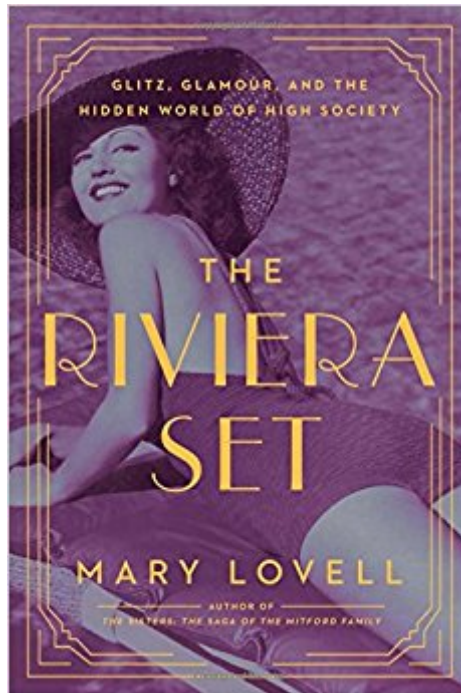




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# **The Riviera Set: Glitz, Glamour, And The Hidden World Of High Society**



## Synopsis

The author of the bestselling *The Sisters: The Saga of the Mitford Family* brings her trademark brio and relish to the charming and fascinating world of the Chateau de l'Horizon on the French Riviera. The Riviera Set reveals the story of the group of people who lived, partied, bed-hopped and politicked at the Chateau de l'Horizon near Cannes, over the course of forty years from the time when Coco Chanel made southern French tans fashionable in the twenties to the death of the playboy Prince Aly Khan in 1960. At the heart of dynamic group was the amazing Maxine Elliott, the daughter of a fisherman from Connecticut, who built the beautiful art deco Chateau and brought together the likes of Noel Coward, the Aga Khan, the Duke and Duchess of Windsor and two very saucy courtesans, Doris Castlerosse and Daisy Fellowes, who set out to be dangerous distractions to Winston Churchill as he worked on his journalism and biographies during his 'wilderness years' in the thirties. After the War the story continued as the Chateau changed hands and Prince Aly Khan used it to entertain the Hollywood set, as well as launch his seduction of and eventual marriage to Rita Hayworth. Bringing a bygone era back to life, Mary Lovell cements her spot as one of our top social historians in this captivating and evocative new book. 16 pages of B&W photographs

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

“Lovell presents a textured and meticulously researched history of a scintillating era on the Mediterranean coast.” - Publishers Weekly (starred)  
“Lovell packs in as many celebrities as possible, which makes for an entertaining book.” - Kirkus

Reviews – “This work embodies a place with personality and panache. Lovell does a fine job in providing the gossip without salaciousness in this well-researched volume. Entertaining and well cited.” – Library Journal

Mary Lovell is a fellow of the Royal Geographical Society. She is the author of eight previous biographies including the bestselling *The Sisters: The Saga of the Mitford Family* and *The Churchills*.

What a great idea for a book – a look at the lives of the rich and/or famous told through the prism of the French Riviera, and one house in particular, the Chateau de l'Horizon. Mary Lovell's absorbing account spans four decades, from the 1920s to the end of the 50s and is very sensibly – she first gets the reader up to speed with the chateau's first owner, the redoubtable Maxine Elliott. Maxine's life would be difficult to make up. The daughter of a Maine sea captain, her chequered love life eventually leads to stardom on the New York stage, and thence to London where she sets her cap at high society. A complete Anglophile whose wise investments have made her a wealthy woman, she restores a grand Hertfordshire house, Hartsbourne\*, where the great and the good come to enjoy “Saturdays to Mondays” (the word “weekend” not yet having been invented). When she finally sells up, she purchases a prime piece of real estate between Cannes and Juan-les-Pins and, with a daring new architect, builds an extraordinary house set into the rocks. A virtual Who's Who of the British establishment and the cultural icons of the day flock to enjoy her lavish hospitality. Churchill was her most frequent and most beloved visitor. Then comes the war. Ms Lovell's writing is eminently readable but even with the author's helpful footnotes there is inevitably some confusion for the reader with the abundance of lords and ladies (I use the term loosely) and how they interrelate. The sybaritic interest in sex does become a little wearing – what grubby lives those lotus-eaters led – but Maxine herself remains a sympathetic character to whom Churchill was devoted and her contribution to the war effort was immense. Later, Chateau de l'Horizon was bought by the Aga Khan and his playboy son, Aly Khan, took over the reins. There in the post-war years, Hollywood stars mingled with the money, sex was still the great driving force and the Riviera jet-set life continued to be a cocktail more heady than an achingly dry Martini.\* I had no idea Hartsbourne had

such an interesting history. It is near to where I live and is now a golf club.

Lovell wrote a brilliant, in-pot-downable book on the Churchills (and lots of other interesting, readable biography) , but it's hard to fathom where she is going with this. Much of it is rehash of the Churchill book and what isn't feels so familiar, it isn't very interesting. But if you haven't read her Churchill book I highly recommend it. If you are interested in the Riviera of the period try Selina Hastings fascinating book on Somerset Maugham, too.

Lovell transports the reader into another time and place - and it's not fiction. It was an entertaining, seriously researched read about an era and the lifestyle of the rich and famous, as well as the infamous. Mary Lovell is a great story teller.

I won a free copy of this book from Goodreads First Reads. A biography of a time and place that truly captures the imagination. Starting with a mini biography of Maxine Elliot and her home on The Riviera and moving into the prewar years of glitz and glamour and the power players that visited in those golden years. Moving into the post war years and changes with a nice update of players at the end. I knew some of these players and the idea that the Riviera is a place to see and be seen, but this was more involved and a deeply interconnected set of powerful individuals from various domains - aristocracy, royalty, and Hollywood. Engaging and interesting

This new book sustains the high standard of Mary S Lovell's biographies, many others most of which we own. Her chatty descriptions of well-researched people and events, her eye for weaving together the various characters' lives of that period, her own observations of the mores of the time, make this a book both my husband and I can enjoy, as do many of our friends. A very worthwhile addition to our collection of books on the eccentric and over the top goings on of the gratin of the first half of the 20th century!

For a reader interested in the period of the decadent 1930s, a great read. Racily written, with the book completed too quickly. Many superficial people, with the writing style paralleling the racey nature of those individuals. Recommended to those who wish they were in the south of France in the 1930s, and famous or financed! Peter J. Woodford.

I really enjoyed this book for the detailed view of what the Riviera was like in its' golden age.

Very interesting view into this era

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