

## ADVENTURE & TRAVEL

# Monte Carlo or Bust

Revved-up Monaco goes green



BY LANIE GOODMAN

**YOU MAY KNOW** the scene by heart: screeching tires, hairpin turns, a harrowing race, Monte Carlo in the distance. This may sound like the Monaco Grand Prix, which starts next Thursday, but it's actually Alfred Hitchcock's 1955 classic "To Catch a Thief," when Grace Kelly, as a rich heiress, and Cary Grant, as a former cat burglar, tear around the winding heights of the Grande Corniche in a blue roadster with cops in hot pursuit. "Have you ever seen any place in the world more beautiful?" the actress enthuses to her co-star, gazing at the breathtaking uncluttered panorama of the Principality of Monaco, just below.

Nearly 60 years later, the intense blues of the sea and the sky haven't changed an iota, but Monaco—a country smaller than New York's Central Park—is shining up its stuffy Old World image with innovations in every domain.

The skyline has changed: The nearly completed Tour Océan, an ultracontemporary 170-meter tower with a €300 million penthouse for sale, is just one of many new high-rise additions. And even the most famous landmarks, like the SBM-owned Hôtel de Paris and the state-of-the-art Thermes Marins Monte-Carlo spa, are now undergoing face-lifts.

This summer, green is the word. Along with the futuristic multilevel Norman Foster designed Yacht Club opening at the harbor, Monaco will host Europe's first solar-powered boat race on the sea, Solar 1. And Venturi's high-tech streamlined electric cars, made in Monaco, are all the rage.

In case you thought a bling-free experience is improbable, check the convivial scene at the revamped Condamine covered market, now open in the evenings, where locals wolf down fresh pasta and barbapans (Swiss chard and Parmesan fried ravioli). Or simply stroll through the just-renovated Princess Grace Rose Garden, with more than 8,500 bushes of every variety—including, of course, "Grace of Monaco," a fragrant silvery-pink tea rose dedicated to the actress-turned-princess in 1956. (A movie of the same name, starring Nicole Kidman, debuted at the Cannes Film Festival this week.)



**GRACEFUL** Clockwise from top, CGI of the Monaco skyline with the Tour Océan; poolside at the Odyssey lounge at the Hotel Metropole Monte-Carlo; Condamine covered market; Cappelletti with quinea fowl Consommé at Esa restaurant; Grace Kelly portrait by Marcos Marin at Diva Boutique



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### THE LOWDOWN: MONTE CARLO, MONACO

Even if you're not a Formula One fan, there's plenty to get revved up about. Our guide to some of the best ways to spin your wheels in Monte Carlo.

**WHERE TO EAT** // When the restaurant Elsa at the Monte Carlo Beach Hotel was recently awarded a Michelin star, it became the first all-organic establishment to step into the gastronomic limelight. "We look for the best and the healthiest ingredients and 94% of them come from a 100-kilometer radius," says Venice-born chef Paolo Sani. Begin with the Bio Sema, an artful assemblage of spring garden vegetables topped with edible flowers, or the paper-thin carpaccio of San Remo shrimp encrusted with pink grapefruit, fennel and a sprinkling of caviar. The flavorful main dishes range from gold risotto with black cuttlefish in a pot to perfectly cooked local fish. But don't miss the grand finale: aged Parmesan whipped up as ice cream, drizzled with balsamic vinegar and a feather-light Sicilian almond soufflé. [www.montecarlo.com](http://www.montecarlo.com)

**WHERE TO WATCH THE GRAND PRIX** // Beyond the elegant lobby of the Belle Époque landmark Hotel Hermitage, a more uproarious atmosphere awaits: the 4-day "Paddock Lounge," a high-tech playground for F1 aficionados. Now in its second year, the banquet hall-turned-games room offers a chance to experience Monaco's serpentine circuit inside the cockpit of a state-of-the-art Simulator F1, equipped with a large video screen. After competing on the reflex-testing Batak machine, head upstairs to the Crystal Bar Terrace for champagne, haute finger food and a terrific view of the port and the Grand Prix paddockium just below. *May 22-25*; [hotelhermitage.montecarlo.com](http://hotelhermitage.montecarlo.com)

**WHERE TO SHOP** // Hidden away on a side street in the portside Condamine district, Diva is a sleek, recently opened boutique and showroom featuring a mix of luxury craftsmanship and innovative audiovisual technology. Among diverse objects d'art for sale are dazzling OpArt VIP portraits by Marcos Marin and a selection of high-performance jewelry like Cottin computers, trimmed with intricate handmade gold lace. [diva.me](http://diva.me)

**WHERE TO RELAX** // Steps away from the buzzy Casino Square on the Hotel Metropole's ground floor, the Jacques Garcia-designed ESPA is a low-lit urban oasis that exudes a soothing jungle vibe. Beyond the stylish décor (polished woods and stingray-skin walls), the spa's latest offerings include a variety of exclusive back-to-nature treatments: an energy-boosting deep massage with heated green bamboo stalks and essential oils and an astringent cold stone massage with a refreshing splash of aloe vera, chamomile and mint potions. After a tropical mist shower, kick back at the new lounge and heated seawater pool, surrounded by Karl Lagerfeld's monochrome black and white engravings-in-glass photos of Ulysses' Mediterranean odyssey. [metropole.com](http://metropole.com)

**WHAT TO SEE** // Don't miss the cutting-edge contemporary art exhibitions at the Nouvau Musée National de Monaco, housed in two elegant Belle Époque villas. Opened in 2010, both the exquisitely restored Villa Paloma, perched on a slope above exotic gardens, and the seaside Garnier-designed Villa Sauber have added a dose of daring to the Principality's artistic resurgence. "We try to do unique projects," says associate curator Cristiano Raymond. "With the Villa Paloma's magnificent view of the Mediterranean, we decided to choose works built around concept of a landscape." This summer the landscape theme goes urban with 50 eye-popping works by London artists Gilbert & George, on loan from a Monegasque private collection (June 16-Nov. 2). At the Villa Sauber, five international artists create contrasting installations of décor inspired by literature, art, theater and film for "Portraits d'Intérieurs" (July 10-Jan. 18). [www.mnc](http://www.mnc)