

PLANNER PERSPECTIVE

# MONACO

With some of the most gorgeous beaches in the world and a litany of scenic locales, the French Riviera—including Monaco and Nice—is truly a land of grandeur. To meet here is to transport your MICE attendees into a world of luxury. More than 150 years after the first casino opened there in 1863, Monaco maintains its prestige, glamour and elegance in a way not many destinations can mimic.

## GETTING THERE

Nice Cote d'Azur International Airport is the second largest in France, positioned 7 kilometers (4 miles) west of the city center, and is the principal port of arrival for passengers to the Cote d'Azur. Due to its proximity to the Principality of Monaco (a 30-minute drive), it also serves as that country's airport. One of the most exciting ways to kick off an incentive program in Monaco is arranging a helicopter transfer through Monaco Air, which is a quick 10-minute flight over the gorgeous waters.

## HOTELS

The area has many four- and five-star properties, with some of the most glorious perched in the heart of Monaco. The Le Meridien Beach Plaza is a four-star, 397-room resort right on the sea—and the only hotel in the area with a private beach.

The Hermitage is a five-star hotel with 280 rooms and suites and 10 meeting rooms. The on-site restaurant, Le Vistamar, has views of the sea and is 1 Michelin Star rated. It sits adjacent to the Grand Casino in the middle of the hustle and bustle.

Hotel Negresco, a five-star hotel in Nice, is one of the most interesting hotels in the region. Its collection of



art is eclectic and downright funky, and the property serves as a museum of sorts for the eccentric owners' private collection. Each of the 96 guest rooms is different, filled with antique furniture and inspired by periods of French art—from art deco to baroque to classical.

## WATER ACTIVITIES

In an area surrounded by water, activities on said water are a must. Boule d'Energie is a teambuilding company that specializes in groups, with a fleet of boats and a talented team ready to make your day of adventure one to remember. From learning to sail or biking around the cities to making your own movies, activity opportunities are sure to keep guests entertained.

## VENUES

Monaco's Oceanographic Museum is a place of wonder built right on

the sea with a number of venues for receptions. You'll also find special exhibitions and massive aquariums filled with all sorts of marine life.

The Grimaldi Forum is the convention center that also sits right on the water. The views from its many flexible meeting spaces (32,000 square metres in total) are incredible.

RMS Market, located on the Place d'Armes, is a compelling spot for an evening reception. After perusing the fish shops, butchers and bakers, your guests can sit down for an authentic, laid-back Mediterranean-style meal.

In Nice, The Villa et Jardins Ephrussi de Rothschild is a massive estate surrounded by gardens and dancing water features designed by the same architect as the Bellagio in Las Vegas. An evening here will make your guests feel like they've stepped back in time to the grandeur of days gone by.

## ULTIMATE LUXURY

When you think of executing a once-in-a-lifetime incentive trip, there is no better place to provide this experience than the French Riviera. For the right budget, events such as walking the red carpet at the Cannes Film Festival, sitting in the grandstands of the Grand Prix and playing a hand of blackjack at the famous Casino of Monte Carlo all can be easily executed for groups.

*Deborah Elias, CSEP, CMP, is an award-winning event coordinator specializing in unique client experiences in the MICE market. As president of Elias Events, she's planned events from Canada to Dubai.*