WIFE SWAPPING RISE ON RIVIERA

OVER 600,000 people now take part in partner swapping in France, twice as many as three years ago.

And what's more, local expats are enthusiastically adopting this newly fashionable aspect of French culture, along with buying baguettes and drinking rosé.

"The ‘échangistes’ have realised there is a difference between love and sex," British born swinger Briony Tapsell, 41, of Nice told The Riviera Gazette. "My partner and I always attend together and so it is still a shared experience.

Jacuzzis

"A friend who works at a local school got chatting to parents of his pupils and was then inundated with offers from couples willing to supply their villas with pools and jacuzzis for parties if he could provide the guests. It is all very safe and condoms are often available free in clubs."

And it's much better than just going to a bar and drinking loads on a Saturday night, maintains Briony. "We are just being open about sleeping with other people. There’s no deceit or illicit affairs and the divorce rate tends to be far lower among couples who practice échangisme."

Most clubs are strictly ‘couples only’ although single men are sometimes allowed in if they are willing to pay a substantial premium.

Often there is a discreet ‘club privé’ notice on the door and a sign saying ‘couples only’. The clubs are typically equipped with a bar and dance floor, while downstairs there are rooms with mattresses and showers.

Fashionable

The new popularity of swapping amongst young couples is in part due to the fashionable novel, The Memoirs of Catherine M, published in French last year and now available in English.

In her memoirs, an instant bestseller, Catherine frankly details her group couplings in locations that include museums and offices.


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Swinger... Brit Briony enjoys attending local échangiste evenings with her partner.

The Forum’s Simon Glynn tells how he loves getting people together.

By JENNY PAUL

The new weekly Riviera Gazette: 10,000 copies distributed this week. Look for the next issue on Thursday January 16.
YOUR DESTINY IN 2003

TV’s John Garland tells what the stars hold for you in the coming year...

AQUARIUS

Jan–18 Feb

A most energetic year for practical and domestic ideas. Launch new projects in March, May and September. The fact that you’re about to have another try at improving your overall outlook will give 2003 a bright start, with more in the offing. Financially, you’ll notice a buoyant trend, with plenty of scope to enhance your income, particularly in June, July and December. Romance won’t be without some testing phases, but if you’re single, motivate your charisma in March, August, September and December. The main thing is not to mix business with pleasure.

Star celebrity John McEnroe (16 February 1959)

— A special career boost.

SCORPIO

23 Oct–22 Nov

Take advantage of this year’s top trends. There are bound to be months when you’ll wonder why you tolerated certain obstacles. January, April, and October, paint a brilliant picture for career, professional and creative outlets. Financial gains are likely, if you’re shrewd during January, June and November. The planets underline your talents, so use your wonderful ability to sense the feelings of others, particularly if you’re single. March, April, May and December are starred for romance, just ensure that you decide on what you want, rather than be led by others.

Star celebrity Demi Moore (11 November 1962)

— New directions.

LIBRA

23 Sept–20 Oct

Zoom in on what appears to be the least attractive invitations, or ideas, because you never know what might develop. In fact, it’s the most insignificant suggestions that can lead to a fresh friendship, or something you’ve been waiting for. Just how important money and romance turn out to be, depends on your willpower to network. Your aims between January and May. Regardless of certain highs and lows, this is one of your most auspicious years. There will be golden opportunities on all fronts. Remember, the more decisive you are, the greater the rewards.

Irish festival

2003 will be ‘the year of the Irish’ in Villefranche, with festivities throughout the year to celebrate the historical links between France and Ireland. Conferences on Irish culture and art will be held, and the citadel will be transformed into an Irish pub for St Patrick’s day on March 17.

Super-lottery

FRANCE, Spain and the UK have joined forces for a European ‘super-lottery’ with a weekly draw on Fridays and no limit to the number of times a jackpot can be rolled over, to be launched in early 2004.

Truffle teaching

CELEBRATED Var chef Bruno has bought the disused manor at Aups. He plans to turn it into an international truffle institute, teaching others how to cook using the rare delicacy. The €2 million complex will also offer luxury hotel accommodation.

Driving down

ONLY three people were arrested and had their licences suspended after armies of gendarmes took to the roads to catch drink-drivers over the festive period. The Police also carried out roadside tests for drugs, but no-one tested positive. Meanwhile, the French government is urging motorists to “drive more like les Anglais” in a bid to encourage safe driving.

Fit for business

CLIVE Stokes of the Antibes Squash & Fitness Club is the British Chamber of Commerce’s Business Personality of the Year, after winning a vote by members.

Shop posters and bags say ‘No to Tramway’ but bus drivers give plan thumbs up

TRAM PLAN PROTEST TAKES TO THE STREETS

PROTESTERS for and against the planned Nice tram network have stepped up their activities this week as the public enquiry phase comes to an end and the first stage of the four year building programme begins.

Running from the Nice Nord motorway junction into the centre of Nice via the University district, Place du Gaultil, the railway station, Nice Étoile and Place Masséna, the tram system is designed to reduce congestion and pollution and is due to come into service at the end of 2006.

But Nice residents and local businesses now face four years of disruption while the €305 million tram network infrastructure is installed. In some areas, roads will be closed for a year while buildings are demolished and roads are re-routed to accommodate the trams.

Shopkeepers along the proposed tram routes are collecting signatures for a petition protesting against the new system, and several have placed large banners decorated with skulls bearing the slogan “No to the Tramway” across their shop fronts.

“We have been told that our road will be closed to traffic and pedestrians for up to one year while the installation work is completed,” Evelyne Grac, proprietor of Alpes Fruits in Avenue Beergioline told The Riviera Gazette. “We will have no business – and we will not be able to survive. We don’t even know if we will receive any compensation from the government,” continued Evelyne, who has had 20,000 plastic bags printed with the anti-tram slogan to issue to her customers.

Nice bus drivers, however, have jumped on the pro-tram bandwagon, painting slogans on the side of their buses promoting the message “Progress, security, tramway, health!” “Our drivers are very supportive of the tram system,” Michel Otobrucc of the Urban Transport Syndicat of Nice confirmed to The Gazette. “Over 90% of our members are pro-tram, and consider the improvement of the public transport network to be beneficial to everyone in the community. Tourists and residents will benefit from improved traffic flow, and the reliability of trams which have priority and can more easily keep to timetables. It is a move for the better and a move to the future.” Otobrucc concluded.

Residents are mainly in favour of the system. “I think the tram system sounds like a very good idea,” commented Lawrence Stringer, 31, a Nice resident who works in Sophia Antipolis. “It will be much cleaner for the environment and better for traffic. I don’t have a car so any improvements in public transport will be great for me.”

Meanwhile the new generation regional express train was unveiled at the Nice train station on Monday. Ultra-modern and roomy, it will go into service next year.

“Progress, security, tramway, health!” “Our drivers are very supportive of the tram system,” Michel Otobrucc of the Urban Transport Syndicat of Nice confirmed to The Gazette. “Over 90% of our members are pro-tram, and consider the improvement of the public transport network to be beneficial to everyone in the community. Tourists and residents will benefit from improved traffic flow, and the reliability of trams which have priority and can more easily keep to timetables. It is a move for the better and a move to the future.” Otobrucc concluded.

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Revelers set fire to 379 vehicles in 60 departments during the last night of 2002 in what is becoming an unfortunate New Year’s Eve tradition in France.

Seven cars went up in flames in Nice, where 37 rubbish bins were also burned out. The total represents a slight improvement on last year, when 388 vehicles were destroyed on the same night.

A bouncer at The Cat’s Corner nightclub in Cannes was rushed to hospital with knife wounds on New Year’s Eve. He was attacked by four youths who had earlier been refused entry because they didn’t meet the dress code.

Tickets for the 61st Monaco Grand Prix, which will be held from Friday May 29 to Sunday June 1, went on sale this week.

The Monaco race weekend is regarded as the most glamorous event on the Formula One circuit, and always sells out early. But the Automobile Club de Monaco told The Gazette that only one hundred tickets were snapped up on Monday, so there are still plenty of good seats to be had. The cheapest tickets for Sunday’s F1 Grand Prix are €50 – holders will watch the race from the steep ‘Rocher’ hillside – and grandstand seats range from €250 to €420. Tickets can be bought in person at the ACM shop at 46 Rue Grimaldi, Monaco. Race fans can also call +377 93 25 26 00 or fax +377 93 25 80 08 to request an order form, which has to be posted back to the club with cheque or credit card payment before tickets can be allocated.

A new US ‘reality TV’ show has recently completed filming in secret at a chateau on the Riviera.

Joe Millionaire, which started its run on the Fox network on Monday night, features twenty-five women competing to marry Evan Marriott, a good-looking American multimillionaire who lives in a huge French castle.

But in a cruel twist the hunky 28-year-old bachelor is in fact a near-penniless construction worker who has had coaching to help him persuade the girls he’s a toff. The winner will be told in the final programme.

Producers hope for ratings success as viewers tune in to see the tension between the women competing for his love and Marriott’s struggle to maintain the façade of a wealthy man. Fox has also promised a surprise for the last episode; the US press is speculating that a double bluff is in operation and that Marriott may actually be very wealthy after all.

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New year, new laws

A SLEW of new laws, rules and regulations came into effect on January 1.

Tax on cigarettes has increased to 17.7%, putting around 8% on the most expensive brands and 16% on the cheapest. A pack of 20 cigarettes now costs between €3.40 and €4.

Strong beers containing more than 8.9% alcohol have also been hit with extra taxes, taxi fares have increased by 2.2% and it is now illegal to drive under the influence of marijuana.

Across the EU, more wine and food labelling measures mean packaged meat products must now state the animal’s origin, differentiate between muscles and offals and stipulate fat content. Wines must specify the method of production, vineyards and any traditional accreditation.

Travellers entering the EU may no longer bring in any foodstuffs containing meat or milk, unless they have an official health certificate from their country of origin.

Gold diggers meet ditch digger

HUNKY HEIR ... Digger driver Evan Marriott ‘inherits’ a $50M fortune in Fox TV’s ‘Joe Millionaire’ told in the final programme. In the first episode Marriott was treated to a style makeover and lessons in horse riding and wine appreciation to allow him to exude the air of someone who has had a privileged upbringing.

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Man dies as ski slopes fill over holiday

LOCAL ski stations were beset with problems over the busy New Year period, reports Jenny Paul.

A man from Nice was killed in an avalanche whilst skiing off-piste at Pra Loup, while in Valberg a woman suffered serious back injuries and had to be airlifted to hospital following an accident on the slopes.

Auron, Isola and Valberg racked up record numbers of visitors during the festive season, putting strain on resort resources. “Last weekend Auron was crazy; I’ve never seen the place so crowded. “Each workshop promises a forty-five minute talk by an expert in each subject, a ‘question and answer’ opportunity afterwards and the chance to meet people who are new to the area and those who have been happily settled here for years,” Adapt in France’s Sylvie Kermin-Coffier told The Riviera Gazette.

“We were starving when we came off the slopes at the end of the day, but everywhere had run out of bread so we couldn’t even get a sandwich,” she continued.

CURRENT RESORT CONDITIONS

Âuron 40/160cm, 31 pistes open (2 green, 12 blue, 13 red, 4 black) and 19 lifts operating.

Greolieres No significant snowfall this low yet; station still closed.

Isola 2000 100/180cm, 45 of 50 pistes open (7 green, 20 blue, 15 red and 3 black) and 18 of 23 lifts operating.

Pra Loup 40/110cm, 90% of pistes are open and 24 of 29 lifts operating.

Pra-Loup 40/110cm, 13 blue, 12 red and 4 black) and 19 of 23 lifts operating.

The link with Foux d’Allos is open.

Valberg 40/40cm, 35 pistes open (9 green, 10 blue, 15 red and 1 black) and 18 of 26 lifts operating.

ADAPTING MADE EASY

By Jenny Paul

ADAPT in France, the non-profit association that helps newly arrived expats settle in on the Riviera, begins a new programme of educational workshops on January 17.

The fourteen seminars run over a six week period and cover everything from buying and renting property, insurance, banking, motoring, childcare, healthcare and education to social rights and culture shock.

“Each workshop promises a forty-five minute talk by an expert in each subject, a ‘question and answer’ opportunity afterwards and the chance to meet people who are new to the area and those who have been happily settled here for years,” Adapt in France’s Sylvie Kermin-Coffier told The Riviera Gazette.

The resource centre in Sophia also provides information in English (as well as in Spanish, German, Danish, etc) on a wide range of topics and staff are available to answer questions.

Multinational

“We have Chinese, Mexican and multi-nationality clients. The most commonly used language is English though,” Mme Kermin-Coffier continued.

Sylvie explained that the cultural exchanges are a good opportunity to practice your French and meet French people.

Many residents who have been here a long time come along to these workshops as they have an established circle of friends and just don’t get the chance to brush up on their French in a welcoming environment, Mme Kermin-Coffier told The Gazette.

As workshops are extremely popular Sylvie strongly advises booking in advance. The Cultural Exchanges take place twice a month on the second and fourth Tuesdays from September through June in Antibes (there is plenty of parking!). Meetings are held from 19h00 to 21h00.

Contact the office for further information about how to join and where they meet on 04 93 65 33 79.

Membership of Adapt in France costs €150 for a year for the top, blue level of membership which includes access to all workshops.

The lowest price is €50 and includes two personalised support sessions, or €80 for the workshop series alone.

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I'm originally from the British Midlands. My wife Dawn and I moved here from Amsterdam in September 2000. I fell in love with the place straight away. It's a huge contrast to life in Amsterdam. We had a very hectic lifestyle there and here the weather is really nice and the beaches are so accessible.

But after about six months here we started to realise the Riviera could be quite a lovely place for some people. A lot of couples are in a situation where one works and the other is at home all day.

This was the main reason we started The Forum. I met my co-founder, Heather, over the internet and she suggested an informal get-together. We had thirty people on the first night and now we've got over 400 members.

The Forum is a non-profit organisation for expats of all ages. We’ve also branched out into support groups, such as The Seniors Forum, which we started when we were contacted by an older lady who had recently been widowed.

We’ve also just started doing singles nights after many requests. It’s been a great success. We had an older lady who had started when we were contacted by an older lady who had recently been widowed.

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Thursday 9
● The Dante Alighieri Association in Monaco is hosting a piano concerto, including the music of Beethoven. 7:30pm at the Galerie Charles III (by the Metropole Hotel). Call Aiding on +377 93 30 59 52 for information.
● The British Association of Monaco is hosting their Happy Hour tonight between 18:30 and 19:30 at Le Bistroquet in the Galerie Charles III (by the Metropole Hotel). Call Aiding on +377 93 30 59 52 for information.

Friday 10
● The Salsa Phlubes are performing an acoustic music concert tonight at 21:00 at the Salle desVariats, Monaco. Tickets are €8. Tel: 06 22 41 42 29.
● Today and tomorrow there’s a free concert called Tremplin Musical at 20:30 in Valbonne Village featuring MusikiTik, Persyogo and Zitke Zorotes. Tel: 04 93 03 54 48.
● Head along to Bar en Biais Jazz Club for an evening of world music with Alain Panteleimonoff on the accordion, and Gérard Kuradian playing percussion. It starts at 21:30. Call Aurelie Herber on 04 93 74 71 99.

Saturday 11
● The Compagnie Nationale de Mexico is performing the music and dance of Mexico today at 14:30 and 20:30 at the French Cultural Institute. All rights reserved. © 2003 The Riviera Gazette SARL. Copyright in The Riviera Gazette (including but not limited to text, photographs and illustrations) is owned by respective owners. Due care is taken to ensure that the content of The Riviera Gazette is accurate but The Riviera Gazette SARL, its publishers, its executives, and their respective officers and representatives cannot be held responsible for any consequences or damages arising from the use of the information contained herein. Call 04 94 47 06 28 or Selwyn Glick on 04 94 47 06 28 for the British Association to book your seat.

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Sunday 12
● The Orchestre Regional de Cannes, under conductor Philippe René, is performing the music of Rodrigo, Ennio Morricone and more today at 16:30 at the Theatre Claude Debussy in Cannes. Tickets start at €10. Tel: 04 94 19 97 77.
● La Colle sur Loup is hosting a Brancote – an antiques market – today on rue Ancienne Gare. Tel: 04 93 30 68 36.
● The Monte-Carlo Philharmonic Orchestra is in concert today at 18:00 at Monaco’s Auditorium Rainier III. Tickets start at €15.00. Tel: 04 93 92 12 22.
● Valley hosts a triathlon in the snow from 13:00. Registration opens at 11am for 6km of running, 12km of mountain biking and 12km cross-country skiing. Tel: 04 93 24 24 25 for more information.
● The Colomnie ski station hosts the Big Border Tour – a regional snowboarding competition – all day today. Tel: 04 93 23 23 90.
● Christine and Sacha Chmilyak are performing accordion classics including the music of Yradal, Gradin and Shimpirov today at 18:00 at the Théâtre de La Cité in Nice. Tickets are €8.00. Tel: 04 93 80 08 74.

Wednesday 15
● The Monte-Carlo Philharmonic Orchestra performs a lunchtime concert playing Tchaikovsky and Borodine at the Monaco’s Salle desVariats at 12:30.
● At 19:30 this Thursday there’s a US Democrats Abroad political meeting at 11 bis rue de la Baume, Nice where there will be a chance to meet representatives of the Paris branch, dept officers and meet other members. Call Jeanne on 06 68 51 49 41 to find out more.

Coming up...
● Monaco’s world-famous circus festival, the 25th Festival International du Cirque de Monte-Carlo, is on between January 16 and 23 at the big top in Fontvieille.
● All the thrills and excitement of top-level international rallying arrive in Monaco on January 22 until the 26th at the Principality plays host to the first round of the 2003 World Rally Championship.
● Burns Night is January 25, and local Scots are spoilt for choice. The Auld Alliance is holding its traditional celebration and the British Association of the Var will be gathering at the Belais de Trans in the Var. Call Brian Moncrieff on 04 94 35 72 78 or Sebby Glick on 04 94 47 06 28 for the British Association to book your seat.
● The Glenn Miller Memorial Orchestra performs the music of the Nice Accorpa on January 26.

Now booking...
● The Palace Nikaia in Nice is the official venue for ‘Stadium’ concerts and shows, and will host several international stars over the coming weeks.
● Totò on January 26 – tickets from €35.50.
● Tracy Chapman on February 9 – tickets from €34.50.
● On the heels of Rèverend, Lord of the Dance comes to Nice from February 29 to March 1. Tickets from €35.85.
● Ennio Morricone on March 5 – tickets from €40.00.
● And Diez Straits frontman Mark Knopfler will appear on April 28 – tickets are from €36.75.

MEXICAN WAVE... A piquant taste of Mexico arrives in Cannes on Friday night