



American Horticultural Society  
Travel Study Program

# GARDENS OF PROVENCE

May 18–27, 2022

WITH AHS HOST LAURA DOWLING,  
GUIDE AMY KUPEC LARUE, AND  
TOUR LEADER MARION MAKO OF SPECIALTOURS



Dear Friends of the American Horticultural Society,

I invite you to accompany us to one of the world's finest destinations for horticulture, viticulture and gastronomy: "Gardens of Provence," will take place from May 18 to 27, 2022. Here are just a few highlights of a tour chock-filled with extraordinary experiences.

Would you agree that private gardens offer surprises and delights around every turn? They never cease to inspire me, and we'll be treated to several on this tour. We'll be fortunate to meet a number of enthusiastic and knowledgeable garden owners and designers, including several expatriate British hosts.

Our first stay is in Nice, a picture-perfect destination on the Côte d'Azur, with a rich history, combining natural beauty with Old World opulence and a vibrant artistic scene. Since France is synonymous with superb cuisine, you can be assured that our meals will be nothing short of excellent. For example, we'll take lunch at the famed La Colombe d'Or in Saint-Paul-de-Vence. What would a tour of southern France be without a visit to Grasse, the world's perfume capital? It will be a feast for the senses. We'll be surrounded by fields of lavender, jasmine, and roses. The Villa Fort France is an artist's garden where we'll find an intriguing harmony of shape, color and texture.

Our second stop is in Aix, known for its outdoor markets, food and leisurely pace. By special arrangement, we'll see the iconic garden of La Louve, created by the late textile designer, Nicole de Vésian. It's one of several lovely private gardens in the hilly area of the Luberon.

This tour will allow us to walk in the footsteps of three legendary artistic masters: Paul Cézanne, Vincent van Gogh and Marc Chagall. We'll get to know the majestic walled city of Avignon; its rich attractions include its famous bridge, along with Romanesque Avignon Cathedral and the ornate Palace of the Popes, the seat of Western Christianity in the 14<sup>th</sup> century.

Hosting this extraordinary program is AHS Board member Laura Dowling, an award-winning florist, designer, and passionate Francophile who studied French floral design in Paris for 15 years and served as the Chief Floral Designer at the White House from 2009 to 2015. Laura currently travels the world presenting design programs and organizing floral installations and special events.

Marion Mako of Specialtours will be our tour leader for this enticing program. Marion, a garden historian and designer, has led tours all over the world and served as a guide and lecturer on previous AHS travel programs. She has an MA in Garden History from the University of Bristol and is the author of several books on notable historic English gardens.

We are delighted to have American-born Amy Kupec Larue as our guide for the duration of the tour. Amy has lived in Paris for 30 years and made a career in flower arranging and guiding garden tours. Some of you may remember she accompanied part of the AHS Normandy tour in 2014. She is currently working on a book related to one of the private Provençal gardens that we will be visiting.

The excellent accommodations are befitting a journey of this caliber. Hotel La Pérouse in Nice has rooms overlooking the Bay of Angels, one of the prettiest coasts in the world. Hotel Le Pignonnet is a lovely family-owned hotel where Paul Cézanne used to paint. Hotel de l'Europe is an elegant, traditional property overlooking a beautiful square in the storied city of Avignon.

My insider's advice: make your reservations as soon as possible! This is Provence, and the tour will sell out quickly. For your convenience, a reservation form is enclosed in this brochure.

A bientôt!



Marcia Zech  
Chair, Development Committee  
American Horticultural Society



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GUIDE AMY KUPEC LARUE, AND  
TOUR LEADER MARION MAKO OF SPECIALTOURS



Join AHS host Laura Dowling, guide Amy Kupec Larue, and tour leader Marion Mako of Specialtours for this once-in-a-lifetime garden travel experience.

## Itinerary Highlights

### TUESDAY, MAY 17 — DEPART UNITED STATES

This tour commences on the ravishing Côte d'Azur, where the mild, sunny climate has attracted visitors since the 19<sup>th</sup> century. We'll be shown several restored historic and beautiful private gardens all along this tour. Those of you with an interest in the art and science of floral scents will rejoice, for we'll be in Grasse, considered one of the great perfume capitals of the world. We'll continue to the elegant 18<sup>th</sup>-century city of Aix, below the iconic Mont Sainte-Victoire. Here and around Avignon, we'll see how modern designers have transformed horticultural sensibilities, often using traditional terracing and planting drought-resistant native shrubs and herbs. Here, we will find the light, the landscape, the scents, and the magic of Provence.

*Note: While the AHS is inclusive of all members, be advised that Gardens of Provence will require walking that may be physically demanding for guests with mobility issues.*

### WEDNESDAY, MAY 18 — NICE (L, D)

We'll arrive at Nice Côte d'Azur Airport and transfer by private coach to the Hotel La Pérouse, at the end of the Promenade des Anglais. How wonderful that it has rooms overlooking the Bay of Angels, one of the prettiest coasts in the world! A light lunch will allow us to gather ourselves before our enjoyable afternoon. The Villa Ephrussi de Rothschild is an Italianate belle époque villa and a sight to behold. Once the residence of Baroness Ephrussi, née de Rothschild, it was completed in 1912 and occupies a captivating site on the peninsula of Cap Ferrat. We'll marvel at the baroness' collection of artworks, tapestries, and carpets, Sèvres and Meissen porcelain, and 18<sup>th</sup>-century furniture. The magnificent 15-acre gardens were designed to exemplify different styles, including Florentine, Spanish, and Japanese by the landscape architect Achille Duchêne. The design resembles the prow of a ship, decorated with fountains and waterfalls, culminating in the Temple of Love. What a show! We'll raise our glasses with

a champagne toast before we return to the hotel. There, we'll be treated to drinks followed by our welcome dinner.

### THURSDAY, MAY 19 — NICE (B, L)

This morning's visit will have us in sensory heaven. Surrounded by fields of lavender, mimosa, jasmine, and roses, Grasse has been the center of the world's perfume industry since the 16<sup>th</sup> century, when queen and matriarch Catherine de Medici set the fashion for scented gloves. Our next stop is a private garden near Opio that was inspired by the great gardens of the Riviera. This superb semi-formal site was created in the 1980s by a gifted amateur landscape designer. It has south-facing terraces and a sequence of stylish "rooms" enclosed by immaculately clipped evergreens, santolina, and lavender, with 18<sup>th</sup>-century statuary as a focal point. We'll be treated to the garden's pastel colors, notably fragrant roses, agapanthus, and wisteria. For a change of pace, we will next visit a garden set in olive groves with steep terraces leading down toward the Mediterranean. Acquired by an English family in 1998, the site has been restored and enhanced with different horticultural themes, including a vegetable garden, prairie meadows, and a rock garden. We'll be offered an informal outdoor lunch. In the afternoon, we will visit Villa Fort France, an artist's haven—a garden designed with a particular emphasis on color and the juxtaposition of plant forms. British author Lady Winifred Fortescue, known for her best-seller *Perfume from Provence*, built the villa in 1935 and it has been lovingly revived with over 500 species of plants and trees. With a commitment to earth-friendly gardening practices, including a ban on use of chemical treatments here, this well-maintained garden respects the fauna and flora. We'll dine independently tonight at our choice of Nice's fine restaurants.

### FRIDAY, MAY 20 — NICE (B, L, D)

An early departure will take us to Menton, which has the mildest climate on the Riviera as it's sheltered by a semicircle of mountains, the eastern end of which forms the border with Italy. Menton is known for mimosa and citrus. This morning's treat will be Serre de la Madone, an old farmhouse in the Gorbio Valley that was bought in 1924 by Lawrence Johnston, a wealthy American anglophile. Here, he created a subtropical paradise, with plants gathered from his world travels, including Australia, Burma, China, California, and South Africa, displayed in a series of outdoor rooms. At one time, Johnston employed twelve gardeners. After his death in 1957, the garden was neglected for decades, but it has now been restored. Next, we'll see the gardens of Ferdinand Bac who, gifted with an imaginative and creative flair as an artist, cartoonist, and writer, turned his focus to landscape gardening in his 50s. The extensive site, laid out from 1920 to 1928, is an artistic ensemble, designed to evoke a journey through the Mediterranean. Tuscan influences can be seen in the cypress and olive trees, but there are also flavors of Greece, Venice, and Spain in the design, recently updated by the landscape design duo of Ossart & Maurières. We'll be hosted for lunch with the owner. After lunch we will make a quick hop over the border to Italy, to take in the gardens of La Mortola. These famous botanical gardens, some of the finest in the Mediterranean, were created by Sir Thomas Hanbury and his brother Daniel in 1867. After a long period of neglect, the gardens were returned to their former splendor in the 1980s. Medicinal plants were the nucleus of the original collection; since then, many rare, exotic, and beautiful trees and shrubs have been added.

In all, we'll see about 5,000 specimens from five continents. The garden descends in terraces to the sea, the lower part lies beyond a stretch of the Roman Via Aurelia. We'll close out our travels today with tea and a fascinating talk by a member of the Hanbury family at her home on a terrace overlooking La Mortola. We'll return to the hotel in Nice to freshen up before dinner at a restaurant.

### SATURDAY, MAY 21 — NICE (B, L)

We'll leave on foot after breakfast to visit the Marché Aux Fleurs, one of France's best open-air markets, on Cours Saleya. Then the coach will take us to visit a well-established garden — it has evolved over many years—in the hills above Grasse. The English owner is passionate about indigenous species, self-seeders, gray-leaved plants, and glorious roses, which caress cypress and olive trees. We'll wind down with a drink on the terrace. We're in France, so it's a given that we'll eat wonderful food. We will lunch at the famed La Colombe d'Or in Saint-Paul-de-Vence. We'll have to tear ourselves away from the table, but it will be worth it as we'll next visit the Fondation Maeght. This world-class institution, dating from 1964, owes its existence to the friendship of art dealer Aimé Maeght, with artists including Joan Miró, Alexander Calder, Alberto Giacometti, and Marc Chagall. The complex, designed by Catalan architect Josep Luis Sert, beautifully combines architecture and nature. We'll return to the hotel, then dine on our own tonight.

### SUNDAY, MAY 22 — AIX (B, L, D)

We'll bid *adieu* to Nice with luggage in tow for Les Arcs sur Argens. First up, the Chateau Sainte Roseline. This family-owned Grand Cru winery is set in a restored abbey with a 12<sup>th</sup>-century cloister, a chapel decorated by Marc Chagall and a rose garden. After lunch, we'll travel to our new lodging, the Hotel Le Pignonnet, a family-owned property in a typically regal Provençal manor house. Set

close to the historic center of town, it will soothe our souls with peaceful gardens and an abundance of fountains. Paul Cézanne used to place his easel here to paint the distant view of his beloved Mont Sainte-Victoire. Perhaps we'll try our hand at a sketch or two. The elegant city of Aix has Roman origins and was a center of culture in the Middle Ages, particularly in the reign of Renaissance ruler Good King René (René of Anjou). We'll take dinner at the hotel tonight.

### MONDAY, MAY 23 — AIX (B, L)

The Cathedral Saint-Sauveur will “wow” us with its sculpted West Door and its use of Baroque, Gothic, and Romanesque styles. We'll also see the city's daily flower market and places associated with Cézanne's time in the city. We'll proceed to the award-winning gardens of Val Joanis, a successful wine estate, designed in the style of a 17<sup>th</sup>-century kitchen garden or potager by Tobie Loup de Viane. The three terraces, linked by a central pergola, are devoted to an old-fashioned vegetable and fruit garden, roses, perennials, and cut flowers, and ornamental and fruit trees selected for foliage, structure, and color. Organic methods and indigenous plants are used where possible. For lunch we'll stop at Ansouis, a picturesque village dominated by the 12<sup>th</sup>-century castle, which has been recently restored by the owners. We will be shown the chateau, with its fine furniture and tapestries, as well as the small formal garden. We'll wind down at an 18<sup>th</sup>-century hunting pavilion near the village of Cucuron. This lovely garden is a romantic reinterpretation of the traditional formal French garden, with walls and box hedges providing structure, alongside informal plantings of lavender, roses, and other scented plants. We'll see the national collection of cardoons and 100 varieties of fruit trees. The terraces feature spring-fed Roman pools, a superb Magnolia grandiflora, ancient plane trees, and jasmine, neroli, and lonicera. We'll recap our visit over drinks with the engaging owner. Then we'll return to the hotel before we set off on our own for dinner in Aix.

### TUESDAY, MAY 24 — AVIGNON (B, D)

We'll leave by coach with luggage for Saint-Rémy-de-Provence. This city was founded after the destruction of the Roman city of Glanum. This is truly a Provençal town, with tree-lined boulevards and fountains. Here in Saint-Rémy, van Gogh spent about a year at Saint Paul de Mausole hospital, where he painted some 150 works, including *Starry Night* and *The Irises*. We'll spend time with influential French designer Dominique Lafourcade, who will show us an ambitious and extensive new creation, approached through an arboretum and featuring some of her signature classic vistas, as well as an outdoor theater, a flower garden, and a kitchen garden. We'll continue on to La Pomone for a visit and drinks in the garden with her. We'll continue to the five-star Hotel de l'Europe, an elegant traditional hotel overlooking a beautiful square in the storied city of Avignon. As time allows, we'll have the opportunity to explore this majestic walled city on the banks of the River Rhône. It's dominated by the Romanesque Avignon Cathedral and the Palace of the Popes, a UNESCO World Heritage Site and one of the largest and most important medieval Gothic buildings in Europe. The Church established the seat of the Papacy here in 1309 until its return to Rome in 1377. Avignon's famous bridge, called Pont Saint Bénézet or Pont d'Avignon, was built in the 12<sup>th</sup> century; four of the original 22 arches remain. We'll dine together tonight at a restaurant in the city.





### WEDNESDAY, MAY 25 — AVIGNON (B, L)

Our first stop is Apt, where we'll discover a magical garden created by the owner, a landscape architect and interior designer. Set on a 20-acre estate, the handsome old *bastide* is enhanced by formal areas in the spirit of the 16<sup>th</sup> century, while, beyond, the garden merges subtly with the wooded hills of the Luberon landscape. Spaces and levels have been artfully arranged with a framework of plane trees, figs, Judas trees, and stone walls. Topiary and sculpted boxwood are featured, as are aromatic Mediterranean herbs and shrubs. This garden was awarded first prize by Vieilles Maisons Françaises in 2014. Next, Bonnieux is a picturesque terraced village with lovely views over the Calavon Valley to the hilltop villages of Lacoste, Gordes, and Roussillon. We'll take lunch at a restaurant before our busy afternoon. By special arrangement, we'll see the iconic garden of La Louve. Located in the hilltop village of Menerbes, this privately owned treasure was created by legendary textile designer Nicole de Vésian. It's an extension of the hilly landscape, which it overlooks and was designed to be admired from a series of terraces. The subtle planting, inspired by the *garrigue* (Mediterranean scrubland), features immaculately clipped myrtles, lavender, perovskia, and cornus. Another delightful garden of de Vésian's combines a spacious lawn with signature clipped box balls, a steeply-sloping terraced area with drought-resistant planting, and views of the Montagne de Luberon. We'll return to Avignon to dine independently in one of its restaurants; Avignon is home to over 50 Michelin-starred establishments!

### THURSDAY, MAY 26 — AVIGNON (B, L, D)

We'll leave by coach with luggage for Saint Etienne-du-Grès and visit a beautiful private garden. After lunch in Villeneuve-les-Avignon, we'll visit the privately-owned Abbaye St André. The owner will show us the wonderful collections of paintings and decorative arts in the Abbot's Palace. The romantic ruins of this Benedictine Abbey, founded in the 10th century (and destroyed in the French Revolution) form the framework of the garden, which was designed in the 1920s. From a formal rose parterre, with stone basins and statuary, we'll ascend terraces with magnificent views, past two ruined churches to a Romanesque chapel. After our garden visit, we'll return to Avignon, and have the rest of the afternoon free to ourselves to explore shopping, local ruins, or other historic sites.

Tonight, we'll raise our glasses and celebrate the conclusion of our sojourn with a farewell dinner.

### FRIDAY, MAY 27

This morning we'll bid *au revoir!* to France as we leave with luggage for Marseille Airport and our return flights home.

*While revisions of this itinerary are not anticipated, the AHS and its travel partners reserve the right to make changes, with or without notice, which may become necessary.*





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Announcing an  
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Society Travel Program

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JOIN US FOR THIS EXTRAORDINARY TOUR,  
INCLUDING THESE HIGHLIGHTS:

- A stay in Nice, one of the most envied cities in the world
- Superb cuisine, as you would expect in a fine tour of France
- Several private gardens, each one unique, inspired, and full of surprises
- A visit to Grasse, where we'll be surrounded by fields of lavender, jasmine, and roses
- The Villa Fort France garden, which incorporates a harmony of shapes and colors as well as diversity of species
- The city of Aix, which has Roman origins and was a center of culture in the Middle Ages
- Art all around; we'll walk in the footsteps of no less than three legendary artists: Cézanne, van Gogh and Chagall
- The walled city of Avignon, with rich attractions including its famous bridge, the Romanesque Avignon Cathedral, and the Palace of the Popes

THE OUTSTANDING ACCOMMODATIONS FOR THIS PROGRAM:

- Hotel La Pérouse in Nice, with rooms overlooking the picturesque Bay of Angels
- Hotel Le Pignonnet, a family-owned hotel and a typical Provençal manor house in Aix, where Paul Cézanne painted.
- Hotel de l'Europe, an elegant traditional hotel overlooking a beautiful square in the storied city of Avignon

Please refer to the enclosed reservation form for pricing and instructions for reserving your place on this AHS Travel Study Program tour. For more information about Travel Study Program tours, please contact [development@ahsgardening.org](mailto:development@ahsgardening.org) or (703) 768-5700, ext. 127. Information is also available at [www.ahsgardening.org/travel](http://www.ahsgardening.org/travel).

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Designed with the garden-travel connoisseur in mind, the American Horticultural Society Travel Study Program offers exceptional itineraries that include many exclusive experiences and unique insights. Your participation benefits the work of the American Horticultural Society and furthers our vision of *"A land of sustainable gardens, cultivated by a diverse population with a common passion for plants."*

