

August 6, 2006**CHECK IN, CHECK OUT**

Nice, France: Palais de la Mediterranée

By SETH SHERWOOD

THE BASICS Opened in 1929 by the American millionaire Frank Jay Gould, the soaring neo-Classical-style Palais de la Mediterranée quickly became one of the great Riviera shrines of leisure. From Maurice Chevalier to Josephine Baker, the stars of the Jazz Age cavorted in the casinos and restaurants tucked behind the hotel's colonnaded stone facade. The grand dame went bust in the 1970's but reopened in 2004 after a total renovation by the new owners, the Taittinger family (of Champagne fame). The resulting 188-room property pays homage to the hotel's Art Deco pedigree while maintaining plenty of contemporary sleekness and style.

THE LOCATION Prime. The hotel is perfectly situated along the seaside Promenade des Anglais. The beach is about 20 paces away, and the rustic cobbled lanes of Old Nice are a mere five-minute walk.

THE ROOMS Though I had reserved a standard double, I was upgraded to a suite because of availability. (A hotel representative later confirmed that this is standard hotel policy for guests staying one night, provided that suites are available.) The large room, full of smooth chocolate wood surfaces and mostly autumnal colors, was enlivened by orange, crimson and blue pillows and cushions — as well as the sublime turquoise expanse of the Mediterranean across the street. Indeed, so splendid was the view that the minibar even stocked a pair of binoculars (55 euros, about \$71 at \$1.29 to the euro). There is high-speed Internet connection, and the hotel's interactive digital television system holds about 2,000 music albums (generally 10 euros a play) and some 150 on-demand movies (generally 15 euros).

THE BATHROOMS The marble bathroom was appointed with an electronic scale, a heated towel rack, Annick Goutal toiletries and a pair of yellow terrycloth bathrobes. A speakerphone was mounted next to the toilet.

AMENITIES According to the menu at the Asian-themed Pingala cocktail lounge, "the name Pingala is used to designate the right nostril in the Buddhist religion." Sporting red walls, plum-colored footrests and lots of Far Eastern decorative items, the plush space recalls 1930's [Shanghai](#). Le Padouk, the hotel's equally chic restaurant, serves a changing menu of semi-adventurous Mediterranean cuisine. Recent offerings have included risotto with fried foie gras, grilled mushrooms, Perugine sausage and star anise juice (35 euros).

To work off such indulgences, the hotel has a small but modern fitness center and two pools. The

outdoor pool, colored and shaped like a lime wedge, overlooks the sea. The indoor pool, with mosaic tile and columns, awaits Nero's arrival. And when your pockets start getting heavy, hit the suitably garish Egyptian-themed casino, where young hotshots in suits, Arab and Asian businessmen and even some old Niçoise ladies sit elbow-to-elbow by the roulette wheel under a smoky haze.

ROOM SERVICE Sure there's Iranian caviar (120 euros), but the menu's main attraction is its impressive wine list. A bottle of Château Lafite Rothschild (400 euros) or Roederer Cristal (205 euros) takes the edge off of any gambling losses. Room service operates 24 hours, but menu selections are scaled back after 11 p.m.

THE CROWD Flappers and robber barons have given way to a young, monied international crowd. On an afternoon at the end of May, the lobby hummed with 40-ish Russian women in miniskirts, businessmen attending conferences in the extensive meeting facilities and some honeymooning Americans pulling Gucci luggage.

BOTTOM LINE With its excellent location and sublime views (from many rooms), the hotel comes up a winner on nearly all counts. It's not cheap, with low-season standard doubles starting at 280 euros. But for a splurge or a special occasion, this is your top bet in Nice.

Palais de la Mediterranée, 13-15 Promenade des Anglais, (33-4) 92-14-77-00,
www.lepalaisdelamediterranee.com.

Copyright 2006 The New York Times Company

[Privacy Policy](#) | [Search](#) | [Corrections](#) | [XML](#) | [Help](#) | [Contact Us](#) | [Work for Us](#) | [Site Map](#)