

“ART & CULTURE IN SOUTHERN FRANCE & NORTHERN SPAIN”

Wednesday, March 30, 2011

DAY 1 DEPARTURE FROM SEATTLE

Enjoy full meal service on your scheduled wide-bodied flight to Nice.

Thursday, March 31, 2011

DAY 2 ARRIVE NICE (2 NIGHTS) - EZE

We will be met at the airport by our Tour Manager/Guide, board our own private bus, and take a scenic drive to the nearby beautiful perched village of Eze. After time to explore or shop in this beautiful village, we will visit the **Fragonard Perfume Factory**, where we will take a guided tour, which will reveal some of the secrets of perfume making. We continue to our hotel for the evening.

Friday, April 1, 2011

DAY 3 NICE & MONACO

We will spend the morning exploring and shopping in **Vieille Ville**, the old town, which begins at the foot of "The Rock" and stretches out from place Masséna. Sheltered by sienna-tiled roofs, many of the Italianate facades suggest 17th-century Genoese palaces. The old town is a maze of narrow streets, many of them teeming with local life, many of which are reserved exclusively for pedestrians. While in the old quarter it is traditional to buy *la pissaladière* (an onion pizza) from one of the local vendors. During our walk we will also visit the **Marché aux Fleurs**, the flower market at cours Saleya. A flamboyant array of carnations, violets, jonquils, roses, and birds of paradise is hauled in by vans or trucks and then displayed in the most fragrant market in town. Next we will visit the **Cathédrale Orthodoxe Russe St-Nicolas à Nice**, ordered and built by none other than Tsar Nicholas II. This is the most beautiful religious edifice of the Orthodoxy outside Russia, and a perfect expression of Russian religious art abroad. The church, with its ornate onion-shaped domes, dates from the belle époque, when some of the Romanovs and their entourage turned the Riviera into a stomping. The cathedral interior is richly ornamented and decorated with icons. Our morning concludes with a visit to the **Musee Matisse**, which honors the great artist who spent the last years of his life in Nice. The museum features several permanent collections, most painted in Nice and many donated by Matisse and his heirs, including a chronologically arranged series of paintings from 1890 to 1919. There is also an ensemble of drawings and designs he prepared as practice sketches for the Matisse Chapel at Vence. The most notable are *The Créole Dancer*, *Blue Nude IV* (1952), and around 50 dance-related sketches he did between 1930 and 1931. This afternoon we will enjoy a scenic drive to the Principality of Monaco, a sovereign state covering less than one square mile. We begin with a visit to the **Cathedral**, a Neo-Romanesque church containing a number of early paintings of the Nice School, including a St. Nicholas altarpiece by Louis Brea. After time to enjoy Monaco, we return to our hotel for the evening.

Saturday, April 2, 2011

DAY 4 NICE - CANNES - AIX-EN-PROVENCE AREA (2 NIGHTS)

This morning we begin our journey to Provence. We will stop en route in Cannes, the elegant playground of the rich and famous on the French Riviera, where we will have a bit of free time to explore, shop or relax on the beach. Our day continues to Aix-en-Provence, the ancient capital of Provence, former watering place for the Roman legions and the home of the Impressionist painter Paul Cezanne. We begin with a stroll along the **Cours Mirabeau**, a particularly stately looking thoroughfare, with lovely shops, sidewalk cafes, and richly embellished sandstone mansions from the 17th and 18th centuries. During our walk, we will view the 1860 landmark fountain on **Place de la Libération**. This afternoon we will focus on Aix's most famous son, Paul Cezanne. We will begin with a visit to his studio, the **Atelier de Cezanne**, which is preserved, as it was when he died in 1906. We continue to our hotel for the evening.

Sunday, April 3, 2011

DAY 5 ARLES & AVIGNON

This morning we visit the Roman city of Arles, which is also closely associated with Vincent van Gogh & Paul Gauguin. We begin our tour with a visit to the **Roman Amphitheater**, one of the best-preserved monuments of Roman Provence, which dates from the reign of Vespasian. Next we will take a **Van Gogh Walking Tour**. Van Gogh lived in Arles and completed around 200 paintings during his stay, including some of his most revered paintings - *Sunflowers*, *The Bedroom*, *The Yellow House*. We will have a specialist guide take us around town where there are 10 sites where we can stand in the spot where Van Gogh set up his easel. We will follow the yellow arrows to each site, marked with a laminated picture panel. E.g., Place Lamartine for *The Yellow House* or the Jardin d'Ete on Boulevard des Lices for the *Public Garden at Arles*. When Gauguin joined Van Gogh in Arles he also drew inspiration from Arles' public gardens when he painted *Les Arlesiennes*. This afternoon we continue to Avignon, a medieval city surrounded by over 3 miles of walls and punctuated by 39 towers and 7 gates. We begin with a visit to the spectacular **Palais des Papes**, a series of buildings, which offers a glimpse into the grand life under the seven Popes who built a miniature Vatican in Avignon during their rule (1309-1377). We return to our hotel for the evening.

Monday, April 4, 2011

DAY 6 AIX AREA - PONT-DU-GARD - NIMES - PERPIGNAN AREA (2 NIGHTS)

This morning we begin with a visit to **Pont-du-Gard**, a three-tiered Roman aqueduct, which is almost entirely intact. At over 2,000 years old, Pont-du-Gard is a startling example of Roman engineering. We continue to the Roman city of Nimes, which had its water supplied from the aqueduct. Nimes was an important city in the Roman period, and is home to many of France's greatest treasures from Roman antiquity. Our tour of Nimes will include; the superb **Roman Amphitheater**, built during the reign of Augustus; the **Maison Carree**, the best-preserved of all Roman temples; and the **Tour Magne**, an old Roman watchtower with fabulous views over the city. We continue to our hotel in the Perpignan area for the evening.

Tuesday, April 5, 2011

DAY 7 DAY TRIP TO CARCASSONNE

Today we travel inland for a visit to the spectacular walled-city of **Carcassonne**. The fortifications consist of the inner and outer walls, a double line of ramparts. The Visigoths built the inner rampart in the 5th century, and were further fortified by the vicomtes de Trencavel in the 12th century, and again by Louis IX and Philip the Bold during the following century.

We will begin with a **Walking Tour of the City Walls**, which will also include a stop for a guided tour of **Château Comtal**, a restored 12th-century fortress. During our tour we will view exhibits that display the archaeological remnants discovered on-site, plus an explanation of the 19th-century restorations. We will also visit the **Basilique St-Nazaire**, another important monument in the fortifications, dating from the 11th to the 14th centuries and containing some beautiful stained-glass windows and a pair of rose medallions. The nave is in the Romanesque style, and the choir and transept are Gothic. The 16th-century organ is one of the oldest in southwestern France. The remainder of the day will be free to explore the city within the walls, before returning to our hotel for the evening.

Wednesday, April 6, 2011

DAY 8 PERPIGNAN - FIGUERES - BARCELONA (3 NIGHTS)

Our first stop this morning will be in Perpignan, once Catalonia's second city after Barcelona, but now part of Roussillon in France. We will take a **Walking Tour of Perpignan** which will highlight important landmarks and sites within the town. We will also visit the **Palace of the Kings of Majorca**, situated at the top of the town. The Spanish citadel was built in the 13th and 14th centuries around a court encircled by arcades. We will view the old throne room, with its large fireplaces, and a square tower with a double gallery, as well as beautiful views of the Pyrenees. We continue south across the border into Spain, where we will stop in Figueres to visit the **Teatre Museu Dali**, the internationally known artist Salvador Dalí was as famous for his surrealist and often erotic imagery, as he was for his flamboyance and exhibitionism. At the Figueres museum, we will view his paintings, watercolors, gouaches, charcoals, and pastels, along with graphics and sculptures, many rendered with seductive and meticulously detailed imagery. We continue to our hotel in Barcelona, the capital of Catalunya, and second only to Madrid in size and importance. This evening we will take a stroll along **Las Ramblas**, Barcelona's most colorful and interesting street. We will begin in the **Placa de Catalunya**, a vast square and the symbolic center of Barcelona which features sculpture, fountains and gardens. We will walk from the square to the waterfront, passing along the way a parade of street life, performance artists, flower stalls, cafes, markets and bird stalls. Architectural highlights include the market, La Boqueria, the Gran Teatre de Liceu, the Placa Reial and the Café de l'Opera.

Thursday, April 7, 2011

DAY 9 BARCELONA (BARRI GOTIC & MONTJUIC)

This morning our sightseeing commences in the **Barri Gòtic (Gothic Quarter)**. This is the oldest quarter, parts of which have survived from the Middle Ages, and we will explore its narrow streets and squares. A few highlights of our walk will include the Placa del Pi, the quirky specialist shops, the Placa de Sant Felip Neri and the magnificent Placa Sant Jaume. During our walk we will also visit **Barcelona Cathedral**, a celebrated example of Catalonian Gothic architecture. The three naves, cleaned and illuminated, have splendid Gothic details, and the large bell towers, perfectly blend medieval and Renaissance styles. The beautiful cloister, high altar, side chapels, sculptured choir, and Gothic arches highlight one of the most impressive cathedrals in Spain. Our afternoon begins in the section of the city known as El Born, just off the Gothic Quarter. We will begin the afternoon with a visit to the **Museu Picasso**, housing works by Pablo Picasso, who donated some 2,500 of his paintings, engravings, and drawings to the museum in 1970. Picasso was particularly fond of Barcelona, the city where he spent much of his formative youth, and many of the works in the collection show the artist's debt to van Gogh, El Greco, Rembrandt and Velázquez.

Our day concludes with a visit to the **Fundació Joan Miró**, a museum with a collection of over 10,000 works by the Catalán surrealist, including paintings, graphics, and sculptures. An exhibition in a modern wing charts Miró's complete artistic evolution, from his first drawings at the age of 8 to his last works. We conclude the afternoon by viewing the magnificent outside of the Museu Nacional d'Art de Catalunya, followed by a short walk to the **Font Màgica**, a grandiose fountain at the base of the staircase to the MNAC. Our afternoon concludes with a walk to the monumental square, **Placa d'Espanya**, which was designed as the main entrance to the International Exhibition of 1929. A highlight of the square is the set of twin towers, which were modeled on Venetian campaniles. After dinner we will return to watch the **Sound and Light Show at Font Màgica**, which takes on a different personality. At regular intervals, the fountain puts on a spectacular show: Music, a range of pop songs to popular classical, belts out from loudspeakers, and different colored lights are beamed from inside the fountain itself. The gushes of water, controlled externally, "dance" to the mixture of light and sound.

Friday, April 8, 2011

DAY 10 BARCELONA (L'EIXAMPLE: GAUDI & THE MODERNISTA PERIOD)

This morning we will explore L'Eixample, Barcelona's "new town," and its extension beyond the old city walls, which contains a glorious grid of 18th- and 19th-century buildings, including the most vibrant examples of the *modernista* movement. We begin with a visit to **La Sagrada Família**, Antonio Gaudí's incomplete masterpiece and one of the more idiosyncratic creations of Spain. We will explore the **Crypt** of the cathedral, which features a small museum of the architect's scale models, photographs displaying the progress of construction on the building, as well as photos of Gaudí's funeral. Our day continues with a **Quadrat d'Or (Golden Triangle) Walking Tour**, encompassing an area bordered by the streets Bruc, Aribau, Aragó, and the Diagonal. This area has been named the world's greatest living museum of turn-of-the-20th-century architecture. Our tour will highlight many of the key buildings, including **Casa Batlló**, designed by Gaudí in 1905; and the **Manzana de la Discòrdia**, the ultimate *modernista* building. Many of the buildings still serve their original use as luxury apartments for the city's 19th-century nouveau riche, while others are office buildings and even shops. During our walk, we will also stop to visit **Casa Milà**, commonly called "La Pedrera," the most famous apartment-house complex in Spain. Antoni Gaudí's imagination went wild when planning its construction, even including vegetable and fruit shapes in his sculptural designs. We will ascend to the rooftop, filled with phantasmagoric chimneys known in Spanish as *espantabrujas* (witch-scarers), which affords a view of Gaudí's La Sagrada Família and the Eixample area of the city. We will also visit the **Espai Gaudí** (Gaudí Space) in the attic, which features an intriguing multimedia display of the works of the controversial artist. Our afternoon will conclude in **Parc Güell**, which was designed primarily by Gaudí, including a mosaic pagoda, a lizard fountain spitting water, an undulating bench decorated with ceramic fragments and the bizarre Doric columns, which are hollow as part of Gaudí's drainage system.

Saturday, April 9, 2011

DAY 11 DEPARTURE FROM BARCELONA

Our enjoyable and rewarding tour will come to an end as our guide accompanies us to the airport for the return flight home.