




Great Monuments, Art and Gardens of the Côte d'Azur, Provence and the Cévennes 2028

12 MAY – 27 MAY 2028

Code: 22814

Tour Leaders **David Henderson, Romain Nugou**

Fitness Level 

Level 2 - Intermediate

For people with energetic lifestyles and very good mobility

Journey from the sparkling Côte d'Azur through Provence to the mountainous UNESCO-listed Cévennes NP. View Roman monuments, private gardens & the work of artists such as Cézanne, Matisse & Bonnard.

Overview

Led by award-winning artist [David Henderson](#) and French historian [Romain Nugou](#), this tour explores the extraordinary diversity of the natural and human landscapes of Southern France, and their influence upon human creativity, with visits to important art collections, idyllic private gardens, great monuments, and spectacular natural sites.

- View the work of artists such as Bonnard, Cézanne, Cocteau, Chagall, Matisse, Hepworth, Miró, Giacometti and Picasso, and visit the coastal towns, villages and landscapes that inspired them.
- Enjoy guided tours of the finest private gardens of the Côte d'Azur: Domaine de l'Orangerie designed by James Basson, and Villa Fort France originally planted by Lady Fortescue in the 1930s.
- Travel in May to witness vibrant spring wildflowers and stroll through picturesque stone villages in the UNESCO-listed Cévennes National Park, which so impressed Robert Louis Stevenson.
- Uncover the rich Roman history of Provence as you visit Nîmes' monumental Roman Arena and the Maison Carrée; the breathtaking Pont du Gard aqueduct; and the impressive amphitheatre of Arles.
- Gain special access to enchanting private gardens such as the Pavillon de Galon in the Luberon mountains; the stone manor of La Chabaude and Anne Cox Chambers' domain Le Petit Fontanille.
- View some of the finest Roman mosaics in France at the Musée de la Romanité in Nîmes; a 31 metre-long Roman boat in Arles; and the archaeological remains of the ancient port of Marseille.
- Meet tree sculptor Marc Nucera at his atelier, and visit one of France's most famous private gardens, Mas Benoît, laid out by sculptor, garden designer and land artist Alain-David Idoux.
- Visit the Villa Ephrussi de Rothschild and see its paintings, sculpture and furniture, as well as the nearby Villa Grecque Kérylos, a luxurious re-creation of an ancient Grecian dwelling.
- Meet landscape designer Dominique Lafourcade, whose work embodies the Provençal 'art de vivre', and visit her private garden in Saint-Rémy-de-Provence.
- Tour Château La Coste with its wine cellar designed by Jean Nouvel, an art centre by Tadao Ando and artworks by leading contemporary artists such as Louise Bourgeois and Alexander Calder.
- Explore masterpieces of modern architecture, from Eileen Gray's elegant Villa E-1027 and Le Corbusier's intimate Cabanon overlooking the Mediterranean, to Marseille's iconic Cité Radieuse, one of the defining landmarks of 20th-century design.
- Cruise through the precipitous Gorges du Tarn, a limestone canyon carved by the Tarn River and dotted with medieval castles.

Limited to 18 participants

Overnight Menton (2 nights) • Antibes (2 nights) • Aix-en-Provence (4 nights) • Arles (4 nights) • Florac (3 nights)

Introduction

The district of the Côte d'Azur is one of the world's most famous examples of interactions between magnificent landscapes and the human creative spirit. Gardeners, architects and artists, writers and musicians have moulded this environment and also celebrated its topography, colour and light.

In stark contrast, the Cévennes region, on the south-eastern edge of France's Massif Central, is one of the least populated, most isolated and grandest semi-wilderness areas of Western Europe. Yet a different balance between nature and human creativity is to be found in Provence, which has a far deeper history of civilization than the other two regions.

Before the 18th century, the Côte d'Azur was the rarely visited haunt of poor fishermen and pirates. Little of human value existed between populous and powerful Genoa and the old cities of Provence. In the 19th

century wealthy gardeners began to create villa gardens along this coast, whose clement climate enabled them to grow a bewildering variety of plants from everywhere in the world.

In the late 19th and early 20th centuries artists followed: Monet, Renoir, Pissarro, Signac, Seurat, Picasso, Braque, Miró, Fernand Léger, Matisse, Marc Chagall, Jean Cocteau and a host of others, and the coast became inextricably associated with the development of modernist art. Kenneth E. Silver has aptly entitled his book on this artistic transformation *Making Paradise, Art, Modernity and the Myth of the French Riviera*.

Provence was the first transalpine province of the Roman Republic, and has some of the finest antique architecture outside the Italic peninsula. Provence fractured into a number of small principalities in the Middle Ages, and Avignon became the temporary home of the papacy. When this region became integrated into the French nation its days of glory had, however, passed, yet its lovely agricultural landscapes and distinctive peasant culture fascinated 19th century intellectuals and artists such as Mistral, Van Gogh and Paul Cézanne.

In the 20th century, this region became increasingly important for its excellent cuisine, fine wine, its homely *bastides* (country houses), its distinctive way of life celebrated by Marcel Pagnol, and the rugged beauty of its landscapes. In stark contrast to the artists of the Côte d'Azur, the farming community of the Cévennes has always struggled with the region's awesome environment.

This tour will explore the diverse ways in which gardeners, artists and architects have interacted with one of Europe's most beautiful regions, contrasting with the Cévenne's wild scenery of man's struggle with nature. We explore many of the Côte d'Azur's most interesting gardens, buildings and museums, and also spend time in one of the Mediterranean's most important trading cities, Marseille, whose wealthy families built magnificent palaces and collected masterpieces to hang in them.

We also explore Provence, where the Romans created wealthy cities, and where in the 19th and early 20th centuries writers and artists found a deeply traditional, distinctive peasant culture. In the great Cévennes National Park we end our tour with gentle hikes through magnificent scenery, visit isolated villages, and even go on a cruise through the Tarn Gorges.

Leaders



David Henderson

Award-winning artist & Royal Academy graduate who paints half the year in Italy, David brings an artist's eye & profound knowledge of European art to ASA tours.

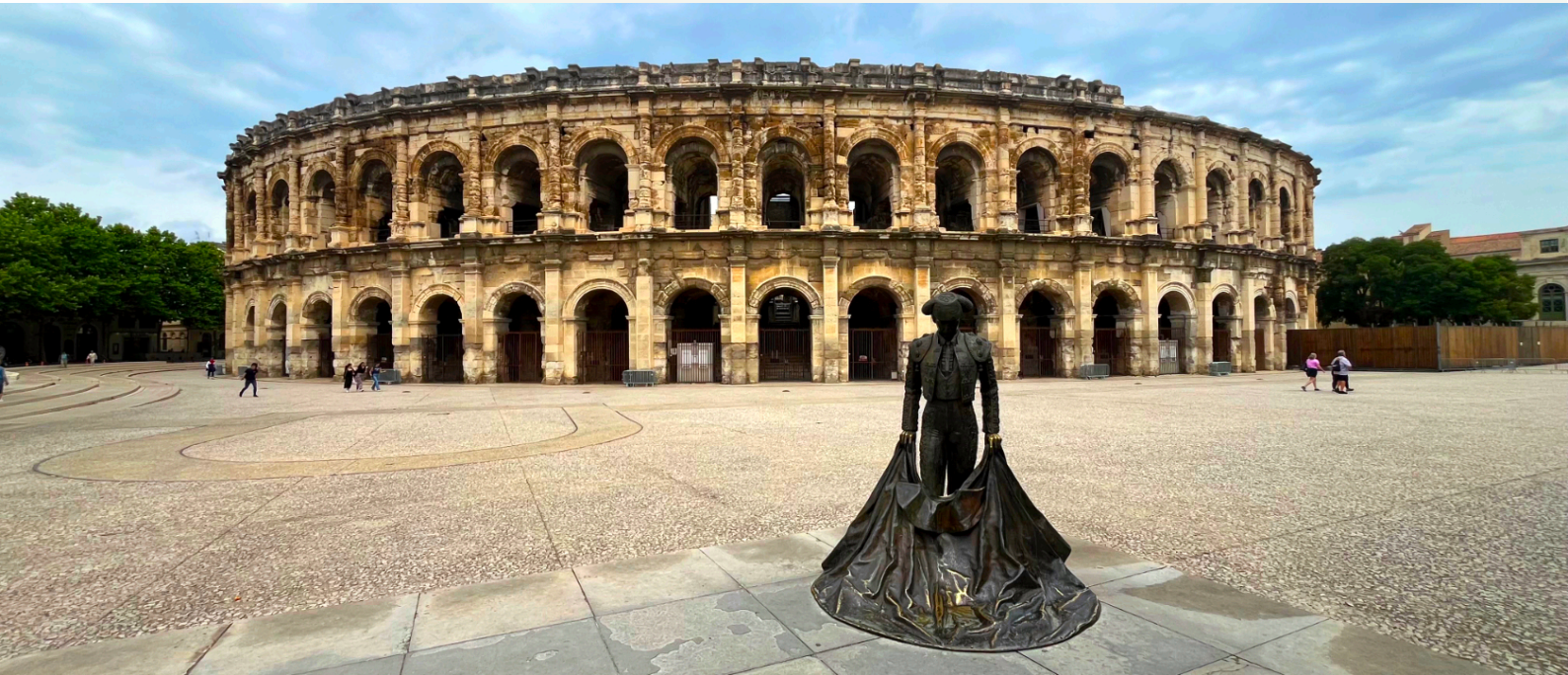
After initial studies in architecture, David Henderson spent four years at London's Royal Academy Schools where he was awarded the S.J. Solomon prize for figure painting and was twice selected for the Academy's annual summer exhibition. Since then, he has held over 30 solo exhibitions in London, Rome, Melbourne, Sydney and Brisbane. His work has been selected for a number of prestigious group exhibitions, including the New English Art Club, the Doug Moran National Portrait Prize and Tattersall's Landscape Prize. David has been the recipient of numerous awards including - on two occasions - Best of Show at the Brisbane Rotary art exhibition. In 2021, he was elected a Fellow of the Royal Queensland Art Society. David has lectured for the Queensland Art Gallery, Queensland University of Technology and the Brisbane Institute of Art. He has accompanied over 50 tours for ASA to Italy, France, the UK and the USA and now spends a part of each year living and working in Italy. David brings a trained artist's eye to an analysis of painting, sculpture and architecture and takes great pleasure in sharing his knowledge.



Romain Nugou

Romain holds a Master of Arts degree in European history from the University of Toulouse. He also graduated in geography and economics. A native French speaker and an insatiable traveller, he joined ASA in 2018 and leads tours to France.

Born and raised in the mountainous region of Auvergne in Central France, Romain studied at the University of Toulouse and completed a Bachelor of Arts in 2003 with major studies in history, geography and economic history. He also holds a Master of Arts in Contemporary European and Italian history. His Master's thesis examined the issues of Italian exiles in France during the Fascist period, which led him to study in Rome on a regular basis. Romain is forever a curious mind and an insatiable traveller who is trilingual (French, English and Spanish, with notions of Italian). Apart from his beloved France, he lived and worked in South America and then New Caledonia, before eventually moving to Melbourne which he now calls home. Romain is a member of the Royal Australian Historical Society and the Royal Historical Society of Victoria. Romain joined ASA in 2018 and leads a number of ASA's tours to Southern France.



Itinerary

The following itinerary describes a range of museums and private gardens which we plan to visit. Many are accessible to the public, but some require special permission, which may only be confirmed closer to the tour's departure. The daily activities described in this itinerary may change or be rotated and/or modified in order to accommodate alterations in opening hours and confirmation of private visits. Participants will receive a final itinerary together with their tour documents prior to departure. The tour includes breakfast daily, lunches & evening meals indicated in the detailed itinerary where: B=breakfast, L=lunch and D=dinner.

Menton - 2 nights

Day 1: Friday 12 May, Menton – Cap Moderne – Menton

- Tour commences at 1.30pm in the foyer of the Hotel Napoléon in Menton
- Introductory Meeting
- Salle des Mariages, Menton
- Eileen Gray villa E-1027 & Le Corbusier's Cabanon
- Welcome Dinner

Meeting Point: The tour commences at 1.30pm in the foyer of the [Hotel Napoléon](#) in Menton. Note: private transfers from the airport to the hotel can be arranged through the hotel's concierge, please contact ASA for further information.

For the next 2 nights we stay at the 4-star Hotel Napoléon, located just across the road from the beach and only a ten-minute gentle walk to the old town of Menton. The hotel's private off-street courtyard is an exotic garden designed by Eric Ossart and Arnaud Maurières.

Following a short welcome meeting at the hotel, we transfer to Menton's town centre. Menton occupies a natural amphitheatre and has always been a frontier town. Ruined fortresses clinging to its surrounding cliffs

testify to the town's deep, turbulent history. Here we shall encounter the work of the famous artist and filmmaker Jean Cocteau. Cocteau redecorated the town hall's *Salle des mariages* (marriage room) with frescoes and furnishings, all in the theme of 'Love'.

We then transfer to Roquebrune-Cap-Martin to view Le Corbusier's Cabanon and the interior of Eileen Gray villa E-1027. Le Corbusier built his Cabanon on the land of a restaurateur friend, Thomas Rebutato. This tiny, wooden, 14-square holiday house was the only residence the architect ever designed for himself. *Cabanon* is the French diminutive for cabin, but also evokes the shepherd huts that can be found throughout the south of France, a clear reference to Le Corbusier's love of nature. Le Corbusier at the time was master planning the city of Bogotá and work on his Marseille Unité d'Habitation, his vertical concrete garden city, was coming to an end. He lived from time to time at the much-photographed modernist villa that his friend, the Anglo-Irish designer Eileen Gray, had already established here.

In 1924 Gray and Jean Badovici had begun working on this vacation house. L-shaped and flat-roofed with floor-to-ceiling windows and a spiral stairway to the guest room, E-1027 was both open and compact. Eileen spent three years designing the furniture and working with her partner on the plans. This is considered to be Gray's first major work, making indistinct the border between architecture and decoration, and highly personalized to be in accord with the lifestyle of its intended occupants. The name of the house, E-1027, is a code of designers' names; 'E' stands for Eileen and the numbers are those of the alphabetical positions of their initials: '10' Jean, '2' Badovici, '7' Gray. The encoded name was Eileen Gray's way of showing their relationship as lovers at the time when the house was built.

This evening we enjoy a welcome meal at a local restaurant overlooking Menton's Garavan Bay. (Overnight Menton) D

Day 2: Saturday 13 May, Menton – Nice Cimiez – Menton

- Musée Matisse, Cimiez
- Jardin Exotique Val Rahmeh, Menton

This morning we drive to Cimiez, today a suburb of Nice and site of a small Roman city, which is famous for its museum devoted to France's greatest modern painter, Henri Matisse; he lived in Nice from 1917 until his death in 1954. We shall view paintings that span his career, from the very early *Still Life with Books* (1890) to his *Rococo Armchair* (1947) and *Blue Nude* (1952).

We drive back to Menton where lunch will be at leisure. Les Halles Market is open every day, and you'll have the opportunity to taste some local specialties, such as the *socca*, a savoury chickpea pancake.

We end the day with a visit to the Jardin Exotique Val Rahmeh, the sub-tropical botanical garden of May Sherwood Campbell. A guided tour will reveal its wonderful array of lush plantings. Its pond is enlivened with water hyacinths, water lilies, and papyrus. (Overnight Menton) B

Antibes – 2 nights

Day 3: Sunday 14 May, Menton – Saint-Jean-Cap-Ferrat – Villefranche-sur-Mer – Beaulieu-sur-Mer – Antibes

- Villa Ephrussi, Saint-Jean-Cap-Ferrat
- Chapelle Saint-Pierre by Jean Cocteau, Villefranche-sur-Mer
- Villa Grecque Kérylos, Beaulieu-sur-Mer

We spend today on Cap-Ferrat, a narrow peninsula extending far out to sea. Cap-Ferrat was one of the most fashionable resorts of the 20th century. In 1926, Baroness Béatrice Ephrussi de Rothschild chose a site here for her enormous villa and garden – Villa Île de France. The villa's first floor includes terracotta sculptures by Clodion, a Meissen China Room and a Tapestry Room whose furniture by Jacob is upholstered with Beauvais tapestries. We then tour the villa's seven exquisite gardens, which include patios, waterfalls, ponds, floral borders, shady walks and rare species of trees. The garden ensemble comprises Florentine, Spanish, formal French and exotic gardens, as well as rose and rock gardens.

Our next visit is to the Chapelle Saint-Pierre, painted by Jean Cocteau at Villefranche-sur-Mer. The chapel's feeling of simple, humble fervour echoes that of small Romanesque churches. Its decoration simultaneously represents St. Peter's life, the village dear to Cocteau's childhood, and the artist's friendship with the fishermen to whom the chapel was dedicated.

After time at leisure for lunch in Villefranche-sur-Mer we visit the extraordinary Villa Kérylos. This unique re-creation of an ancient Greek dwelling, complete with wall decorations and furniture, was built by two great Hellenophiles, archaeologist and patron Théodore Reinach and the architect Emmanuel Pontremoli. They based the design on 2nd century BCE noble houses on the Island of Delos. Everything inside, from the arrangement of rooms to the details of the décor, recreates the atmosphere of a luxurious Grecian villa. (Overnight Antibes) B

Day 4: Monday 15 May, Antibes – Vallauris – Grasse – Châteauneuf-Grasse – Vence – Antibes

- Domaine de l'Orangerie, Antibes – private garden designed by James Basson
- Musée National Pablo Picasso – La Guerre et la Paix, Vallauris
- Time at leisure in Grasse
- Jardin de la Villa Fort France, Châteauneuf-Grasse (private garden, by special appointment)
- Matisse's Chapelle du Rosaire, Vence

This morning we visit the Domaine de l'Orangerie, a private garden designed by James Basson, winner of the best in show award at the RHS Chelsea Flower Show in 2017. Set in the hills above Antibes, the owners of Domain de l'Orangerie have, since 2018, been transforming a traditional, heavily irrigated lawn with annual planting, into a dry garden of flora from around the Mediterranean basin. The new garden relies entirely on natural rainfall. The entrance to the property has been planted with local oak and pine, and the area around the house is now a haven for bees, birds and insects. Neither pesticides nor herbicides are used on the property.

We then leave Antibes to reach Vallauris and immerse ourselves in the world of Pablo Picasso. Drawn to the allure of the Mediterranean, the artist chose to make the Côte d'Azur his home after World War II. Vallauris, renowned for its pottery industry, became his haven from 1948 to 1955. He created a vast body of work experimenting with ceramics. Picasso's connection to Vallauris and its people ran deep and in 1951 he celebrated his 70th birthday within the castle chapel. Drawn to the profound symbolism of the place and the architectural integrity of its austere structure, Picasso chose this very chapel to install his monumental masterpiece *La Guerre et la Paix* in 1959. Made of two very large painted panels, this work retains an undeniably allegorical dimension. This decision by Picasso was part of a broader artistic movement that saw a renewed interest in sacred art during the 1950s. Henri Matisse adorned the Rosary Chapel in Vence, while Marc Chagall, Pierre Bonnard, Fernand Léger, and Germaine Richier contributed to the decoration of the church of Plateau d'Assy, Notre-Dame-de-Toute-Grâce. The ancient building serves as a powerful anchor for *La Guerre et la Paix*, imbuing it with a sacred and universal resonance.

After this visit, we travel to Grasse where there will be time at leisure to explore the town. Perched 350m

above sea level, Grasse is renowned as the world's perfume capital. Its thriving perfume industry dates back to the late 18th century, attracting skilled "noses" who have honed their craft in Grasse, distinguishing over 2,000 different scents. The town's microclimate has fostered a flourishing flower farming industry, particularly for jasmine, a key perfume ingredient. Introduced to southern France by the Moors in the 16th century, Grasse now harvests an impressive 27 tonnes of jasmine annually. The historic quarter of Grasse is a captivating labyrinth of narrow, shaded streets, showcasing the town's medieval and Renaissance architecture. All of these streets converge at the magnificent Notre Dame du Puy Cathedral. Originally built between the 10th and 11th centuries and later modified in the 17th century with the addition of an immense bell tower, this Romanesque church is a treasure trove of art. Inside, you will find a splendid altarpiece by Louis Brea, paintings by Rubens and Fragonard, as well as exquisite stained-glass windows and statues.

Nearby is the garden of Villa Fort France. Its original owners, Lady Winifred Fortescue and her husband, Sir John, bought it in 1935. Lady Fortescue wrote of her struggles to create her home there entitled *Perfume from Provence*, illustrated by A.A. Milne. Her rose garden was expanded by Jeanne Gruniaux for the present owners, Pierre and Valérie de Courcel, who have added their own touches to create a lovely garden full of colourful annuals: Poppies, larkspur, love-in-the-mist and aquilegia plus a sweet pea hedge.

We return to Antibes via Vence, noted for Henri Matisse's *Chapelle du Rosaire*. Matisse worked on this unique architectural masterpiece between 1948 and 1951, creating its plan and all its decoration, including stained glass windows, ceramics, stalls, stoup, cult objects and priestly ornaments. (Overnight Antibes) B

Aix-en-Provence - 4 nights

Day 5: Tuesday 16 May, Antibes – Saint-Paul-de-Vence – Aix-en-Provence

- Provençal Market, Antibes
- Château Grimaldi – Musée Picasso, Antibes
- The Maeght Foundation, Saint-Paul-de-Vence

This morning we explore the port town of Antibes, which attracted many writers, such as Graham Greene, Ernest Hemingway and F. Scott Fitzgerald. Our walking tour includes a visit to Antibes' Provençal food market. We also visit the Château Grimaldi that houses the Musée Picasso. Picasso used the castle as his studio for a time in 1946. It holds a fine collection of the master's paintings and ceramics.

We next drive to Saint-Paul-de-Vence, built on a rocky outcrop and surrounded by ramparts overlooking the coast. Fortified in the 16th century, it began to attract artists such as Marc Chagall, who moved here in 1966 followed by a host of famous artists and writers drawn to the beauty of the surrounding area and its exceptional light.

After time at leisure for lunch and to explore the narrow, picturesque streets of Saint-Paul-de-Vence, we visit the Marguerite and Aimé Maeght Foundation, which has an exceptional collection of 20th-century and contemporary artworks. Painters and sculptors collaborated closely with Catalan architect Lluís Sert to create such elements as the Giacometti courtyard; the Miró labyrinth with sculptures and ceramics; mural mosaics by Chagall and Tal-Coat; a pool and stained glass window by Braque, and a Bury fountain. We shall enjoy works by artists such as Bonnard, Braque, Calder, Chagall, Giacometti, Léger, and Miró.

Following our visit, we continue to Aix-en-Provence. Provençal poet Frédéric Mistral went to school in Aix, Marcel Pagnol attended its university, and it was Émile Zola's hometown. Zola and Cézanne enjoyed long excursions on which one would paint, and the other would write. (Overnight Aix-en-Provence) B

Day 6: Wednesday 17 May, Aix-en-Provence – Marseille – Aix-en-Provence

- Musée d'Histoire de Marseille
- La Cité Radieuse – Unité d'habitation by Le Corbusier

This morning we drive south to the port city of Marseille, once a Greek settlement founded in the 7th century BCE, and arguably the oldest city in France. We begin with a visit to the Musée d'Histoire de Marseille, one of the most significant museums for urban history in France, exhibiting the major archaeological finds discovered after the site was excavated in 1967. During the earthworks, many remains of Greek, Roman and medieval ages were discovered. The museum opens out onto the Jardin des Vestiges, an outdoor garden containing the stabilised archaeological remains. The site was part of the ancient Greek city of Massalia and includes parts of the ancient port and city walls, with remains of three squared towers, a gateway dating back to the second or third century BCE and a necropolis. The museum presently contains permanent displays exhibiting the history of Marseille from prehistory to modern times. Highlights include some of the finds from the site itself, including, most famously, the hull of a ship of the 2nd century, claimed to be the best-preserved vessel of this period in the world.

After lunch at leisure on the Vieux-Port, we visit *La Cité Radieuse*, the first and most famous *Unité d'habitation* designed by Le Corbusier and built between 1947 and 1952. It is a modernist residential housing typology developed with the collaboration of painter-architect Nadir Afonso, which formed the basis of several housing developments throughout Europe designed by Le Corbusier, sharing the same name and reaching prominence in the 1950s and 60s. It was added to the UNESCO World Heritage List in 2016 because of its importance to the development of modernist architecture. Later in the afternoon we return to Aix-en-Provence. (Overnight Aix-en-Provence) B

Day 7: Thursday 18 May, Aix-en-Provence

- Market Day in Aix-en-Provence
- Orientation walk of Aix-en-Provence
- Afternoon at leisure

Thursday is Market Day in Aix-en-Provence. The market (*faire le marché*) is a tradition, a way of living, and an important element of socialisation and identity for French people. Colours, flavours, textures and local accents are all part of a charming mix. In Aix-en-Provence, there are as many markets as there are days of the week. From the vegetable market to the old books market, not forgetting the flower market, they bring the city to life with colours and sounds. Places for meetings and discoveries, they are set up on the many squares of the city centre.

Next, we continue with a guided walk through the old part of the city. Established in 122 BCE by the Roman garrison led by Caius Sextius Calvinus as *Aquae Sextiae*, Aix later flourished as the capital of the county of Provence. Renowned for its spa traditions since ancient times, Aix-en-Provence boasts a rich cultural heritage and serves as a prominent arts hub along the French Mediterranean coast. Dubbed the "City of a Hundred Fountains", Aix is a city characterized by its water features.

The afternoon is at leisure for you to further explore and enjoy this pleasant city and soak up the atmosphere of Aix watching the world go by on the café terraces of the Cours Mirabeau. (Overnight Aix-en-Provence) B

Day 8: Friday 19 May, Aix-en-Provence – Lourmarin – Apt – Bonnieux – Aix-en-Provence

- Village of Lourmarin
- La Chabaude, Apt (private garden, by special appointment)
- Lunch at La Bergerie, Bonnieux
- Le Jardin de La Louve, Bonnieux (private garden, by special appointment)

Lourmarin is listed as one of the most beautiful villages of France. It has a castle, winding streets, great views and famous writers. Albert Camus, Nobel Prize winner, lived and wrote in Lourmarin, as did novelist and biographer Henri Bosco. Both men are buried in the local cemetery.

Mid-morning we cross the Luberon mountain range to La Chabaude, a beautiful stone manor near the market town of Apt. Its gardens, designed by owner and landscape architect Philippe Cottet, are a masterpiece which includes sculptural boxwoods, sycamore trees, towering topiaries and fragrant rosemary and lavender.

We continue through the Luberon range to the picturesque village of Bonnieux, set atop craggy cliffs. Here we enjoy lunch at a local restaurant followed by a visit to Jardin La Louve ('She-Wolf Garden'). Fashion designer Nicole de Vésian began restoring her Provençal terrace garden on the lower fringe of this medieval village in 1987. She designed the house and garden in harmony with the natural surroundings. Since Nicole's death in 1996, this tiny spot has become one of the most photographed gardens in the world. Louisa Jones' book, *Modern Design in Provence* (2011), brought further fame to the garden. (Overnight Aix-en-Provence) BL

Arles - 4 nights

Day 9: Saturday 20 May, Aix-en-Provence – Cucuron – Le Puy-Sainte-Réparate – Arles

- Pavillon de Galon, Cucuron (private garden, by special appointment)
- Lunch at Restaurant designed by Tadao Ando, Château La Coste, Le Puy-Sainte-Réparate
- Art and Architecture Tour, Château La Coste, Le Puy-Sainte-Réparate

This morning we travel north to the Pavillon de Galon, a restored 18th-century hunting pavilion at the foot of the Luberon mountains, surrounded by vines, orchards, cherry and olive trees. Its gardens boast a colourful mix of lavender and clipped hedges.

We leave Cucuron for Le Puy-Sainte-Réparate where we visit Château La Coste, the creation of Irish property magnate Patrick McKillen. Since 2008, the Château has invited artists and architects to create a work there. Jean Nouvel designed the estate's chai de vinification (wine vault). In 2011 Tadao Ando designed the art centre surrounded by a shallow pool of water, on which Louise Bourgeois' Crouching Spider perches. On a guided tour through wooded hilltops and valleys, alongside olive groves and vineyards, we discover many installations by Alexander Calder, Frank O. Gehry, Ai Weiwei, Andy Goldworthy, Paul Matisse, Tom Shannon, Jean Prouve, Sean Scully, Richard Serra, Hiroshi Sugimoto, Tunga, and others. We also visit its kitchen garden, conceived by the landscape designer Louis Benech. We then travel to Arles, our stop for the next four nights. (Overnight Arles) BL

Day 10: Sunday 21 May, Arles – Nîmes – Pont du Gard – Arles

- Musée de la Romanité incl. the Mosaic of Pentheus, Nîmes
- Walking tour of Nîmes incl. the Maison Carrée and Les Arènes
- Pont du Gard

This morning we drive to Nîmes we visit the iconic Musée de la Romanité on arrival which opened in 2018, opposite Les Arènes. This modern museum, designed by French-Brazilian architect Elizabeth de Portzamparc, features exhibitions devoted to regional archaeology from the 7th century BCE (Iron Age) to the Middle Ages and complemented by several 18th and 19th century collections. One of the highlights is a 35 metre-square mosaic among the best preserved in the world after those of Pompeii. Dating from the beginning of the 3rd century AD, it was discovered in 2006 during excavation work on Avenue Jean-Jaurès. Impressive not only by its size but also for its composition and colours, it shows the mythological story of Pentheus who was put to death by his own mother for defying Dionysus.

We then take a walking tour of the town centre to view the magnificent Roman Temple, the Maison Carrée, and the twin-tiered amphitheatre (Les Arènes) which is considered the best preserved in France. Built around 100 CE, the arena once seated 24,000 spectators. Following our guided walking tour we return to Arles.

Following lunch at leisure in Nîmes, we drive north to visit the Pont du Gard, the best-preserved of all Roman aqueducts. The massive blocks from which it was fabricated have remained in place for two millennia despite the fact it is a dry stone construction (without mortar or cement). (Overnight Arles) B

Day 11: Monday 22 May, Arles

- Musée de l'Arles Antique, Arles
- Saint-Trophime and its cloister, Arles
- Roman Theatre and Amphitheatre, Arles
- Time at leisure with optional visit to LUMA Arles

This morning we head to the splendid Musée de l'Arles Antique, whose rich collection of antiquities includes a wonderful, sculpted head of Julius Caesar and a 31m-long Roman boat which was discovered in the Rhône.

Following our introduction at the museum, we return to Arles centre for a walking tour of the city. We begin with a visit the Church of Saint-Trophime which has one of the finest Romanesque porticoes in Provence with a porch modelled on a Roman triumphal arch.

Provence takes its name from the fact that it was the first 'province' (*provincia*) of the Roman Empire outside Italy. Roman Arleate became a major city and was built to protect the vital estuary of the Rhône. This *colonia* was given a typical gridded street plan that can still be traced in the centre of the city. It had an important amphitheatre, which in the Middle Ages became a castle but is now used for bullfights, and a theatre, now used for festivals.

The afternoon is at leisure. You may wish to join an optional visit to LUMA Arles, an arts centre designed by Frank Gehry. The centre, which opened in 2021, features a stainless steel-clad tower with a twisting geometric structure – a glittering icon set within the Parc des Ateliers. (Overnight Arles) B

Day 12: Tuesday 23 May, Arles – Eygalières – Noves – Saint-Rémy de Provence – Arles

- Mas Benoît, Eygalières (private garden, by special appointment)
- Atelier of Marc Nucera, Noves (by special appointment)
- La Pomone, designed by Dominique Lafourcade (private garden, by special appointment)

We begin today with a visit to the private gardens of Mas Benoît in the foothills of the Alpilles. The garden

surrounding a traditional Provençal farmhouse, or mas, lies on a low hill with a magnificent distant mountain backdrop. It is a leading example of contemporary Mediterranean landscape art, with lavender wedge, almond spiral, rock river and oak groves sculpted by Marc Nucera.

In Noves we are privileged to meet with Marc Nucera, renowned tree sculptor and 'shaper', at his atelier and experimental garden 'Le Terrain'. Nucera sculpts living trees, favouring natives such as almonds, green and white oaks, and the remnants of cypress hedging often found on old farmsteads. He also gives new life to dead trees by turning them into furniture and sculptures.

We next make a visit with master landscape architect Dominique Lafourcade to her private garden in Saint-Rémy-de-Provence, La Pomone. "A garden is first and foremost a work of art, with the gardener playing the roles of architect, sculptor, musician and painter in turn. A garden should move visitors, setting all their senses aquiver" – Dominique Lafourcade. (Overnight Arles) B

Florac - 3 nights

Day 13: Wednesday 24 May, Arles – Saint Etienne du Grès – Uzès – Florac

- Le Petit Fontanille, Saint Etienne du Grès (private garden, by special appointment – to be confirmed for 2028)
- Wednesday market in the medieval town of Uzès
- Dinosaur footprints, St-Laurent-de-Trèves (time-permitting)

This morning we visit Le Petit Fontanille, the private garden of late Mrs Anne Cox Chambers. Le Petit Fontanille is the work of several English garden designers: Peter Coates, Rosemary Verey, and, more recently, Tim Rees. The garden merges perfectly into the surrounding hills, woods and olive groves; its success lies in its combination of a profusion of native plants with exotics that are compatible with the climate.

From Saint Etienne du Grès we drive north-west from Arles to the pretty village of Uzès, home to one of the most colourful markets in the south of France. The Wednesday morning market specialises in regional products and specialties: creamy goat cheese, garlic olives, fragrant herbs, pots of thyme-flavoured honey, bread and even small jars of snail and shallot spread!

We continue to our friendly family hotel in the picturesque village of Florac at the very centre of the Cévennes National Park. Time-permitting we stop at the little hamlet of St-Laurent-de-Trèves, situated on a rocky outcrop with magnificent views. Dinosaur footprints have been discovered here, dating back 190 million years, to a time when the region was a limestone swamp. A short walk around the site reveals a number of footprints, which are amazingly clear.

Tonight we dine in the hotel restaurant, *L'Adonis*, where owner and chef Martial Paulet will serve dishes with the best local seasonal produce. The hotel is situated on the escarpments of the Causse Méjean close to the awesome Gorges du Tarn, Mont Lozère and Mont Aigoual. Robert Louis Stevenson became enamoured of this awesome region and spent much time wandering through it. (Overnight Florac) BD

Day 14: Thursday 25 May, Florac – Mont Lozère – Finiels – Pont de Montvert – Florac

- Time at leisure to explore Florac Market
- Orientation walk in Florac and R.L. Stevenson Exhibition
- Mont Lozère scenic drive

- Le Pont de Montvert

We spend the next two days exploring the Cévennes National Park in the company of local expert mountain guide Anne Noury, Vice-President of the Association Sur Le Chemin de Robert Louis Stevenson. The Cévennes is one of the wildest areas of France, with high mountains and deep gorges. Nineteenth-century travellers like Robert Louis Stevenson visited isolated villages that seemed locked in the past, with a tradition-bound, conservative culture.

Today's program will combine coach touring with easy rambles through the countryside and to small, medieval villages. We shall be able to imagine the area as Robert Louis Stevenson saw it, with its wilderness scenery of rugged escarpments, deep valleys, small streams and a host of pretty wildflowers.

After an orientation walk in Florac, we take a scenic drive to the summit of Mont Lozère, the highest peak in the Cévennes National Park. It offers some stunning views of coniferous plantations and 'broom' scrub moorland. A short walk will enable us to view the Pic de Finiels which rises at 1699m. The distinct geological zones that make up the Cévennes National Park sustain different types of landscape, which have all been shaped by human activity. Mont Lozère is a granite massif scattered with typical reliefs called *felsenmeer* ('block fields'). Water is omnipresent in springs, peat bogs and rivers. The bare crests are summer pastures for great flocks of sheep. Mont Lozère bears the signs of ancient human occupation: menhirs, Gallo-Roman vestiges, and so on.

Following lunch in the small village of Finiels, we drive to Le Pont de Montvert (870 metres in altitude), located at the base of the south-facing slopes of Mont Lozère. Le Pont de Montvert is a pretty granite village that is named for its hump-backed bridge (*en dos d'âne*) that spans in a single arch the swift-flowing Tarn. The bridge is guarded by a defensive tower. The bridge, where Robert Louis Stevenson stopped during his famous 'travels with a Donkey', is now a stop along the popular trail that follows his original route. (Overnight Florac) BLD

Day 15: Friday 26 May, Florac – Gorges du Tarn – Gorges de la Jonte – Florac

- Boat excursion, Gorges du Tarn
- Belvédère des Vautours (Vulture Lookout), Gorges de la Jonte
- Causse Méjean
- Farewell Dinner

This morning we focus on the Gorges du Tarn, an impressive canyon cut by the Tarn River through the harsh limestone plateaux (*causses*) south of the Massif Central. We shall drive along the gorge and then take a small cruise down the Tarn as it winds through the most spectacular section of the valley. We cruise through Les Détroits, the most beautiful and narrowest section of the canyon, between towering vertical cliffs of 400 metres, and end at the Cirque des Baumes, where the gorge widens forming a magnificent amphitheatre.

Following a picnic lunch we travel to the western edge of the park, where the Gorges du Tarn meets the Gorges de la Jonte. Here we visit the Belvédère des Vautours, an interpretive centre and viewing point for the many Griffon and Black vultures that nest in the Gorge. National park officers will show us their nests as we watch individuals and groups perched on the dramatic gorge walls. Following a majestic aerial ballet performed by 30 or so vultures, we return to our hotel via the Causse Méjean and enjoy a farewell meal. (Overnight Florac) BLD

Day 16: Saturday 27 May, Florac – Nîmes Centre Station

- Corniche des Cévennes

This morning we drive out of the Cévennes National Park along the scenic Corniche des Cévennes, past the village of Saint-Jean-du-Gard and on to Nîmes' TGV station, where you will be able to take a train to your airport or next French destination. Our tour ends at Nîmes Centre station at approximately 1200hrs (midday).

For those departing from Nîmes Pont-du-Gard TGV Station, a transfer will be organised. B

Accommodation

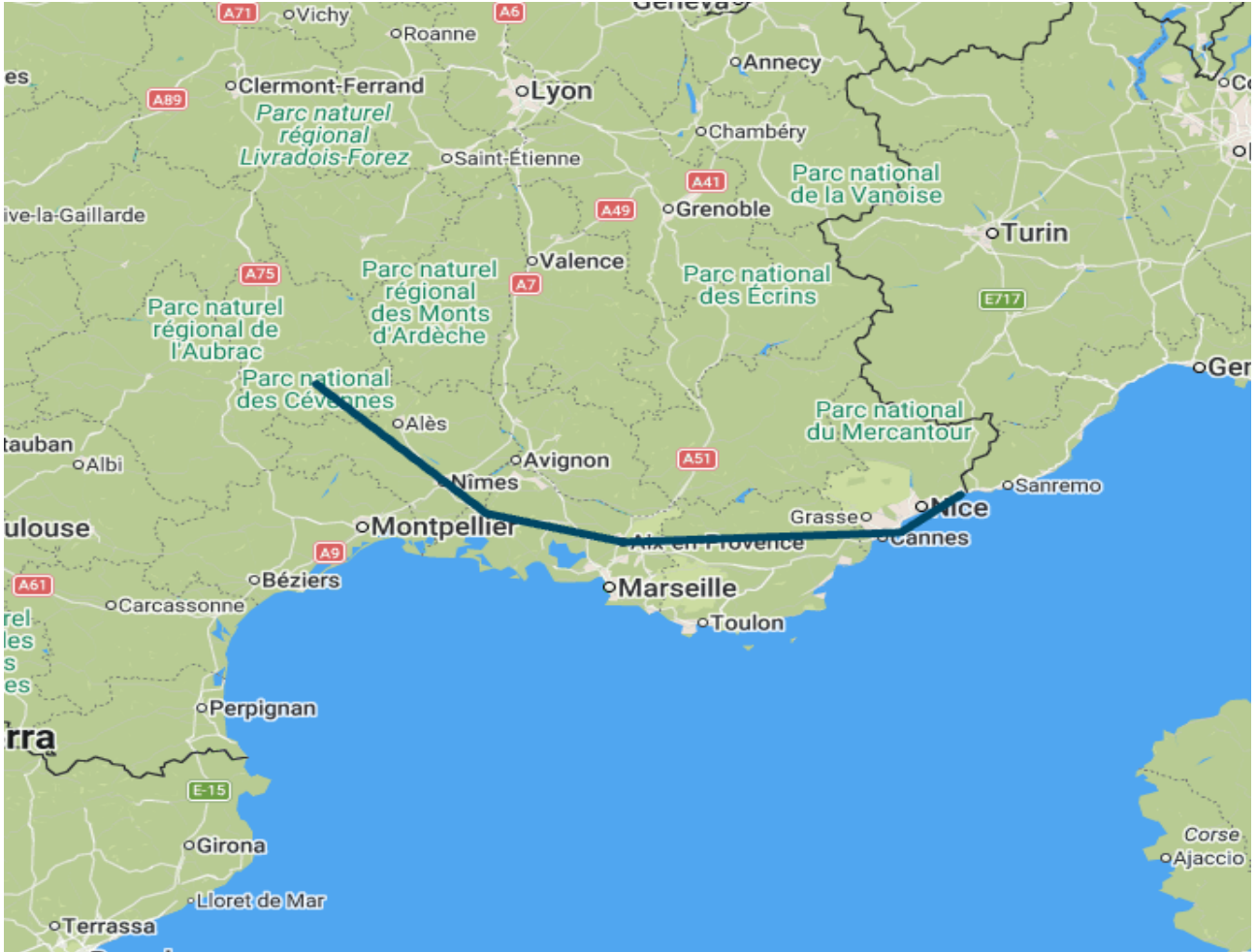
Hotels are rated 3- to 5-star locally and are comfortable and conveniently situated. All rooms have en suite bathroom.

- Menton (2 nights): [Hotel Napoléon](#) – located on the seafront within walking distance of the old town with gardens designed by landscape architects Arnaud Maurières and Eric Ossart.
- Antibes (2 nights): [La Villa Port d'Antibes](#) – located between the marina and the old town.
- Aix-en-Provence (4 nights): [Grand Hotel Roi René](#) – a short stroll from the Cours Mirabeau.
- Arles (4 nights): [Hôtel Jules César Arles](#) – situated across from the antique theatre; and decorated by Christian Lacroix.
- Florac (3 nights): [Hotel des Gorges du Tarn](#) – a charming family-run hotel set in the heart of the Cévennes National Park.

Single Supplement

Payment of this supplement will ensure accommodation in a single occupancy throughout the tour. In all hotels on this tour, this will be a double/twin room for single occupancy. The number of rooms available for single use is extremely limited. People wishing to take this supplement are therefore advised to book well in advance.

Tour Map



Tour Price & Inclusions

AUD \$TBA Land Content Only – Early-Bird Special: Book before 30 June 2027

AUD \$TBA Land Content Only

AUD \$TBA Single Supplement

Tour Price (Land Content Only) includes:

- Accommodation in twin-share rooms with private facilities in 3-5 star hotels
- Meals as indicated in the tour itinerary where: B=breakfast, L=lunch & D=dinner
- Drinks at welcome and farewell meals. Other meals may not have drinks included
- Transportation by air-conditioned coach
- Hotel-TGV station departure transfer
- Porterage of one piece of luggage per person at hotels (not at airports/train stations)
- Lecture and site-visit program
- Entrance fees
- Use of audio headsets during site visits
- Tips for the coach driver, local guides and restaurants for included meals

Tour Price (Land Content Only) does not include:

- Airfare: Australia-Nice, Nîmes-Australia
- Personal spending money
- Airport-hotel transfers
- Luggage in excess of 20kg (44lbs)
- Travel insurance
- Visas (if applicable)



Fitness Criteria & Practical Information

Fitness Level 

Level 2 - Intermediate

For people with energetic lifestyles and very good mobility

You must be able to:

- manage at least five to six hours of physical activity per day with ease.
- walk at a regular to moderate pace on flat or undulating terrain; a few days include steep ascents/descents to hilltop towns and terraced gardens.
- climb a few flights of stairs without duress (eg. access to 3rd level of the Pont du Gard involves 80 steps).
- stand for one to two hours during visits to galleries and museums without the need to sit.
- manage your own luggage at some hotels and at the Nîmes train station.

Fitness Levels

Please also view the fitness criteria required for our tours, graded from Level 1 to Level 3, at www.asatours.com.au/fitness-level/

All ASA tours are active programs suitable for people with a good level of mental and physical fitness and good mobility. They are not suitable for people who lack stamina, have difficulty walking at the group's pace or who have mobility issues. An unavoidable aspect of every tour is the need to manage walking, stair-climbing and standing for long periods of time.

It is a condition of travel that all participants agree to accept ASA's directions in relation to their suitability to participate in activities undertaken on the tour, and that ASA retains the sole discretion to direct a tour participant to refrain from a particular activity on part of the tour. Before enrolling on an ASA tour please read the fitness requirements carefully.

Booking Conditions

ASA INTENTION TO TRAVEL APPLICATION FORM

Some ASA tours fill almost immediately. Don't miss out! You can register your 'Intention to Travel' by completing this application and returning this to ASA with a AUD \$200.00 per person deposit. Once the tour price has been published, the itinerary and ASA Reservation Application Form will be sent to you. From the time you receive the itinerary you will have two weeks to either:

- Send us a completed ASA Reservation Application Form together with an additional deposit of AUD \$800.00 per person. On receipt of this Reservation Application and deposit, ASA will process your booking and if approved, send you a tour confirmation. At this time your deposit of AUD \$1000.00 is subject to the tour's Booking Conditions.

Or

- CANCEL your Intention to Travel in writing. ASA will refund your AUD \$200.00 per person deposit, less a \$66.00 service fee (including GST)



Intention to Travel Application

TOUR NAME _____
TOUR DATES _____

Booking before the tour price is available

Some ASA tours fill almost immediately. Don't miss out! You can register your 'Intention to Travel' by completing this application and returning this to ASA with a AUD\$200.00 per person deposit. Once the tour price has been published, the itinerary and ASA Reservation Application Form will be sent to you. From the time you receive the itinerary you will have two weeks to either:

- Send us a completed ASA Reservation Application Form together with an additional deposit of AUD\$800.00 per person applicable for International tours OR AUD\$300.00 per person applicable for Australian tours. On receipt of this Reservation Application and deposit, ASA will process your booking and if approved, send you a tour confirmation. At this time your full deposit is subject to the tour's Booking Conditions.

OR

- Cancel your Intention to Travel in writing. ASA will refund your AUD\$200.00 per person deposit, less a \$66.00 service fee (including GST).

Applicant Details (as in passport)

TITLE Mr Mrs Ms Miss Dr Other _____
FIRST NAME _____ Preferred FIRST NAME _____
MIDDLE NAME _____ SURNAME _____
POSTAL ADDRESS _____
CITY _____ STATE _____ COUNTRY _____ POSTCODE _____
TEL. (AH) () _____ TEL. (BH) () _____ Mobile Tel: _____
EMAIL address _____
Date of birth ____ / ____ / _____ GENDER Male Female

Tour Accommodation (rooming preferences)

I/we would like: a twin-bedded room a double-bedded room a room for sole occupancy
I am travelling: on my own with a friend/family member Travel Companion _____

Meals

I do not have any specific dietary requests

Please **X** the box if you **CAN NOT** eat any of the following:

fish poultry red meat dairy products

eggs pork nuts

Other _____

Correspondence

Your preferred method of correspondence Postal Mail Email Address _____

Participation Criteria

To participate in an ASA tour, you must be reasonably fit, in good health and able to participate in all activities without assistance from Tour Leaders or other tour members. If you require assistance, a fit and able travel companion must undertake to accompany and assist you with all tasks for the duration of the whole tour.

ASA's ability to make reasonable adjustments to accommodate your specific needs, your health and safety and the health and safety of other tour members, is of paramount importance to us. For this reason the ASA Reservation Application includes a Medical Information section. As a general guideline, you must be able to accomplish each of these activities *without assistance or support*:-

- walk & stand unassisted for at least 2-3 hours a day in hot, humid conditions
- walk confidently on and over uneven surfaces
- climb at least 3 flights of stairs
- embark and disembark from ferries, buses and trains
- walk up and down steep slopes
- walk at a steady pace and no less than 1 km every 15 - 20 minutes
- organise, manage and carry your own luggage
- follow and remember tour instructions
- meet punctually at designated times and places
- administer your own medication.

Applicant's Signature _____

Dated _____



Intention to Travel Payment

Tour / Course Name

Name of Traveller 1 _____

Name of Traveller 2 _____

I have enclosed a payment to the value of \$ _____ (including CC or bank fee if applicable) for this tour

Payment by (please indicate): Cheque Direct Debit (see below) Credit Card (see below)

International Payments

Welcome to our international travellers! If you are making a payment and do not have an Australian bank account/credit card, we can only accept payment as follows:

- via credit card with the applicable fee - the credit card company/bank will set the exchange rate
- via bank transfer; please give your surname and tour code (eg. Smith 21705) as a reference and ask your bank to allow for all charges.

Bank cheques or personal cheques will not be accepted.

By Cheque (accept Australian cheques only)

Please make cheques payable to *Australians Studying Abroad*

Direct Deposit or Internet Banking

You will need to:

1. Provide your bank with ASA's bank details (see below) and the amount you wish to transfer OR make a direct deposit through any ANZ branch
2. Include any fees levied by the banks
3. Provide a reference number (Mobile or last name recommended).
4. Complete section below, including confirmation no. (given when transaction completed).

Australians Studying Abroad bank details

Bank ANZ
Branch 420 St Kilda Road, Melbourne Vic
Swift Code ANZBAU3M
BSB 013-423
Account No 3472-32759

Bank confirmation No. _____

Reference used: Mobile or last name recommended

Date Money Transferred _____

Credit Card Payment

Credit card fees apply: Mastercard, Visa & American Express 2%

Please debit my: Mastercard Visa American Express

I authorise ASA to debit my credit card for the amount due plus the applicable fee as above

Credit Card Number _____

Expiry Date _____ Security Code (CVC) _____

Bank the Card is linked to (eg. NAB or ANZ) _____

Cardholders Name _____

Cardholders Billing Address _____

Postcode _____

State _____ Country _____

Phone _____

Email _____

Cardholders Signature _____

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