



An exclusive tour of Provence, escorted by Ron & Carolann Rule, will focus the best examples of contemporary living in the south of France at the time of year when the air is still warm and redolent with the herbal fragrances released by the Mediterranean sun. Roman Provence was the first province outside of Italy and its heritage has never made the separation between productive and pleasure gardening. Inspired by a love of nature and ecological idealism, the gardens of Provence are the forefront of global garden design, attracting the top international designers.

Nicole de Vesian, Dominique Lafourcade, Marc Nucera, James Basson, Jacqueline Morabito, Francois Catroux, Lawrence Johnson; these are names that may or may not be familiar. Many gardens are private and others public; most are hosted by the resident owner. The gardens planned make a superb agenda for garden lovers and students of design. The tour group is purposely kept to 12-16 guests, ensuring the right amount of personal interaction with Ron and the gardeners we are fortunate to meet.

***Eleven amazing days, one amazing garden tour. A collaboration of Ron Rule, garden designer and Julia Guest, travel consultant who together have offered enlightening garden tours since 1988.***

Words of note:

1. If you do not recognize the names and significance of these gardens ... wonderful! Ron will hope to satisfy your curiosity and broaden your knowledge and enjoyment of garden design. Stimulating morning and evening talks will give everyone a chance to share their thoughts and impressions.
2. The distance between gardens is minimal for the most part and so visiting 2 or 3 gardens in one day will not be onerous, and will visually allow comparisons of different garden styles.

The tour of Provence is centred in the areas Vaucluse and Alpes-Maritimes. A relaxing stay of 5 nights in each provides the opportunity of familiarity as well as being able to fully unpack. Avignon in Vaucluse is a UNESCO World Heritage Site and Valbonne, in Alpes-Maritimes – the Cote d’Azur - is medieval, set out in a grid pattern and is a pedestrian only area – quite charming.

## Day-to-day Itinerary:

**September 18<sup>th</sup> – Day 1**

Travel by high-speed rail service from Paris Charles de Gaulle airport to Avignon. Our base for 5 nights will be the 19<sup>th</sup> century Hotel de L’Horloge, ideally located in the heart of Avignon’s historic and tourist district, close to the Palais des Papes and the city centre’s shaded cafes and small shops. Where the light has inspired artists for centuries, the rough landscape is scented with wild thyme, great restaurants to discover and exceptional gardens – this is the area of garden designers’ gardens.

**September 19 – Day 2 – St. Remy/Alpilles (BD)**

**Petit Fontanille** is the work of several English gardeners including Rosemary Verrey; Tim Rees became a major force, adding strong outdoor rooms and rich tapestries of plantings. Maurieres and Ossart are two designers who helped shape modern French design - **La Noria** is their

# Day-to-day Itinerary:

French masterpiece and is on the theme of water. The tour is joined by a Provençal garden expert for days 2 & 3, and she will join this evening for a Welcome Dinner.

## September 20 – Day 3 – Bonnieux/Luberon (BL)

Visit 2 gardens of Nicole de Vesian, a textile designer for the Paris fashion house of Hermes who traded haute couture for horticulture at the age of 69. Made for her Provençal home, **La Louve** is considered her major work with her minimalist, whimsical and dreamlike sense of style and **Le Clos Pascal** was also designed by her; her sense of harmony with the natural landscape, use of local materials and shrubs trimmed into geometric shapes are her classic style. An included lunch will be taken at a restaurant in the enchanting hilltop town of Bonnieux.

**Eagle's Nest** is a stunning cliff-hanging garden that is a model of contemporary landscape art by Eric Ossart.

## September 21 – Day 4 – Avignon, St.Remy (BL)

**Les Halles** is Avignon's covered food market (with an exterior wall cloaked in a vegetable garden by Patrick Blanc) where we will attend a cookery school followed by enjoying the fruits of our labours! **Les Confines** is the private garden of Dominique LaFourcade, an artist and gardener whose family restores and recreates wonderful old properties in Provence for gracious country living. The **Carrieres des Lumieres** is an amazing multi-media art gallery in a limestone quarry near St. Remy.

## September 22 – Day 5 – Avignon (B)

De Vesian helped train two artists: Alain Idoux - a "sculptor of landscape" and Marc Nucera whose specialty is trees, aka the "Provençal tree sculptor". We'll visit **Nucera's own garden** and Idoux' **Mas de Benoit**, the best example of the soft minimalist style for which this region has become famous, with its almond spiral, lavender wedge and other sculpted landscape features. **Pierre Berge**, longtime companion of Yves Saint Laurent, is an art collector and his 'jewel box courtyard' garden is a masterpiece by Michel Semini – a favourite designer of fashion and cinema stars.

## September 23 – Day 6 – en route to Valbonne (BL)

**Les Ramades** is the intimate and stylish, lushly landscaped gardens of Betty and Francois Catroux. Assisted by Dominique Lafourcade, it exemplifies rustic chic and quiet elegance at its best, and **Pavillon de Galon** is the garden of a famed French photographer Guy Hervais and his wife Bibi. He is a renowned expert on the aesthetics and ephemeral beauty of gardens and here is their personal and elegant creation. An accomplished small hotel, we will take time for a leisurely lunch here. Enjoy peaceful surroundings at La Bastide de Valbonne for 5 nights, located between the Provençal villages of Valbonne and Mougins in a rural setting and 10 minutes walk to the old village of Valbonne.

## September 24 – Day 7 – Grasse (BL)

**La Casella** inspires with its harmonic shapes and never ageing spirit, the planting Mediterranean rather than an attempt to recreate an English garden abroad and made by Klaus Schienert with the late Tom Parr. **Villa Fort France** is now the artists' garden of Valerie de Courcel; it was planted by Lady Fortescue in the 1930's (here she wrote her best-selling novel "Perfume from Provence").

**La Mouissonne's** owner is Maggie Lockett who has arranged a special tour for us followed by an elegant picnic in her fragrant terraced garden.

## September 25 – Day 8 – Menton (B)

**Serre de la Madone** was created in the 1920's by Lawrence Johnson, creator of Hidcote Garden in the Cotswolds. This possibly superior garden is in a steep valley among the pine-clad hills and was restored in 1990s. **Hanbury Botanical Garden** on Capo Mortola is a 40-acre garden descending into the glistening Mediterranean in a series of terraces populated by an unrivalled collection of tender and half-hardy plants.

## September 26 – Day 9 – Villefranche (B)

**James Basson** is an exciting new garden designer creating low maintenance dry gardens mixing contemporary design with traditional skills. He will take us to gardens of his design at Villefranche-sur-Mer and Beaulieu-sur-Mer. Ile de France the name given to the **Villa Ephrussi de Rothschild**; it is surrounded by nine magnificent gardens decorated with patios, waterfalls, ornamental ponds, flowerbeds, shady paths and rare species of trees overlooking the bay of St-Jean-Cap-Ferrat.

## September 27 – Day 10 – Vence (BD)

The garden of Interior Designer **Jacqueline Morabito** is complex yet uncomplicated, a soothing and harmonious place transformed from a terraced olive grove while 'The Grande dame of Riviera gardening' is **Joanna Millar** who we will visit at her terraced garden - **Domaine du Prieure**. Enjoy a farewell dinner together this evening.

## September 28 – Day 11

The end of the tour transfer to Nice airport follows breakfast.



### *Ron Rule is a landscape architect*

with a practice that specializes in estate gardens. He taught Garden Design History at the University of British Columbia and is the founder and director of the Garden Design Certificate programme, also at UBC. Since 1988 has taken small group tours to England and Northern France, this is his first foray into Provence.

His curiosity leads him to uncover and discover 'new' gardens and garden designers; travelling on a garden tour with him is partly exploration, partly educational and a great deal of fun with like-minded travellers.

**For more information or to reserve your place, please contact Julia Guest.**

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## Tour Inclusions and Pricing:

### WHAT IS INCLUDED:

- Professional guidance from Ron Rule
- 4-star hotel accommodation sharing twin-bedded rooms with en-suite facilities
- Standard class TGV rail from Paris CDG Airport to Avignon TGV
- Luxury coach with driver for all touring from arrival at Avignon TGV to Nice Airport
- Professional English speaking Tour Manager throughout
- Specialist garden guide in Avignon for days 2 and 3
- Garden entrance fees and guided tours
- Morning Cooking Class/workshop at Les Halles market with lunch
- Continental breakfast daily, 4 lunches. 2 three course dinners with wine
- Escorted from Paris CDG Airport to Nice Airport by Ron & Carolann Rule
- Portage of one piece of luggage per person on arrival and departure at each hotel
- Tips are included for all pre-booked meals
- A detailed travel journal outlining the gardens, tour details, maps and room for notes

### WHAT IS NOT INCLUDED:

- International air transportation
- Items of a personal nature, meals not shown to be included
- Gratuities for the guides and driver, at the tour guest's discretion

### THE DETAILS:

- The price per person sharing accommodation is CA\$6400, single supplement is CA\$1400.
- A non-refundable deposit of \$1000 per person and a completed Tour Registration is required to secure a space. The non-refundable balance is due by July 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2014. Name substitutions will not be permitted.
- Cancellation insurance is strongly recommended and may be arranged by Travel Concepts.
- The tour is strictly limited in numbers and a minimum of 12 passengers is required.
- The gardens chosen may be altered should confirmations be withdrawn for whatever reason. Further inclusions may be made if considered to be an enhancement to the tour and hotels of equal quality may be substituted. At time of printing four gardens are yet to be verified; change of itinerary and cost may be affected.
- The tour cost may be subject to change due to currency fluctuations and any other conditions beyond the control of Travel Concepts.
- The topography is hilly in the south of France, be prepared for walking on uneven surfaces.

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