



## **La Détente en Languedoc – Relaxing in the Languedoc** 5th – 11th September 2010

### **Itinerary**

**Sunday 5th September** You will be met at your airport or station of arrival (see Getting Here) and taken to the Hôtel du Château in the historically famous town of Carcassonne. Alternatively, if you are arriving by car, you will be given instructions on how to reach the hotel, which is situated just outside the walls of the picturesque Cité. The hotel provides a high standard of comfort and decor and has gardens and a swimming pool. Dinner (and a chance to talk about the week's programme) at the Auberges des Lices restaurant in La Cité.

**Monday 6th September** Our morning will be spent exploring Carcassonne, starting with a guided tour of the castle and mediaeval town of La Cité, a UNESCO World Heritage Site and the largest fortress in Europe. This impressive structure was restored in the nineteenth century by the architect, Viollet-le-Duc, and is unforgettable. Following the visit, you are free to stroll around the town and take lunch in one of the numerous restaurants. After lunch we will go down to the Canal du Midi (another World Heritage Site) for a short cruise. Evening free.

**Tuesday 7th September** This morning we will visit the Parc aux Bambous at Lapenne, recently awarded the *Jardin Remarquable* label. This delightful four hectare garden by the river Hers has, as its name suggests, a wonderful collection of bamboos but also of ornamental grasses. Lunch will be at La Table Cathare restaurant in the charming village of Fanjeaux, which specialises in traditional cuisine. After lunch we will stroll around this mediaeval town, situated on a rocky promontory overlooking the Lauragais plain; the site was originally an oppidum (Roman settlement) with a gallo-roman temple. The town was also a centre of Catharism in the thirteenth century and St Dominic himself came here in 1206 to live as a missionary among the heretics. Early evening we shall have a tasting of local wines at a wine bar in Carcassonne. Remainder of the evening free.

**Wednesday 8th September** This morning we will visit the Arboretum du Lampy, situated by one of the lakes that is a source for the Canal du Midi. This remarkable landscaped park dates back to the nineteenth century, with many wonderful trees of over a hundred years old (sequoias, tulip trees, thuyas) as well as more recent plantings. We will lunch at the Prise d'Alzeau restaurant at Lacombe and in the afternoon visit the evocative, ruined fourteenth century Château de Saissac. On our way back to Carcassonne we will stop at the charming twelfth century Abbaye de Villelongue where the owners have created an unusual and somewhat quirky garden. Evening free.

**Thursday 9th September** We will start today with a visit to the Cathar castles of Lastours, where the ruins of the four castles are perched on the rocky hillside of a deep valley. These were constructed in the eleventh century at an altitude of 300 m, along a rock wall measuring just 400 m long by 50 m wide. The castles of Cabaret, Surdespine and la Tour Régine stand in line, while Quertineux is built on a separate pinnacle close by. They constitute a single entity, even though they are not a single structure and impressively guard the deep valleys below. Lunch will be at the Restaurant du Château at the Château Pennautier. Later we will have a tour of the garden and the beautiful seventeenth century Château, followed by a tasting of the excellent wines of the domaine. Evening free.



**Friday 10th September** This morning you will be free for a last walk around Carcassonne, before leaving late morning for the winery of Domaine Gayda at Brugairolles for a wine tasting before lunch. In the afternoon we will visit the Jardin de la Bouichère in Limoux. This garden is spread over two hectares and is home to over 2,500 perennials, trees and shrubs; the emphasis is on perfumed plants but there is an interesting, more recently planted dry garden. Farewell dinner at the Brasserie Donjon in the heart of La Cité.

**Saturday 11th September** Breakfast and transfer to your railway station or airport.

**Price € 1,195**

**Single room supplement € 420**

**If you wish to pay in a currency other than euros, the exchange rate for the cost of the holiday will be fixed at the rate on the day of booking.**

**For reference: <http://markets.ft.com/markets/currencies.asp>**