a good counterbalance to a sinfully decadent concoction of foie gras, although the richness was almost overwhelming. (Explained Chef Llorca: “I wanted to find another way to work with foie gras. Here, the foie gras is mixed with whipped cream and crème de volaille.”) Spit-roasted Bresse poultry with *blanquette* of morels—a house signature poultry dish—was rustically prepared with hay and herbs in a salt crust. As Chef Llorca noted, “chickens run around on hay, and here I wanted to bring back the subtlety of this flavor.”

The cheese trolley carried a number of regional specialties, while the “Chantecler Delight,” banana-

lime in a mantle of Jivara chocolate, offered some delicious flavor contrasts. Among the wines, we had a *Domaine de la Lauzade* Côtes de Provence which displayed greenish tints in its yellow body along with palate notes of fennel, flowers and honey.

Llorca, who is also executive chef for the hotel, needs to devote more attention to the quality of the food at **La Rotonde**, the hotel’s bistro, where we had a meal that can only be described as poor: overcooked, prosaic and seemingly thrown together in a hurry. With its merry-go-round décor of wooden horses, “musical automate,” and over-the-top sherbet colors, however, the restaurant offers a truly unforgettable setting.

This article was written by Nicole Medvecky, Contributing Editor to *Cognoscenti Magazine*. Photo on page 1 courtesy of *Hotel Negresco*.

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