

## Cognoscenti

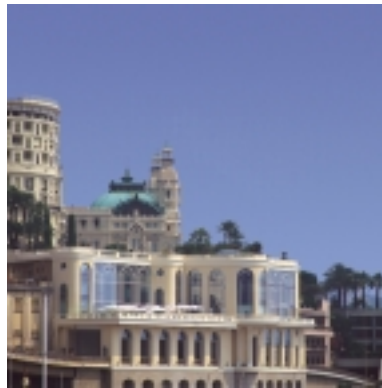
## magazine

SPA COLUMN

Because life is short

## Les Thermes Marins de Monte Carlo L'Hirondelle Restaurant Monte Carlo

“Care for someone you have long neglected: Yourself.” That’s the watchword at the eminently posh Les Thermes Marins de Monte Carlo, where **Cognoscenti Magazine** editors recently enjoyed treatments and a lunch. The spa is owned and operated by the Société des Bains de Mer, which also owns Monaco’s fabled casino as well as four of its best hotels: Hôtel de Paris, Hotel Hermitage, Monte Carlo Beach Hotel and Hotel Mirabeau.



*Dream location for a beautiful spa*

We began with a workout in the spa’s very stylish fitness center, which offers panoramic vistas of the sea and the yacht club, where some of the world’s most extravagant boats regularly anchor. The fitness center is loaded with state-of-the-art “Technogym” equipment. Hydrotherapy is available downstairs in the aquagym—we loved the underwater bicycles! The local seawater, drawn offshore at a depth of 37 meters and alleged to be chock-full of negative ions, is widely credited for having therapeutic benefits. Perhaps the ultimate treatment is the choreographed four-handed efflusion massage that combines a spray of seawater and essential oils.

The overcrowded, small changing rooms at the spa and fitness center are its weak point. Instead of being provided with a key to a secure private locker, arriving guests are handed plastic clothing baskets and directed to narrow changing booths. After changing, guests return the basket to the check stand, only to recover it again after their workout or spa treatment—a rather clumsy and inconvenient system.

One of us tried the **Kanebo Kai-Hoh Facial**, given in a treatment room overlooking the harbor. The **Chinese Massage** enjoyably activated pressure points along energy channels more typically reached by Shiatsu techniques; here, massage strokes were used rather than constant pressure. In the **Star Massage**, the focus was on the five “points of a star”: head, hands, and feet. A therapist used circular patterns to gently work these areas, with New Age music—including the deliciously hypnotic sound of Tibetan bells—playing in the background.

Lunch at **L’Hirondelle** was the perfect way to follow the spa treatments. Here, Chef Jacky Oberti offers a light and healthy menu that’s appropriate for a toned and buffed clientele. We tried some very tasty dishes, including salad of young sprouts, shrimp and scallop kebab with freshly shredded oriental vegetables. Coming on top of our workout and spa treatments, two flutes of well-chilled *Jacquesson* Brut “Perfection” put us into a blissful state of ease from which we were in absolutely no hurry to emerge.

This article was written by Nicole Medvecky, Contributing Editor to *Cognoscenti Magazine*. Photo courtesy of Les Thermes Marins de Monte-Carlo.

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