

LAVENDER LANDSCAPES  
SUMMER IN PROVENCE

TUESDAY 13 - MONDAY 19 JUNE 2017 (7 DAYS)

LECTURER: CAROLINE HOLMES

£2595

- Visit an eclectic selection of villas, gardens & art collections
- Discover the modernist villa of Charles, Vicomte de Noailles in Hyères
- Several private gardens not open to the public
- Literary associations from Lady Fortescue's memoirs to Tender is the Night & The Hare with the Amber Eyes
- Beautifully appointed 4\* hotel in Mougins



Olives and irises on a terrace at La Mouissone

OVERVIEW

The River Var in Nice marks the old border between Provence to the west where this tour will travel, and the kingdom of Savoy. A rocky landscape between the blue of the sea and skies, it has been sculpted by nature into fertile *restanques* that still support extensive olive groves and vineyards. In late June waves of flowering lavender start to transform this landscape – indeed olives, vines and lavender are the *leitmotif* of traditional and modernist Provençal gardens. The Mediterranean light has inspired generations of artists, writers and garden makers, their colourful works ranging from classical to cubist to contemporary.

A variety of garden traditions live on, tended by hands in whose gardens we will meet, privately, the owners: La Mouissone which is undergoing ambitious replanting by Lady Lockett; La Domaine du Prieuré gloriously tended by Joanna Millar; and Les Jardins de la Villa Fort France lovingly maintained by the de Courcel family in the spirit of its creator, author of *Perfume from Provence*, Winifred Fortescue.

Charles, Vicomte de Noailles, and his wife, Marie-Laure, were generous patrons at the forefront of interwar cubism and surrealism. We will explore their early modernist villa in Hyères and its cubist-inspired terraces.

Location, eclectic taste and obsessive collecting make the Villa Ephrussi de Rothschild and its gardens on Cap Ferrat an exemplar of Riviera *richesse*. Beatrice Ephrussi de Rothschild dynamited away the back bone of Cap Ferrat on which to place her Italian inspired pink palazzo and create a world full of inspired garden making. It will provide an apt contrast to the overlooked, aesthetically pure, Grecian style Villa Kerylos, created by her brother-in-law, Theodore Reinach, who features in *The Hare with the Amber Eyes*.

In a parallel world, equally inspired by the wonderful light, artists have both captured and shaped our views of the Mediterranean. Les Collettes encapsulates Renoir's last years and work, whilst the walls of La Colombe d'Or bear witness to the imaginative outpourings of post-impressionist artists. A timeless spirituality feeds the soul when viewing Matisse's Chapelle du Rosaire, while American neo-medieval tastes in sculpture and architecture define Château de La Napoule. A microcosm of these artistic gymnastics can be experienced in Christian Levett's private collection in Mougins.

The visit will be led by Caroline Holmes, the noted garden historian and award-winning writer. Author of many books, her latest is *Water Lilies and Bory Latour-Marliac, the genius behind Monet's Water Lilies*. She has a particular interest in the relationship between horticulture and painting in nineteenth and twentieth century France.

We shall stay at the very comfortable 4\* **Hotel de Mougins**, located close to the historic village of Mougins, a few miles inland from Cannes. It sits amidst a fine garden and has a good restaurant and a swimming pool. There are a number of excellent restaurants within walking distance of the hotel and the village is host to an annual gastronomy festival. Mougins is steeped in the French cultural traditions of recent times and Pablo Picasso spent the last twelve years of his life just outside the village, dying there in 1973. All in all, our week will provide participants with a feast for all the senses, sustained by the best of French Provençal cuisine.

## ITINERARY OUTLINE

**Day 1:** Tuesday 13 June – We fly from London Heathrow and arrive at **Nice** airport in the early afternoon. Mid way through the journey to our hotel, we visit **Château de la Napoule**, transformed in neo-Medieval style by sculptor Henry Clews and his architect wife, Marie. From there we continue to **Mougins** and the 4\* **Hotel des Mougins** where we have our first group dinner. Wine, water and coffee are included with all group lunches and dinners.

**Day 2:** Wednesday 14 June – This morning we travel to **Grasse** to visit the plantsman's gardens of **La Mouissone**, recently created and renovated by Lady Lockett, who will lead a personal tour after which we will enjoy a 'La Mouissone' picnic lunch in the garden. Following our lunch we continue the short distance to visit the world renowned **Fragonard Perfumery** and have a brief guided visit. We then drive into central **Grasse** to visit the finely restored Fragonard town mansion where shall view the small **Museum**. Following some free time in Grasse we return to the hotel after which the evening will be free.

**Day 3:** Thursday 15 June – Today we visit **Villa Noailles**, created by Charles, Vicomte de Noailles and his wife, Marie-Laure. After some free time in the centre of for lunch, not included, we make an afternoon visit to the gardens of the famous American author and society hostess, Edith Wharton, surrounding her former home, **Castel de Ste Clare**. The evening will be free.

**Day 4:** Friday 16 June – The **Villa Ephrussi de Rothschild** and its magnificent gardens in **Cap Ferrat** will be our destination this morning, followed by free time for lunch, not included, at the port of **Saint Jean Cap Ferrat**. We then visit **Villa Kerylos**, a re-creation of ancient Greek architecture and interiors. The evening will be free.

**Day 5:** Saturday 17 June – We return to the hills around Grasse and our first visit of the day to the **Villa Fort France** at **Grasse**, created by the English writer, Lady Fortescue. We then wind our way into the hills of the Alpes-Maritimes to **Château Gourdon** where the handsome, formal gardens are attributed to André Le Nôtre, who masterminded the transformation of Versailles. We have a group lunch at **La Colombe d'Or** in **St Paul de Venice** followed by free time to explore - it is one of the oldest Medieval towns on the French Riviera. We end the day with a visit to Matisse's **Chapelle du Rosaire** at **Vence**. We travel back to our hotel where the evening will be free.

**Day 6:** Sunday 18 June – High up in the olive groves we visit **Les Collettes** at **Haut-Cagnes**, Renoir's final house and garden, now the **Musée Renoir**. We return to Mougins for lunch, which is not included today, then visit the small **Musée d'Art Classique** - it houses Christian Levett's private collection of classical sculpture and Modern French figure painting and drawing – a remarkably fecund conversational juxtaposition. Later in the evening we visit one of Mougins's most reputable restaurants, **Le Mas Candille**, with a Michelin star, located in the hotel of the same name and beautifully positioned at the edge of the village overlooking the surrounding hills.

**Day 7:** Monday 19 June – We make a leisurely departure from our hotel and journey to the outskirts of **Tourrettes sur Loup** to visit the private garden **Domaine de la Prieuré**. Our hostess will be the English owner and gardener Joanna Millar who, along with her husband, bought the house back in 1969. Following this delightful visit we drive the short distance close to the village of **Le Bar sur Loup** for our final lunch at **L'Auberge des Gorges du Loup** after which we depart back towards the coast in time for our early evening departure from Nice for London Heathrow.

## PRACTICALITIES

**Price** £2595                      **Without Flights** £2425                      **Deposit** £300

**Single Supplement** £395 (Double/Twin Room for Sole Use)

**Hotels** 6 nights at the 4\* Hotel des Mougins, Mougins

**Tour Manager** James Hill

**Flights** British Airways

Outward: **BA344** Depart London Heathrow **1130**, arrive Nice **1435**

Return: **BA355** Depart Nice **1835**, arrive London Heathrow **1945**

**Price includes** 2 Dinners & 3 Lunches with wine, water & coffee, all local transfers, entry fees & gratuities, services of Caroline Holmes & James Hill

**Not included** Travel to/from Heathrow, 4 Dinners & 3 Lunches



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