

## **A Walk On The Beach**

I love to walk on beaches. My bucket list includes putting my toes in the sand on as many shores of islands, states, and countries as possible. On one of my adventures, my husband and I were in Nice, France. Of course, I was going beachcombing.

It was a beautiful sunny day. Why wouldn't it be? We were on the Côte d'Azur - the French Riviera. The locals get very upset if it rains during the summer, and it was summer. We were off to the beach!

After my walk, I joined my husband. He was already sitting by the water. In no time at all, an older woman spread her towel and laid down next to us. I did not notice when she removed her clothing, but I could not ignore that she was suddenly sans bathing top. As we would say in America, she was topless!

Despite our prolonged observation of her, she was utterly oblivious to us. It was apparent she was there to enjoy the intense afternoon sun. Everyone else on the beach was entitled to do the same, but she owned that strip of seashore. She graciously chose to share the spot with us if we desired. She was not attached to anyone else's decision about adding or subtracting a bathing suit top. The locals didn't pay any attention to her whatsoever. As far as she was concerned, the tourists could stay, stare, strip, swim, or scam.

As she soaked up the rays, I marveled at the confident air she had about her. This visit to Nice occurred a long time ago. I was much younger than the self-assured soul I was watching. It was apparent that I could not muster a fraction of her confidence and allow myself to indulge in this particular local custom. I had never swam topless in my life. As I was having this lengthy

discussion with myself, it appeared she hadn't given her actions or the people she shared her space with a moment's thought. I was fascinated. While I was in my head, she was in the moment.

I interrupted my conversation with myself to make a note. I understood that the woman ignored the other beachgoers. The fact that the local beachgoers were willing to ignore her could not have transpired in America. I know what you're thinking, but they weren't taking notice of the young girls either. We weren't in Kansas anymore. In America, half-naked females seem very aware of who is on the beach. The people on the beach seem very aware of anyone not wearing a complete bathing suit. I stand corrected. Everyone knows you can be in full bathing suit attire and be half-naked. Perhaps the French are on to something!

She made such an impression on me that I can still picture her. Before you snicker, I can recall her face, not her anatomy. Well, maybe a little, but I learned a lot in those few minutes of shared beach time with my partially unclothed octagenarian. If all the world's a stage, and we are all players, I was looking at a leading lady. She was stealing the scene. She was the epitome of someone living life to the fullest. I imagined her doing that in all her engagements, not just those performed on the beach.

I wondered if she was always like this. Perhaps her wisdom came with age. Perhaps she had always lived her life to the fullest. The question was how much she had inspired me. Could I borrow her script? Could I perform in Scene Two and exhibit that same free spirit? When in France, could I do as the French do? Did I follow her lead and become a willing understudy? Did I strip and swim, or did I scam? You'll have to ask my husband.