The harbor is one of the best protected anchorages along the French Riviera for large cruise ships. Old Town is a scenic village and a convenient location to explore Nice, Monaco, and other sites. This guide includes train and bus routes to Nice and Monaco (Monte Carlo). Bus routes are subject to change.

View from the Ship

The photo above shows the ship's tender dock and cruise terminal. Old town buildings are colorful. There are arches under the buildings along streets parallel to the harbor. You'll find fine restaurants and discover photo opportunities as you explore the area. It is a very scenic area.

A popular stroll is along the harbor east (right in this photo) to the beach. There is some shopping along the harbor, but shopping is much better in Nice. Just west (left in this photo) of the cruise ship terminal is a large 16th century fortress. It's not shown in this photo.

NOTE: Villefranche-Sur-Mer is on a mountain. The city limits, high up on the mountain, are 1700 feet above sea level. You won't be walking that far, but you'll encounter steeply inclined streets as you walk inland. Note the stairs shown by the arrow in the photo above.

CAVEAT

Information contained herein is believed to be accurate. PLEASE verify the information you use for your travel plans. Opinions expressed are my own. This port guide is protected by copyright law - see the last page of this guide for legal notices.  

Tom Sheridan
Cruise ships dock and/or anchor to tender passengers ashore at the ports of Cannes, Nice, Villefranche-sur-Mer, and Monaco. The ports are small with limited or no dock space so you'll probably use the tenders. Wherever your ship anchors or docks, you'll have access to many popular tourist sites along the French Riviera.

**Three Port Guides for Eastern French Riviera**

*Download All of Them*    *READ the Cannes-Nice Port Guide FIRST*

**Cannes – Nice France Port Guide – an Introduction to Touring the French Riviera**

Describes the French train and bus system with tips for self-guided touring. Includes information on popular tourist sites of Cannes, Nice, St. Paul de Vence, Eze Village, Grasse, and St. Raphael. Information on these tourist sites is NOT repeated in other port guides.

**Monte Carlo Monaco Port Guide**

Focuses on the port and tourist sites in Monaco. Includes bus route maps and schedules plus step-by-step directions to avoid steep streets and climbing stairs. This should help you spend your time enjoying the tourist sites, rather than wasting time figuring out how to get to them. Includes information on bus stops near the Monaco train station with tips on how to get around Monaco if arriving by bus or train.

**Villefranche-sur-Mer France Port Guide**

Focuses on this port with detailed information for travel by train or bus to Nice and Monaco.

For more guides, see [www.TomsPortGuides.com](http://www.TomsPortGuides.com)
Note the distance scale of 300 feet on the photo above.
The dock for ship's tenders is a short walk from the terminal.
Tourist information personnel are in the cruise terminal to provide maps, etc.
The #80 bus stop is across the street from the terminal. This bus runs once an hour to Nice.
Buses #81 to Nice and #100 to Nice and Monaco run about every 20 minutes. But to get these buses you have to walk up the steep hill to the Octroi bus stop.
The train station is at the end of the harbor near the beach. The stairs to the train station are shown.

**Planning Self-Guided Touring from Villefranche-sur-Mer**

Because Villefranche-sur-Mer is conveniently located to many popular tourist sites along the French Riviera, there's a temptation to want to see everything. Remember each museum, botanical garden, palace, small village, etc. requires 40 to 60 minutes visit time. And if you are having lunch, add another hour.

I've included information to describe changes in elevation by relating it to climbing a multi-story building, e.g., a 15-story building, to help you judge how strenuous that walking route is and whether it is for you.

A concern for self-guided travel is getting back to the ship in time. Road traffic and crowds can cause delays. If feasible, plan your day to go to the farthest tourist site first and then work your way back to the port. I would leave early in the morning for Nice, Monaco, or wherever you are going and return to the port early to spend the remaining time exploring Old Town in Villefranche-sur-Mer.
Traveling by Train

It's about a 1500 feet walk along the sea front from the cruise terminal to the stairs for the train station. The path is generally flat and you are walking past the restaurants and shops facing the harbor with great views.

The stairs to the train station are behind the large tree as shown by the arrow (photos above and below). Climb the stairs, go through a tunnel under the tracks, and take a set of stairs to the station.

Photo right is a street level view of the location of stairs to the train station platform. Note the red arrow. The train station platform is about 20 feet above the street at the harbor. That's like walking up a two-story building which isn't bad.

Purchase your tickets from vending machines using exact euro change or a credit card with a chip in it. Trains don't stop very long. Make sure you are on the correct track to board the train quickly.
Trains to Nice

Your departure train station is Villefranche-sur-Mer

Check the train website schedules for the dates/times you will be traveling.
The French train website is www.voyages-sncf.com
The local 'TER' train website is http://www.ter-sncf.com/Region/paca/gare/Villefranche%20sur%20Mer.aspx

Nice has four train stations; namely gare de Nice-Riquier, Nice-St-Augustin, Nice-St-Roch and Nice-Ville.

Nice-Ville is the main station.

The train website schedule for 9:00 AM departure to Nice-Ville on June 8, 2012 showed trains leave at 9:15, 9:27, and 9:45. Travel time is 7 minutes. Cost is 1.6 euros one way.

Where Trains & Buses from Villefranche-sur-Mer Arrive in Nice

The map above shows where you will arrive in Nice. Nice-Ville is the main train station. It is a nice walk from the station to Old Town. You could take the T1 tram which is very convenient. Buses #81 and #100 end at J.C. Bermond bus stop. The #80 bus from Villefranche ends at Riquier train station.

Nice has many places to visit. We like to go to Old Town to explore the area, visit the markets, and have lunch. It can be difficult to find bus stops and train stations on Google or Bing Maps. To help you find these locations, enter the map coordinates below:

43.704411,7.262564 for Nice-Ville train station
43.698077,7.274402 for J.C. Bermond stop for buses #81 and #100
43.705586,7.289932 for Riquier train station and stop for bus #80

Double click on the down pointing arrow on the map to see the street view for that location.

For more guides, see www.TomsPortGuides.com
Buses to Nice

The primary buses to Nice are #81 and #100 departing from the Octroi bus stop as shown in the map below.

The Octroi bus stop is up the steep hill from the cruise terminal. Follow the signs “Octroi-Centerville” through the park and past the soccer field. Depending on the day of the week, buses #81 and #100 run every 15-20 minutes with 15 minutes travel time to J.C. Bermond bus stop in Nice.

Octroi is about 150 feet higher elevation than the cruise terminal. That's like walking up a switchback incline to the top of a 15 story building! On a warm day, you'll probably break a sweat.

Bus #80 departs from next to the cruise ship terminal in Villefranche and ends at Riquier train station in Nice. The advantage of this bus is that you don't have to walk up the steep hill to Octroi bus stop. The disadvantage is that the #80 bus only runs once an hour.

Bus tickets are typically 1 euro per trip or 4 euros for a full day.

Check the bus schedules, routes, and costs at this websites:  [http://www.lignesdazur.com/](http://www.lignesdazur.com/)

Buses # 81 and #80 are urban lines. They go to Nice, but they do not go to Monaco.

Bus #100 is a regional, “departmental” line. It runs approximately every 15 minutes between Octroi in Villefranche-sur-Mer and J.C. Station in Nice.

There is also a bus #100X which takes freeways more than small roads through the towns. Both buses #100 and #100X go to Nice and Monaco. Bus 100X runs once an hour. Bus 100X has a time advantage on long routes but does not offer an advantage over bus #100 for the short distance between Octroi-Villefranche-sur_mer and J.C. Bermond in Nice.
The photo at left is the schedule “Horaires lignes urbanies” for urban bus #81 showing all stops from Port de Saint Jean to J.C. Bermond in Nice. I printed this schedule for 9 AM on June 20, 2012.

The bus departs from Villefranche-sur-mer-Octroi stop every 15 minutes. See the red arrow. It arrives at J.C Bermond in Nice 20 minutes later.

I suggest you print out this type of schedule for the times, days, and buses you plan to use.

Bus #100 and 100X are “departmental” lines and use a different type of time schedule. The route is from Nice to Monaco to Menton. Villefranche is between Nice and Monaco so it is included in the schedule. Save the pdf files to your computer for lines #100 and #100X from this website:

http://www.cg06.fr/fr/servir-les-habitants/deplacements/transport-collectifs/transports-collectifs/

Buses vs. trains:
Given a choice, I'd take a train rather than a bus from Villefranche to Nice or Monaco:

- It's a less strenuous walk from the cruise terminal to the train station than the Octroi bus stop,
- Trains have more room and are less prone to overcrowding by people from cruise ships,
- Trains avoid delays by road traffic, accidents, and road repairs,
- I almost always get a seat on a train, and
- Trains have free toilets.
Trains to Monaco

Your departure train station is Villefranche-sur-Mer

Check the train website schedules for the dates/times you will be traveling.
The French train website is www.voyages-sncf.com
The local 'TER' train website is http://www.ter-sncf.com/Region/paca/gare/Villefranche%20sur%20Mer.aspx

The train website schedule to Monaco-Monte-Carlo for June 8, 2012 departing near 9 AM showed trains leave at 9:08, 9:18, 9:33, and 9:48. Travel time is less than 14 minutes and cost is 2.70 euro one way.

Download the “official” bus route map for Monaco showing all bus stops to determine which stop is most convenient for you. See http://www.cam.mc/documents/1298472237.pdf

The main, high level entrance to the train station is Monte-Carlo at Pont Sainte Devote. This exit/entrance has a huge sign over the building “Gare de Monaco”. You can't miss it. This exit/entrance is next to the stop for Monaco buses 2, and 4. Buses are the easiest way to travel in Monaco to avoid getting lost, climbing stairs, and walking steeply inclined streets. Regardless of where you are going in Monaco, I believe you will find that if you use the bus system is the best, easiest, lowest cost, no-sweat, trouble-free way to see all the tourist sites in Monaco. I have provide detailed directions, bus routes, schedules, street level photos, maps and aerial photos in my Monte Carlo Monaco Port Guide. It's intended to help you focus on the tourist sites and not waste a lot of time trying to get to them. I suggest you download the Monte Carlo Monaco Port Guide.

A useful website for planning your visit to Monaco is http://www.photomazza.com/-Monaco-. It is an awesome photo documentary. It covers the history and almost everything there is to see and visit including the palace, churches, museums, casino, gardens, skyscrapers, underground train station, mountains, monuments, squares, state events, cultural activities, sporting events, and every tourist site. You don't have to click on each photo, just scroll with the arrow at the right of your monitor to preview your visit.

Buses to Monaco

Your will board either the #100 or #100X bus at the Octroi bus stop in Villefranche-sur-mer. There is no major bus station in Monaco, the buses make several stops as shown below:

Bus #100 stops in Monaco:
Cimetiere
Place d’Armes
Les Carabiniers
Place des Moulins
Ste Devote/Gare
Stade Nautique
Office de Tourisme
Casino (aller Lumiere)
Place des Moulins
Saint Roman

Bus #100X stops in Monaco
Place d’Armes
Stade Nautique
Pl. Ste Devote/Gare
Casino
Place des Moulins
User Feedback Is Welcome

Goal
My guides are designed to help you plan a great cruise vacation by providing information such as where the ship docks, location of tourist sites, public transit, walking tour maps, things to see and do, travel issues unique to the port, etc. Knowledge of ports is important when planning shore excursions because you have to make many decisions and commitments long before your ship docks. I believe the information in this guide is accurate, however you are responsible to verify accuracy of the information that you use to plan your vacation.

Information on cruise ports frequently changes such as bus routes, admission fees to sites, rental car locations, etc. Cruise Critic is the best source for up-to-date, detailed information on travel details for shore excursions, reviews of cruise ships, etc. There are many knowledgeable people on Cruise Critic who are willing to share their expertise and travel experience. I highly recommend www.CruiseCritic.com; it's free to join.

Why feedback is important
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PLEASE Help “spread the word” about my website
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Fortunately, a friend of mine on that ship complained to the purser and the ship stopped violating my copyright.

If there is any question about use of my guides, contact me at TomsPortGuides@Gmail.com

Tom Sheridan