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MONOCLE

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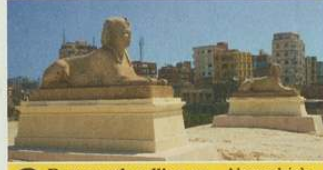
- A AFFAIRS** The geopolitics of the Mediterranean and the factors shaping them
- B BUSINESS** A host of ideas for those in search of a fresh start
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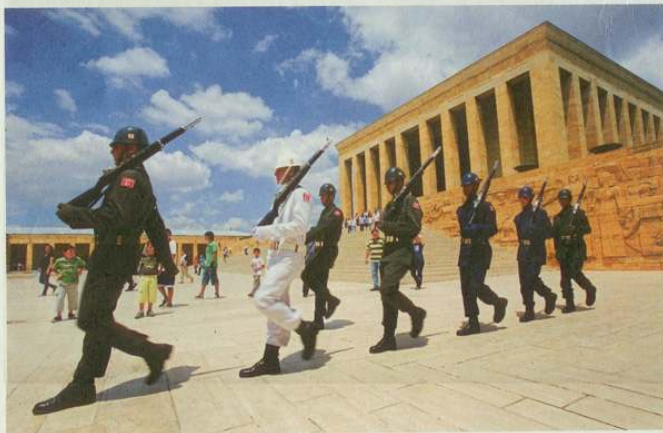


Back to the building blocks: *A fix for Greece*

Monocle travels to Athens and the islands beyond to find a recipe for fixing a nation and meets a new generation of aspiring Greek business heroes

Monocle on the Med

Monocle Mediterraneo is a new venture from the Monocle media stable that incorporates both this super-premium newsprint edition and a weekly audio series. Inside, our editors and correspondents have penned essays on topics serious and saucy, uncovered businesses you wish you'd invented and gathered garments and goods you'll want to collect. You can also listen to a sunny mix of banter and songs every Friday by downloading the Monocle Summer Series from monocle.com or iTunes.



Ottoman influence: How Turkish foreign policy is reshaping not just the eastern Mediterranean but the entire world. Our correspondent reports from Ankara



Fashion: The basics for creating a solid wardrobe this coming autumn



Design: A selection of welcoming residences in country, town and city



Food: Four of our favourite chefs offer up simple signature dishes for late afternoon on deck or terrace



History: How did our ancient ancestors spend their summers?



Radio: Our pick of the best radio stations around the Med basin

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12/25
Be square

by Andrew Tuck
Editor of Monocle, London

There we all were, sitting at our ring-side seats. We were drinking rosado, ordering tapas with abandon (breathing again after the waiter actually understood our faltering Spanish) and generally feeling rather happy with the world. Maybe it was too much sun to blame, but part of what made sitting here so voyeuristically engaging was the stage in front of us: a Mediterranean piazza.

As inevitably as rain running down a hill, it seemed that everyone in the town would be drawn here at some point in the evening: the flocks of fan-flapping dressed-up old dears; the kids who'd kick a football against the church wall (without causing any offence, not even to the priest who smiled and sidled past); the group of African young men worrying about one of their party's broken leg; and the tourists hoping they looked like locals (and wondering why the square deal couldn't be exported back home). It was also clear why nobody was at home watching the telly: here the Spanish soap opera was a live nightly spectacle.

Sure, there are plenty of Mediterranean piazzas that also pull in junkie pickpockets (hello Barcelona) and, just as tiresome, café owners who'll rob you of €10 for an espresso because there's a pleasant view (welcome to Venice), but at their best they are urban wonders. By day they host markets and enterprise and at night they put on their best tablecloths to become places where it feels like you could bump into the whole world.

The only thing you need to be wary of: make sure the statues are real and not some drama school student dipped in silver paint. That could ruin any piazza moment. — (M)



11/25
Doctor on heat

by Richard A Friedman
Professor of Clinical Psychiatry, Weill Cornell Medical College, New York

Ah, the glorious languor and shimmering heat of summer! We all have to grow up, alas, but we still have summer. If you lament the swift passage of time, welcome to summer. And there are plenty of seasonal health benefits. To start with, the sun.

Those solar rays may be unkind to your skin, but to your brain they have potent mood-elevating and antidepressant effects. Light is so powerful an antidepressant that it can push some biologically vulnerable people right over the edge into mania.

Our clever brains track the seasons with melatonin, which turns on with darkness and off with light. When you take melatonin to sleep, you essentially are telling your brain that it's nighttime.

Not just that but rays from the sun promote the synthesis of vitamin D in your skin, and vitamin D is linked not just to calcium but also mood regulation. To get your vitamin D dose it only takes 10 to 30 minutes of sun twice a week. Since vitamin D is present in few foods (fish and fish oil, fortified milk and some meats), most people get their vitamin D needs from sun exposure. Not everyone shares a love of heat and light, though. Some people get depressed in summer; they have reverse seasonal affective disorder. Whether the culprit is summer light or heat, we don't know.

Now you've had your perfect day at the beach, what's for dinner? Best make it hot and spicy. Spicy food will make you sweat and sweating cools you down. So get hot and stay cool. — (M)



13/25
I'm sorry but it's winter

by Tim Hume
Journalist, Auckland

You might not have noticed but there's been a distinct change in temperature in the world's media in recent weeks, one that's been particularly apparent from Down Under. Tips on "best kept secret" beaches and pop-up rooftop bars. Summer music festival guides on who to see, and what to be seen in. Pretty boys and girls, the latter generally in bikinis.

It's one of life's cruel certainties that just as winter Down Under is at its keenest, the northern hemisphere is at its most insufferably smitten with summer. And, despite the distance and disconnect with our own circumstances, we somehow wind up hearing all about it. My motherland New Zealand is a famously beautiful country but Auckland in winter is a hard place to love. Our beaches are transformed into blustery grey wastelands. It rains constantly; it's hard to say where from, because the entire sky seems to have absconded.

Matters aren't helped by the daily barrage of reminders of the delights of a European summer. Facebook taunts with an unending stream of photos of poolside cocktails, and chatter about planned assaults on the music festival circuit. (At home, the closest you'll come to Glastonbury is the rain drumming on the roof.) International magazines pile it on with reports on seasonal trends; I would order a pair of citrus-hued boat shoes, but fear I wouldn't cut the same figure with them caked in mud.

As for the impact of those lithe beach bodies on the psyches of our well-upholstered citizenry, in the thick of their winter coats, the less said the better. Even the inevitable monster summer pop hits are jarring to our ears; lines about "sun-kissed skin so hot [it] will melt your popsicle" are hard to take at the best of times, but particularly grate when you're struggling to get your laundry dry.

It's all unavoidable, of course; a small price to pay for globalisation, the internet... But is it too much to ask for a bit of sensitivity? The polarity of our seasons is nothing new; every Australasian has fielded questions from Northern Hemisphere friends about the perceived weirdness of our Christmas arrangements ("You go to the beach?"; "Santa still wears his red suit?"). Yet at first sight of the Mediterranean you forget the flipside holds true. You forget about what your frosty friends in the south must be enduring. We cannot and do not blame you for this. But a summer can't be lived vicariously. So how about holding off uploading those holiday snaps until September? — (M)



14/25
What the hotelier saw

Interview with Andrea Fustinoni
Hotelier, Grand Hotel Miramare, Liguria

Each summer the most exclusive hotels on the Mediterranean turn into global microcosms, miniature UN headquarters where a host of nations unite and hole up for weeks on end, trying, and as in real life, often failing to live together in harmony. From a distance it may look like happy families but as every hotelier – and chambermaid knows – there are things going on behind those soundproofed doors that would make even the most open-minded of onlookers demure in disgust.

What seemed like a good idea while Martini-ed out at 3.00 can wake a guest with a shudder at 10.00 as the maid rattles the door. But there are some places that can cope with any foible.

Andrea Fustinoni of the Grand Hotel Miramare in Liguria has fond memories of certain stately visitors: "This stretch of Riviera has always attracted a certain type of clientele.

In the early 1960s, we had the King of Burundi stay with his wife and son. He was so tall that the bed had to be custom-made to fit him. In 1971, we had the Ethiopian Emperor Haile Selassie and his entourage stay when he was on a state visit. A few years back, I remember we had the Israeli novelist Amos Oz staying here while he was writing a book, and his wife, a noted flautist, would play in their suite while he worked in order to help relax him."

Every nationality has its own peculiar quirks that define their stay and challenge GMs all around the Med. The Chinese are known to specify larger bathrooms in which to store their emptied out shopping bags, Russians require acres of garage space and the Japanese regularly require twin beds because traditionally they sleep on two futons pushed together. Food is also a foible of the finicky traveller.

"Breakfast is always interesting. Italians usually have continental breakfast; the Americans eat quite a lot. For us, it seems more like a lunch. They have eggs, ham, cheese, focaccia, yoghurt. It's very convivial, often families, or groups of friends move their tables together. Italians and Americans also tend to tip more. The biggest tip we received was from a Lebanese family in the 1980s – they left 5m lire. The concierge was able to assist them in renting a train from Rome to Santa Margherita because the kids wanted to have the experience," says Fustinoni. — (M)

FURTHER THINKING: Lobster thermidor is a dish, not a shade of tan; something too many crisped Irish, Brits and Americans forget.

FURTHER THINKING: People love piazzas; northern urban planners seem reluctant. Perhaps they need a few more sunny holidays.

FURTHER THINKING: Sydney in the rain, Cape Town with a grey sky: some places don't work without the sunshine. We'll see you in six months.



15/25
Sea, snogs and sausages

by Matthew Sweet
Writer and broadcaster, London

Fourteen or so millennia ago, Britain lifted its tectonic skirts and eloped, hand in hand with Ireland, from the continent of Europe. It took roughly 12,150 years for the broad mass of its inhabitants to see the possibilities afforded by all that coastline – except as a means for keeping the French at arm's length. But by then the population of Britain had evolved into Victorians – those mutton-chopped, hoop-skirted good-time guys who invented the fish-and-chip shop, the roller-coaster, recreational drugs and Reebok trainers (the spiked running shoe was invented in 1890 in a small village outside Bolton).

Before Victoria's reign, the British public kept its back to the sea: 18th-century coastal tourism was a minority affair and generally pursued for therapeutic ends. The railways and the Factories Acts, which limited working hours, conjured the modern British beach resort into existence – by making it possible for large numbers of people to travel from the towns and cities to the country's salty, liminal spaces.

It was an intractably industrial affair. One by one, during its allotted week, each mill town would disgorge an entire working population into the nearest coastal settlement willing to provide it with seven days full board. The killing routines of labour were suspended and gave way to a bacchanal of alcohol, oysters, dancing, snogging and velocity – all conducted in an atmosphere of ozone and cigarette smoke. Southend sprouted the world's longest pier; Brighton gained a bizarre elevated tramway that moved across the sea on stilts; Blackpool grew its own scaled-down Eiffel Tower.



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But it's in those bigger, poorer, more troubled resorts that the real desiring spirit of the 19th-century holiday survives. Resorts such as Blackpool, where, three years ago, the council lost its hope of getting fat on the proceeds of the first Vegas-style casino in the British Isles. On any night in the summer, it is the most permissive place in England. A town populated by teenagers in sequinned halters stuffing one last jumbo sausage before taking a tram down the Golden Mile; by drunk boys on their way to see the drag show at the Funny Girls drag club, without quite knowing why. A Rabelaisian carnival, with donuts and giant sugar dumplings and pre-mixed vodka cocktails – conducted by the heirs to the pleasure-seekers of Victorian England. — (M)

The Second World War spoiled the party by unspooling razor wire across the beaches of Britain and internment most of the Italian ice-cream sellers as Enemy Aliens. But it was the 1970s straw donkey from Benidorm that proved a near-terminal threat to the raucous seaside culture. British workers, now wealthy enough to afford the airfare to Spain, colonised the Mediterranean, taking much of the atmosphere of Margate and Blackpool with them. The boarding houses they vacated became holding centres for the unemployed. In the 1980s, Brighton was known as the Costa del Dole.

Today the papers love to run stories about the rediscovery of the British seaside. The figures look nice. Coastal tourism currently employs more people than the telecommunications or the steel industry. But this, I suspect, is a middle-class revival. The Britons who are reclaiming the coast are the sorts who come with their Cath Kidston beach bags and Kate Atkinson novels – and they're bringing them to the smaller resorts that, historically, have been patronised by the genteel and the faintly bohemian.

FURTHER THINKING: The relationship Italians have with their coastline impresses northern Europeans – everyone, of every class, has "their" beach which they faithfully visit every year. Northerners are far more promiscuous with their holiday choices.

FURTHER THINKING: Andrea Fustinoni reserves loungers for clients. We like that. Puts a stop to the unseemly lounge land grab pre-breakfast.