

# Intoxicating Southern France Features Provence This Week

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PJ Adams



Picturesque Provence. A lovely part of Southern France filled with lovely vistas, lavender aromas, garlic-infused dishes, and delightful Provençal people. This land, dubbed the "Provinces" by Julius Caesar, is shaped as much by its quirky people and colorful culture, as by its agricultural landscape, peasant cuisine, and dynamic history.



Situated between the French Riviera and the vast Languedoc, Provence is famous for its rosé wines, charming hill towns like Gordes, Menerbes, and Bonnieux, street markets, and medieval and Roman ruins. Peter Mayle famously wrote about Provence in his many books starting with *A Year in Provence*. And when you visit these Alpilles-lined plains dotted with lavender and sunflowers, you too will experience the splendid country lifestyle of rural Provence.



Among its many pleasures are peasant cuisine flavored with the precious "black diamonds" (truffles), filled with fresh vegetables and Mediterranean olives, and accompanied by artisanal cheeses and local meats like wild boar, farm-raised poultry, and hearty country pâté. Meals are crowned by memorable Provençal sweets like white nougat and frosted callison cookies. And it's all washed down with sun-kissed rosés or world-famous red vintages from Châteauneuf du Pape. Stars Brad Pitt and Angelina Jolie famously own a vineyard here called



Miraval, by the way.

The people live a charming life in Provence. They see bullfights in Arles at the still-utilized Roman Amphitheater. They gaze at the legendary paintings of Van Gogh who painted here. They climb the limestone fortresses like Les-Baux-de-Provence, and sail along the Rhône or the Gardon River alongside the Pope's Palace in Avignon or under the grand Roman aqueduct at the Pont du Gard. And they visit their wonderful open-air markets, like the popular Wednesday market in Saint-Remy-de-Provence. Nostradamus, seer and favorite of the great Queen Catherine de' Medicia, as well as Vincent Van Gogh loved Saint-Remy.



And there is much to see, do, and buy here, from the blue, purple, and yellow provençal linens and faience (pottery), to the keepsakes for your home or closet with lavender motifs, Provençal images, or locales logos like Aix-en-Provence and Marseilles. Art abounds here as well, such as magnificent pieces by Paul Cezanne, as well as Van Gogh and others.



*Intoxicating Southern France* takes readers on a grand tour of these Provence delights from its pages. And, if you decide to travel here, you may wish to engage the service of local guide companies like my American friend Christy Destremau who lives in France and offers a stellar group of private tours at **Off the Beaten Path, LLC**. Christy's tours are wonderfully managed venues where you will experience the pleasures of Provence in comfortable style.



Ultimately a visit to Provence is a memory-making experience. The verdant lands, the magical white horses and feisty black bulls of the Camargue, the ruins at Glanum, and the ghosts of La Coste--all add to the wonderful mystique of beautiful Provence. And when you journey through Provence--whether in person or on the page--keep in mind the words of Frédéric Mistral: "When the Good Lord comes to doubt about the world, he remembers that he created Provence." Santé!

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