

HOTELS ABOVE PAR
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Hôtel Belles Rives Is a 1920s Fever Dream on the French Riviera



The French Riviera is known for glitz and glamor, with over-the-top luxury hotels by international brands like Four Seasons, Cheval Blanc, and the Oetker Collection. Distinguishing itself from those brands, the Hôtel Belles Rives in Cap d'Antibes – Juan-les-Pins is one of the few historic hotels that's still family-run. It's also one of the few with direct access to the sea.



F. Scott Fitzgerald stayed there in the 1920s, when it was the Villa St. Louis, and penned part of *Tender Is the Night*, which takes place on the coast, there. Back then, Americans flush with cash following the First World War flocked to the beaches, changing the nature of tourism on the Riviera. Prior to that, wealthy Victorian-era Brits spent winters there to enjoy the mild weather. That gradually started to change in the 1920s, and summer tourism exploded with the invention of the bikini in 1946.



According to Antoine Chauvin-Estène, the hotel's fourth-generation owner, those years were some of the happiest for Scott and Zelda Fitzgerald. His great-grandparents bought the villa in 1929, expanded it, and transformed it into an intimate hotel. As soon as you enter, you can feel the spirit of the Roaring Twenties still alive and well. An Art Deco mural of ships decorates the lobby and original furniture from the period adorns the public spaces. Even the little cage elevator, a relic of the era, adds to the charm. A framed photograph of Fitzgerald stands sentinel near the concierge desk.



Just off the lobby, a small fumoir looks much the same as it did in Fitzgerald's day. A glass case displays the books awarded the Prix Fitzgerald, a literary prize created by Antoine's mother for novels in Fitzgerald's spirit. A doorway leads to the recently renovated Fitzgerald Bar. A mural depicting a map of the coast decorates the wall behind the bar counter and the chairs have been reupholstered, but the Art Deco cocktail tables and red chandeliers have remained. On summer evenings, a pianist serenades the guests. Of course, when the weather is good, the place to be is on the terrace overlooking the sea. Marble café tables and classic French bistro chairs in royal blue create a romantic ambiance that seems fit for a Wes Anderson film.

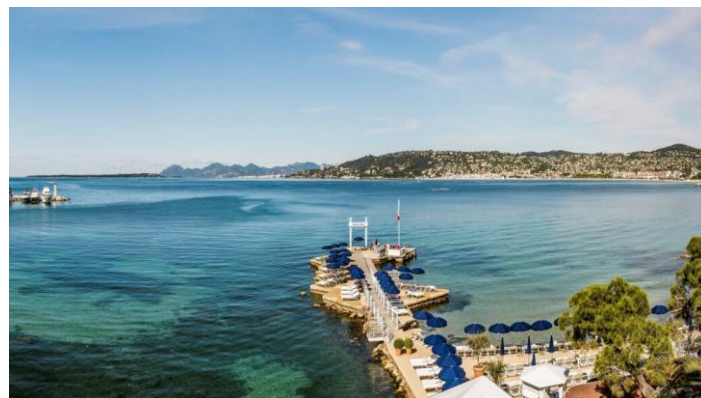


While half the terrace is reserved for the bar, the other half is for the Michelin-starred restaurant La Passagère, whose entrance from the lobby is marked with sparkling mosaic tiles underfoot. In the morning, a breakfast buffet

replete with croissants, baguettes, brie, and other items is set up inside the dining room, which is adorned with surrealist art pieces and ceramics reminiscent of the work of Picasso, who had a studio in the Château Grimaldi in the old town. In the evening, guests enjoy gourmet tasting menus that highlight the fresh seafood and vegetables in the region.



A staircase leads down to the beauty corner, which offers facials and massages incorporating Valmont products, and further down to the beach club, which serves light lunch fare and has sunbeds and water sports equipment available to rent.



The 43 rooms and suites are individually styled with luxe touches like mirrored side tables and original art. Some have balconies with beautiful sea views. The hotel is a member of Small Luxury Hotels of the World.

Top Takeaways

Location: Cap d'Antibes – Juan-les-Pins, France

Rating: Five-Star

The Vibe: An Art Deco gem that transports you to the Roaring Twenties on the French Riviera.

Food + Drink: Michelin-starred La Passagère serves a buffet breakfast and elegant tasting menus for dinner, while the beach club serves lunch fare like burgers and poke bowls. The Fitzgerald Bar is the place to start or end the evening with cocktails.

Our Favorite Thing About the Hotel: It's a toss-up between the terrace with its little round café tables and bistro chairs or the beach club right on the water.

Amenities: concierge; beach club with sunbeds and water sports equipment; Valmont spa; turn-down service; valet parking.

What's Nearby? Villa Domergue; Fort Royal Sainte-Marguerite Island; La Malmaison Art Center; Castre Museum; Square Frank Jay Gould; Jardin de la Pinède

Any Personal Neighborhood Recs?: Spend some time wandering the old town, where there's a market in the mornings, and you can visit the Picasso Museum in the Château Grimaldi, where the artist had a studio in the 1940s.

PASEO, the restaurant at Hotel Juana (Belles Rives' sister hotel) has a colorful retro design and great food served tapas-style.

Rooms: 43 rooms and suites

Pricing: Rates start at \$249 per night

Closest Airport: Nice Côte d'Azur Airport

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