

Destinations with **JASON OLIVER NIXON**



Monaco may be all about the glitz and glam, but there are also wonderful cultural opportunities.



Monaco

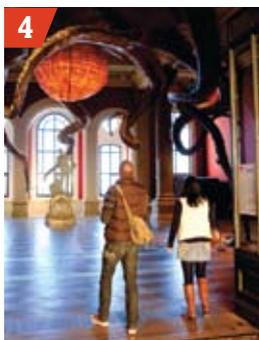
Explore this seaside paradise where over-the-top luxury prevails.

Somerset Maugham once described the French Riviera as a “sunny place for shady people.” And Monaco is definitely sunny. As for the people, well, they favor expensive cars and flaunt big jewels and towering heels and big shades. But that’s Monaco! How is a country the size of Central Park going to be noticed if it’s not all about the splash and sizzle? When was the last time you read anything about Lichtenstein or San Marino? Enough said.

Start your Monaco adventure at the sprawling, belle époque-era **Hotel Hermitage**. The property has recently been retooled to give the historic structure a breath of contemporary chic, and the results are fresh and engaging. Settle into your colorful sea-view room with its bold wallpaper and take in the sumptuous views of the bustling waterfront packed with yachts. Then set out to explore. You’ll immediately notice that the principality is landscaped within an inch of its life—there are flowers

everywhere and palms sway overhead—and there’s nary a weed or speck of trash in sight.

For shopping, you’ll find the usual global heavy hitters—**Louis Vuitton, Chanel**—but there are also magical one-off shops and al fresco markets, too. And that’s part of Monaco’s charm: On the surface it may seem all glitz and glamour, but dig deeper and you will encounter hidden charms that are



“**MONACO IS ABOUT SPLASH AND SIZZLE.**”

more small town than sock-it-to-me chic.

Front and center in the Monte Carlo district, there are the opulent casino and opera, both designed by architect Charles Garnier, who also crafted Paris’ Opera House. Inside, the various *salles* are awash in glorious swirls and flourishes and gold leaf that compete with blackjack and roulette as well as the up-and-coming soprano for attention. And next door sits the famed **Hotel de Paris**.

Walk along the waterfront and soak in the sparkling Mediterranean views. Or climb up the stairs to the fortified seat of the Grimaldi family, where Prince Albert reigns with his new bride, Princess Charlene. Tour the rooms of the 12th-century **Prince’s Palace**, and note the exuberant, must-see portrait of Princess Grace surrounded by her family and pets. Speaking of Grace, pay your respects to this Hollywood legend at her crypt in the **Monaco Cathedral** before visiting the stunning **Oceanographic Museum** 1. Catch a taxi to the cliffside **Exotic Gardens** 2 and peruse the contemporary collections at the **New National Museum of Monaco** 3.

Finally, it’s time to plan your evening. Perhaps dine at the Hermitage’s spare, chic **Vistamar** 2 restaurant before taking in a performance of the **Ballets de Monte-Carlo**. Or dance the night away at **Jimmy’z** before trying your hand at craps. Better yet, sit back at the al fresco **Café de Paris** with a tall cocktail and watch the over-the-top scene that totters by.

NCE Get there via Nice Cote d’Azur Airport.

Q: I want to visit Monaco, but I’d love a modern hotel with stunning views of the sea, a great pool and a terrific spa. Any ideas?

A: **Jetting out into the Mediterranean atop pilings, the Fairmont Monte Carlo fits the bill perfectly. Fairmont threw gobs of cash at the former Loews, and the hotel shines afresh in contemporary splendor with colorful rooms and beautiful terraces. Try the stunning seventh-floor swimming pool then sample a seaweed and salt body scrub or stone massage in the Willow Stream Spa. Later, relax with a glass of Champagne at the rooftop Horizon Deck. fairmont.com**

The author: Jason Oliver Nixon is Sky’s global lifestyle editor and one half of the Brooklyn-based interior design firm Madcap Cottage. He lives his life out of a shocking pink suitcase.



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