



TOURIST INFORMATION

The main TI is at the top of the park above the casino (Mon-Sat 9:00-19:00, Sun 11:00-13:00, 2 Boulevard des Moulins, tel. 00-377/92 16 61 16 or 00-377/92 16 61 66, www.visitmonaco.com). Another TI is at the train station (Tue-Sat 9:00-18:00, also open Sun-Mon in July-Aug, closed 12:00-14:00 off-season). There's also a TI desk for Monaco in Terminal 1 of Nice's airport.

ARRIVAL IN MONACO

By Train from Nice: You know your train is in Monaco when you're in a long, modern underground station. The station is in the center of Monaco, a 15-minute walk to the casino or to the port, and about 25 minutes to the palace. The station has no baggage storage.

The TI, train-ticket windows, and WCs are up the escalator at the Italy end of the station. There are three exits from the train platform level (one at each end and one in the middle).

To reach Monaco-Ville and the palace, take the exit at the Nice end of the tracks (signed Sortie Fontvieille/Le Rocher), which leads through a long tunnel to the base of Monaco-Ville at Place d'Armes. From here, it's about a 15-minute hike up to the palace. To reach Monaco's port and the casino, take the middle exit, following Sortie Port signs down the steps and escalators, and the 'II' Acces Port signs until you pop out at the port, where you'll see the stop for buses #1 and #2 across the busy street. From here it's a 20-minute walk to the casino (up Avenue d'Ostende to your left).

To return to Nice by train after 20:30, when ticket windows close, buy your return tickets now or be sure to have about €4 in coins for the ticket machines.

Passport Stamp: If you want an official memento of your visit, you can get your passport stamped at the main TI (listed earlier).

Monaco-Ville Walk

All of Monaco's major sights (except the casino) are in Monaco-Ville, packed within a few cheerfully tidy blocks. This self-guided walk connects these sights in a tight little loop, starting from the palace square.

• *To get from anywhere in Monaco to the palace square (Monaco-Ville's sightseeing center and home of the palace), take bus #1 or #2 to the end of the line at Place de la Visitation. Turn right as you step off the bus and walk five minutes down Rue Emile de Loth. You'll pass the post office, a worthwhile stop for its collection of valuable Monegasque stamps (we'll go there later—to visit it now, see page 386).*

If you're walking up from the port or the Place d'Armes stop for bus #100, a well-marked lane leads directly to the palace.

Palace Square (Place du Palais)

This square is the best place to get oriented to Monaco. Facing the palace, go to the right and look out over the city (er...principal-ity). This rock gave birth to the little pastel Hong Kong look-alike in 1215, and it's managed to remain an independent country for most of its nearly 800 years. Looking beyond the glitzy port, notice the faded green roof above and to the right: It belongs to the casino that put Monaco on the map in the 1800s. It was located away from Monaco-Ville because Prince Charles III (r. 1856-1889) wanted to shield his people from low-life gamblers.



The modern buildings just past the casino mark the eastern limit of Monaco. The famous Grand Prix runs along the port and then up the ramp to the casino (at top speeds of 180 mph). Italy is so close, you can almost smell the pesto. Just beyond the casino is France again (which flanks Monaco on both sides)—you could walk one-way from France to France, passing through Monaco in about 60 minutes.

and the opera house. The private gaming rooms occupy the left wing of the building.

Cost and Hours: Hours and entry fees are shuffled regularly. Plan on €10 to enter at any hour, whether you gamble or not. Public areas are open daily 9:00-12:30 (no gambling). Guided tours may be available, or take an English brochure and tour on your own. From 14:00 to very late the gaming rooms are open to appropriately attired humans over 18 (bring your passport as proof). Tel. 00-377/92 16 20 00, www.montecarlocasinos.com.

Dress Code: Before 14:00, shorts are allowed in the atrium

area, though you'll need decent attire to go any farther. After 14:00, shorts are off-limits everywhere, and tennis shoes are not permitted. Men should wear a jacket and slacks, and women should dress appropriately.

Visiting the Casino: Count the counts and Rolls-Royces in front of Hôtel de Paris (built at the same time, visitors allowed in the hotel, no shorts, www.montecarloresort.com), then strut inside the casino to the sumptuous **atrium**. This is the lobby for the 520-seat opera house (open Nov-April only for performances). A model of the opera house is at the far right side of the room, near the marble WCs.

The **first rooms** (Salle Renaissance, Salon de l'Europe, and Salle des Amériques) have European and English roulette, blackjack, craps, and slot machines. The more glamorous **private game rooms** (Salons Touzet, Salle Medecin, and Terrasse Salle Blanche) have those same games, plus Trente et Quarante, Ultimate Texas Hold 'Em poker, and Punto Banco—a version of baccarat.

The scene, flooded with camera-toting tourists during the day, is great at night—and downright James Bond-like in the private rooms. This is your chance to rub elbows with some high rollers.

The **park** behind the casino offers a peaceful **café** with a good view of the building's rear facade and of Monaco-Ville.

Take the Money and Run: The stop for buses returning to Nice and Villefranche-sur-Mer and for local buses #1 and #2 is on Avenue de la Costa, at the top of the park above the casino (at the small shopping mall). To reach the train station from the casino, take bus #1 or #2 from this stop, or walk about 15 minutes down Avenue d'Ostende toward the port, and follow signs to *Gare SNCF*.

The odd statue of a woman with a fishing net is dedicated to the glorious reign of **Prince Albert I** (1889-1922). The son of Charles III (who built the casino), Albert I was a true Renaissance Man. He had a Jacques Cousteau-like fascination with the sea (and built Monaco's famous aquarium) and was a determined pacifist who made many attempts to dissuade Germany's Kaiser Wilhelm II from becoming involved in World War I.

• *As you head toward the palace, you'll find a statue of a monk grasping a sword nearby.*

Meet **François Grimaldi**, a renegade Italian dressed as a monk, who captured Monaco in 1297 and began the dynasty that still rules the principality. Prince Albert is his great-great-great... grandson, which gives Monaco's royal family the distinction of being the longest-lasting dynasty in Europe.

• *Now walk to the...*

Prince's Palace (Palais Princier)

A medieval castle sat where the palace is today. Its strategic setting has had a lot to do with Monaco's ability to resist attackers. Today,

Prince Albert and his wife live in the palace, while poor Princesses Stephanie and Caroline live down the street. The palace guards protect the prince 24/7 and still stage a **Changing of the Guard** ceremony with all the pageantry of an important nation daily at 11:55, fun to watch but jam-packed, arrive by 11:30). Audioguide tours take you through part of the prince's lavish palace in 30 minutes. The rooms are well-furnished and impressive, but interesting only if you haven't seen a château lately.

Cost and Hours: €8, includes audioguide, €19 combo-ticket also covers Cousteau Aquarium; hours vary but generally April-Oct daily 10:00-18:00, closed Nov-March, last entry 30 minutes before closing; tel. 00-377/93 25 18 31.

• *Head to the west end of the palace square. Below the cannonballs is the district known as...*



Fontvieille

Monaco's newest, reclaimed-from-the-sea area has seen much of Monaco's post-WWII growth (residential and commercial—notice the lushly planted building tops). Prince Rainier continued—some say, was obsessed with—Monaco's economic growth, creating landfills (topped with apartments, such as in Fontvieille), flashy ports, more beaches, a big sports stadium marked by tall arches, and a rail station. (An ambitious new landfill project is in the works

and would add still more prime real estate to Monaco's portfolio.) Today, thanks to Prince Rainier's past efforts, tiny Monaco is a member of the United Nations. (If you have kids with you, check out the nifty play area just below.)

• *With your back to the palace, leave the square through the arch near the white flag (under one elegant police station—where the guards come from during the Changing of the Guard) and find the...*

Cathedral of Monaco (Cathédrale de Monaco)

The somber but beautifully lit cathedral, rebuilt in 1878, shows that Monaco cared for more than just its new casino. It's where centuries of Grimaldis are buried, and where Princess Grace and Prince Rainier were married. Inside, circle slowly behind the altar (counterclockwise). The second tomb is that of Albert I, who did much to put Monaco on the world stage. The second-to-last tomb—inscribed "*Gratia Patricia, MCMLXXXII*"—is where Princess Grace was buried in 1982. Prince Rainier's tomb lies next to Princess Grace's (daily 8:30-19:15).



• *As you leave the cathedral, find the 1956 wedding photo of Princess Grace and Prince Rainier, then dip into the immaculately maintained Jardin Botanique, with more fine views. In the gardens, turn left. Eventually you'll find the impressive building housing the...*

Cousteau Aquarium (Musée Océanographique)

Prince Albert I built this cliff-hanging aquarium in 1910 as a monument to his enthusiasm for things from the sea. The aquarium, which Jacques Cousteau captained for 32 years, has 2,000 different specimens, representing 250 species. You'll find Mediterranean fish and colorful tropical species (all well-described in English). Rotating exhibits occupy the entry floor. Upstairs, the fancy Albert I Hall houses a museum that's filled with ship models, whale skeletons, oceanographic instruments and tools, and scenes of Albert and his beachcombers hard at work—but sadly, only scant English information is provided here. Don't miss the elevator to the rooftop terrace view café.

Cost and Hours: €14, kids-€7, €19 combo-ticket includes Prince's Palace; daily April-Sept 10:00-19:00, July-Aug until 19:30, Oct-March 10:00-18:00; down the steps from Monaco-Ville bus stop, at the opposite end of Monaco-Ville from the palace; tel. 00-377/93 15 36 00, www.oceano.mc.

• *The red-brick steps across from the aquarium lead up to stops for buses #1 and #2, both of which run to the port, the casino, and the train station. To walk back to the palace and through the old city, turn left at the top of the brick steps. If you're into stamps, walk down Rue Emile de Loth to find the **post office**, where philatelists and postcard writers with panache can buy—or just gaze in awe at—the impressive collection of Monegasque stamps (Mon-Fri 8:00-19:00, Sat 8:00-13:00, closed Sun).*

Sights in Monaco

Jardin Exotique

This cliffside municipal garden, located above Monaco-Ville, has eye-popping views from France to Italy. It's home to more than a thousand species of cacti (some giant) and other succulent plants, but worth the entry only for view-loving botanists (some posted English explanations provided). Your ticket includes entry to a skippable natural cave, an anthropological museum, and a view snack bar/café. You can get similar views over Monaco for free from behind the souvenir stand at the Jardin's bus stop; or, for even grander vistas, cross the street and hike toward La Turbie.

Cost and Hours: €7.20, daily 9:00-19:00, Oct-April until about dusk, take bus #2 from any stop in Monaco, tel. 00-377/93 15 29 80, www.jardin-exotique.com.

▲Monte Carlo Casino (Casino de Monte-Carlo)

Monte Carlo, which means "Charles' Hill" in Spanish, is named for the prince who presided over Monaco's 19th-century makeover.



In the mid-1800s, olive groves stood here. Then, with the construction of casino and spas, and easy road and train access, one of Europe's poorest countries was on the Grand Tour map—the place for the vacationing aristocracy to play. Today, Monaco has the world's highest per-capita income.

The Monte Carlo casino is intended to make you feel comfortable while losing your retirement nest egg. Charles Garnier designed the place (with an opera house inside) in 1878, in part to thank the prince for his financial help in completing

Paris' Opéra Garnier (which the architect also designed). The central doors provide access to slot machines, private gaming rooms,

