



# Gardens of Provence, Côte d'Azur and Lake Como

with Julie Kinney

AIX-EN-PROVENCE • JUAN-LES-PINS • MENTON • LAKE COMO

13 - 28 April 2012 (16 days)



Tour Leader

## Julie Kinney

Growing up in Western Australia Julie developed a love of all things rural, in particular, thoroughbred horses and beef cattle.

Commencing with the Australian rite of passage to UK and Europe, Julie began her travel adventures which led amongst many things to studying at the Cordon Bleu School of Cookery in London before meeting her farmer husband David and returning to Western Australia where they lived until decamping 14 years ago to the beautiful wine region of Margaret River.

Gardening was always a passion so studying horticulture seemed logical.

Becoming a selector and later on the national committee for Australia's Open Garden Scheme was an ideal way to view excellent gardens across the country as well as becoming extremely familiar with her own region.

Julie has opened her own garden to the public and is well known for her collection and knowledge of rare plants. She collects with a passion from across the world.

All this led to designing and leading occasional tours based on food, wine and gardens both in Australia and overseas. Julie as a guide loves nothing more than showcasing excellence wherever she is and ensuring everyone has a great experience.

# Gardens of Provence, Côte d'Azur and Lake Como

In the glorious springtime month of April, join 'gourmet gardener' Julie Kinney for this delightful sojourn from the Mediterranean coast of France and its hinterland, to the spectacular gardens and villas of Lake Como in the footsteps of the Swiss Alps. On the way, discover a stunning array of villas and chateaux, private homes and royal residences, gardens and parks, and enjoy the superb food and wine, art and culture for which these regions are renowned.

Enjoy leisurely stays in Aix-en-Provence, Juan-les-Pins, Menton and Lake Como, from where you will explore a mouthwatering selection of gardens. Highlights include the Chateau Val Joanis and La Louve near Aix, the Villa Ephrussi, Villa Thuret, Château de Gourdon, 'La Casella' and Villa Noailles on the Côte d'Azur; 'La Mortola' and 'Clos du Peyronnet' at Menton; the villas Melzi, Carlotta and del Balbianello at Lake Como; Isola Bella and Isola Madre on Lake Maggiore.

Other highlights of the tour include Cézanne's house and studio, the medieval 'perched villages' of Eze, Gourdon and Grasse, the Château Grimaldi (Picasso Museum), the Swiss lakeside city of Locarno, and four nights at the Grand Hotel Tremezzo overlooking Lake Como.



*Villa Carlotta*

## ITINERARY

**Thu 12 April 2012**

**Depart Australia**

Suggested departure from Australia on Emirates flights via Dubai.

**Fri 13 April**

**Arrive Nice – Aix-en-Provence**

Afternoon arrival in Nice. Transfer to Aix-en-Provence (approx. 170 KM, 2hrs). Aix-en-Provence is the former capital of Provence and is a university town and well known for its festivals. Stroll along the Cours Mirabeau and explore the flower-filled squares and narrow streets of the old quarter. Tonight join Julie Kinney for a welcome briefing and dinner. (D)

**Sat 14 April**

**Aix-en-Provence**

Just outside Aix-en-Provence, visit the Atelier Paul Cézanne, the last house and studio of the artist, with views towards Montagne Ste-Victoire, one of Cézanne's favourite subjects. Continue to Château Val Joanis, a vineyard and gardens located in Pertuis. On arrival, join Julie Kinney for a tour of the winery, wine tasting and lunch followed by a visit to the garden which has also been classified as one of the 'Notable Gardens of France'.

The gardens are laid out on three terraces, and are designed to resemble a French garden of the 18th century, combining both ornamental plants and selection of vegetables and fruits. It features rose trees, ornamental bushes, and old varieties of pears, apples and other fruit attached to the walls in the style of the 18th century. An arbor covered with climbing roses joins the three terraces. (BL)

**Sun 15 April**

**Aix-en-Provence**

Excursion to the town of Bonnieux for a visit to La Louve\*, a private contemporary garden classified as one of the 'Notable Gardens of France'. It was created beginning in 1986 by Nicole de Vésian, a former textile designer for the Paris fashion house of Hermès.

The gardens are laid out on a series of terraces, and are designed to be in harmony with the surrounding natural landscape. They incorporate local rocks and stones, trees and bushes trimmed into geometric shapes, and wooden benches placed for meditation and contemplation. The garden includes an Arbutus tree shaped by artist Marc Nucera; fig, cherry, apricot and apple trees; roses and iris; and native fragrant plants of the region, including lavender, rosemary, and santolina.

On the summit of the village of Bonnieux, which clings to the slopes of the Luberon Mountain, lies Les Blayons\*, set in one and a half acres of grassed land planted with mature trees and shrubs and has exceptional views over the surrounding area. Les Blayons is the home of the artist Denis Brihat known for beautiful photos of vegetables and flowers from his garden. (B)

**Mon 16 April**

**Aix-en-Provence – Juan les Pins**

Depart Aix-en-Provence after breakfast and travel to Juan-les-Pins. Break the journey with a visit to the gardens of the Villa Noailles, designed by the Armenian, Gabriel Guevrekian. It is triangular in plan and, one of the best examples of the influence of Art Deco ideas on garden design. Guevrekian's garden is on a triangular plot, fortuitously suited to an Art Deco composition. It has a decorative pattern of square beds, paved triangles, slab walls and globular plants.

Arrive in Juan-les-Pins in the afternoon. (BD)

**Tue 17 April**

**Juan-les-Pins**

Exploration of Juan-les-Pins and Antibes. The jardin botanique de la Villa Thuret is a renowned botanical garden created in 1857 by Gustave Thuret a botanist best known for studies of reproduction in algæ.

Today the garden contains approximately 2,500 trees and shrubs in its collections, representing some 1,600 exotic species from the Mediterranean or hot climate countries including South Africa, Australia, California, Chile and Mexico as well as China, Japan, and New Zealand. The garden contains fine collections of cycads, conifers and an exceptional collection of cypress.



Château Val Joanis



La Louve



Markets in Aix-en-Provence

Continue to the Château Grimaldi, home to the Musée Picasso, one of the great collections of the artist's work. Remainder of the day at leisure to soak up the atmosphere of Juan-les-Pins. (C)

**Wed 18 April** **Juan-les-Pins**

Today journey into the hinterland of the Côte d'Azur to the town of Grasse and the small town of Gourdon. This medieval village is the home of the Château de Gourdon. Initially built as a fortress high on a rocky bluff during the Middle Ages, it has been transformed over the centuries into the spectacular castle it is today. It also boasts a series of stunning gardens designed by André Le Nôtre, the renowned landscape architect responsible for the gardens of Versailles.

Explore Grasse, the perfume capital of the world, on a walking tour of the old town and enjoy some free time. In the afternoon stop at the private garden 'La Casella'\*. (C)

**Thu 19 April** **Juan-les-Pins**

After breakfast travel to Fréjus for a visit to La Pomme d'Ambre which was created by Nicole Arboireau, a well known French gardener. The garden is built on a slope on which a series of terraces have been created. With more than 700 species the garden has the typical informal exuberance which characterises cottage gardening. The garden contains many traditional cottage plants such as kerria, aquilegias and dicentra but also many exotics common to the region such as the beautiful tall blue echiums. Enjoy a traditional provincial buffet lunch before spending the afternoon at leisure in nearby Cannes. (CL)

**Fri 20 April** **Juan-les-Pins – Menton**

Bid "Au revoir" to Juan les Pins and travel along the Côte d'Azur to Menton. Visit the magnificent villa and garden of Béatrice Ephrussi de Rothschild at the Villa Ephrussi de Rothschild, completed in 1912 and regarded as amongst the Côte d'Azur's finest.

Free time for lunch (at own expense) in Eze, a medieval 'perched village'. Visit the Jardin Exotic which was opened in 1949 amongst the ruins of the ancient medieval fortress. It houses more than 400 succulent plants including cactus, aloes, agaves and euphorbia. Located 427m above sea level, it has spectacular views over the coastline of the French Riviera. Arrive in Menton late in the afternoon. (CD)

**Sat 21 April** **Menton**

Start your exploration of Menton with a visit to the Serre de la Madone Garden Museum.

Classified as an historic site, this garden was laid out between 1919 and 1939 by the renowned landscape-gardener Lawrence Johnstone, creator of Hidcote Manor. Terraces, rockeries, pergolas, ponds and orange grove, plus a profusion of rare species and perfumed plants make this a really privileged place.

Continue with a visit to the garden of Palais Carnolès boasting Europe's largest collection of citrus trees, featuring approx. 400 plants from some one hundred species including orange, lemon, grapefruit, clementine, citrus, kumquat trees and more. On display is a collection of contemporary sculptures.

After lunch embark on a guided tour of the old town of Menton where narrow streets cascade toward the sea. The majestic Basilique Saint-Michel and La Chapelle des Pénitents Blancs (White Sinners Church) are beautiful Baroque churches. At the top of the hill is the Vieux Château cemetery with unrivalled views over the sea, where many Russian and British aristocrats have found their final resting place. (CL)

**Sun 22 April** **Menton**

Continue your garden discovery of Menton with a visit to the Fontana Rosa Gardens, laid out adjacent to the Moorish style 'House of Writers' villa in the 1920's by Vincente Blasco-Ibañez, a Spanish writer and screenwriter. He intended that the garden would honour famous writers, and the busts of several notable ones are installed in various sites. It is laid out along Andalusian and Arabian-Persian styles with ficus macrophylla, araucaria heterophylla, palm trees, banana trees and scented rosebushes.

Located near the Italian border, the Maria Serena villa was built in 1886 and designed by Charles Garnier, the architect of the famous Paris opera house. Standing on the outskirts of the city in an area called 'la petite Afrique' (little Africa), the 1.5 hectare garden is reputed as having the mildest climate in France. It boasts a large collection of palm trees, cycas and tropical plants – a genuine outdoor greenhouse.



Côte d'Azur



Grasse Old Town



Château de Gourdon



Villa Ephrussi de Rothschild

After a break for lunch (at own expense) explore the private garden Les Colombières\*. Artist and writer Ferdinand Bac designed and created this garden between 1918 and 1927. This garden offers a path marked by astonishing works: the garden of Homer, the trompe – l’oeil garden, the obelisk rotunda, the Palladio pavillon and Bellavista, among others. The garden was listed a Historical Monument in 1991. (C)

**Mon 23 April** **Menton**

Today visit the Hanbury Botanic Gardens also known as ‘La Mortola’ located just across the border in Italy. Planned and planted in 1867 by a wealthy English merchant, Sir Thomas Hanbury, and his botanist brother Daniel, ‘La Mortola’ is located on a small, steep peninsula jutting into the Mediterranean Sea. The terraced gardens contain species from five continents, including many palms and succulents.

On return to Menton, discover the private garden of Clos du Peyronnet\*. It was designed by Humphrey Waterfield and is, in effect, an English garden transported to the French Riviera. Some of the terracing survives from when the garden was a citrus grove. It has a pergola, graceful steps, excellent planting and a stairway of successive pools, of which the last is the ocean.

Finish the day with a visit to the newly opened Museum Jean Cocteau – Severin Wunderman Collection. (C)

**Tue 24 April** **Menton – Lake Como**

After breakfast depart Menton and travel to Tremezzo located on the western shore of Lake Como in Northern Italy (approx. 370 KM, 5hrs incl. stop). The Grand Hotel Tremezzo is located adjacent to the Villa Carlotta, with views across the lake to the villa Melzi and the resort town of Bellagio. (CD)

**Wed 25 April** **Lake Como**

Today you will explore Lake Como by boat. This morning you will cross the lake by boat to the Villa Melzi near Bellagio. Laid out at the beginning of the 19th century it is considered the first example of an English garden in the area and contains several interesting works of art, architectural relics and rare plants: red oaks, giant redwoods, white pines, tulip trees, swamp cypresses from North America and camellias from Asia.

Lunch and time at leisure in the elegant resort town of Bellagio before returning to Tremezzo by ferry. (B)

**Thu 26 April** **Lake Como**

Enjoy a full day trip to nearby Lake Maggiore. From the lake-side town of Stresa travel by boat to Isola Bella and Isola Madre, both important gardens owned by the powerful Borromeo family of bankers since the 15th century. Lunch at a family-owned restaurant.

Return to Tremezzo around the northern tip of Lake Maggiore, via the elegant Swiss city of Locarno. Visit the Giardini Jean Arp, a lakeside park with sculptures by the Surrealist artist scattered amongst the palm trees, and see the Visconti Castle, possibly built to a design of Leonardo da Vinci. NB. Passports required today. (BL)

**Fri 27 April** **Lake Como**

This morning visit two of the most beautiful and famous gardens of Lake Como – the Villa Carlotta and the Villa del Balbianello. Filled with a fine collection of 19th century art, the Villa Carlotta is surrounded by a park of great historical and botanical value. Famous for its elaborate terraced gardens, the Villa del Balbianello occupies a promontory overlooking the lake and has been used for numerous film shoots, including *A Month by the Lake* (1995), *Star Wars: Episode II Attack of the Clones* (2002), *Ocean’s Twelve* (2004) and *Casino Royale* (2006).

Enjoy a farewell lunch with Julie Kinney and fellow garden lovers at the famous Villa d’Este Hotel, followed by time at leisure to explore the glorious gardens of the hotel. (BL)

**Sat 28 April** **Depart Lake Como / Milan**

Tour arrangements end today with a transfer to Milan Airport for an afternoon departure on Emirates to Australia via Dubai. (B)

**Sun 29 April** **Arrive Australia**

Evening arrival in Australia.

\* Visits to private gardens are subject to confirmation by the owners.



Menton Old Town



Hanbury Botanic Gardens



Clos du Peyronnet



Villa Carlotta



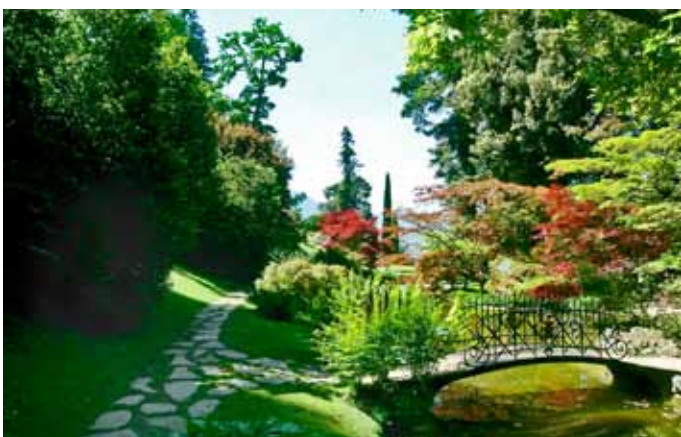
*Villa del Balbianello*



*Villa Ephrussi de Rothschild*



*Fontana Rosa, Menton*



*Villa Melzi*

## TOUR PRICES ...

Per person, twin-share	<b>AUD 8,350</b>
Single supplement*	<b>AUD 1,650</b>
Tour Code	<b>GDNS FRANCE AND LAKE COMO</b>
Deposit (per person)	<b>AUD 500</b>
Final Payment Due	<b>13 February 2012</b>

\*Single travellers may request to share. Please advise at time of booking.

### SUGGESTED AIRLINE: Emirates

Emirates flies from Australia via Dubai to Nice and Milan as well as many other European cities. Please contact Renaissance Tours for assistance with your flight reservations.

### TOUR PRICE INCLUDES

- Accommodation in centrally located 3, 4 and 5-star hotels with private facilities and daily Continental or American breakfast (C / B)
- Meals as per itinerary (L=Lunch, D=Dinner) including special Welcome and Farewell lunches including wines. Wines with dinners.
- Transfers on arrival and departure if travelling on suggested flights
- Comfortable air-conditioned coach transport throughout
- Comprehensive sightseeing including entrance fees as per itinerary
- Lectures and talks with Julie Kinney throughout
- Gratuities for local guides and drivers
- Hotel portorage (1 piece per person). Airport portorage NOT included.

### DOES NOT INCLUDE

- International airfares
- Transfers on arrival / departure if not traveling on group flights
- Drinks with lunches except welcome and farewell lunches
- Items of a personal nature, including telephone, laundry etc.
- Travel insurance

### IMPORTANT INFORMATION

Many of the old town centres and private gardens are built in terraces and on hillsides. You will be required to walk on uneven surfaces such as cobblestones, unsealed tracks and on hilly terrain and navigate many steps during walking tours of 2-3hrs. A good level of fitness is required.

## YOUR HOTELS ...



Grand Hôtel Roi René

Aix-en-Provence

★★★★



Hotel Ambassadeur

Juan-les-Pins

★★★★



Hotel Napoléon

Menton

★★★



Grand Hotel Tremezzo

Lake Como

★★★★

NB. Hotels of a similar standard may be substituted

## TERMS & CONDITIONS

### How to Book

Complete, sign and return the Booking Form available from Renaissance Tours with your deposit of \$500 per person. Upon receipt of your Booking Form and deposit, you will receive confirmation of your place from Renaissance Tours.

### Deposit / Final Payments

Deposit (at time of booking) AUD 500

Your deposit is used for hotel deposits and is non-refundable in the event of your cancellation. Your final payment is due 60 days before departure (45 days for domestic tours). Failure to make your final payment by the due date may result in cancellation of your booking and loss of deposit. We reserve the right to charge a late payment fee in the event of late booking and/or payment to cover additional communication and other expenses.

Payment by cash, cheque, American Express, Diners Club, MasterCard and Visa is accepted. A 3% service charge applies for payment by American Express and Diners Club.

We reserve the right to charge a late payment fee in the event of late booking and/or payment to cover additional communication and other expenses.

### Cancellation & Refunds

a) Cancellation by You - Cancellation charges will be applied as shown below, calculated from the day written notification is received by Renaissance Tours. In addition to cancellation fees for tours operated by Renaissance Tours as shown below, airlines, hotels and other third parties may impose up to 100% cancellation charges.

60 days or more	Forfeit of deposit
59 – 45 days	25% of tour cost
44 – 31 days	50% of tour cost
30 – 15 days	75% of tour cost
Less than 15 days	100% of tour cost

The above cancellation charges include applicable GST.

In addition to the above cancellation charges, the full insurance premium together with any existing administration fees is also payable in the event of a cancellation by the Client. If the reason for cancellation is covered by the insurance policy, you may be able to reclaim these charges.

b) Cancellation by Us - We reserve the right to cancel a tour for any reason (such as failure to reach minimum tour participant numbers). Except for force majeure or the Client's failure to pay the final balance, we will not cancel a tour less than 60 days before departure (45 days before departure for domestic tours). Unless the Client fails to pay the final balance, we will return all monies paid, excluding payment for travel insurance and administration fees.

No further compensation will be paid in the event of cancellation by Renaissance Tours. A full refund of monies paid for tour costs will be the full extent of our liability. Airlines may impose up to 100% cancellation charges.

### Passports, Visas and Vaccinations

It is your responsibility to be in possession of a passport valid for 6 months after the date of your return to Australia. You are also responsible for obtaining all necessary visas, inoculations and preventative medicines as may be required for the duration of the tour. Information about these matters or related items is given in good faith but without responsibility on the part of Renaissance Tours.

### Travel Insurance

It is a condition of travel that you are covered by comprehensive travel insurance for international tours. You can make your own arrangements or your travel insurance can be arranged by Renaissance Tours. In either case all participants must provide the following information no later than 60 days prior to commencement of travel:

- a copy of your travel insurance policy (or details of master policy)
- the emergency telephone number of your insurance company
- next of kin emergency contact.

### Fitness and Participation

While our tours do not require a special level of fitness, for the overall benefit of the group, all tour members must possess a moderate level of mobility, including the ability to:

- negotiate airports and railway stations without wheelchair assistance
- use combined shower/bath facilities (it is impossible to guarantee walk-in shower facilities)
- undertake walking tour of 2-3 hours duration, including using stairs, walking over cobblestones and other uneven surfaces
- stand for long periods in museums and other sites
- embark / disembark coaches, trains and other methods of transportation without assistance
- handle your own luggage

If you (or we) have any doubts about your ability to participate in your chosen tour, you may be required to have a doctor's appraisal. This would require a doctor to read the itinerary of your chosen tour and provide you with a written confirmation of your ability to participate.

### Terms & Conditions

You can find the full terms & conditions on the Renaissance Tours booking form. They can also be found at [www.renaissancetours.com.au](http://www.renaissancetours.com.au) or we would be happy to post you a copy on request.



Cover image: Serre de la Madone, Menton.  
Back page image: Bellagio, Lake Como.



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