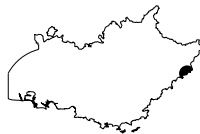


Monaco



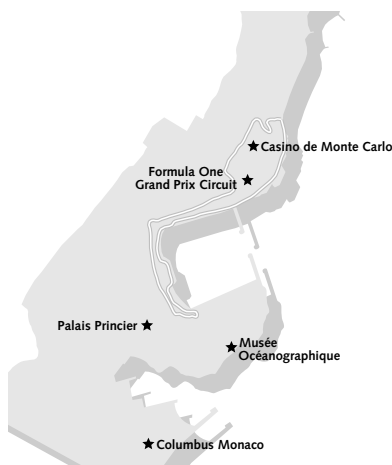
Squeezed into just 1.95 sq km, this confetti principality might be the world's second-smallest country (the Vatican's smaller), but what it lacks in size it makes up for in attitude. Glitzy, glam and screaming hedonism, Monaco compels you to let rip. Be it razzing around in a helicopter or Ferrari, risking a little (or a lot) at the casino, sipping designer cocktails by a Med-filled pool or simply revelling in the extraordinary opulence that drips from every last lamp post, this the perfect place to play millionaire.

The stories behind this skyscraper-studded cityscape – a once-impoverished backwater – only add to the glamour: fortunes have been won and lost in the casino in its capital since the *belle époque*. Formula One's showpiece race has ripped around the port since the late 1920s. A Hollywood queen found her prince charming, the late Prince Rainier III, here. And in the 1930s Somerset Maugham famously dubbed this well-known tax haven for astronomical earners 'a sunny place for shady people'. Indeed, with zero natural resources to rely on, this sovereign state has made pampering the super-rich its speciality.

Yet 'decadent hide-out for dodgy characters' is not a designer label reigning monarch Prince Albert II likes. In the wake of his coronation in 2005, the bachelor prince with a couple of illegitimate children dotted around the globe wants to clean things up. Money launderers, shady businessmen et al are *persona non grata* in this fairy-tale kingdom where no-one breaks the rules and practically everyone's a millionaire – for real.

HIGHLIGHTS

- Watch the changing of the guard at the Grimaldi's **Palais Princier** (p387)
- Stare nose-to-nose at sharks in the breathtaking **Musée Océanographique** (p386)
- Risk all (or simply sit back and savour the *belle époque* splendour) at **Casino de Monte Carlo** (p388)
- Sip champagne at sunset in the bar of **Columbus Monaco** (p391) or in one of the principality's cutting-edge **designer dines** (p393)
- Jump in an open-topped, cherry-red Ferrari and tear around the **Formula One Grand Prix circuit** (p395)



HISTORY

Since the 13th century, Monaco's history has been that of the Grimaldi family whose rule began in 1297 when François 'the Spiteful', disguised as a monk (see a statue of him at the top of the Rampe Major leading up to the palace), begged for shelter at the fortress on Le Rocher. Pitying soldiers let him in, only for François to stab them and open the gates to his followers.

Charles VIII, king of France, recognised Monégasque independence in 1489. But during the French Revolution France snatched Monaco back and imprisoned its royal family. Upon release, they had to sell what few possessions they still owned to survive and the palace became a warehouse.

The Grimaldis were restored to the throne under the 1814 Treaty of Paris. But in 1848 they lost Menton and Roquebrune to France, and Monaco swiftly became Europe's poorest country. In 1860 Monégasque independence was recognised for a second time by France, and a monetary agreement in 1865 sealed the deal on future cooperation between the two countries.

Despite Monaco's 'neutrality' in WWII, Prince Louis II (1870–1949) was a supporter of the Vichy government and turned a blind

LITERARY MONACO

Lose yourself in some Monaco-inspired literature.

- *Loser Takes All* (Grahame Greene) Short novel written in 1955 in which a young couple are manipulated into honeymooning at the Hôtel de Paris in Monte Carlo and end up risking all at Monte Carlo casino.
- *Collected Short Stories* (Somerset Maugham) Includes *The Facts of Life*, a short story about a tennis player taking to the gambling tables at Monte Carlo; and *Three Fat Women from Antibes*, inspired by the many years Maugham lived on Cap Ferrat.
- *Mademoiselle of Monte Carlo* (William Le Queux) Who's that woman standing the other side of the roulette table? Drama around Monte Carlo's 'suicide table', written in 1921 by the British writer said to have inspired Fleming's 007.

THE MONÉGASQUES

Citizens of Monaco (Monégasques), of whom there are only 7600, don't pay taxes. They have their own flag (red and white), their national anthem and national holiday (19 November).

The traditional dialect is Monégasque (broadly speaking, a mixture of French and Italian), which children of the 107 different nationalities living in Monaco are taught in schools alongside French, Monaco's official language. Many street signs are bilingual.

Monaco is not quite an absolute monarchy: the ruling prince is assisted by a national council of 18 democratically elected members. Only Monégasques aged 21 or over can vote; elections are held every five years.

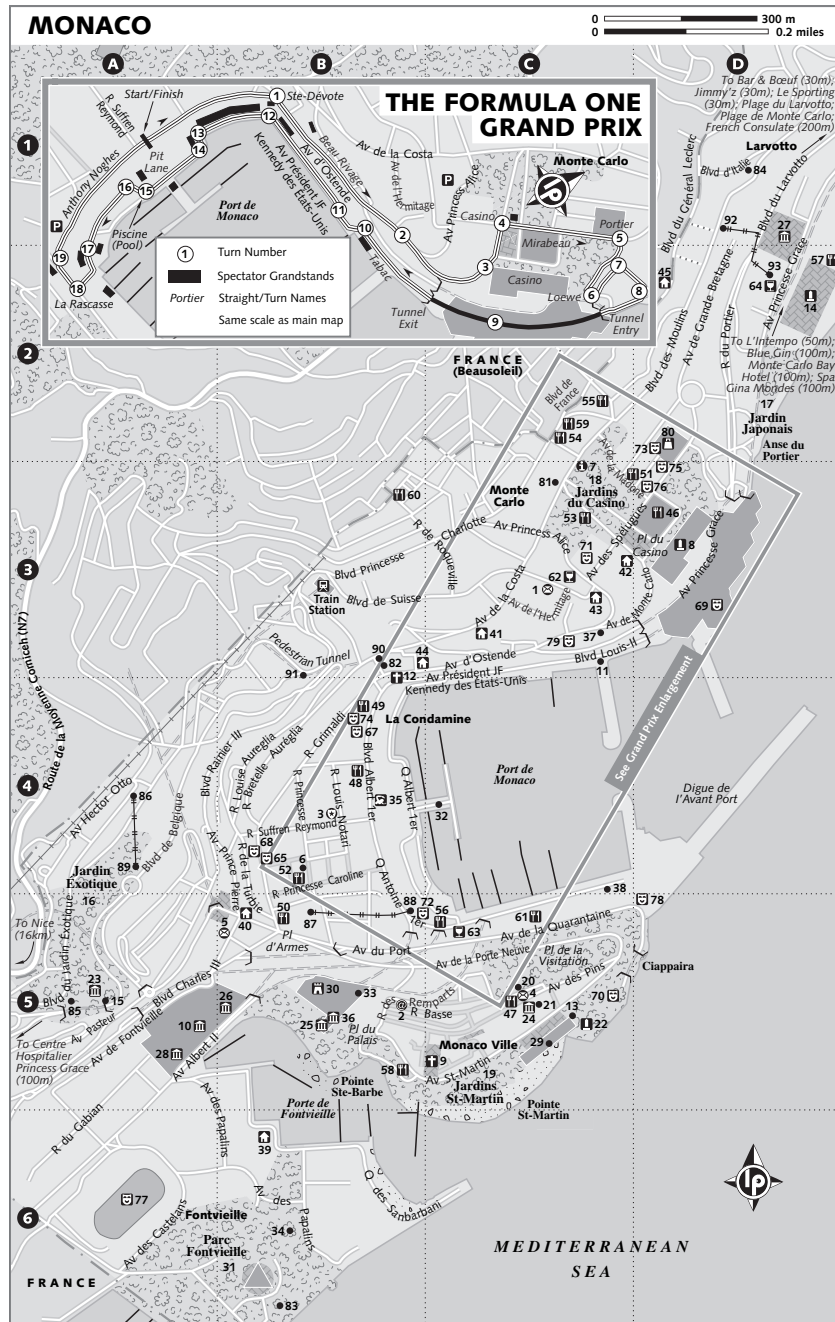
eye to Jewish 'disappearances' in Monaco. The principality's annual revenues rose from three million francs in 1941 to 80 million in 1943 through money-laundering on the Nazis' behalf.

Rainier III (ruled 1949–2005), nicknamed *le prince bâtisseur* (the builder prince), expanded the size of his principality by 20% in the late 1960s by reclaiming land from the sea to create the industrial quarter of Fontvieille. In 2004 he doubled the size of the harbour with a giant floating dike (p386) as part of an ambitious project to place Port de Monaco (Port Hercules) among the world's leading cruise-ship harbours. Upon Rainier's death in 2005, son Albert II became monarch.

Monaco's economic status is strange. Although not a member of the European Union, because of its continuing special relationship with France, Monaco participates in the EU customs territory (meaning no border formalities crossing from France into Monaco) and uses the euro as its currency. It's been a member of the Council of Europe since 2004.

ORIENTATION

Monaco divides into five: Monaco Ville, a rocky outcrop crowned by the Palace Princier on the southern side of Port de Monaco; Monte Carlo, north of the port; La Condamine, the flat area around the port; Fontvieille, the industrial area southwest of Monaco Ville; and Larvotto, the beach area east of Monte Carlo. The French town of Beausoleil is three streets



INFORMATION	Port de Monaco.....32 C4	Quai des Artistes.....63 C5
Canadian Consulate.....(see 1)	Rampe Major.....33 B5	Sass Café.....64 D2
Main Post Office.....1 C3	Roseraie Princesse Grace.....34 B6	
Notari Cyberspace.....2 B5	Stade Nautique Rainier III.....35 B4	ENTERTAINMENT
Police Station.....3 B4	State Apartments.....36 B5	ASM Football Club Pro Shop.....65 B4
Post Office.....4 C5	Thermes Marins de Monte-Carlo.....37 C3	Atrium du Casino.....(see 8)
Post Office.....5 B5	Yacht Club de Monaco.....38 C4	Auditorium Rainier III.....66 D3
Scraples.....6 B4		Automobile Club de Monaco.....67 B4
Stars 'n' Bars.....(see 61)		Boutique Formule 1.....68 B4
Tourist Office.....7 C3		Centre de Congrès
	SLEEPING	Auditorium.....69 D3
	Columbus Monaco.....39 B6	Cinéma d'Été.....70 C5
SIGHTS & ACTIVITIES	Hôtel Ambassador.....40 B5	Cinéma Le Sporting.....71 C3
Casino de Monte Carlo.....8 D3	Hôtel Balmoral.....41 C3	Ferrari City Tour.....72 B5
Cathédrale de Monaco.....9 C5	Hôtel de Paris.....42 C3	Hôtel Hermitage.....43 C3
Collection de Voitures Anciennes.....10 A5	Hôtel Miramar.....44 B3	Hôtel Villa Boeri.....45 D2
Compagnie de Navigation et de Tourisme.....11 C3		
Église Ste-Devote.....12 B3	EATING	
Escalator to Monte Carlo Story.....13 C5	Café de Paris.....46 D3	
Grimaldi Forum.....14 D2	Carlino's.....47 C5	
Grottes de l'Observatoire.....15 A5	Casino.....48 B4	
Jardin Exotique.....16 A5	Caves & Gourmandises.....49 B4	
Jardin Japonais.....17 D2	Covered Market.....50 B5	
Jardins du Casino.....18 C3	Fuji.....51 C3	
Jardins St-Martin.....19 C5	Fusion.....(see 61)	
Ministère d'État.....20 C5	Huit Demi.....52 B4	
Monaco Tours.....21 C5	Häagen-Dazs.....53 C3	SHOPPING
Monte Carlo Story.....22 C5	Il Terrazzino.....54 C2	Métropole Shopping Centre.....80 D2
Musée d'Anthropologie Préhistorique.....23 A5	La Maison du Caviar.....55 C2	TRANSPORT
Musée de la Chapelle de la Visitation.....24 C5	La Rascasse.....56 C5	Buses to Airport.....81 C3
Musée des Souvenirs Napoléoniens et Archives Historiques du Palais.....25 B5	La Rose des Vents.....57 D2	Entrance to Train Station.....(see 82)
Musée des Timbres et des Monnaies.....26 B5	Le Castelroc.....58 B5	Gallery to Public Lift.....82 B3
Musée National.....27 D1	Louis XV.....(see 42)	Héliport de Monaco.....83 B6
Musée Naval.....28 A5	Marché U.....59 C2	Public Lift.....84 D1
Musée Océanographique.....29 C5	Polpetta.....60 B3	Public Lift Entrance.....85 A5
Palais Princier.....30 B5	Stars 'n' Bars.....61 C5	Public Lift Entrance.....86 A4
Parc Fontvieille.....31 B6	Zebra Square.....(see 14)	Public Lift Entrance.....90 B3
		Public Lift Entrance.....91 B3
	DRINKING	Public Lift Entrance.....92 D1
	Flashman's.....62 C3	Public Lift Entrance.....93 D2
	Karé(ment).....(see 14)	
	La Note Bleue.....(see 57)	

up the hill from Monte Carlo, and Moneghetti borders Cap d'Ail's western fringe.

INFORMATION

Bookshops
Scraples (☎ 93 50 43 52; 9 rue Princesse Caroline)
 English-language bookshop.

Emergency

Ambulance & Fire Brigade (☎ 18)
Police station (☎ 17, 93 15 30 15; 3 rue Louis Notari)

Internet Access

The glass lobby of the Grimaldi Forum (p389) is a Libello **wi-fi hot spot** (2/24hr card €12/24).
Notari Cyberspace (☎ 92 16 17 62; www.notari.mc; 3bis rue Basse; per 30/60min €3/5; ☎ 10am-7pm)
Stars 'n' Bars (☎ 97 97 95 95; www.starsnbars.com; 6 quai Antoine 1er; per 30min €5; ☎ 7.30am-midnight, later in summer, Tue-Sun winter; ☎)

Internet Resources

<http://holiday.monacoeye.com> Alternative guide to Monaco.
www.gouv.mc The government.
www.monaco-montecarlo.com Five-language site loaded with practical info.
www.monaco-tourisme.com The tourist office.

Media

106.5 Riviera Radio (www.rivieraradio.mc) English-language station with hourly BBC news summaries, on 106.3MHz FM (106.5MHz FM in France).
Radio Monte Carlo (RMC; www.radiomontecarlo.net) French- and Italian-language broadcasts on 98.8MHz FM in Monaco.

Medical Services

Centre Hospitalier Princesse Grace (☎ emergencies 97 98 97 69, switchboard 97 98 99 00; www.chpg.mc in French; 1 av Pasteur)

THINK BIG

With no room for expansion on land, minuscule Monaco is looking to its 12 miles of territorial waters to make more space. Extending Fontvieille still further out to sea is one idea, although the sudden falling away of the sea bed is problematic. A second sky-scraping proposal is to build three offshore islands, each mounted by one leg of a futuristic, 390m-high 'Tour de la Mer'.

Money

Monaco uses the euro. Banks abound near the casino and on blvd Albert 1er.

Change Bureau (Jardins du Casino; ☎ 9am-7.30pm)

Post

Monégasque stamps are only valid for letters sent within Monaco; use a French stamp to send a postcard. Postal rates are the same as those in France.

Main post office (Palais de la Scala, sq Beaumarchais)

Post offices (place de la Mairie)

Telephone

Telephone numbers in Monaco have eight digits and no area code.

Calls between Monaco and France are deemed international calls. When calling Monaco from the rest of France or abroad, dial ☎ 00 followed by Monaco's country code, 377. To call France from Monaco, dial ☎ 00 then France's country code, ☎ 33.

Monaco's public telephones accept Monégasque or French phonecards.

Tourist Information

Tourist office (☎ 92 16 61 16; www.monaco-tourisme.com; 2a blvd des Moulins; ☎ 9am-7pm Mon-Sat, 10am-noon Sun) From June to September additional tourist information kiosks open at the harbour and train station.

SIGHTS**Monaco Ville**

Monaco Ville, also called Le Rocher, thrusts skywards on a pistol-shaped rock. The most alluring sights – the Prince's palace, the old town, gardens and museums – are here, and the superb state-wide views help you get your bearings.

The 16th-century red-brick **Rampe Major** provides a steep pedestrian link from the

port area of La Condamine to the palace. Alternatively, avoid the sweaty crowd slog-ging up the ramp and instead take a nautical stroll around the port and up the stairs next to Yacht Club de Monaco onto the **Digue de l'Avant Port**, a record-breaking floating dike, 28m wide, 352m long and weighing 163,000 tonnes, that doubled Monaco port's capacity overnight when it was unveiled in 2004. From its southern end a path winds along the coast and up through the shady Jardins St-Martin to Monaco Ville.

Buses 1 and 2 link the tourist office (via place d'Armes) with Monaco Ville, stopping at place de la Visitation.

MUSÉE OCÉANOGRAPHIQUE & AROUND

Stuck dramatically to the edge of a cliff since 1910, the world-renowned **Musée Océanographique** (Oceanographic Museum; ☎ 93 15 36 00; www.oceano.mc; av St-Martin; adult/6-18yr €11/6; ☎ 9.30am-7.30pm Jul & Aug, 9.30am-7pm Apr-Jun & Sep, 10am-6pm Oct-Mar) – which is a Prince Albert I (1848–1922) creation – is a stunner. Its centrepiece is the 7.5m-long coral reef, with vivid tropical fish on one side and deep-sea predators on the other. Ninety smaller tanks contain a dazzling 450 Mediterranean and tropical species, sustained by 250,000L of freshly pumped sea water per day. The Whale Room, filled with cetacean skeletons and pickled embryos, and fanciful seabird-covered chandeliers, mosaic floors and oak doorframes carved into marine shapes at every turn complete the mesmerising ensemble. Kids will love the **tactile basin** (2-12yr €3; ☎ hourly 10.45am-3.45pm Mon-Fri); tickets for the 30-minute feel-the-fish sessions are sold at the entrance.

Complete the oceanographic trip with a postaquarium stroll around the steep-sided, statue-studded **Jardins St-Martin** (☎ 7am-6pm Oct-Mar, to 8pm Apr-Sep), which run round the coast outside the museum or – the lazy option – a cup of tea in the aquarium's rooftop **brasserie** (mains €10-15; ☎ 10am-5pm).

Ticky-tacky but busy is **Monte Carlo Story** (☎ 93 25 32 33; adult/6-14yr €7/3.50; ☎ 2-5pm Jan-Jun, Sep & Oct, 2-6pm Jul & Aug), a 35-minute film about the Grimaldi dynasty accessed via the escalator in front of the Musée Océanographique.

Opposite, **Monaco Tours** (☎ 92 05 64 38; av St-Martin; adult/2-8yr €7/4; ☎ 10am-5pm Sep-Jun, to 6pm Jul & Aug) runs 30-minute city tours aboard the *Azur Express* tourist train.

PALAIS PRINCIER

Prince Albert and his **palace** (☎ 93 25 18 31; www.palais.mc; place du Palais) are protected by an elite company of 112 guards, the Carabiniers du Prince. In summer they sport bleached hats and uniforms, in winter moody black attire. At 11.55am daily a tourist scrum scrambles to watch the pristine soldiers parade outside the palace during the **changing of the guard**.

If the Grimaldi standard is flying from the palace tower, it means the Prince is at home. Sneak a peak at royal life with an audio-guide tour of the **state apartments** (adult/8-14yr €7/3.50; ☎ 10.30am-6pm Apr, 9.30am-6.30pm May-Sep, 10am-5.30pm Oct); in summer queue for up to 45 minutes to get in.

In the palace's southern wing princely collections of bric-a-brac (medals, coins, uniforms and swords), Napoleon's socks and other fascinating objects of day-to-day life form the **Musée des Souvenirs Napoléoniens et Archives Historiques du Palais** (Museum of Napoleonic Souvenirs & the Palace's Historic Archives; adult/8-14yr €4/2; ☎ 9.30am-6.30pm May-Sep, 10am-5.30pm Oct, 10.30am-5pm Dec, 10.30am-12.30pm & 2-5pm Jan-Apr).

CATHÉDRALE DE MONACO

Visitors flood to this Romanesque-Byzantine **cathedral** (☎ 93 30 87 70; www.cathedrale.mc in French; 4 rue Colonel Bellando de Castro), built in 1875, to view the flower-covered graves of fairy-tale couple Princess Grace (1929–82) and Prince Rainier III.

HEDONIST MONACO

Go on, spoil yourself. Pretend you're loaded. First stop: the **port** (opposite) with its big-name boats to ogle at and get you in the moneyed mood. Nautical wealth ingested, grab a portside coffee at **La Rascasse** (p392) before revving up a gear with a razz around the Grand Prix circuit in a **Ferrari** (p395). Next, whiz up the rock (cut through the **Jardins St-Martin**; opposite) and pick an unforgettable frock at **Isabelle Kristensen's** (p395) *haute-couture* boutique, then shift to **Monte Carlo** (above) with its glam **designer line-up** (p395). End your shopping spree with apéritifs and Beamer-watching at **Café de Paris** (p392) followed by the lunch of a lifetime at **Louix XV** (see the boxed text, p392).

Fill what's now a short afternoon with a flutter at **Casino de Monte Carlo** (p388) and a down-your-sorrows session in a 55-minute seaweed bath, caviar facial or old-fashioned shave at the **Thermes Marins de Monte Carlo** (p390). A poolside siesta is mandatory.

Oh dear. It's 5pm. Apéritif time again. Strut north along the coast, savouring a Zen moment in the **Jardin Japonais** (p389) before indulging in a champagne cocktail with sun-drenched sea view at **Karément** (p392), on the beach with jazz at **La Note Bleue** (p393) or in the extravagant company of gourmet tapas at **Sea Lounge** (p392).

Dinner is a seaside affair at **Bar & Bœuf** (see the boxed text, p393) or **Fuji** (see the boxed text, p393). Then it's drinks with the jet set on the champagne terrace at **Blue Gin** (p392) and dancing 'til dawn at **Jimmy Z** (p393).

TAKE NOTE

By law, it's forbidden to inline skate or walk around town bare-chested, barefooted or bikini-clad. Oh, and crossing the road at any point other than a zebra crossing is severely disliked by the army of whistle-blowing police officers who police the streets alongside a generous dose of CCTV cameras.

Key phrase to understand in Monaco: *tenu de ville* (jacket and tie).

From September to June, Sunday Mass at 10am is sung by **Les Petits Chanteurs de Monaco** (☎ 93 15 80 88; www.lespetitschanteurs.mc), Monaco's boys' choir, although tours in July and August can take the choir out of town. Organ recitals are at held at 6pm on alternate Saturdays, from July to September.

MUSÉE DE LA CHAPELLE DE LA VISITATION

Religious artworks by some big-hitters, including Rubens, Zurbaran and Ribera, are displayed in the enchanting **Musée de la Chapelle de la Visitation** (☎ 93 50 07 00; place de la Visitation; adult/6-12yr €3/1.50; ☎ 10am-4pm Tue-Sun), a 17th-century baroque chapel.

Monte Carlo

The **Jardins du Casino** form the district's green hub. Changing art exhibitions in the central strip add intrigue. For further brushes with

DYNASTY

Monaco's longest-ruling monarch, reigning for 56 years, Rainier III (1923–2005), won the heart of a nation with his fairy-tale marriage to Grace Kelly in 1956. The legendary Philadelphia-born actress made 11 films in the 1950s, including Alfred Hitchcock's *Dial M for Murder* (1954), *Rear Window* (1954) and *To Catch a Thief* (1955), in which she played the cool blonde on the coast. The movie took Kelly to Cannes and later to Monaco for a photo shoot where she met Rainier. One year later they wed and the princess retired from film and devoted herself to being Princess of Monaco. Tragically, in 1982, she died in a car crash; a broken-hearted Rainier died 23 years later.

The soap-opera lives of the couple's children – Prince Albert (b 1958), monarch since 19 November 2005, and his two sisters, Caroline and Stephanie – take centre stage today. 'World's most eligible bachelor', 48-year-old Albert lives up to his reputation as athlete and international playboy. He set up Monaco's bobsleigh team in 1986, competing himself in several Olympic Games, is a black belt in judo and played for a while on the national soccer team. Just months after being crowned, he publicly recognised first one (three-year-old Alexandre, son of a former flight attendant from Tonga) and then another (14-year-old Jazmin Grace, daughter of a Californian waitress who had a fling with the Prince while holidaying on the Côte d'Azur) child he'd fathered. The Palace quickly made it clear that neither child – nor any other that pops up out of the woodwork – could be line to the throne.

Indeed, until Prince Albert succeeds first in marrying and second in siring an heir, older sister Caroline (b 1957) remains next in line for the throne. Princess Caroline was widowed in 1990 when her second husband (her marriage to the first was annulled) and father of her three children was killed in a speedboat accident. On her 42nd birthday she wed Prince Ernst of Hanover, a cousin of Britain's Queen Elizabeth.

Wild child Princess Stephanie (b 1965) has been keeping the tabloids in business for more than 20 years, not least because she was in (some say driving) the car during the crash that killed her mother. She wed her bodyguard in 1995, but divorced him a year later after he was snapped frolicking with a Belgian stripper. Her second marriage to Portuguese circus acrobat Adan Peres lasted 10 months; within a couple of weeks of the marriage's end a casino croupier was rumoured to be her latest lover. During the 1980s and early 1990s the entrepreneurial princess launched her own swimwear label (Pool Position) and released a flurry of pop songs, including 'Ouragan' (Hurricane) and 'I am Waiting for You'.

May's Rose Ball, the Summer Ball, the fundraising *Gala de la Croix Rouge* (Red Cross Ball) and the Gala Ball are key events in Monégasque high society – all of which offer a royal chance to glimpse Monégasque royalty.

nature, follow the coastal path (two to three hours) from Monte Carlo to Roquebrune-Cap Martin.

CASINO DE MONTE CARLO

The drama of watching the poker-faced risk all in Monte Carlo's marble-and-gold **casino** (☎ 92 16 20 00; www.casino-monte-carlo.com in French; place du Casino; ☎ from noon Jul & Aug, from 2pm Mon-Fri & noon Sat & Sun Sep-Jun) makes the stiff admission fees, stakes and obligatory cloakroom 'tips' almost bearable. The **Salon Ordinaire** (admission €10) has European roulette (minimum stake €5) and trente et quarante (minimum stake €20); and the **Salons Privés** (admission €20; ☎ from 4pm) offer baccarat, craps, English roulette and chemin de fer.

To enter the casino, you must be at least 18, have a passport for ID, and be dressed relatively smartly (no shorts, trainers etc). A jacket and tie are required to enter the Salons Privés and the Salon Ordinaire in the evening. The one-armed bandits, to the right as you enter, command neither fee nor dress code.

MUSÉE NATIONAL

More innocent pleasures are to be found in Monaco's **Musée National** (National Museum; ☎ 93 30 91 26; www.monte-carlo.mc/musee-national; 17 av Princesse Grace; adult/6-14yr €6/4; ☎ 10am-6.30pm Easter-Sep, 10am-12.15pm & 2.30-6.30pm Oct-Easter), a Garnier-designed villa filled with dolls and mechanical toys (with demonstrations in the afternoons at half past the hour).

JARDIN JAPONAIS

Sandwiched between built-up Monte Carlo, Larvotto and the Mediterranean, the **Jardin Japonais** (Japanese Garden; av Princesse Grace; ☎ 9am-dusk) is intended as a piece of paradise. It was blessed by a Shinto high priest, and quiet contemplation and meditation is encouraged.

GRIMALDI FORUM

Monaco's congress and conference centre, the **Grimaldi Forum** (☎ 99 99 30 00; www.grimaldiforum.mc; 10 av Princesse Grace), is worth a peak for its architecture – think glass crystal, two-thirds submerged in the sea – and designer dining and drinking spaces. Otherwise, contemporary art exhibitions and cultural happenings add spice to daily Monégasque life.

Fontvieille

Fontvieille – built on 30 hectares of land reclaimed from the sea between 1966 and 1973 – covers the southernmost part of Monaco. From here a 3.5km-long coastal path leads southwest to Cap d'Ail. The lush gardens of **Parc Fontvieille** are equally pleasant for a summer stroll; more than 4000 rose bushes and a small swan-filled lake adorn the **Roseraie Princesse Grace** (Princess Grace Rose Garden),

planted in her memory in 1984. Contemporary sculptures, including works by César and Arman, line the length of the park's **Chemin des Sculptures**. Museum-wise, Fontvieille is Monaco's collector's corner.

COLLECTION DE VOITURES ANCIENNES

Highlights of the 100-odd classic cars displayed in the Palace's regal **Collection de Voitures Anciennes** (☎ 92 05 28 56; Centre Commercial de Fontvieille; adult/8-14yr €6/3; ☎ 10am-6pm) include a Rolls Royce Silver Cloud, a wedding present from local shopkeepers to Rainier III; a black London cab (Austin 1952) fitted out for Grace Kelly; and the first F1 racing car to win the Monaco Grand Prix – the Bugatti 1929.

MUSÉE NAVAL

An impressive collection of 200-plus model ships fills the **Musée Naval** (Naval Museum; ☎ 92 05 28 48; www.naval-museum.mc in French; Centre Commercial de Fontvieille; adult/8-14yr €4/2.50; ☎ 10am-6pm).

MUSÉE DES TIMBRES ET DES MONNAIES

The **Museum of Stamps & Coins** (☎ 93 15 41 50; Centre Commercial de Fontvieille; adult/12-14yr €3/2; ☎ 10am-6pm Jul-Sep, 10am-5pm Oct-Jun) contains Monégasque stamps dating from 1885 and numismatic wonders from 1640.

LOSER RISKS ALL

The beautiful *belle époque* décor of Monte Carlo Casino – Europe's oldest – is as extravagant as those who play in it. The casino was built in several phases, the earliest being the Salon de l'Europe, built in 1865 and splendidly lit with eight 150kg crystal chandeliers from 1898. The second phase saw French architect Charles Garnier, who'd just completed the Paris opera house, move to Monte Carlo to create the luxurious fresco-adorned Salle Garnier in 1878. The main entrance hall, with its 28 marble columns and flurry of gamblers and voyeurs, opened the same year. The third part, the Salle Empire, was completed in 1910.

Monaco's Prince Charles III, who saw the casino as the solution to the principality's financial troubles, was nevertheless concerned about the malign effect of gambling on his subjects. He therefore made it illegal for his family, or any Monégasque, to set foot in the precincts! Money-losing was for rich foreigners only.

Monte Carlo Casino remains in the hands of its founding owner, the **Société des Bains de Mer** (SBM; Sea Bathing Society; www.montecarloresort.com), established in 1863 and Monaco's largest corporation today, owning the principality's priciest hotels, restaurants and spa. Original shareholders included Charles III, and the state remains the leading shareholder today. Despite an initial drop in revenue in 1933 after roulette was legalised in neighbouring France, Casino du Monte Carlo rakes it in.

In 1875, when the then-future Edward VII and Queen Alexandra visited, around 150,000 players per day were frequenting the casino. Shotgun suicides, hot on the heels of a heavy loss at the gaming tables, were still common well into the 1920s. When Charles Deville Wells broke the bank in 1891 – the first and last person to do so – gaming tables were draped in black for three days.

Moneghetti

The world's largest succulent and cactus collection tumbles down the slopes of the **Jardin Exotique** (☎ 93 15 29 80; 62 blvd du Jardin Exotique; adult/6-18yr €6.90/3.60; 🕒 9am-7pm mid-May-mid-Sep, 9am-6pm or dusk mid-Sep-mid-May). Seven thousand varieties, from small *echinocereus* to 10m-tall African candelabras, are linked by winding paths and wooden bridges with spectacular views. Keep a firm hold of toddlers – there are some holey fences and unthinkable drops.

Your ticket also gets you a 35-minute guided tour round the **Grottes de l'Observatoire**, a prehistoric cave network stuffed with stalactites and stalagmites, 279 steps down inside the hillside; strangely, it's the only cave in Europe where the temperature rises as you descend. Admission to the **Musée d'Anthropologie Préhistorique** (Museum of Prehistoric Anthropology; ☎ 93 15 80 06), with displays of human artefacts, is also included; it closes 15 minutes before the gardens.

From the tourist office, take bus 2 to the Jardin Exotique stop.

ACTIVITIES

Boats & Beaches

Palatial pleasure crafts bedecked with cinemas, saunas, helicopter pads and lord knows what else dominate the **Port de Monaco**: many of the world's top 100 private yachts (listed at www.powerandmotoryacht.com/megayachts) are frequent visitors here. At the eastern end of quai Antoine 1er, members of the exclusive **Yacht Club de Monaco** (☎ 93 10 63 00; www.yacht-club-monaco.mc in French; 16 quai Antoine 1er) eagerly await a new clubhouse designed by architect Sir Norman Foster.

Lesser mortals should be able to sail in a glass-bottomed catamaran run by the **Compagnie de Navigation et de Tourisme** (☎ 92 16 15 15; www.aquavision-monaco.com; quai des États-Unis), at the quay's northeastern end, from 2007.

The nearest fine-shingle beaches, **Plage du Larvotto** and **Plage de Monte Carlo**, are in Larvotto. Both have private, paying sections where you can hire cushioned sun lounges and parasols for €8/10 per half-/full day. Take bus 4 from the train station or bus 6 from the port to Le Sporting stop.

Pools & Spas

Beautiful swimmers frequent **Stade Nautique Rainier III** (☎ 93 30 64 83; quai Albert 1er; adult/4-12yr €4.50/2.60; 🕒 9am-6pm May, Jun & mid-Sep-Oct,

9am-6pm Mon, 9am-8pm Tue-Sun Jul-mid-Sep), the Olympic-sized outdoor sea-water pool with water slide and sun-loungers/parasols (each €3.90) at the port.

Casino owner SBM runs the prestigious **Thermes Marins de Monte-Carlo** (☎ 92 16 49 46; www.montecarlospa.com; 2 av de Monte Carlo; 🕒 8am-8pm), a spa with 29°C sea-water pool, solarium and other aquatic self-pampering treats. One-/two-day sessions without accommodation start at €188/266.

Spa treatments – Brazilian slimming, Japanese flower baths, Balinese massages et al – span the globe at cutting-edge **Spa Cinq Mondes** (☎ 98 06 01 80; www.cinqmondes.com), inside the Monte Carlo Bay Hotel (opposite).

FESTIVALS & EVENTS

Poor old Ste Dévote, martyred in Corsica in AD 312, was thrown into a boat and left to drift to sea. Miraculously, a dove flew from the dead woman's mouth and blew the boat safely to Monaco, where the inhabitants snapped her up as their patron saint. The **Fête de la Ste-Dévote** on 27 January celebrates her feast day, with a traditional Mass celebrated in Monégasque in **Église Ste-Dévote** (place Ste-Dévote), with a torch-light procession, blessing and symbolic boat-burning in front of the church.

To celebrate midsummer, dancers in folk costume (long, frilly skirts and red-and-white patterned garments) leap around the **St-Jean Bonfires** on place du Palais (23 June) and place des Moulins (24 June).

Early August brings a glittering **International Fireworks Festival** (☎ 93 15 28 63) to the port area, and a carnival spirit fills the streets during the **Fête Nationale Monégasque** – Monaco's national holiday – on 19 November.

SLEEPING

Bar the truly moneyed, few people stay in Monaco; most day-trip it from Nice or elsewhere along the coast. Budget options and *chambres d'hôtes* in the principality are nonexistent.

High-season rates quoted here exclude the Grand Prix and New Year, when prices rocket sky high and most hotels demand a minimum three-night stay.

Midrange

Hôtel Villa Boeri (☎ 04 93 78 38 10; www.hotelboeri.com; 29 blvd du Général Leclerc; s/d/tr low season €49/56/65, high season €54/61/69; 🕒) Cross the road to get to blvd de France in Monaco from this appealing

AUTHOR'S CHOICE

Hôtel Miramar (☎ 93 30 86 48; www.hotel-miramar.mc; 1 av Président JF Kennedy; d low/high season €105/170; 🕒) This 1950s seaside hotel with rooftop terrace bar just made for long, lazy breakfasts, lunches and evening drinks is a fabulous, affordable option for the fortuneless. Recently renovated from head to toe in smart whites, creams and other natural hues, the minimalist rooms are sleek, modern and a tad nautical. Some have ab-fab balconies overlooking the port, seven of the 11 have air-con, and rates include breakfast with a princely palace view.

30-room option snug in French Beausoleil. Trademarks include ultracharming staff, patio garden to breakfast on and mirrored, plant-filled public spaces that lend a terrarium feel. Some rooms have flower-bedecked balconies with tiny sea view. Use the country code for France (☎ 00 33) when calling this hotel from Monaco.

Hôtel Balmoral (☎ 93 50 62 37; www.hotel-balmoral.mc; av de la Costa; d low/high season from €115/210; 🕒) Built in 1896 and run by the same family ever since, the Balmoral is set coolly apart from the clamour of the casino and enjoys inspirational views over the port and Monaco Ville.

Hôtel Ambassador (☎ 97 97 96 96; www.ambasadormonaco.com; 10 av Prince Pierre; s/d/tr low season €130/150/179, high season €150/180/210; 🕒) Clad in three stars, the Ambassador has a graceful interior (think carpeted rooms and marble bathrooms) and lovely Liberty-style restaurant serving Italian cuisine. Breakfast is included and wi-fi is free.

Columbus Monaco (☎ 92 05 90 00; www.columbus-hotels.com; 22 av des Papalins; d from €195; 🕒) Hi-tech urban chic best describes this boutique hotel in Fontvieille – the doing of hugely successful Glaswegian hotelier Ken McCulloch, designer Amanda Rosa and British F1 racing driver David Coulthard (all Monaco residents today). Its cocktail bar – a designer's wet dream – is hipper than hip and *the* place to sip champagne at sunset.

Top End

Monte Carlo Bay Hotel (☎ 98 06 25 25; www.montecarlobay.com; 40 av Princesse Grace; d from €300; 🕒) Beach babes will enjoy this waterfront location...not that you're likely

to venture out. A neoclassical interior with several hip bars and eating spaces, a ravishing lagoonlike pool with waterside cabanas to hide in, a state-of-the-art spa, and lavish Mediterranean gardens ensure guests stay firmly ensconced in this stylish corner of 1930s-cum-21st-century paradise.

Hôtel Hermitage (☎ 92 16 40 00; www.montecarlo-resort.com; sq Beaumarchais; d from €360; 🕒) The literary James Bond plumped to stay here when he was in town. One of many treasures in the SBM trove, this luxurious four-star palace with beige-suited doormen has an Italianate façade, pink-marbled restaurant, stained-glass winter garden designed by Gustave Eiffel, fabulous rooms in Wedgwood blues and the full complement of Rolls and Beamers parked outside.

Hôtel de Paris (☎ 98 06 30 00; www.montecarloresort.com; place du Casino; d from €395; 🕒) Monaco's most famous hotel, this magnificent *belle époque* pad was Monte Carlo's first hotel and the place where writer Colette spent her last years. Built between 1859 and 1864, it sits snug against a gastronomic temple to die for (see the boxed text, p392). A night in the Churchill Suite costs a mere €8000.

EATING

Dining in Monaco is overwhelmingly Italian; even places pertaining to cook Monégasque (essentially a local adaptation of Niçoise cuisine) pepper their menus with a generous dash of pasta.

But eating here needn't be expensive. There are cheaper places alongside the star-spangled whirl of dining legends. Pedestrian rue Princesse Caroline near the port is particularly well-endowed with affordable, if unmemorable, eateries.

Restaurants

La Maison du Caviar (☎ 93 30 80 06; 1 av St-Charles; plat du jour €16, menu €26; 🕒 lunch & dinner Mon-Fri, dinner Sat Sep-Jul) Going strong since 1950, the House of Caviar is that – and more. Savour blini with 30 mouth-melting grams of Iranian caviar (€80) followed by pan-fried beef and caviar (€48) or homemade gnocchi in a chive and cream sauce and 20g of the black roe (€60).

Il Terrazzino (☎ 93 50 24 27; www.ilterrazzino.com; 2 rue des Iris; plat du jour €12, menu €37, pasta/meat dishes €15/18; 🕒 lunch & dinner Mon-Sat) Dried sweet-corn cobs dangle from the ceiling of this colourful eating space where traditional Neapolitan

fare fuses with Italian charm. Pea-green and turquoise chairs grace the conservatory-style terrace, but the best bit is the eat-as-much-as-you-want antipasti buffet.

Huit et Demi (☎ 93 50 97 02; 4 rue Langlé; pizza €10.50-12.50, pasta €15, meat dishes €16-20; ☎ closed Sat lunch & Sun) Eight and a Half is a chic, clean-cut place with an industrial interior and pavement terrace filling an entire street running off rue Princesse Caroline. The fare is a mix of Italian (lots of pasta) and local (think *bagna cauda*, or lamb with Sospel olives).

La Rose des Vents (☎ 99 70 46 96; www.larosedesventsmonaco.com; Plage du Larvotto, av Princesse Grace; plat du jour €15, mains €20; ☎ lunch & dinner) Beach dining at its best. Sit on wooden decking arranged around a century-old palm tree on the sand and enjoy warm baby octopus salad, clams, or the catch of the day simply grilled.

Polpetta (☎ 93 50 67 84; 2 rue Paradis; menu €23; ☎ lunch & dinner Wed-Fri & Sun, dinner Sat) Craving down-to-earth dining? Then hike uphill to this disarmingly old-fashioned trattoria next to a garage, where eggs and veg are delivered each morning by a man in a little white van. The doing of the Guasco brothers for 20-odd years, Sinatra among others loved Polpetta. We love its osso bucco.

La Rascasse (☎ 93 25 56 90; 1 quai Antoine 1er; starters/mains €10/25, menu €35; ☎ restaurant lunch & dinner Mon-Sat, bar 10.30am-5am Mon-Sat, from 8pm Sun) It changed its name to Café Grand Prix but the punters just wouldn't have it. It does, after all, sit inside the Rascasse bend of the F1 Grand Prix circuit and throbs with drivers' girlfriends and support teams during the race. The restaurant is on the 1st floor, the bar is on the ground.

Le Castelroc (☎ 93 30 36 68; place du Palais; mains €22-27; ☎ lunch daily, dinner Tue-Sat May-Sep) Opposite the Palace with an entrance ensnared by T-shirt and souvenir shops it might be, but, incredibly, Le Castelroc is no tourist trap. Spilling out to an al-fresco terrace, its twin dining rooms are the best place around to try authentic Monégasque specialities such as *barbadjuan* (a spinach and cheese-stuffed doughnut) and *pissaladière* (onion and tomato tart; France's version is tomatoless).

Cafés

Café de Paris (☎ 92 16 21 24; place du Casino; starters/salads €15, mains €25-50; ☎ 8am-2am) A sight in itself, Monaco's best-known café has been in business since 1882 and is *the* place in Monte Carlo to people-watch. A *croque monsieur* (toasted

SIMPLY THE BEST

Reputed to be the Riviera's best restaurant, Ducasse's legendary **Louis XV** (☎ 92 06 88 64; Hôtel de Paris, place du Casino; lunch/dinner menus from €110/170; ☎ lunch & dinner Thu-Mon Jan-Nov, plus dinner Wed mid-Jun-mid-Aug) is the height of sophisticated dining. Set jewel-like inside the opulent Hôtel de Paris, the dining room, which looks as though it's been teleported from 17th-century Versailles, sparkles with gold. Nice-born head chef Franck Cerutti uses seasonal ingredients in his themed French menus, with dashes of Italy, Bavaria, Scotland and the Far East to keep things peppy. The restaurant contains the world's largest wine cellar: 250,000 bottles of wine (many priceless) stashed in a rock cave. Reservations are essential, as are jacket and tie for men.

ham-and-cheese sandwich) on its legendary terrace costs €12.50; a nip to the loo to glimpse the original brasserie interior is a must.

A prime spot for ice cream in a cone or a glass of soda is **Häagen-Dazs** (☎ 93 30 38 30; place du Casino; 1-/2-scoop cone €3.20/4.70, ice-cream soda €5.50) in the Jardins du Casino. Or gorge on tea and cake at 1920s chocolate house **Carlino's** (☎ 97 97 88 88; place de la Visitation).

Self-Catering

Stock up on fruit, veg et al for a picnic at Monaco's indoor and outdoor **market** (place d'Armes; ☎ 7am-1pm) in La Condamine or at a supermarket:

Casino (17 blvd Albert 1er; ☎ 8.30am-midnight Mon-Sat summer, 8.30am-10pm Mon-Sat winter) Waterfront supermarket with takeaway pizza (€2.50 to €11.50) and sandwiches (€3.20 to €4).

Caves & Gourmandises (25 blvd Albert 1er) Upmarket grocer.

Marché U (30 blvd Princesse Charlotte)

DRINKING

Much of Monaco's superchic drinking goes on in its designer dines and luxury hotels: the bar in Columbus Monaco (p391) is magical, as is the **Blue Gin** (Monte Carlo Bay Hotel; p391), a cocktail bar with champagne terrace, and the seasonal **Sea Lounge** (av Princesse Grace), with DJ David Parker, in Monte Carlo Beach Hôtel.

Karé(ment) (☎ 99 99 20 20; www.karement.com; 10 av Princesse Grace; ☎ 9-4.30am Mon-Fri, 6pm-4.30am Sat

& Sun) One glimpse of the stunning waterside terrace and you'll be fighting for a bar stool at this celebrity-cool lounge bar in the Grimaldi Forum. Fashion shows, DJ mixes and cultural happenings are held here.

Quai des Artistes (☎ 97 97 97 77; www.quaidesartistes.com; 4 quai Antoine 1er; lunch menu €21.50; ☎ noon-11.30pm) Tucked beneath awning at the port, with a glass façade and terrace overlooking the boats, this Art Deco metropolitan space with Parisian-style metro entrance is a great spot to drink, hang out, chat and dine on seafood. Kitchen closed afternoons.

Sass Café (☎ 93 25 52 00; 11 av Princesse Grace; ☎ 11pm-3am) Hipper-than-cool lounge lizards gather at this piano bar to dine and jive to live jazz.

La Note Bleue (☎ 93 50 05 02; av Princesse Grace; ☎ 8am-11pm Feb-Dec) The Blue Note comes in the shape of a jazz lounge with vast decking terrace on the sands of Larvotto.

Flashman's (☎ 93 30 09 03; 7 av Princesse Alice; ☎ 11am-dawn) Down a pint on a pint-sized terrace or mellow out in a steely interior at this English-run disco bar. Bands and DJs let rip Friday and Saturday.

TOP FIVE DESIGNER DINES

Hipster than hip, these gastronomic hang-outs are as much drinking as dining haunts for Monaco's jet set. Looking good is key to snagging a table.

Zébra Square (☎ 99 99 25 50; www.zebrasquare.com; 2nd fl, Grimaldi Forum, 10 av Princesse Grace; mains €15-20; ☎ lunch & dinner) The plates, floor and odd lamp are patterned like a zebra at this chic address in the Grimaldi Forum where Monaco trendies mingle with better-known bods on cushion-stacked sofa seating facing the sea. DJs, fashion shows and art happenings add an after-dark buzz.

L'intempo (☎ 93 15 78 50; www.meridien-plaza.monte-carlo.mc; 22 av Princesse Grace; mains €20-30; ☎ 24hr) Hotel restaurants in the principality are not second-best options, as this stunning eating space testifies. Take your pick from one of four dramatically different eating areas stuck in a glass tower on the seashore. Cuisine – some live – is Mediterranean.

Fuji (☎ 93 30 40 11; 4 av de la Madone; sushi €2.50-6.90, sashimi €13-32, menus €15-31; ☎ lunch & dinner Tue-Sat, dinner Mon) With its Zen interior – natural hues broken with the odd splash of lime-green neon – this Japanese restaurant is a sleek crowd-pleaser. Find it beneath the escalator leading down to the Métropole shopping centre and, in July and August, beneath the stars at Le Sporting (26 av Princesse Grace).

Bar & bœuf (☎ 98 06 71 71; www.sbm.mc; Le Sporting, 26 av Princesse Grace; full meal around €150; ☎ 8pm-1am mid-May-mid-Sep) Style-setters hobnob in a minimalist wood-and-glass interior designed by Philippe Starck at this Ducasse venture. Bar & bœuf specialises in just that – sea bass (*bar*) and beef (*bœuf*). Fellas note: jacket required.

Stars 'n' Bars (☎ 97 97 95 95; www.starsnbars.com; 6 quai Antoine 1er; salads €13, mains €15-20; ☎ 7.30am-midnight, later in summer, Tue-Sun winter; ☎ X) This American bar-restaurant just doesn't lose its touch. A long-time hot spot, its portside terrace remains one of Monaco's sexiest – as does its interior plastered with sporting memorabilia. Tex-Mex platters, buffalo wings, burgers and a generous dose of vegetarian dishes plump out a family-friendly menu, while fusion is the essence upstairs at the grown-up sushi and cocktail club Fusion (☎ 97 97 95 90; open 7pm to 2.30am Monday to Saturday).

ENTERTAINMENT

Tune in to events with the monthly *Bienvenue* and weekly *Your Week in the Principality* (both free at the tourist office) or online at www.monaco-spectacle.com. Venue box offices sell tickets, as does the *billetterie* at **Fnac** (☎ 93 10 81 81; www.fnac.com/monaco; 17 av des Spélugues; ☎ 10am-7.30pm Mon-Sat) in the Métropole shopping centre.

Nightclubs

Pure hedonism and a total disregard for cost are essential clubbing ingredients. Admission costs €15 to €20, although women often get in for free.

Jimmyz (☎ 98 06 73 73; Le Sporting, 26 av Princesse Grace; ☎ from 11.30pm Easter-Nov, Wed-Sun Nov-Easter) Part of the SBM empire, the most famous nightclub in town – jet-set den for 30-odd years – comes with Cuban smoking room, top DJs, models and celebrities à gogo.

Living Room (☎ 93 50 80 31; www.mcpam.com; 7 av des Spélugues; ☎ 11pm-dawn) DJ Kriss is the sound man at this hybrid piano bar-nightclub with tough door policy. Dress up nice (jacket required) and be as famous as possible.

MY MONACO

British-born Riviera Radio presenter Elizabeth Lewis lives in Nice and works in Monaco. She commutes to the station's portside studio with Monte Carlo view each morning by train.

Why Monaco? Monaco is glam. I love the beauty of the place, the weather, the attitude of the people, the fact you can be in a party with people of five different nationalities, people who have stories to tell. I like being able to speak French and English in the same sentence without sounding pretentious.

Unique trait: You can never be overdressed in Monaco. However dressed up you are, there's always someone more dressed up than you.

The people: The Monégasque are very loyal. They love their prince and his family; they don't gossip. Businesses require the permission of the princely family (an official portrait of the prince is displayed in every office, shop window). When Rainier died, we had to drape a black ribbon on his portrait for the official three-month mourning period, after which the official portrait of Albert went up.

Favourite spot: The market at 6am. There are no tourists; just the same people each morning walking to work like me. It's a taste of the real old Monaco.

Most loved character: Michel at the bar I go to for a coffee on my way to work. He serves me black coffee with an ice cube in it. It's not a trendy bar; it's where all the place d'Armes market-stall holders get their coffee.

For romance: The beach at night, La Note Bleue (p393). Some of the best jazz musicians in the region play here.

Best bar: The Columbus Monaco (p391) for an apéritif; also the Monte Carlo Bay Hotel (p391). They serve foie gras-flavoured crisps that are purple.

Best shop: There's Karen Millen in Monaco. I'm a €15 dress type of gal, though. I can't afford Chanel.

Hot tip: If you want to break the law, it is not the right place for you, Monaco. There's no crime in Monaco and police cameras everywhere. We're probably being watched now.

Legend (☎ 93 50 53 13; www.thelegendmonaco.com; 3 av des Spélugues; 🕒 11pm-dawn Thu-Sun) Resident DJs Pierre and Max spin a mix of sounds at this disco adjoining the Métropole shopping centre. Bikinis are obligatory at beach parties.

Live Music & Ballet

Le Sporting (☎ 92 16 36 36; www.sportingmontecarlo.com; 26 av Princesse Grace; tickets incl drink/dinner from €40/85) is Monaco's prime pop-concert and cabaret-show venue. Buy tickets at the **SBM Ticket Office** (☎ 98 06 36 36; place du Casino; 🕒 10am-5pm) adjoining Café de Paris or at Fnac.

The Salle Garnier (1892), a confection of neoclassical splendour adjoining Monte Carlo Casino, is the permanent home of the renowned **Opéra de Monte Carlo** (☎ 92 16 22 99; www.opera.mc; place du Casino). The **Monte Carlo Philharmonic Orchestra** (1863; www.opmc.mc) often plays at the Auditorium Rainier III inside the **Centre de Congrès Auditorium** (☎ 93 10 85 00; tickets €10-40; Blvd Louis II). In July and August its venue shifts to the star-topped Cour d'Honneur (Court-yard of Honour) at the Palais Princier. Tickets (€18 to €80), sold at the **Atrium du Casino** (☎ 92

16 22 99; place du Casino; 🕒 10am-5.30pm Tue-Sun) in the casino, are like gold dust.

The **Monte Carlo Ballet** (1985; www.balletsdemontecarlo.com) and orchestra perform in the Salles des Princes at the **Grimaldi Forum** (☎ 99 99 30 00; www.grimaldiforum.mc; tickets €25; 10 av Princesse Grace).

Jacket and tie for men is obligatory at all performances (except Le Sporting pop concerts).

Cinemas

Cinéma Le Sporting (☎ French number 08 36 68 00 72; www.cinemasporting.com; place du Casino) shows non-dubbed films daily.

From late June to the end of July films are screened in English at the open-air **Cinéma d'Été** (☎ 93 25 86 80; Parking des Pêcheurs, chemin des Pêcheurs), on a car-park roof. The show kicks off daily at 9.15pm; the programme is online at www.cinemasporting.com.

Theatre

Grace Kelly designed the interior of **Théâtre Princesse Grace** (☎ 93 25 32 27; www.tpgmonaco.com; 12 av d'Ostende; tickets around €40).

Watching an open-air performance at **Théâtre du Fort Antoine** (☎ 93 15 80 00; Jardins St-Martin, av de la Quarantaine) makes for a fabulous evening out. July and August ushers in a rash of free plays and musical concerts.

Sport

FOOTBALL

Football team **AS Monaco** (www.asm-foot.mc) plays at the **Stade Louis II** (Louis II Stadium; ☎ 92 05 40 00; 3 av des Castelans) in Fontvieille; buy match tickets from the ticket office inside or view the stadium as part of a 20-minute **guided tour** (adult/under 12yr €4/2; 🕒 10.30am, 11.30am, 2.30pm & 4pm Mon, Tue, Thu & Fri); just turn up at the respective time and buy a ticket. **ASM Football Club Pro Shop** (☎ 97 77 74 74; 16 rue Grimaldi) sells all the club gear.

MOTOR SPORT

January's **Monte Carlo Rally** is a high-octane three-day series of timed stages, starting and finishing at the port and ripping through Haute-Provence in between. The traditional night stage and the concentration run, where drivers set off from various European cities to meet in Monte Carlo (like Disney's on-screen VW Beetle Herbie in the 1970s), were scrapped in 1997.

The scent of singed tyres also fills the air at May's **Monaco Formula One Grand Prix** (p396).

From mid-July to the end of August speed fiends can put their foot down in a cherry-red Ferrari during a **Ferrari City Tour** (☎ 92 05 54 20; www.livenupmonaco.com) around the Monaco Grand Prix circuit. A lap takes 15 to 20 minutes and costs €35 in the passenger seat or €70 if you drive (someone comes with you to tell you when to accelerate, change gear etc). Look for the red Ferrari parked near the Rascasse bend at the port.

SHOPPING

Tool up on designer clothes at a dizzying array of big-name couturiers, listed in the annual 150-page *Monaco Shopping* guide, free at the tourist office. From mid-July to mid-August boutiques are open on Sunday too.

Should arranging your own shopping spree be too much of a chore, **Monte Carlo Accueil** (☎ 97 70 89 12; 3hr tailored shopping tour €30) can do it for you (minimum three people). Or take along a **fashion consultant** (Isabelle Ughes; ☎ 06 78 63 83 63; www.make-it-perfect.com; from €160).

Monte Carlo's legendary 'Golden Circle' is the spot to (window) shop. Get going on av

des Beaux Arts, on the southern side of the casino gardens, where you can swirl through Chanel, Christian Dior, Céline, Louis Vuitton, Yves St-Laurent and Sonia Rykiel. Bow down at the altar of Italian fashion house Prada, and pay homage to Salvatore Ferragamo inside Hôtel Hermitage. Nearby, av de Monte Carlo is a short, chic street with a luxury line-up: Gucci, Valentino, Hermès, Laliq (crystal) and Prada. Tucked beside the casino is Parisian jeweller Van Cleef & Arpels while Kenzo, Marina Rinaldi, D&G and Christian Lacroix hide alongside more affordable names in the indoor **Métropole Shopping Centre** (Centre Commercial Le Métropole; enr av de la Madone & av de Spélugues), on the northern side of the casino gardens.

Atop Le Rocher, Danish-born designer and former top model **Isabelle Kristensen** (☎ 97 70 41 94; 18 rue Princess Marie de Lorraine) designs ball gowns and evening wear to die for.

A glimpse in the window of **Quatre Pattes** (18 rue Grimaldi) is a giggle.

GETTING THERE & AWAY

There are no border formalities upon entering Monaco from France.

Air

Monaco's helicopter companies are **Héli-Air Monaco** (☎ 92 05 00 50; www.helicoptermonaco.com in French) and **Monacair** (☎ 97 97 39 00; www.monacair.mc in French), based at **Héliport de Monaco** (☎ 92 05 00 10; av des Liguères). They can whirl you anywhere along the coast, including to/from Nice airport (€80/96 one way departing from Monaco/Nice, €166 return including airport taxes; at least 20 daily March to October).

Bus

Bus 100 runs along the Corniche Inférieure (p280) between Nice and Menton, stopping in Monaco. Buses to/from Nice-Côte d'Azur airport (€14.40, 45 minutes) depart hourly from the Casino stop on Blvd des Moulins.

Car & Motorcycle

The Corniche Moyenne (N7) links Monaco to the A8. For Italy, look for signs indicating Gênes (Genoa; Genova in Italian).

Well-signposted public car parks are scattered liberally around the principality, including at the train station and Monte Carlo Casino. The first hour is free, the second costs €2.40, and every subsequent 20 minutes is €0.60.

THE FORMULA ONE GRAND PRIX *Tony Wheeler*

If there's one trophy a Formula One driver would like to have on the mantelpiece, it would have to be from the most glamorous race of the season, the Monaco Grand Prix. This race has everything. Its spectators are the most sensational: the merely wealthy survey the spectacle from Hôtel Hermitage, the really rich watch from their luxury yachts moored in the harbour, while the Grimaldis see the start and finish from the royal box at the port. Then there's the setting: the cars scream around the very centre of the city, racing uphill from the start/finish line to place du Casino, then downhill around a tight hairpin and two sharp rights to hurtle through a tunnel and run along the harbourside to a chicane and more tight corners before the start/finish. To top it all off there's the race's history: it was first run in 1929, and the winners' list features a roll-call of racing greats right down to Michael Schumacher's five victories between 1994 and 2001.

But despite its reputation, the Monaco Grand Prix is not really one of the great races. The track is too tight and winding for modern Grand Prix cars, and overtaking is virtually impossible. The Brazilian triple world champion Nelson Piquet famously described racing at Monaco as like 'riding a bicycle around your living room'. Piquet clearly rides a much faster bicycle than most of us; Monaco may be the slowest race on the calendar, but the lap record is still over 160km/h and at the fastest point on the circuit cars reach 280km/h. Even the corner in the gloom of the tunnel is taken at 250km/h (over 150mph).

Over the years the race has featured some unexpected surprises. In 1955 Alberto Ascari's Lancia was about to take the lead from Englishman Stirling Moss' silver Mercedes when the Italian arrived at the chicane travelling too fast, shot through the straw bales (this was more than 20 years before modern Armco barriers arrived on the scene) and plunged straight into the harbour. Seconds later the twice world champion bobbed to the surface with only minor injuries. Remarkably, the feat was repeated 10 years later at exactly the same spot. That time it was Australian driver Paul Hawkins who drove into the harbour in his Lotus. If spinning into the harbour was still possible the unlucky driver probably wouldn't have to walk too far to find some dry clothes – typically 10 to 12 (of the 20 to 24) Grand Prix drivers actually live in Monaco.

The track may be slow and overtaking difficult, but the circuit has still seen some great races, particularly in 1961 when Stirling Moss (the greatest driver never to win a world championship) held off the might of Ferrari in his underpowered Lotus. I've been to the Monaco Grand Prix just once, but fortuitously I also chose a classic year. In 1970 Austrian driver Jochen Rindt overtook Australian Jack Brabham on the final corner of the race. Later in the year Rindt was killed at the Italian Grand Prix at Monza, but no-one could surpass his points total and he became Formula One's only posthumous world champion.

The 78-lap race happens on a Sunday afternoon in late May, the conclusion of several days of practice, qualifying and supporting races. Tickets (€50 to €300) are available from **Automobile Club de Monaco** (ACM; ☎ 93 15 26 24; www.acm.mc; 23 blvd Albert 1er) and the official T-shirt, too seats et al from **L@Boutique** (☎ 97 70 45 35; laboutique@acm.mc; 46 rue Grimaldi) and **Boutique Formule 1** (☎ 93 15 92 44; 15 rue Grimaldi).

one-way ticket/one-day pass costs €1.50/3.60. Alternatively, buy a four-/eight-ride magnetic card (€3.60/5.70) from the bus driver or from vending machines at most bus stops. Buses run roughly every 11 minutes between 7am and 9pm (every 20 minutes from 7.30am on Sunday).

Lift

A system of escalators and public lifts links the steep streets. They operate either 24 hours or 6am to midnight or 1am.

Taxi

Call ☎ 93 15 01 01.

minutes) in Italy, and west to Nice (€3.10, 20 minutes) and beyond (see p278).

GETTING AROUND
Bus

Monaco's urban bus system has five lines, bizarrely numbered one to six without the three. Line 2 links Monaco Ville to Monte Carlo and then loops back to the Jardin Exotique. Line 4 links the train station with the tourist office, the casino and Plage du Larvotto. A

Train

Monaco's **train station** (www.monaco-gare.com; blvd Princesse Charlotte) – a glam subterranean marble affair – can be accessed via pedestrian tunnels and escalators from 6 av Prince Pierre de Monaco, pont Ste-Dévote (blvd Princesse Charlotte), place Ste-Dévote and blvd de la Belgique.

Trains run by France's SNCF (p427) run east to Menton (€1.70, 15 minutes) and Ventimiglia (Vintimille in French; €3.10, 25

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