

# FranceGuide

## PRESTIGE

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INTERVIEW



### *Elite Travelers*

Douglas Gollan, President and Editor-in-Chief of *Elite Traveler*, the private jet lifestyle magazine, speaks with *FranceGuide Prestige* about luxury travel and France.

***Over the past few years, the luxury travel market has grown at an astounding rate. How is travel in France different within the luxury sector?***

For *Elite Traveler* readers, France is always an important place to visit. I always say private jets set the rich free, as they no longer have to worry about airline schedules. It means they can hop from their villas on the French Riviera to Paris for dinner and be back before midnight or sunrise depending on their tastes. I hear from readers who make trips to see specific vineyards and wineries, who participate in car rallies, who take their yachts along the French Riviera as you and I might stop down at a local deli to have a coffee. Beyond that, they might balloon in the countryside, bike different sectors of the Tour de France (sometimes hiring actual former riders to accompany them) or recreate a scene from history at a castle with 200 of their closest friends all in period attire.

***You've said you love France. What is it about the country you love so much?***

I love the French people because they remind me of New Yorkers. I'm from New York. If you criticize New York to New Yorkers, they become defensive and start telling you why it is so great, but if you flatter New Yorkers about their city, they start talking about all its defects. I believe it's because, like New Yorkers, the French are very proud of their home, like a parent is of a child.

Beyond the French people, I love the food, wine, fashion. I have many Hermes ties and a Louis Vuitton briefcase I like to just look at when I'm not using it. When you walk down the street in Paris, everyone is just so well dressed. Even on a train or a commercial airliner in France, people just have a flair. The countryside is beautiful, and the small villages are charming. Of course, Paris is the most beautiful city in the world.

***Do you recall your first visit to France?***

I was about 10 years old traveling with my parents. It was during the times when there was a small upper deck on the 747s and instead of seats there was a lounge. As a child, I was always so excited when we went to Europe, which we did several times a year. I would never sleep on the flights but hang out in the lounge. Of course, I would be exhausted when I got there. My first trip to France we were staying at Hôtel de Crillon, and my parents had gone out to dinner (the first evening) but I was so tired I had fallen asleep. At some point I woke up and remember looking out our balcony on to the Place de la Concorde and just watching the cars going around for hours. It was the biggest plaza I had ever seen, and I can still remember it.

***Do you have a favorite luxury vacation destination in France?***

Driving along the Mediterranean through all the small villages from Cannes to Monte Carlo. Stopping in the little towns for a coffee or just to walk along the beach is fun, and is worth an entire day.

***Anywhere you haven't yet been that you would like to go?***

At some point I want to rent (and captain) one of those cute barges and sail the canals for a week or two. I'll let you know so you can avoid the waterways when I'm there!

***What does luxury mean to you?***

It's a combination of the hard and the soft assets. The place has to be beautiful and perfectly maintained, be it ultra-modern or a historic château. Then the service has to be warm, engaging and appropriate to what the client is in the mood for. To me it is an art to be attuned to the amount of interaction a person wants at that specific time.