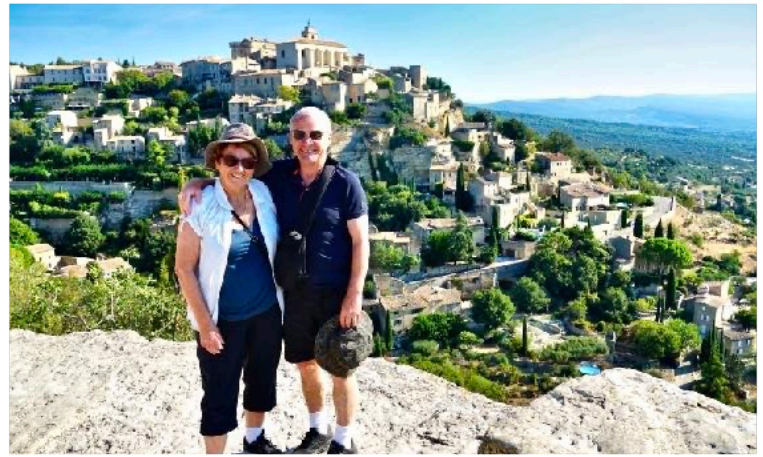


EUROPE 2023

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

Home away from home



The Luberon

By good chance, rather than careful planning, we are staying within easy reach of an area called the Luberon - a mountainous part of Provence. It actually comprises three upright areas called the Petit Luberon, the Grand Luberon and Luberon Oriental. The area reminds up greatly of the region east of Rome that we visited last year. Just a point of interest, the name "Provence" was derived from the description given it by the Romans - this area constituted the first sizeable Roman territory beyond the Italian peninsula, thus they just called it Provincia.

After a restful day of doing nothing yesterday, we headed into the Luberon via a narrow road that wound its way up a valley between the Petit and Grand Luberon. The countryside is surprisingly dry and not particularly fertile looking. The mountains are comprised of eroded limestone and the lower areas are used for grape growing and lavender harvesting. It is just past the lavender harvest, so although we saw quite a lot of lavender bushes there was no beautiful colour. We headed out early to avoid the heat (and masses of fellow tourists) and were rewarded with a cool start to the day and peace and quiet.

The first perched village on our list was Gordes.



Gordes buildings are constructed of whitish stone and appear to root themselves in the side of the mountain. The view from the approach road is fabulous. The walk up and around the narrow cobblestoned streets was well worth the effort. There is a small, fountain dominated square and, typically a large church, at the top of the village. The strikingly coloured interior of the church is a pleasing contrast to the muted colours of the rest of the village.

After taking our fill we drove a few kilometres to the Abbey de Senanque. The building has very simple and beautiful lines. Apparently it is regarded as a gem of Romanesque art. It is not hard to understand why, when the lavender is in bloom in front of the abbey, that it has become a symbol of Provence. It is in the bottom of a small valley and it is still occupied by Cistercian monks. We arrived at a time when the abbey itself was closed for visitors so we only got to savour the outside view (and the shop of course). I could not resist some lavender oil and a little bottle I can add to my perfume bottle collection.

