



FRENCH VILLAGE

Retreats

Art Gardens Gourmet

Experience a week of French village life in the idyllic medieval Renaissance town of Nérac, in the heart of south west France. Live like a local as you paint, sketch, relax and discover the rich history, admire the countryside patch-worked with hay, corn and sunflowers and savour the produce and delicacies for which the region is renowned.

Shop at the local markets and prepare lazy French lunches with seasonal pickings - melons, duck, cherries and prunes abound. As well as daily art sessions, there will be time to soak up the history, explore the picturesque village, visit nearby *brocantes* (antique markets), wineries, galleries and chateaux.

You will stay in a three-level stone home renovated from a 16th Century *pigeonnier* tower overlooking the River Baïse. Located in the old quarter of the village, it's a short stroll to patisseries, bistros or cafes.

Surrounded by a cornucopia of history, nature and village life your artistic appetite will be ignited. Your creative experience will be guided by Perth artist and teacher Peta Zeller. Daily art sessions in the field are interspersed with local visits hand-picked to meet your interests.

This is a chance for you to unpack your bags and enjoy laid back French country lifestyle whilst you paint, sketch or create in your chosen medium. We will take you to local highlights and impromptu outings to capitalise on the rich culture and community entertainment that unfolds.





ABOUT THE AREA

Nestled on the banks of the River Baïse, Nérac is a quaint medieval and Renaissance village bursting with picturesque charm and history amidst its ancient houses, river walks and Gothic stone bridge.

Located between Toulouse and Bordeaux, Nérac was once the stronghold of the Lords of Albret, then home to King Henri IV. The remaining wing of the Château de Nérac and Notre Dame Cathedral are testament to its regal past.

These days boats on the River Baïse ferry holiday makers through the village. A stroll along the shady ancient towpath on the river bank reveals natural fountains, ancient statues, Roman mosaics and centuries-old trees in the charming Royal Park.

Music and art lovers are regularly rewarded by local and visiting musicians and artists at street performances and festivals as part of the summer cultural program. We are constantly surprised and delighted by the range and talent of the artists.





YOUR HOSTESS - NOELENE SWAIN

A boat cruise through Nérac sparked Noelene's love of French villages and prompted buying a 300year old stone pigeon tower. So began an annual journey from Perth with two small children. For the next 20 years annual French holidays were filled with learning and applying trades and artisan techniques to bring new life to the old tower. Balanced with lots of exploring the history and embracing the regional cuisine it was a perfect match for Noelene's passion for property and food – and hard work!

Along the way, they have been warmly welcomed by locals, discovered a rich culture of community traditions and of course savoured the wonderful regional cuisine which is central to the French way of life.

Noelene loves to share her passion for French life and cuisine. A week in her lovingly restored home and French village life will suit those who want to get off the tourist trail and enjoy living with the locals. She offers French home-style hospitality with the opportunity to explore at a relaxing pace away from tour groups, bus trips and city lights. It's a perfect place to relax and be inspired to create, eat and enjoy as you choose.

YOUR ART GUIDE - PETA ZELLER (OPTIONAL)

Peta Zeller is a Perth based artist and teacher who has worked as a professional artist for 20 years. She has a host of art awards under her belt, and her works hang in private collections around Australia, New Zealand and the United Kingdom. But her success is only part the reason she is in such demand as a teacher of art.

Peta happily shares her own learning from years of pursuing and developing the technique that makes her own art so intriguing. Her calm and guiding approach with students allows them to find their own style and direction. Peta is a country girl at heart who spent her childhood collecting and observing the structure and form of her rural surrounds so is totally charmed by the French rural surrounds of this art retreat.

To learn more about Peta, [visit her website](http://www.pzeller.com.au). www.pzeller.com.au



YOUR ACCOMMODATION

Our restored 16th century stone tower house borders the river in the old quarter of Nerac, admired for its pretty timbered facades, and classic stone village houses. Restoration has been a long labour of love that has revealed mysterious links with King Henri IV, secret tunnels and carvings.

The three level stone house has four large comfortable Queen bedrooms some overlooking the river . Some rooms have an adjoining bathroom. Other rooms share a bathroom between two rooms.





SAMPLE ITINERARY

This is intended to be flexible to include personal choice, local events and the pace you prefer. For those opting to include the Art Experience -Peta will be available to provide a unique art experience. Learn, live and be creative side-by-side with fellow artists.

DAY 1	Pick up from Agen Train Station, drive 20min through rolling hills of sunflowers and corn to arrive in Nérac . Settle into your room and explore the surrounding old quarter Petit Nérac with a stroll along the River Baise and the belvedere to view the village. Evening stroll, a good opportunity to assess some painting spots , to the charming night market -the quintessential French long-table meal overlooking the river and chateau complete with live music. An introduction and sharing of your personal art journey.
DAY 2	Breakfast on the terrace before heading to nearby Lavardac to discover seasonal offerings at the market. Then on to Barbaste where you may settle on the banks of the brook overlooking the ancient Roman bridge and fortified mill for your first art/painting session interspersed with a casual riverside picnic . Spend the afternoon creating , resting or wander the village to soak up the history and charm. Be sure to check the latest art exhibition at Galerie des Tanneries. Dinner at a little riverside bistros or linger over some simple local cuisine at home !
DAY 3	Breakfast and little sketch on the terrace then off to visit the Siminow Collection housed in the 12 century Abbey de Flaran - an impressive eclectic private collection with works by Dali, Picasso, Monet, Constable and more. On to the charming round walled village of Forces , home to local artisans and antiques for a <i>plat du jour</i> lunch at a local cafe or picnic under a shady plane tree by the river before settling into an afternoon art session if feeling inclined . Or meander through the Gallo Roman Villa at Seviac or Medieval fort of Larresingle to appreciate the life of an ancient era and stunning views. Stroll along the shady river walk in the Garenne Royal Park before dinner
DAY 4	Breakfast then off to hilltop village of Lectoure . Settle in for a day painting or head off with your camera to explore the street market, snoop around the charming antique brocante market or charming artisan boutiques. You're sure to find some treasures! Lunch at a spot that takes your fancy then a visit to Le Romieu to discover the legend of Angeline's cat as you explore the arcaded cloisters of the Abbey or climb to top of the spire for a magnificent view of the surrounds. Great day for perspective practice for buildings and vistas . Home for a rest before heading out to dine in a night market in the village square in Vianne surrounded by walls of the bastide
DAY 5	Spend the morning exploring Nérac's extensive street market adored by Rick Stein in his French Odyssey. Test your French speaking skills and buy food for lunch! The afternoon is free for more art sessions , local exploring, or sitting in a local cafe watching the world go by or stroll around the village. Evening aperitifs then dinner in the village or dine at home with the market fare. Evening art discussion on group chosen topic .
DAY 6	Breakfast and lazy morning to paint in a place of your choice before we explore a <i>brocante</i> or <i>vide grenier</i> market at nearby villages and visit the waterlilly farm that inspired Claude Monet's garden and famous paintings "Les Nymphens". Aperitifs on the terrace then a last dinner at home. Set up our very own exhibition to view works as a group and admire the creative efforts from this immersion into French country life .
DAY 7	Breakfast and then pack, and drop off at Agen Train Station





Dates

11 to 17 July 2023 or 25 to 31 July 2023

Details

- A maximum of **four guests** can be accommodated.
- Insurance cover is mandatory. There is no refund for cancellations.
- Booking may be transferred to an alternative person.
- Changes to bookings will be considered but we cannot guarantee changes will be possible.
- This is a NO smoking and no animal home.
- **Guests must be able to use steep stairs between floors.**
- **There are no ground floor bedroom or bathroom facilities.**

Inclusions

- Pick up and return to Agen Train Station
- 7 days 6 nights in three level stone village house in large comfortable Queen bedroom. Some rooms have an adjoining bathroom. Other rooms share a bathroom between two rooms.
- Daily French style breakfast
- An evening aperitif on the terrace
- Home prepared lunches and dinners -3x lunches and 3x evening meals
- Chauffeured outings to surrounding villages in an air conditioned car
- Entrance to the Siminow Art Collection and Abbey de Flaran, Water Lilly Farm
- Kitchen, laundry and wifi access

Exclusions

- Flights and trains to and from Agen.
- Some lunches and dinners are available at the many local restaurants or night markets. Options range from take away fast food to cafes, bistros, and fine dining restaurants to satisfy your mood and budget. For a more homely experience you may prefer to prepare your own meals using produce from the local markets. We will home cook local specialty family meals on some days and you are welcome to get involved if you fancy learning about regional cuisine.
- Tickets to music concerts or festivals.
- Alcohol and soft drinks (An evening aperitif is served on occasions).

Art Materials

- On booking, we provide you with a list of recommended art materials to bring.
- Use of Pochade Painters Box, oil paints, tripod and stool supplied



Getting There

- Agen is the closest town serviced by the TGV train from Paris or Bordeaux or Toulouse. A direct TGV from Paris or Charles de Gaulle airport takes approximately 3-4 hours.
- Limited flights are available from Paris (CDG or Orly) to Agen airport
- Major airlines and low cost carriers (Ryan Air, Easy Jet) fly regularly to Bordeaux, Toulouse, or other airports within 1 ½ hrs drive including Bergerac, Pau and Biarritz.

Optional

- Collect or return to Bordeaux, Toulouse, Bergerac, Pau, Biarritz \$200 each way.



Booking

Bookings are confirmed on receipt of a completed Booking Form and a non refundable deposit of \$500 per person. Balance of payment by 1 May 2023. Payment by EFT to BL & NJ Swain – BSB: 086-082 48-458-3539 Ref: Name, arrival date. Credit card payment will incur 2% service charge.

Booking Name: _____ Mobile: _____

Home Address: _____ Email: _____

Dates Requested _____ No People: _____ No rooms required: _____

- ☐ 11 July to 17 July 2023 (3 rooms available) \$2950 (single) or \$2250 (shared double)
- ☐ 25 July to 31 July 2023 (3 rooms available) \$2950 (single) or \$2250 (shared double)
- ☐ Art Option lead by Artist Peta Zeller \$1250 per person

Guest Details

Name: _____ Age: _____ Single Room / Shared Room

Name: _____ Age: _____ Single Room / Shared Room

Arrival Date: _____ Arrival Time: _____

☐ Agen ☐ Bordeaux ☐ Toulouse ☐ Train Station ☐ Airport Flight # _____

Departure Date: _____ Departure Time: _____

☐ Agen ☐ Bordeaux ☐ Toulouse ☐ Train Station ☐ Airport Flight # _____

Collect or return to Bordeaux, Toulouse, Bergerac, Pau, Biarritz \$200 each way.
Additional nights *may* be possible at \$200 per night, subject to availability

- ☐ **I confirm I am able to use steep stairs between floors with limited railing and acknowledge there are no ground floor bedroom or bathroom facilities.**

Contact: Noelene Swain 0419 047 983 or noelene@freshf.com.au