

EUROPE 2023

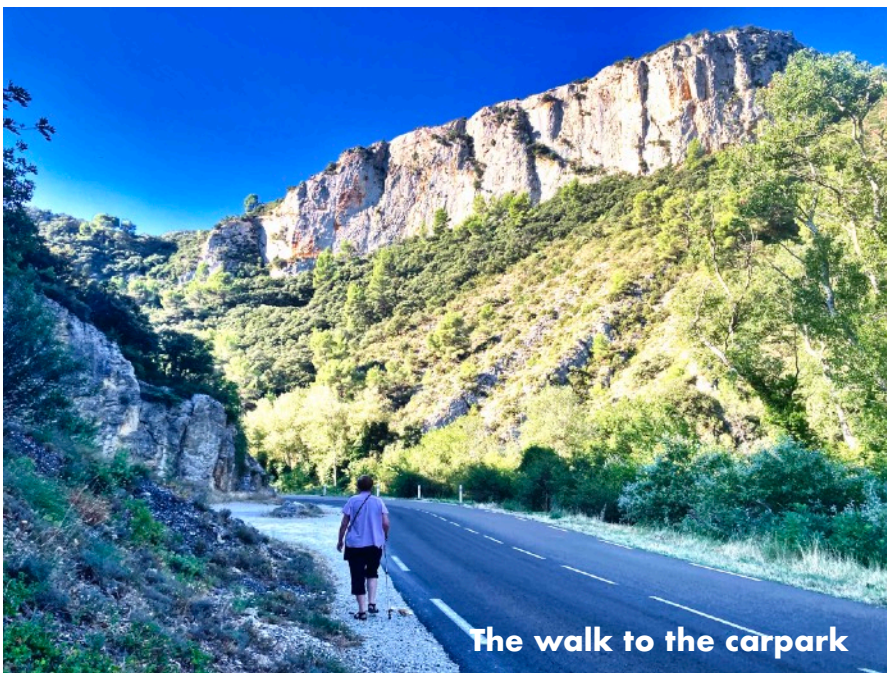
4 months | 6 countries | 8 house swaps | 10 journey legs | 2 grand-boys



Cadenet

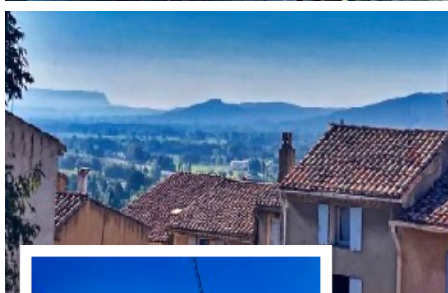
This morning started exceptionally early at 4 am as we tuned into the Australia vs. Mexico live stream. Despite the match ending in a draw, Australia's performance was highly impressive.

As the sun began to rise, instead of returning to slumber, we opted for a morning adventure.



We decided to take a leisurely walk through the stunning gorge along the road to Bonnieux, known as the Luberon Geological Nature Reserve. Over the past few days, we had driven through the gorge, observing the car parks filled with eager trekkers equipped with their walking sticks. As we reached the car park, the sun's gentle rays kissed the tops of the cliffs on either side of the narrow road. Surprisingly, we found ourselves to be the sole early risers; it seems that people in this area are not keen on early Sunday awakenings.

Undeterred, we embarked on our hike, noting the curious absence of bird song in the forested areas, a stark contrast to Australia.



The trail was rough, strewn with gravel and rocks, partly reflecting the arid aftermath of a harsh summer. The landscape appeared somewhat barren, characterised by rocky sandstone formations and sparse undergrowth amidst gnarled tree trunks. We observed a person attempting a perilous ascent up the loose gravel slope - we couldn't quite fathom the attraction or purpose behind such a risky endeavour.

After covering only a kilometre, Heather decided to turn back, to find more captivating adventures elsewhere. Boring is a word she used often.

Our next destination was the nearby village of Cadenet, which boasts its unique history as one of the few villages that remained Jewish in a sea of population that had embraced christianity. We also stumbled upon some trivia, learning about notable figures associated with the village's past, including the orientalist composer Félicien-César David, the carpenters Jacobin Joseph Sec, Saint Elzéar of Sabran, Baron of Ansois, and Count of Ariano. With so many carpenters on the village celebrity list, construction must have been of great importance in this area at some point in history. Oriental music not so much!

Like many perched villages, Cadenet reveals its true charm when viewed from the valley below. We drove into the town, parked our vehicle and strolled through the old town's narrow streets, with its prominent church overlooking the village. We discovered several serene public squares and the usual quaint cafes and souvenir shops where locals were basking in the morning sun. Being a Sunday, fortunately, most of the commercial establishments were closed, which kept Heather's browsing to an absolute minimum.

The sparse vehicular traffic navigated through the one-way main street, while in the quiet backstreets, we caught glimpses of distant mountains and fertile farmland in the valley. Its amazing that in the very tight backstreets locals are able to utilise literally every available space for their car parking.

Now, we find ourselves back home, relishing a delightful lunch consisting of breadstick, ham, tomatoes, avocado, cheese, lettuce, and various sauces. Then a snooze? Maybe a swim? Perhaps a bike ride will be on the agenda later in the day? But perhaps NOT according to Heather.

We have been reflecting on the fact that it is 40 years since our first trip to Europe with the kids in 1983. Life is still truly enjoyable. Life has been good.