



Ferraris, Royalty & Rosé



The 67th Monaco Grand Prix (www.formula1monaco.com) took place under sunny skies in Monte Carlo with a harbor full of mega and gigayachts. The town was filled with lots of testosterone with Formula 1 drivers, crew and spectators. I arrived jetlagged on Thursday for the big weekend. Friday, we kicked off the celebrations with a welcome party aboard yacht, **M/Y Bulldog** where several hundred VIPs showed up including **H.S.H. Prince Albert II** and F1 champ, **Lewis Hamilton**. I wore my Ferrari red dress designed by **Lei Marco** (www.leimarco.com) for the occasion. The yacht was in the number 1 position next to the race track for prime viewing. A full weekend aboard the yacht was organized and appropriately named '**My Yacht Monaco GP**'. Companies entertaining their clients aboard included **Learjet** (www.learjet.com), **Vertu** (www.vertu.com) and **Edmiston** (www.edmiston.com).

I had the pleasure of bringing the top ranked rosé wine, **Chateau d'Esclans** (www.chateaudesclans.com) from **Cote d'Provence**, supplying magnums upon magnums for the thirsty jetsetters. Even **Prince Albert** approved and made a toast!

Additionally, I was accompanied by Miami based international artist, **Stephen Gamson** (www.gamsonart.com). Gamson is an Artist from the communication age. His unique style is easily recognized for its bold colors, iconic symbols and mass appeal. Gamson was commissioned to create a custom **Monaco Grand Prix** image. A framed version was signed by 'his highness' himself as well as several F1 champs and auctioned to benefit the **Princess Grace Foundation** (www.pgfusa.com). A limited edition signed poster version was presented to the VIPs aboard M/Y Bulldog. **Prince Albert** also received a yacht-themed painting as a dedication gift from Gamson.



Prince Albert II & Hope



Prince Albert II signing Gamson art



Artist, Stephen Gamson & Prince Albert II



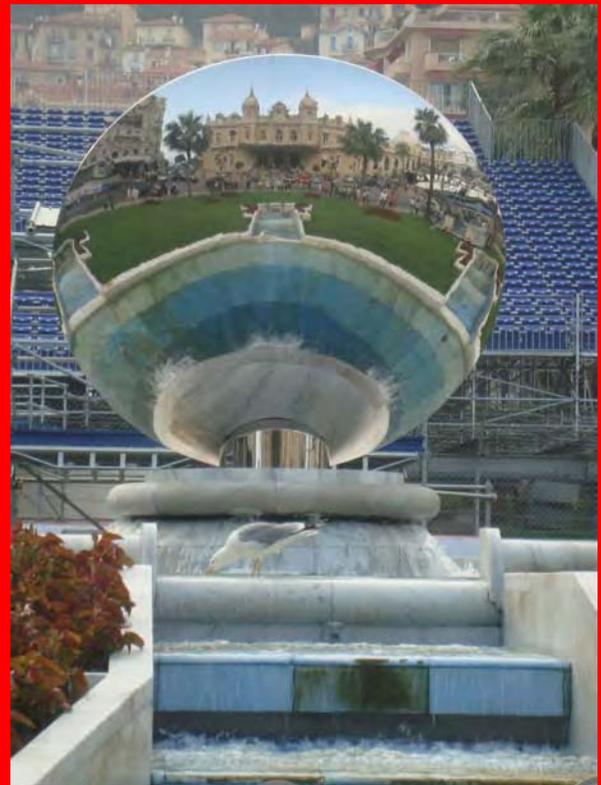
Hope & Alain Riviere

Getting around **Monaco** is never easy, considering it is a principality built on a steep rock cliff overlooking the **Mediterranean Sea**. I was able to forgo my daily exercise routine without guilt since climbing the rock kept me huffing and puffing, in stilettos no less! There are elevators when you can find them buried in the rock face for those that prefer civilized movement up and down. During the Grand Prix most streets are closed off for the races so that means taking the long way around and no taxis to hail. For us, we had a tender to deliver us from the one end of town to our yacht daily...ah, the good life!



Monaco is the second smallest country in the world after **Vatican City** and is three miles long by one-half mile wide (about the size of NYC's Central Park). It has 30,000 residents, of whom 5000 are **Monegasque**. Of course, we are all aware of the obvious tax advantage that attracts new residents. Tourist attractions include the **Monte Carlo Casino** made famous by 007 himself to the **Prince's Palace**, **Grimaldi Forum**, **Oceanographic Museum** and **Port Hercule**.

The **F1** weekend also attracts global hotspots that set up temporary stations for scenesters. **Amber Lounge** (www.amber-lounge.com) sets up shop next to **Le Meridien Hotel** (www.lemeridien.com/montecarlo) and produces a supermodel studded charity event hosted by **Sir Elton John** on Friday night for the **Elton John Aids Foundation** (www.ejaf.org). **Billionaire Club** (www.billionairelife.com) from **Sardinia** spreads its wings at the **Fairmont Hotel** (www.fairmont.com) for late night gallivanting. Locally, there is the infamous **Jimmy'z** nightclub and the always sardine-packed **Sass Café**. **Sea Lounge** is my favorite spot overlooking the water in a more relaxed, classy atmosphere. The new entertainment in town was a trio of babes in mini dresses playing violins...quite refreshing (www.electra-girls.com).



However, **'Ladies of the Evening'** know this is a big weekend with big wallets so they materialize in droves to **Monte Carlo**. If she looks too good to be true, chances are she is! For me, I felt like the 'belle of the ball' with loads of male attention appreciating the company of a "real woman" with no strings attached. I met many flavors....a Scotsman with a castle, a Dutchman with a shipyard, a Greek with an airline, and of course many many boys with big toys like racecars, jets and yachts.

This year the global recession showed its ugly face in **Monaco** as well. Storefronts were boarded up along the famous **Avenue Princesse Grace** and Grand Prix attendance was down 20% and hotel occupancy was nowhere near full capacity. But those that came, had a hell of a weekend!



Our race day included catered lunch aboard our yacht, lots of rosé wine, plenty of sunshine and the constant F1 roaring engines...music to most of the male spectator's ears. Ear plugs and headsets are handed out to those that want to save their eardrums. The viewing vantage point from our yacht's sundeck was right where the cars exit the tunnel. Here the drivers are blinded by the light, thus providing for plenty of crash opportunities. All around the race course you see cranes ready to forklift the wrecks...not such an uplifting site to behold.



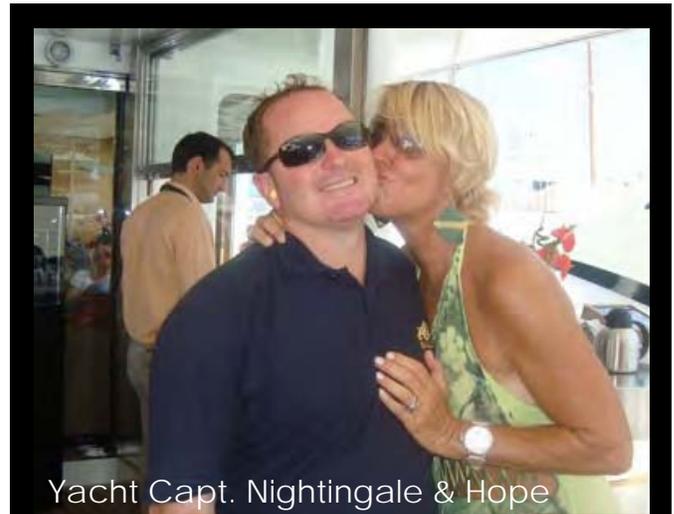
Mother Nature cooperated with strong sunshine unlike last year's rainy race day. I rendezvoused with old and new friends including **Sandy** whom I originally met in **Punta del Este** and **Genilde** who co-habitates between **Miami** and **Monaco** and **Claudio** who now has a double career as investment banker by day and superstar DJ by night. He spun for us at a great party in **Villefranche** in a big hilltop villa with panoramic views Saturday eve. I also enjoyed seeing my friend **Jacqueline**, a Monaco resident who visits South Beach each winter...and she took me to meet local couture designer, **Isabell Kristensen** (www.isabellkristensen.com) at her shop next to the Palace. Once a fashionista, always one...and I could not resist trying on the **Swarovski** studded mini dress that fit me to a t! Now the designer knows my size for the next party I host. Hint hint!





F1 British driver, **Jenson Button** of the **Brawn Team** won the race this year for those that were keeping track of the gazillion laps they took. The race is actually 77 laps around the narrow, winding streets of Monte Carlo, making the Monaco Grand Prix the most thrilling in the world with little room for driver error.

Spectators are everywhere in Monaco during the Grand Prix. Each balcony becomes a viewing deck. Post race, we slipped off M/Y Bulldog, slipped into our shoes, bid farewell to our newfound F1 friends and walked the racecourse to a grand terrace overlooking **Port Hercule** owned by Greek founder of **EasyJet** (www.easyjet.com), **Stelios**. He hosted what seemed like "**The Guinness Book of World Records**" for how many people you can fit on a terrace at once. The view was spectacular and worth the squeeze. By now the crowds had dissipated and the engines had stopped and the yachts began to sail out to sea. The calm after the 3 day F1 storm known annually as the Monaco Grand Prix had ended!



Yacht Capt. Nightingale & Hope





It was time for us to rest our weary heads...but no sooner had I literally laid down, when the fireworks started. Well, that was my wakeup call. The party was not quite over yet. One more round Sunday night and then call it a day or weekend spent to capacity.



As if I did not consume enough fine rosé wine all weekend, Monday I was chauffeured to **Cote d'Provence** to tour **Chateau d'Esclans** (www.chateaudesclans.com) and have a wine tasting of their four varieties. The peaceful countryside in this region is quite special with rolling hills and endless vineyards sprinkled with chateaus here and there. But the grand dame of them all is certainly, Chateau d'Esclans. The grounds consisting of 700 acres are extraordinary, from the gigantic trees to the newly restored 19th century chateau, fully equipped with its own chapel, rose garden, pool, professional kitchen and of course all the state-of-the-art wine making machinery and even a small shop on-premises for stocking up on your favorite variety.



“Over the centuries, across customs and cultures, few places in the world have had the magic appeal of Provence. For generations it has sparked the imagination as the land of sunlit pastel water and sky, towering cliff-top villages and red clay soil.”
Alexis Lichine, *Guides to the Wines and Vineyards of France*

Sacha Alexis Lichine was as enchanted as his father by **Provence**. Thus, he became the proud owner of **Chateau d'Esclans** in 2006. It has been his personal mission to begin a new chapter in the world of **Provence Rosé** elevating it to a level of refinement and pleasure to be reckoned with globally.

I had the honor of meeting **Sacha Lichine**, a bigger than life figure who 'walks the talk' during the **Miami Beach Wine and Food Festival**. I was so impressed with his wine and team of professionals he surrounds himself with, that I just had to become one of his 'brand ambassadors'.

On this visit to **La Motte**, home of **Chateau d'Esclans**, Mr. Lichine was elsewhere in the world showcasing his new wine. I had the pleasure of his Managing Director, **Alain Riviere** showing me around. Prior to our tasting, Alain took me to lunch at a nearby country inn, **Les Pignatelles** on Route de Bagnols where I had one of the best French meals ever. Après lunch, I toured and tasted all four varieties: **Whispering Angel, Esclans, Les Clans** and **Garrus**.



Next time you are wondering why you are paying over \$100 for a bottle of pink wine...blame it on **Mr. Lichine** who has single-handedly created the best and most expensive rosé wine in the world and elevated rosé to premium status.

So here's to seeing the world through rosé-colored glasses!
Voilà!



Au Revoir,
ESPOIR
(aka HOPE)
HOPE INTERNATIONAL

www.ehopeinternational.com www.luxurylord.com www.sbirealty.com

P.S. A limited supply of signed prints of the **Monaco Grand Prix Poster** by artist **Stephen Gamson** are available for sale upon request to me.

P.P.S. If any brands or companies are interested in participating aboard a yacht during the **Abu Dhabi Grand Prix** (the last race of the season and first ever in Abu Dhabi with attendance anticipated to be the largest) **October 30th thru November 1st**, please let me know. Details available upon request. www.visitabudhabi.ae

