



Monday · August 8th, 2022 - Tuesday · August 16th, 2022

Provence Girlfriend's Trip - August 8 to August 16, 2022

Monday · August 8th

Meet Your Tour Hosts



Meet Jennifer Dugdale

Jennifer Dugdale

A former Californian, Jennifer has been living in Europe for the last 25 years, with half of that time in her favourite city of Aix en Provence. Her love affair with France began as a child, thanks to a French great grandmother, her parents' foreign travels, and

her mother who enthusiastically watched (and cooked the recipes of) Julia Child on television! Following a career in group incentive travel, Jennifer launched Tastes of Provence, along with her business partner, Mathilde, in 2010 in order to share the magical history, culture and vibrant produce of the region with visitors. She loves creating travel unique and immersive experiences for travellers. Her ultimate thrill and satisfaction is the excitement guests enjoy while meeting locals and discovering hidden places not usually open to tourists.



Jon will be our host for the cooking school. **Jonathan Chiri**, a native Californian, has worked in numerous well-known restaurants throughout America, Germany & France. He began his career in the early 1990's in California, notably at the **San Ysidro Ranch** (recently rated #1 resort in the world by Forbes) in Montecito and the New Orleans styled Restaurant Catahoula in Napa Valley. After moving north to Seattle, he spent just over a year and a half as Sous-Chef of the innovative vegetarian restaurant Carmelita. His next stop was New Orleans, where he was to open several nationally renowned restaurants including Cuvee, Stella and later August under Chef **John Besh**.

Wanderlust took hold of Chef Chiri and he was off to Europe and the Michelin starred **Romantik Hotel Spielweg** in the Black Forest of Germany. After stints in Berlin and Barcelona, Jon moved to Provence, France, where he has now been since 2002. He spent his first 4 years in the famed Michelin starred **La Mirande** in Avignon, eventually becoming Pastry Chef and Chef-Instructor in their cooking school, **La Marmiton**. Read more about Jon here: <https://www.jonathanchiri.com/>

Kelly McAuliffe, sommelier, is a warm, down to earth, great story teller and good friend of ours. Kelly will be our guide when we travel to the lavender festival and he'll take us wine tasting on the day we transfer to Mazan.

Kelly McAuliffe may very well be the only American sommelier in France. And in a country rather proud of its own wine heritage, Kelly is highly regarded amongst his peers. McAuliffe started out his career working for Alain Ducasse. Renowned for his knowledge and appreciation of all that is wine - McAuliffe is an expert in the Rhône wine region - one might say it's his vibrant personality, plus his genuine passion for wine and life itself, which make Kelly such a success. It seems Mr. Ducasse would agree. The chef would like very much for this sommelier to return to one of his establishments, and meeting Kelly McAuliffe for the first time, one can understand just why.

A career in the fashion world is what first brought Kelly to France some 28 years ago. It was during this time that he not only got a taste of the travel bug, but also acquired a taste for fine wine. The French custom of bringing a bottle of wine to dinner opened Kelly's eyes. Wanting to know exactly what he was offering his hosts, Kelly began educating himself on French wine. After 8 years of touring the globe for work in and living in 11 countries, Kelly and his lovely French wife moved back to France to her hometown in Provence. Kelly then enrolled in the Université du Vin, in Suze La Rousse, and landed an apprenticeship with Alain Ducasse at his 3-star restaurant in Paris. His studies finally complete, Kelly was called to work for Mr. Ducasse in his Bar & Boeuf restaurant in Monaco, and then Spoon in Paris.. He joined the Michelin star restaurant Christian Etienne in Avignon in 2000 as Wine Director, giving him total control of all wine purchases for the restaurant. He also spent 3 years as the the Wine Director at Mix in Las Vegas and was the French Wine Specialist for Southern Wine & Spirits in Nevada.



Meet Pam Mercer

Pam is the co-founder of Tuscany Tours. Originally from Oklahoma. She attended Colorado College in Colorado Springs. She has lived in Colorado and California. She now spends a great deal of time exploring Italy, France and Spain to find just the right experiences for our travelers.

She has a degree in psychology and marine biology but says "all she ever needed to know she learned in her theatre classes.". She loves researching great restaurants, handling tour logistics and leading tours. Most of all she loves seeing our past travelers who return year after year. This is her travel community!

Bienvenue! We'll pick you up at the Marseilles Airport or at the Aix-en-Provence Gare TGV Train Station



Grand Hôtel Roi René Aix-En-Provence

33-4-42376100

24 Boulevard Du Roi Rene
Aix En Provence 13100
FR

Aug 08 · 3:00 PM

Check-in

Aug 11 · 12:00 PM

Check-out

3 nights

Duration

Notes

Included

- Three nights deluxe double rooms pool side - twin beds upon request



Welcome to Aix-en-Provence

Notes

Aix is the city of fountains, home of Paul Cezanne; it's a university town that loves its outdoor markets and holds one just about every day. Morning, noon and night, the stately Cours Mirabeau puts on a fantastic show, as everyone gathers to eat, drink, gossip and watch the world—and their dogs—go by. How can you not love a posh city where the most-famous export is a rich almond-paste candy? Aix is a petite Paris and we're going to drink it all in.



Welcome Drink and Dinner with Pam and Jennifer

Image credits: Pixabay

Notes

Apéro, short for apéritif, is sacred in France. This is the time of day to let go of all your cares and share a drink or two with friends. Our local guide, Jennifer will tell us all about the Provençal apéro customs. And then dinner in a charming town square under the stars in the balmy summertime air.

Tuesday · August 9th



Aix-en-Provence, Market And Food Tour

If you've travelled to France to taste delicious food and wine, Aix-en-Provence will be a dream come true. The town is alive, not only with restaurants and cafés, but with historic food specialty shops and farmers markets that have maintained their first-class reputations and traditions for hundreds of years. Jennifer, will take us to some of these purveyors of fine food as we stroll the elegant streets of Aix-en-Provence, tasting pastries, macarons, candied fruits and absorbing some of its fascinating history on a truly locals' tour. It's also the Tuesday morning market in Aix and after the food tour, you can spend time wandering through the stalls full of lively provincial fabrics, beautiful food, clothes, shoes, soaps, lavender and honey.

Notes

Included

- Market Tour and Tastings
- Lunch



Lunch in the square

We'll have lunch together in a shady square outside under the plane trees. This meal will feature a choice of main course salads featuring Provençal market ingredients, such as heirloom tomatoes, melons, goats cheese, jambon cru, fresh basil, olives etc.

Included

- Lunch with wine of course!



Free Time to Explore Aix

Notes

Possible Activities

- Visit the Hotel Caumont art centre, a stunning aristocratic mansion offering a changing exhibition and a short film about Cezanne.
- Explore the infinite city lanes filled with boutiques and tea rooms.
- Join your guide for a 45 minute narrated stroll back to the hotel, learning about the artist Paul Cezanne and a more detailed look at the architecture, doorways and sculpted nobleman's houses in King Louis the 14th's Mazarin neighbourhood.

Wednesday · August 10th



Day on the Med - Calanques and Cassis

Notes

The coastline nestled between Marseille and Cassis is officially called the Calanques National Park. Featuring unique scenery which resembles miniature fjords, backdropped by cliffs, with turquoise waters and pebble beaches; the area is only accessible by boat or hiking. We'll visit three of these magnificent jewels, where we may spot rock climbers, divers, and plenty of sailing vessels.

Included

- Lunch
- Private Boat ride into the Calanques



Thursday · August 11th



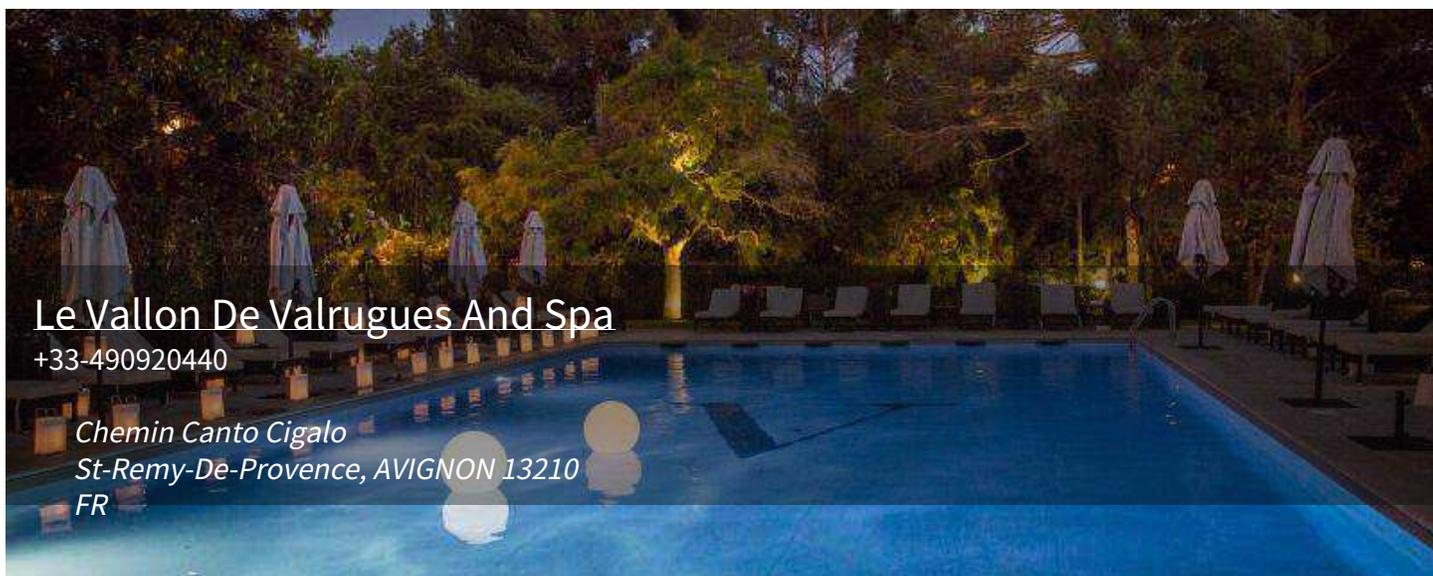
Avignon Market and Cooking Class with Jon Chiri

Our private bus will take us to Avignon where we'll meet Jon Chiri at his restaurant inside Les Halles (the indoor market).

Here is how Jon describes the day:

We begin by venturing into the market to discuss & build our menu together, to see what's freshest and to shop for our ingredients. Along the way we'll enjoy tastings at a few of my favorite purveyors while discussing the specialties of Provence.

We then return to my kitchen and begin preparing our meal. After our class, you will be invited to sit at the communal tables while our restaurant staff serve what we've prepared for your lunch along with local wines, mineral waters and coffee. Generally we prepare a Provencal aperitif, main course and dessert.



Le Vallon De Valrugues And Spa

+33-490920440

*Chemin Canto Cigalo
St-Remy-De-Provence, AVIGNON 13210
FR*

Aug 11 · 3:00 PM

Check-in

Aug 14 · 12:00 PM

Check-out

3 nights

Duration

A delightful Greco-Roman style bastide right in the heart of Provence- The Hotel Le Vallon de Valrugues and Spa 5 stars is set in pretty gardens- just minutes from the famous town of Saint Remy.

Notes

Included

- Three nights double deluxe rooms with terrace
- Breakfast

Not included: City Tax to pay onsite

Payment

Invoiced by Tuscany Tours

Cancellation Policy

1.Cancellation has to be send by email. 2.For short stay (less than 6 nights): cancellation 2 days before arrival date (6pm), the first night will be charged 3.For 6 nights stay or more: cancellation 7 days before arrival date (6pm), the first night will be charged 4.From April 22nd to September 14th 2019: cancellation less than 7 days prior arrival at 6:00pm, 50% of the total amount of stay will be charged 5.Cancellation after 6pm the day of arrival or no-show: the entire stay will be charged. In case of curtailment of stay, once at the hotel, one additional night will be charged



Friday · August 12th



Notes

Today is time for unguided wandering. First we'll visit the tiny village of Eygalieres and today is market day! Then the bus will drop us off in Saint-Remy-de-Provence. You can browse the streets and visit the local cheese shops or the famous Joel Durand chocolate shop. Lunch on your own in one of the many choices in Saint-Remy before we head back to our 5 star hotel for a swim before dinner. Petanque anyone?



Dinner Together at the Le Vallon De Valrugue!

Saturday · August 13th



THE CAMARGUE!

"Head to western Europe's largest delta, where the Rhône River meets the Mediterranean Sea, and you'll find a lesser known side of Provence. The Camargue spreads like a fan from the ancient Roman city of Arles, and in its folds lie green rice paddies, rose-colored salt flats, grass-filled marshes, and wide, windswept beaches. Nearly 400 species of birds call it home, as do prized black bulls and indigenous horses tended by *gardians*, the local cowboys who bolster the region's wild-west reputation. "The Camargue is a mosaic of color, light, and mood," says resident Frédéric Lamouroux, director of the Ornithological Park of Pont de Gau. "A tableau of land and water, wildlife and passionate people, it's like nowhere else in France." - KIMBERLEY LOVATO

<https://www.nationalgeographic.com/travel/article/road-trip-through-wild-camargue-delta-arles-provence>



Horse Back Riding in the Camargue

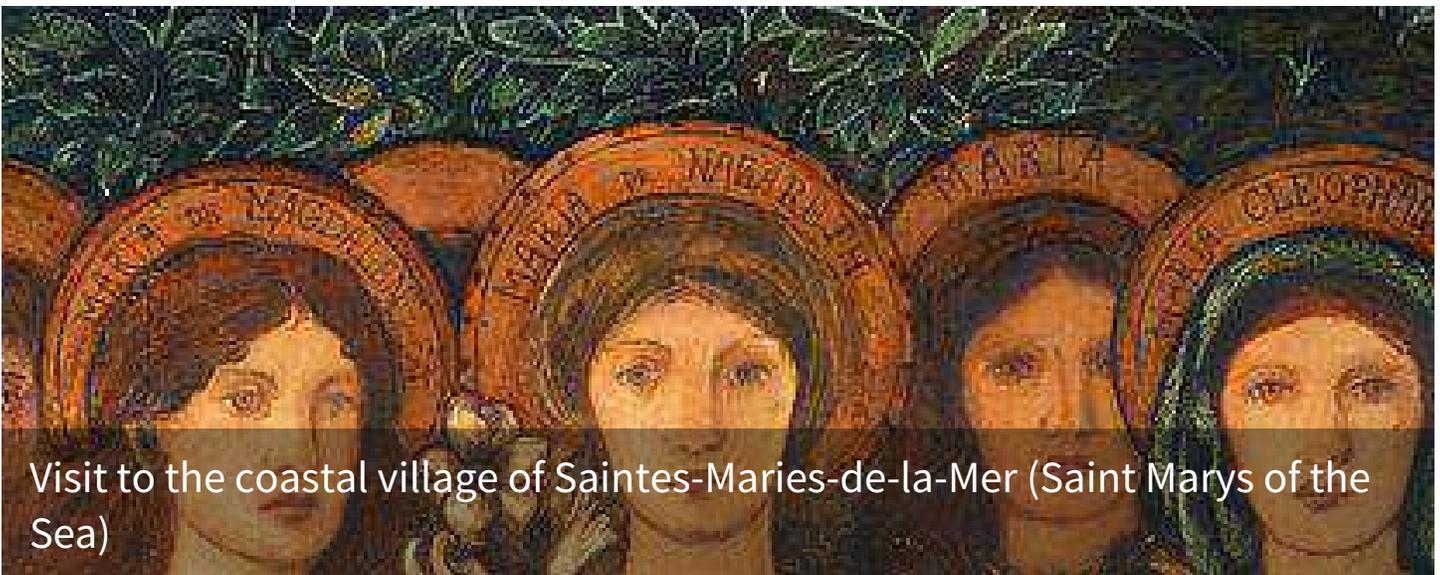
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Notes

Today, we'll see wild horses and ride tamed ones as we explore the area of the Camargue. We'll ride along the ocean and through the park with an eye out for Pink Flamingos.

Included

- Two hour ride through the camargue



Visit to the coastal village of Saintes-Maries-de-la-Mer (Saint Marys of the Sea)

Saintes-Maries-de-la-Mer, an ancient town in the marshes of the Camargue, where the [Rhône](#) meets the Mediterranean Sea, is named after The Three Marys — in French, Marie Madeleine, Marie Salomé and Marie de Cléophas —, a group of three women closely linked to Jesus, as according to the gospels they came to his sepulchre three days after the Crucifixion and were the first witnesses of his Resurrection. The designation "de-la-Mer" (of the sea) derives from a medieval tradition that after Jesus' Resurrection, The Three Marys escaped the Christian persecution in Palestine and travelled across the sea by boat, living in the Camargue the rest of their lives and helping to bring Christianity to France. (From Wikipedia)

We'll visit this ancient village and have lunch together. Afterwards we'll have a walking tour and visit the church.

Included

- Lunch and guided tour of Saintes-Maries-de-la-Mer

Sunday · August 14th

We'll pack up and head out to your next and last glorious hotel. But first...



Lunch at the Bistrot du Paradou

Notes

The bistrot du Paradou is a place that French people from all over France come to each year as a "pilgrimage" site. We come every year too and we love it more each year. I am so happy to be able to take all of you to this little bistrot under the plane trees in the Provence countryside.

Included

- Lunch



Les-Baux Les Carrieres de Lumieres Light Show

2:00 PM

Start Time

3:00 PM

End Time

1hr

Duration

After our lunch, we will go into the near-by underground quarry to see the "Quarries of Lights" (Les Carrieres de Lumieres). This completely enclosed quarry has many flat rock surfaces, some of the walls are as high as some of the walls of Notre Dame. There are 100 projectors that project images of the artist chosen for the year's show while a music sound track of jazz, rock and classic mix are projected by 30 speakers. It's one of the most amazing experiences we have ever had!

Included

- admission tickets



Explore Les-Baux-de-Provence

9:00 AM

Start Time

5:30 PM

End Time

8hr 30min

Duration

As you approach Les-Baux-de-Provence, the landscape changes drastically from lush flatlands filled with vineyards, olive trees and cypress to craggy mineral rock outcroppings that are said to have inspired Dante. The village and ruins of Les-Baux is classified as one of the most villages of France and at the top of its stony streets, you will find a ruined castle worthy of any fairytale. The fortress castle of Les-Baux was built from the 11th to the 13th century over seven hectares. The princes of Baux controlled Provence for many years.

We'll have an hour or so to shop and explore this fortress village.

Transfer to Mazan



Check into the Chateau De Mazan

330490696261

Rue Napoleon

Mazan 84380

FR

<http://www.chateaudemazan.com/>

Aug 14 · 3:00 PM

Check-in

Aug 16 · 11:00 AM

Check-out

2 nights

Duration

First a little history: This elegant 18th century building is where we will welcome you in a sumptuous setting combining history, charm, gastronomy and comfort. The property was built circa 1715, during France's early Regency period. The most notorious individual within these four walls was, of course, the Marquis de Sade and his Family. His father and his uncle, the well-known Abbe de Sade, were both born here. Although he spent most of his life in Paris, it was there in the Chateau de Mazan, in 1772, that the Marquis organized the very first Theatre Festival in France.

The Elegant Property Collection Team bought it in August 2019 and started a full renovation of the property to restore its magnificent setting. The Chateau de Mazan, BW Premier Collection is a historical place now reopened for the enjoyment of our guests and offering an authentic historical experience in the heart of Provence.

The property, situated in the heart of the Village, has 31 rooms divided in the main building and in an old house (dated back 1695) facing it. Renovated in 2019/2020, the decoration has returned Chateau de Mazan and Louis XV to its origins with a contemporary Provence touch. Special attention has been paid to its garden which has restored to its original setting. Respectful of history, elegant and refined.

Notes

Included

- Two nights superior rooms
- Breakfast

Monday · August 15th



Lavender Festival in Sault



Notes

Today is all about Lavender as we travel up the side of Mount Ventoux to the lavender festival in Sault. At the festival, we'll find the Lavender cutting championship, colorful costumes parade, traditional music events, demonstrations of the lavender oil distillation process and all kinds of products like soap and essential oil. Pam will show you her favorite local small production company where she buys lavender lotion and soap to last the whole year - all organic and all made by hand production! We'll have lunch in Pam's favorite gourmet restaurant, tucked into a very small village near-by. Then we'll head home for a swim and last night's dinner.

Au revoir!

This morning we have a group shuttle that will stop at the Avignon Gare TGV train station and then continue on to the Marseilles airport.

Tour Specifics

Notes

Cost: The land cost of the tour is \$5,940.00 USD per person, based on double occupancy. **Cash discount** cost is \$5,740.00 per person for final payment by check or wire transfer. Single rooms are available for a supplementary charge of \$950. You may make your registration deposit using PayPal and/or your credit card and still be eligible for the cash discount cost if your final balance is paid by check or wire transfer. There is a non-refundable deposit due of \$500 per person at time of registration to secure your spot on the tour. Airfare is not included.

Registration

To reserve your place and register for this tour, please click here:

<https://www.tuscanytours.com/registration/>

Please feel free to contact us via email or call us at (800) 634-3460 with any questions you may have about the tour or about traveling to France.

INCLUDED

Accommodations: 8 nights lodging in elegant, historic hotels

3 nights in the Four Star Grand Hotel Roi Rene <https://all.accor.com/hotel/1169/index.en.shtml>

3 nights in the Five Star Hotel <https://www.vallondevalrugues.com/en/5-star-spa-hotel-provence>

2 nights in the Chateau Hotel Chateau de Mazan <https://www.chateaudemazan.com/en>

All rooms have ensuite baths and air-conditioning.

****Due to the ancient architecture of hotels renovated from restored palaces and castles, each hotel room is unique and room sizes may vary.**

Meals: All breakfasts, six lunches and four dinners. All meals—after breakfast!—include regional wines. We carefully choose the restaurants based on ambiance and quality of cuisine.

Transfers: All ground transportation during the tour. We will pick you up at the Marseilles airport or the Aix-en-Provence Gare TGV train station and drop you off at the Marseilles airport or the Avignon Gare TGV.

If you need to depart at a different time, we can help you book a transfer at an additional cost.

Guided Tours with local expert guides.

Admissions: Entrance fees for all planned visits to monuments, galleries and museums are included.

Small, Intimate Group: We limit the number of participants to a maximum of 16. **We need a minimum of 12 for a tour to run.**

Early Arrival/ Late Stay Options: Depending on hotel availability you may be able to arrive early or extend your stay after the tour. We'll be happy to help you make these arrangements.

Experienced Tour Leaders: Tuscany Tours has been leading small-group tours in Europe since 1997.

Note: Tuscany Tours reserves the right to make changes without notice to tour venues and guides as circumstances may require.

Tour Exclusions: Airfare; hotel city tax (usually €2-5 per person, per night; payable onsite).