



May 11-19, 2012

The Luberon Mountains are sprinkled with perched medieval villages, cherry orchards and vineyards, 500 year-old stone farmhouses, and hidden hiking trails that link it all together. We will be hiking this spectacular and diverse terrain through deep gorges with luxuriant vegetation, rounded summits laden with thyme and wildflowers and passing forgotten hamlets of only a handful of homes, separated only by the cobbled streets. Ancient mule tracks lined with poppies lead us to awe-inspiring fortified villages, 1000 years old, perched atop rocky crags and far from the well trodden path...just the way we like it. As we lay out a Provencal tablecloth under the shade of an olive tree for our picnic lunch, we can enjoy some of the region's best produce and cheeses, with delicious wines of course. Come join in the fun. We'll even kayak down the Sorgue River and visit the starchitects on parade in La Coste, a 600 acre setting in Cezanne country.

May 11/12 - Depart USA and arrive into Nice or Marseilles the following day where we will meet for the charming drive to the town of Goult, a timeless village at the foot of the Luberon Mountains and our home for the week. The homes are fashioned out of massive limestone bricks, its castle sitting atop a natural rock wall. The town remains authentic, passed over by the tourist crowds, and as stunning as any other hilltop village in the region.

May 13 - A morning yoga stretch will open our hearts to the Luberon mountain hike for the day. We leave the house and cross the Calavan valley to find a trail climbing the slopes of the Luberon, on a shelf above the valley, passing the ruins of stone farmhouses and "bories": centuries-old huts built from dry stone. We reach the perched village of Lacoste, a small village of only a few hundred souls, crowned by the ruins of a castle and not just any castle, but that of the Marquis de Sade, who in the 18th century became infamous for writings, giving his name to what we now call sadism. No worries...the Marquis and his ways have left the village and the designer Pierre Cardin is renovating whatever remains of the castle. Descending back to the plains and through cherry orchards and vineyards, we reach the perched village of Bonnieux. This village was immortalized in Peter Mayle's *A Year in Provence*, and home to Bonnieux's 12th century church shaded by magnificent cedar trees above the Calavon valley. Opening Ceremony will take place tonight.

May 14 - A perfect morning to walk along the base of the Aiguebrun gorge in the heart of the Luberon Mountains. Its rich vegetation in stark contrast to the rounded and dry summits make this centuries-old mule track leading to the lost village of Sivergues even more picturesque. With a population of only 40, legend has it that Sivergues was first founded by six virgins ("sivergues" comes from "six virgins"), but we'll get the real story! We hike past the goat farm of Le Castellas before reaching the crest of the Luberon at 3000 ft. with an incredible view of Provence from the snow-peaked Alps to the Mediterranean Sea. After descending back to the Aiguebrun gorge via a 3000-year old fort, we catch our ride back to the house in Goult for some quiet time by the pool before our evening festivities.



May 15 - It's a market day in the town of Gordes, a town only a stone's throw from our house. So after yoga and breakfast, we take time to meander through the market stalls, filled with colorful Provençal (that's why we are in Provence) produce, delicious meats, cheeses, and regional specialties. Gordes itself is set atop a rocky perch, a village balancing seamlessly above the Calavon valley, its homes rising in concentric circles up to its renaissance castle. Armed with our picnic fare, we set off for our walk from Gordes, with breathtaking views of the plains, on ancient paths carpeted with aromatic herbs. As we enter the Senancole valley, sprinkled with truffle oaks and brush, we follow the seldom-used path to Senanque Abbey, built in the 12th century in front of fields of lavender. Still after 750 years; the abbey has an order of monks who live, work, and pray here. We will visit this jewel of Romanesque architecture before completing our loop to Gordes and transferring back to enjoy late afternoon messages.

May 16 - It's Summit day as no hiking trip of Provence would be complete without a hike to the summit of Mont Serein at 6300 feet. We have traded the rosemary and thyme of the plains for the mountain forests of fir, larch, and beech. The air is unmistakably cooler and fresher while we lookout for mountain goats (chamois) as we traverse up through the forest to bare limestone and alpine flowers at the top. We will lunch overlooking a vast panorama of the entire chain of the Alps—French and Italian—while the villages we've visited during the week appear as only small patches on the landscape.

May 17 - Deep cleansing breaths in yoga welcome a change in venue as we trade our hiking boots for cycling shoes and hybrid bikes. A new cycle-only path takes us from our house due east

along the Calavon valley across the 2000-year-old Pont Julien Roman Bridge. As we reach the town of Apt...lo and behold...it's market day. A huge sprawling market covers the centre of town, including the local specialty of candied fruit...obviously France's version of the power bar! We dismount and spend time meandering through town looking for a light lunch spot before heading westward into the hills. We pass through the wondrous village of Roussillon listed among the most beautiful in France with its homes painted in different hues of orange, red and yellow from the abandoned ochre quarry below. An afternoon devoted to shopping... I know you were looking for this earlier in the trip.

May 18 - We had so much fun yesterday that we head west this morning on our bikes on tiny roads leading to the perched villages of Menerbes and Oppede le Vieux, each of which we'll take the time to visit. The landscapes flatten as we carry on closer to the Rhone Valley through countless vineyards and orchards before we reach l'isle sur la Sorgue, a veritable island-of-a-town surrounded completely by the clear green waters of the Sorgue river. Our kayaks will be waiting for us for a spin around the river or not! It's a perfect backdrop for lunch and local wine tasting before we are back in the saddle again working it off. A late afternoon massage can be arranged or just a rest before our celebratory last night dinner together until we meet again....

May 19 - Let's sleep in, pack up and meet for breakfast to say goodbye and express gratitude for creating more everlasting memories while expanding our universe and friendships.



The Investment is \$5,000, excluding international airfare.
STAT will donate 100% of its profits to a "loving" boarding home for troubled children in Provence.