



## RIVIERA SERVICES

By Debra Moffitt



The South of France has always worked like a magnet on all those who visit its lovely shores. Not only artists, vacationers and retirees, but increasingly an active crowd of ex-pats who may work for international companies at Sophia Antipolis, in Nice or Monaco or, even better, from home, with their lap-tops shaded from the sun on the terrace ! Others shorten their working weeks in the cold outposts of London, Paris, Dublin, Amsterdam etc., benefitting from low-cost flights to Nice Côte d'Azur International Airport. Sometimes initially daunted by the problems of finding a home and settling in, they can now call on the services of a growing number of companies which make efficiency their rule-of-thumb. Leaving you free to enjoy the good things in life !

# Making the Riviera dream come true

*As legend has it, here on the Riviera the living is easy !*

*A few pointers for newcomers on how to make it even easier.*

Whether you're here for frequent weekend stays or setting up as a part-time or permanent resident, the Riviera offers an array of services to help make that South of France experience a dream-come-true and maximize your time for rest and recreation. Often the dreams of relocating clash with the realities of managing the everyday tasks of owning a home abroad, but these businesses provide the services that make the transition carefree and easy. From home-hunting and financing to dog-sitting and fridge-filling, almost nothing lies beyond their scope. They fall into several categories including real estate and property searches, personal and concierge services, home building and maintenance, and general home services.

Many Riviera visitors dream of a seaside residence, but wonder about market values, schools for children, and their legal and tax status in France. If you don't have time to do the rounds of the estate-agents, let a new breed of property specialists do it for you. Home Hunts and Mitava Consulting provide customized services for potential home owners with a special focus on expatriates to help them realize their dreams. "House hunting and investing in real estate can be very time consuming," says Christian d'Huart of

Mitava Consulting. He visited over 50 villas to find his own home when he relocated from England to the Riviera back in 2000. His experience prompted him to set up Mitava Consulting to help others save time and avoid the headaches. The company provides information on the area's real estate and helps source choice properties corresponding to customers' requirements. It also eases administrative and legal hassles and provides accurate information for enlightened decision-making for potential home owners.

Once your dream home or apartment actually appears, MacMillan Partners give expert advice on regulations and tax matters to make it a reality. With a network of bankers, lawyers, notaries and insurance companies at their disposal, MacMillan specializes in rapid financing packages for ex-pat homes and plays a key role in coordinating paperwork, setting up bank accounts and handling time-consuming formalities.

If your dream includes building your own home to exacting specifications, call on Finishing Touch in Les Adrets, which applies for building permits, builds homes and oversees interior design while respecting budgets and schedules. The company manages construction projects from start to finish in English to put clients at ease. Closer to Monaco, B. Marina Consult-

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Whether you're looking for a home, wanting to renovate, searching for advice on schools, administrative, tax or insurance formalities, the easiest solution is always to call in the experts. They will save you time and money, and make sure that your original dream of living the "dolce vita" doesn't get tarnished by having to face language problems, deadlines and anything else that might keep you from the pool, beach, golf-course or yacht!

ing offers a range of property services including all aspects of acquisition, cost and quality surveys, and supervision of renovation. Proposing a very cosmopolitan stance, Daniela Vescovi proposes architectural and interior design from concept to completion, in English, French, German and Italian. J&J Côte d'Azur specializes in home renovations and repairs, large or small. The firm's Italian craftsmen install or replace parquets and fireplaces, build pools, and handle masonry, painting and electricity for owners all over the Côte d'Azur. Want to settle in quick once the house is bought or built? A number of companies like Riviera Personal Concierge help acclimatize new residents and provide

assistance in managing day-to-day activities. Riviera Personal Concierge "is the key to a life without stress," says Gwenn Manac'h. Clients often leave their house keys with Riviera Personal Concierge which will care for pets, clean, forward mail and follow up on administrative procedures in their absence. Gwenn Manac'h, who has lived in London and New York, says she learnt all about the special needs of foreigners during her MBA classes in Nice a few years ago. Fellow foreign students asked for help with everything from residence status to finding theatre tickets. Her company grew out of this experience and today it sources language schools for adults, organizes events and receptions, takes care of shopping and dry cleaning, and even puts clients in contact with personal trainers to help them stay in shape.

Companies like Libre d'Esprit and Toco d'Azur also offer customized services to clients who jet-set between the Riviera and their permanent homes. Thomas Saquet of Libre d'Esprit describes one of his recent tasks as following up for some clients after thieves broke into their garage to steal a scooter while they were away. His company took care of the insurance claims and repairs for these part-time residents and had the house ready with a full fridge and flowers on the table so the family could enjoy their weekend stay. With a base in London and another in Nice, Toco d'Azur assists with essential yet daunting tasks like residents' permits, car importation, moving and relocation. Fees vary on a service-by-service basis or may be included as part of a package for regular clients. The possibilities are endless and the costs well-worth it.

Zen Partners sources everything from masseurs to florists and provides house opening and closing services like rolling up the shutters, leaving fresh flowers or a welcome basket, closing up and doing the final cleaning when you depart. Its goal is to allow demanding customers to maximize their R&R time without the stress. Quintessentially France also lays on specialized services for its members, like chasing up tickets for La Scala or a fashion show in Paris, finding baby-sitters and getting reservations in hard-to-book restaurants.

For last-minute cocktail parties, buffets and receptions, Private Catering promises to surprise and enchant a demanding clientele and serve up some of the best quality fare on land, air or sea. Catering for private events in villas, on private jets or yachts, the chefs come from prestigious restaurants like the Hôtel de Paris, La Palme d'Or and the 3-star Relais Bernard Loiseau. Their innovative and contemporary cuisine is guaranteed to make your event both successful and special.

And finally, for quick service in getting to and from home-base at short notice, Winnie Rinck at Rinck Travel in Antibes is often on call 24 hours a day for clients. She maintains close relations with British Airways and other airlines which help her to reserve last-minute and tightly booked flights. Rinck Travel provides priority services for its Membership Travel Service Club members and also assists with booking limousines and chauffeurs, private jets, helicopters or a day on the golf course.

### ADDRESS-BOOK

**PERSONAL AND CONCIERGE SERVICES** Libre d'Esprit, 105 ave. Franklin Roosevelt, Le Cannet (04 93 46 12 77). Quintessentially France, 3 rue Commandant Vidal, Cannes (04 93 94 24 44). Riviera Personal Concierge, Les Jardins d'Olympe, Bât. B, 232 bis avenue Ste. Marguerite, Nice (04 93 83 48 63). Toco d'Azur, 455 Promenade des Anglais, L'Arénas, Nice (04 93 83 37 25). Zen Partners, Tel. 06 82 15 53 21 or 06 82 15 50 29. **HOME BUYING, BUILDING, RENOVATING AND FINANCING** Home Hunts, Tel. Côte d'Azur 04 92 28 05 42 - Provence 04 91 33 19 56. Mitava Consulting, Résidence Cannes 2000, 29 blvd. de la Ferrage, Cannes (04 92 98 48 11). B. Marina Consulting, 7 chemin des Oeillets, Villa la Varangue, Eze (04 93 62 28 71). MacMillan Partners, 14 rue Foncet, Nice (04 93 80 00 98). Finishing Touch, Mas l'Arbre de Vie, Chemin de Chense, Les Adrets, Le Var (06 15 47 04 53). J&J Côte d'Azur, c/o LBI, 3 rue Smolett, Nice (04 93 31 14 94). Daniela Vescovi Design Company, 69 bis boulevard du Mont-Boron, Nice (04 93 56 66 85 or 06 89 24 51 35). **CATERING** Private Catering, 170 chemin de Font Cine, Vallauris (04 92 91 51 91). **TRAVEL** Rinck Travel, 6 rue Aubernon, Antibes (Côte d'Azur 04 93 34 34 38 - Provence 04 94 73 73 06).