



Sea life: The Oceanographic Museum presents a variety of marine-themed exhibits.

48 HOURS

Monaco Within Reach

You don't have to be royalty or a high roller to enjoy this Mediterranean playground. | By **KIMBERLEY LOVATO**

THIS SUMMER a prince will marry his commoner sweetheart in an historic setting amid royal pomp and public celebration. No, we're not talking about Britain's Prince William and Kate Middleton but Prince Albert II of Monaco and South African Olympic swimmer Charlene Wittstock. On July 2, they will exchange vows in the royal courtyard of the Prince's Palace at the most anticipated wedding in the Principality of Monaco since the prince's late parents, American actress Grace Kelly and Prince Rainier III, married here 55 years ago.

"The streets will be decorated with red and white ribbons and flags, and bells will be heard ringing from the churches," says Maguy Maccario, consul general of

Monaco and vice president of the Prince Albert II Foundation-USA.

With Friday, July 1, and Saturday, July 2, declared holidays and big-screen televisions set up to allow spectators to witness the nuptials, Monaco is poised to party. But royal revelry is just one reason to visit. While it may be known for its high-roller and haute-couture crowd, Monaco also offers diverse cultural events, appealing public parks and historic sites, and a contagious joie de vivre.

WHAT TO DO Roughly three miles long and a little over a half-mile wide, Monaco, a sovereign state on the Mediterranean coast, is eminently walkable. Most tourist attractions cluster in Monaco-Ville, the old city near the Prince's Palace, and the

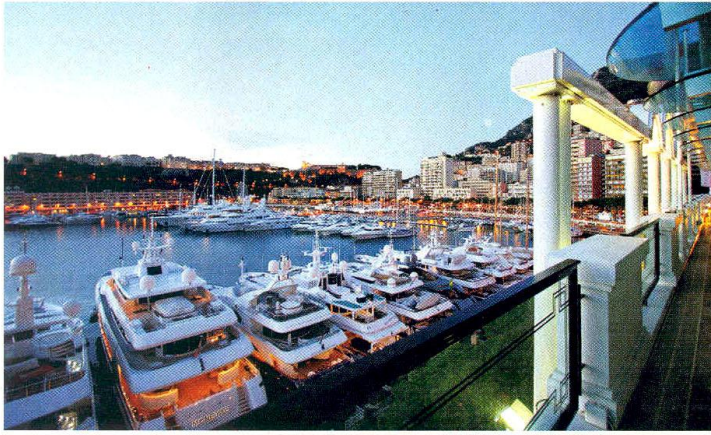
wealthy Monte Carlo area around the Casino and beaches. Head to La Condamine, behind the port, and Fontvieille (see "On Foot" sidebar), west of Monaco-Ville, for peeks into local life. The public bus makes stops in every quarter and is an efficient, pleasant way to tour and a steal at a euro a ride.

In a prime location along the waterfront, the **Grimaldi Forum**, Monaco's main event space, hosts an exhibition July 11 to September 12 of portraits, sculptures, court costumes, jewelry, and other artifacts culled from Europe's royal dynasties. "This is a priceless collection that provides a rare glimpse into the lives of history's most powerful monarchs with special focus on legendary sovereign couples," says Maccario.

Inspired by Princess Grace, the neighboring **Japanese Garden**—a haven of trimmed trees, arched bridges, and water features—was inaugurated in 1994 by Prince Rainier III.

Entry into the storied **Casino** requires ten euros (\$13.90), a passport check (Monaco citizens are forbidden to enter

VALÉRIE HACHE/AFP/GETTY IMAGES



Yachts dock alongside the Port Palace Hotel, which also boasts a Michelin-starred restaurant.

the gaming rooms), and a jacket for men. The place may look familiar to James Bond film fans; the Casino had starring roles in *Never Say Never Again* and *GoldenEye*. Note the eight Bohemian crystal chandeliers and the art-laden walls of Le Salon de l'Europe, the Casino's first gaming room, opened in 1865. Not a high roller? Access to the Casino's atrium is free and there are lots of one-euro slots.

Bargain is a word rarely uttered here, but that doesn't mean there aren't any. Provision a picnic at the daily open-air **Condamine Market** on Place d'Armes, near the pedestrian-only shopping street Rue de la Princesse Caroline. Locals have been coming to the market since 1880 to buy bread, wine, fruit, and cheese.

Champagne may be Monaco's elixir of choice, but the local beer is worth a try. Founded in 1905, the **Brasserie de Monaco**

shut down for over 30 years before being resurrected in 2008 at the encouragement of Prince Albert II. Reserve ahead for a brewery tour and souvenir glass (\$18).

Rising 200 feet above the sea and jutting between Port Hercule and Fontvieille is the Rock, crowned by Monaco-Ville and the **Prince's Palace**. The Grimaldi family have ruled from this fortress since François Grimaldi, disguised as a monk, captured it in 1297. Watch the changing of the guard each morning at 11:55 and from June to October tour the royal courtyard as well as several interior state rooms. The Monte Carlo Philharmonic Orchestra performs during July and August evenings in the courtyard of the palace. Coveted tickets go on sale in early June (\$25-\$115).

The narrow streets of Monaco-Ville amble toward the **Cathedral of Monaco**, celebrating its 100th year this summer. Princess Grace and Prince Rainier III wed here and are now interred behind the altar alongside other Monégasque sovereigns.

The site of their son's wedding dinner and ball is the grandiose **Oceanographic Museum**, built over a hundred years ago by Prince Albert I and home to a broad range of marine curiosities, including a reassembled skeleton of a baleen whale and an aquarium with 90 tanks filled with 4,000 fish. The rooftop terrace boasts a photo-worthy view.

WHERE TO EAT Monaco's restaurant scene is rife with big-name chefs and boasts an impressive eight Michelin stars. Dinner

[ON FOOT]

A WALK IN FONTVIEILLE

Escape Monte Carlo's bustle in this quieter neighborhood.

This annexed hundred-acre land west of the Rock was reclaimed from the sea during the 1970s and today harbors one of Monaco's most treasured gardens, a rare car collection, and a restaurant-lined port that's more low-key hangout than hip.



1 H.S.H. THE PRINCE OF MONACO'S VINTAGE CAR COLLECTION Car buffs drool over this collection of vintage and rare automobiles, including the Rolls-Royce Princess Grace used on her wedding day. Breezy posters (above) capture a golden age of motoring.

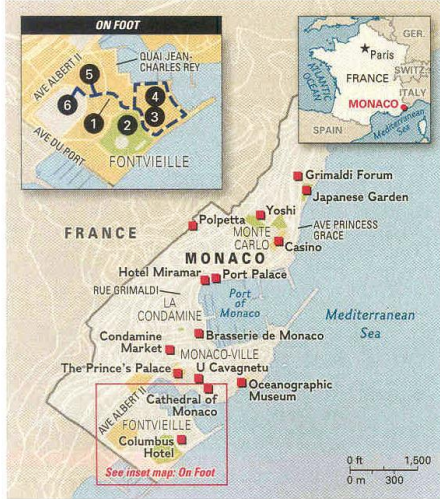
2 PRINCESS GRACE ROSE GARDEN This peaceful green spot tucked into Fontvieille Park is scented with over 4,000 rosebushes.

3 COLUMBUS BRASSERIE For more than just a croissant to start the day, head to this popular breakfast spot for eggs Benedict (\$11) or a full breakfast of eggs, sausage, tomatoes, and toast (\$13.50).

4 FONTVIEILLE FLEA MARKET Juxtaposed against Monaco's luxe boutiques, this small Saturday morning market of old books, cutlery, and knick-knacks is fun to sift through before settling into one of the busy cafés along Fontvieille's port.

5 THE SCULPTURE PATH The curvy pedestrian lanes of Fontvieille Park reveal about a hundred sculptures from contemporary international artists such as Fernando Botero.

6 LOUIS II STADIUM The 18,000-seat stadium is home to the AS Monaco soccer team, but underground sprawls a vast sporting complex, including an Olympic-size freshwater heated pool that's open to the public and used for international competitions.



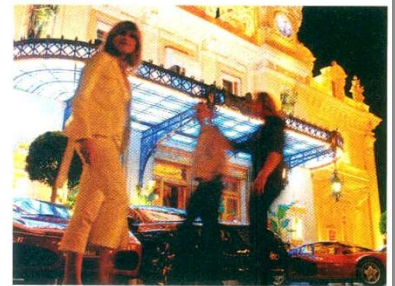
PORT PALACE (UPPER LEFT); LOW-PRICE COLLECTION (ALAMY); UPPER RIGHT; INTERNATIONAL MAPPING

can be budget-savaging, but prix-fixe lunch menus dish up starchy cuisine at affordable prices. French super-chef Joël Robuchon's Japanese restaurant **Yoshi** inside the tony Hotel Metropole earned Monaco its latest Michelin star. Go for traditional sushi and sashimi and sip sake or tea in the interior Japanese garden. The lunch menu is \$40 for three courses.

On a neighborhood street above Monte Carlo, **Polpetta** (2 Rue Paradis) is a local favorite. "I go there every time I return to Monaco," says Maccario. "I love their handmade pasta and fresh fish prepared tableside."

Just steps from the palace on a narrow street of Monaco-Ville, the family-run **U Cavagnetu** (14 Rue Comte Félix Gastaldi) has been serving traditional Monégasque cuisine, which is influenced by nearby Italy and Provence, for 40 years. Try steamed salmon with dill sauce or *pis-saladière*, a tomato-less pizza topped with onions, anchovies, olives, and garlic.

WHERE TO STAY Low-budget hotels and B&Bs don't exist in Monaco, and many people opt to overnight more cheaply in nearby Beausoleil or Cap d'Ail, but guests need not sacrifice college tuition to spend a night in town. A Michelin-starred restaurant, harbor views, and a 20,000-bottle wine cellar cobbled into the cliff wall make the **Port Palace** (from \$289) a popular pillow in Monte Carlo. The **Columbus Hotel** (from \$190) in Fontvieille sits adjacent to the Princess Grace Rose Garden and has a swimming pool and complimentary shuttle service to downtown. The hotel's signature cocktail, "Grace," is a blend of candied rose petals, champagne, and rose liqueur. **Hotel Miramar's** 11 rooms (from \$154) have a view of the Prince's Palace and yacht harbor. The hotel's rooftop bar is an excellent perch during May's Formula 1 Grand Prix, when cars scream by within feet of the hotel. ■



The Casino of Monte Carlo, designed by Charles Garnier of Paris Opera House fame, exudes 007 glam thanks to roles in two James Bond films.