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Living large

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By Amy Longsdorf



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Special to The Mercury

Some movies are agonizingly hard to make. They require long hours, dangerous stunt work and intense emotions.

And then there's "Monte Carlo," a fairy tale as sunny as its title suggests. Shot in some of the swankiest hot spots in Europe, the movie was such a breeze to make that stars Leighton Meester and Selena Gomez liken it to going on summer vacation.

"Being in Monte Carlo was so cool," said Meester ("Gossip Girl."). We went out in the ocean and got yanked around on the back of this boat on an inner tube. We were screaming for our lives but it was really fun ... We ate. We saw fireworks. We went shopping."

"We went to a little sushi place," added Gomez, the star of TV's "Wizards of Waverly Place." "I was 17 when I (started) the film and I got to live in Budapest and Paris and Monte Carlo ... in the actual hotel that you see in the movie, which was really fancy pants."

"The whole experience was really life-changing. I learned so much on this film. So, I'd say it was the best summer (adventure)."

Meester concurred. "If it's a winter trip it's different. But this was a total summer revelation. It was really fun."

For the characters in "Monte Carlo," the fun begins when they land in Paris for a summer holiday, leaving behind boyfriends ("Glee's" Cory Monteith) and overprotective parents (Andie MacDowell, Brett Cullen). The pals' European retreat turns into a full-scale adventure when Grace (Gomez), Emma (Katie Cassidy) and Meg (Meester) discover that Grace is a dead ringer for a bratty British heiress named Cordelia.

One brazen masquerade later, the girls are living large in the lavish Hotel de Paris in Monte Carlo. Not only do they have access to the socialite's grand suite, designer duds and accessories (including a \$4 million necklace) but they stumble into a parade of yacht parties, polo matches and highly eligible bachelors.

"This story is set up as a bit of a 'Wizard of Oz' fable," noted director and co-screenwriter Thomas Bezucha ("The Family Stone"). "The girls are from a remote landlocked place, as was Dorothy Gale, and they journey to Monte Carlo, which is Emerald City. We're doing a storybook version of France — it looks like a giant Easter basket, colorful and coated with sugar." [Continued...](#)

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