

DESCRIPTION OF PAINTING SITES AND EXCURSIONS



Painting in the Luberon, Provence

St. Remy de Provence

As the well-preserved and extensive ruins of Glanum bear witness, St Remy has a long history dating back to Roman settlements. It has been known for a long time as a market town of gardeners and greengrocers. With its town square shaded by ancient plane trees, its fountains, narrow streets, colorful facades and sidewalk cafes St Remy typifies Provencal charm. Make sure to spend some time at the lively open air market which is held every Wednesday. It is an incredible experience guaranteed to appeal to all of your senses. St Remy boasts a diverse history. Not only is it the birthplace of the enigmatic visionary Nostradamus but also the resting place of Vincent Van Gogh who spend his final years painting in the immediate surrounding areas. The Van Gogh trail which will lead you to locations and scenes that inspired many of his paintings remains one of the more fascinating sites to visit in St Remy.

For further information and a complete description of the Van Gogh trail please visit the following web site: www.saintremy-de-provence.com/st-remy/anglais/peint.htm

Eygalières

A short distance from St Remy the village of Eygalières is a rare gem undiscovered by tourists. Nestled amidst lush orchards, olive groves and lavender fields at the foothill of the striking Alpilles, Eygalières exudes a flagrant and timeless mystique. The old village with its winding cobblestoned streets, stone houses, colorful window boxes and containers is undeniably enchanting. Perched on a rocky plateau the nearby chapel of St. Sixte is surrounded by a beautiful countryside and well worth a detour.

Les Baux

Les Baux is a major tourist site that has been described at length in many brochures and guide books. Despite the obvious presence of tourism Les Baux remains one of the quaintest French villages. High up on a limestone plateau Les Baux enjoys an unusually dramatic position. The old fortress, the surrounding limestone cliffs and the village itself built in the same limestone all contribute to a harmonious panorama. Should you be so inclined to splurge on a unique dining experience there is the legendary stone-vaulted restaurant, “Oustau de Beaumaniere”, just outside Les Baux. (Reservations are essential).

Goult

In the bucolic and remote village of Goult the only sounds you might hear are singing cicadas, church bells and the wind under the Mediterranean sun and clear sky. Here you can truly let go of all your stress and soak in the air perfumed by sweet wild thyme and other aromatic “herbes de Provence” which grow everywhere you step. You might see some sheep and goats. Surrender and savor each moment! This is where the simple pleasure of eating local “chevre”(goat cheese) with a dash of “tapenade” (olive spread) on “pain de campagne” (wholesome peasant bread) will taste unimaginably good.

Gordes

Situated above a valley high up on cliffs the once unspoiled and striking village of Gordes is now a trendy tourist attraction surrounded by vacation villas and hotels. Its narrow cobblestoned winding streets, its vaulted alleys, arcades, rustic old stone houses and its castle will delight visitors despite the omnipresence of boutiques, souvenirs shops and galleries catering to tourists. Following in the footsteps of Cubist artist Andre Lhote who settled in the village in 1938 many renowned artist such as Chagall and Victor Vasalery began visiting and summering in Gordes.

Near Gordes in the midst of vast lavender fields is the famous still functioning **Cistercian abbey of Senanque**.

Bonnieux

Despite the recent influx of tourists Bonnieux has retained its distinctiveness. Perched on a hill with the Luberon Mountain in its background, Bonnieux is both extremely picturesque and enticingly serene. From its terraces the views are simply superb. A few rustic eateries make Bonnieux ideal for a lunch break should one tire of the painter’s picnic. Also nearby is the Chateau de Lacoste once home to the infamous Marquis de Sade whose unleashed and savage libido coined the term sadism. On a less disturbing note it is also interesting to know that Peter Mayle’s house is near Bonnieux. (Peter Mayle: A Year in Provence, 1991)

Roussillon

No modern developments have spoiled the hilltop town of Roussillon as it has been protected by strict zoning laws for decades. A major vein of iron hydroxide sediment mixed with pure clay is at the origin of the famous Roussillon ochre deposits which have been mined for centuries. Today

the ochre industry is mainly a tourist attraction. The warm hues ranging from light amber, tangerine and rose to rusty yellow and russet earth give the cliff formations, eroded buffs and the village itself a seductive glow that changes with the light of the day. Set against the Mediterranean vivid sky and surrounding dense greenery the surreal colors of Roussillon will no doubt imbue you with an intense experience. The American Lawrence Wylie wrote his classic sociological study of French culture and village life based on his living experience in Roussillon. (Lawrence Wylie: A Village in the Vaucluse, 1957)

ALTERNATIVE AND ADDITIONAL SITES

Le Pont du Gard

Dating over 2000 years this very tall Roman aqueduct is one of the best preserved ruins in the world. Standing on its top one can feel its massive presence. One has to marvel at this ancient masterpiece combining art and technology.

Arles

Arles is a busy and chic small town on the Rhone river with many sidewalk cafes, quaint boutiques and diverse edifices that bear witness to its past prosperity. The large Roman amphitheater is still used for festivities and bullfights. Many painters have lived in Arles including Gauguin and Van Gogh who was taken by the crystalline quality of the light. Georges Bizet immortalized it in his incidental music written in 1872 to the play L'Arlesienne.

Mt Ste Victoire

A sizable Mountain (3,300 ft) Mt Sainte Victoire looms in majestic isolation over the plain of Aix. Mt Ste Victoire has inspired many of Cezanne's paintings. Today it is a popular destination for hikers and climbers.

La Camargue

Flanked by the vast Rhone delta the Camargue is a protected wildlife refuge consisting of marshlands. You will see many species of birds including egrets, herons and flamingos. However, the Camargue is mostly known for its striking wild white horses. The Camargue has its own subculture colored by the presence of the "gitans", the gypsies. In Saintes-Maries-de-la-Mer on the Mediterranean coast there is a yearly large gypsy festival and pilgrimage with its haunting music, passionate dances, beautiful costumes, rodeos and bullfights.

Oppede-le-Vieux

For a true taste of unspoiled territory in the deep heart of the Luberon the off-the-beaten-path rustic perched village of Oppede-le-Vieux is a discovery. There are two cafes, a main square, a

pretty little church and a rugged 20 minute straight up climb to a ruined castle. On the way to the castle the church terrace will offer an unbeatable view of tiled rooftops and a magnificent panorama of the Rhone valley. There are no shops here for tourists.