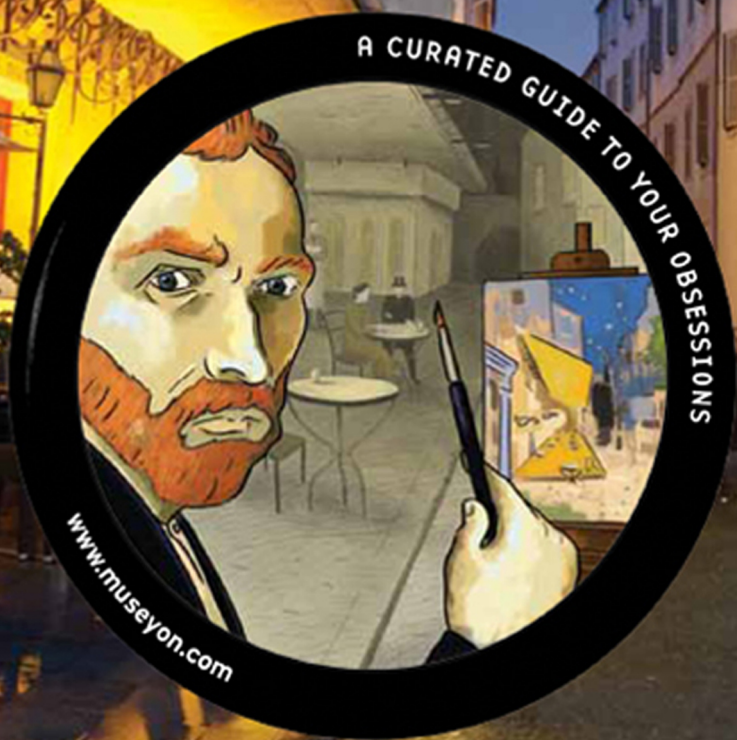


Step Into the Lives of Five Famous Painters

ART + TRAVEL

EUROPE: VAN GOGH, VERMEER, GOYA, CARAVAGGIO, MUNCH

MUSEYON
GUIDES



Step Into the Lives
of Five Famous Painters

ART+TRAVEL

EUROPE

MUSEYON
GUIDES



A CURATED GUIDE TO YOUR OBSESSIONS

www.museyon.com



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MAP : EUROPE

TABLE OF CONTENTS

VAN GOGH AND ARLES

06

FRANCE BY KRISTIN HOHENADEL

Introduction	6	<i>L'Arlésienne</i>	31
Biography	8	Where to...Eat and Sleep	32
<i>Sunflowers</i>	9	Map of Venues and City Landmarks	34
Timeline	11	Extended Travel: Saint-Rémy	36
Art Imitating Art	14	Angladon Museum in Avignon	36
For Your Information / Access	18	<i>Starry Night</i>	37
Before You Go, Get in the Know	19	Nostradamus	38
Calendar...Yearly Events	20	Saint Paul de Mausole	39
The Queen of Arles	21	Van Gogh Museum, Amsterdam	40
Walking Tour	22	Artwork: <i>The Potato Eaters, Skull of a</i>	
Where to See...The Walking Tour	26	<i>Skeleton with Burning Cigarette</i>	42
Where to See...Scene Stealers	28	Souvenirs	43
Picasso in Arles	29	Anatomy of a Masterpiece	44
UNESCO	30	Record Prices	47

VERMEER AND DELFT

48

THE NETHERLANDS BY SANDRA SMALLENBURG

Introduction	48	Where to See...Scene Stealers	72
Biography	50	The Prinsenhof Museum	73
Timeline	55	Where to...Eat and Sleep	74
Han Van Meegeren	56	Map of Venues and City Landmarks	76
Art Imitating Art	58	Extended Travel: The Mauritshuis,	
For Your Information / Access	60	The Hague	78
Before You Go, Get in the Know	61	Extended Travel: The Rijksmuseum,	
Calendar...Yearly Events	62	Amsterdam	80
Walking Tour	63	<i>The Milkmaid</i>	81
Where is the Little Street?	66	Anatomy of a Masterpiece	82
Where to See...The Walking Tour	70	Souvenirs	85

GOYA AND MADRID

86

SPAIN BY GEORGE STOLZ

Introduction	86	For Your Information / Access	98
Biography	88	Before You Go, Get in the Know	99
Timeline	91	Calendar...Yearly Events	100
Goya's Houses	93	Walking Tour	102
<i>The 3rd of May, 1808</i>	95	Goya and The Prado	106
Art Imitating Art	96	Souvenirs	107

Where to See...The Walking Tour	108	Map of Venues and City Landmarks	118
Where to See...Scene Stealers	110	Extended: Travel Zaragoza	120
Goya at the Royal Fine Arts Academy	113	Anatomy of a Masterpiece	122
Where to...Eat and Sleep	116	Record Prices	125

CARAVAGGIO AND ROME 126

ITALY BY BARBIE LATZA NADEAU

Introduction	126	Where to See...The Walking Tour	144
Biography	128	Where to See...Scene Stealers	146
Timeline	130	Souvenirs	149
Art Imitating Art	134	Where to...Eat and Sleep	150
For Your Information / Access	136	Map of Venues and City Landmarks	152
Before You Go, Get in the Know	137	Extended Travel: Valletta, Malta	154
Calendar...Yearly Events	138	<i>The Beheading of Saint John the Baptist</i>	156
Walking Tour	139	Anatomy of a Masterpiece	157
The Expert: David M. Stone	141		

MUNCH AND OSLO 160

NORWAY BY LEA FEINSTEIN

Introduction	160	Souvenirs	180
Biography	162	<i>The Madonna</i>	181
Timeline	164	The National Gallery	182
<i>The Scream</i>	168	Where to See...The Walking Tour	184
Art Imitating Art	171	Where to See...Scene Stealers	186
For Your Information / Access	172	Where to...Eat and Sleep	192
Calendar...Yearly Events	173	Map of Venues and City Landmarks	194
Before You Go, Get in the Know	174	Extended Travel: Åsgårdstrand	196
Walking Tour	175	Åsgårdstrand in Artwork	197
Munch Lived Here	178	Anatomy of a Masterpiece	198

INDEX + CREDITS 200

CONTRIBUTORS + ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS 206

ICON KEY

address
 telephone

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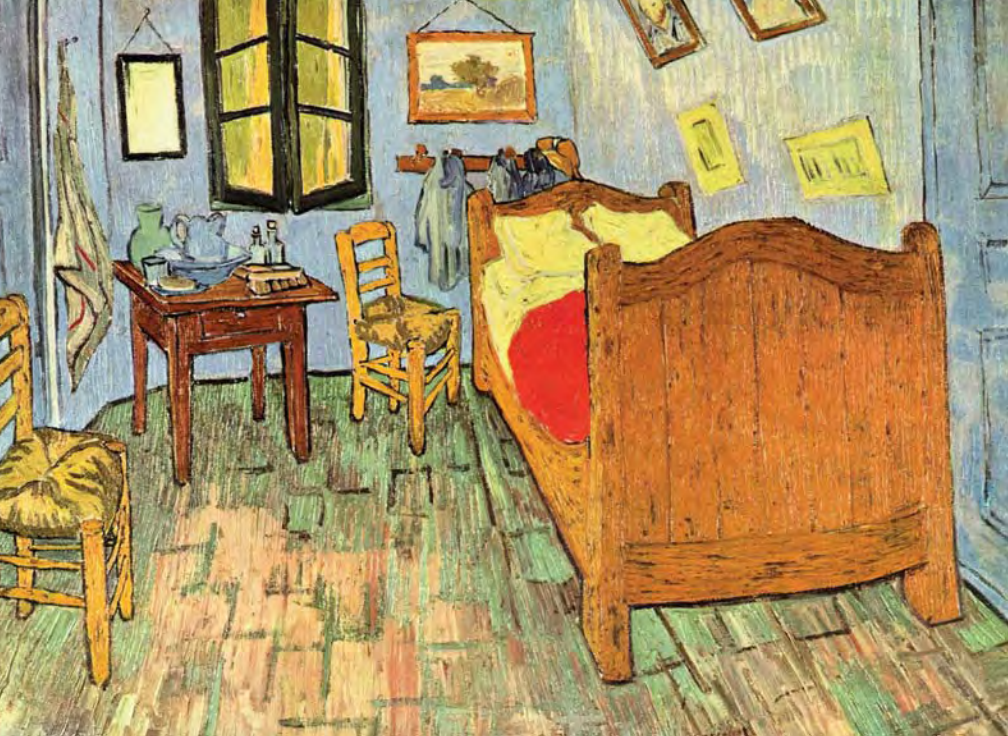
VAN GOGH and Arles



In a career that lasted only 10 years, Dutch-born Vincent Van Gogh created some of the best-loved paintings in modern art. Many of his most dazzling canvases were completed in the year he spent in Arles, a sunny village in the south of France. Exhausted by his hard-drinking, hard-living days in Paris, he was hoping to create an idyllic artists' community in Arles. The first, and only, artist to join him there was Paul Gauguin and the plan ended badly for both their friendship and Van Gogh's left ear. Van Gogh produced an amazing amount of inspired work in Arles, including what may be the only painting he was able to sell in his brief career. Yet his struggle with mental illness proved too much for him and he took his own life at 37.







BY KRISTIN HOHENADEL

The light changes palpably on a high-speed train heading south from Paris to Provence. The landscape brightens, fields of sunflowers rush by, and a sense of *déjà vu* sets in as a 3-D rendering of Vincent Van Gogh's vision of southern France materializes in all its vivid poetry.

In February of 1888, the Dutch artist boarded a train to make this same journey, fleeing gray Paris to seek out the shock of Provençal color and light. But before he painted the now-iconic images of sunflowers and wheat fields and nights lit with stars that flame like miniature suns, the 35-year-old Dutchman found himself snowed in for three weeks of uncharacteristically wintry Provençal weather. Legend has it that Arles was just a stop on a journey to Marseille to meet the painter Adolphe Monticelli, whose work he greatly admired. Van Gogh ended up staying for 15 months in Arles, a pretty, scrappy town in Camargue, with its Roman ruins and bullfighters, soldiers, and women in Arlesian costume.

▲ **Bedroom at Arles** (1888) Van Gogh Museum, Amsterdam

➤ [next page top] **Van Gogh Painting Sunflowers** (1888) by Paul Gauguin

◀ [previous spread] **Self-Portrait** (1888), Van Gogh Museum; **Arlésiennes** by Christophe Loviny

Marooned for those first few weeks in his room at the restaurant/hotel Carrel, he painted the view from its window and the woman at the front desk. The wintry landscapes reminded him of the Japanese prints he so admired. In the spring, the artist moved to a yellow house on the Place Lamartine; he dreamed of turning it into an artists' compound and embarked on a period of frenzied productivity—he made some 300 paintings and drawings here—and unprecedented madness.

At that point in his life, nobody could have predicted that the then-obscure Van Gogh was at work on the handful of paintings, now scattered around the world, that would earn him posthumous status as one of the world's most celebrated, influential, and high-grossing artists. Especially not the people of Arles, who, when they noticed him at all, saw what looked like an unwashed, half-starved, perpetually drunk, redheaded, raving-mad foreigner. They never imagined they had a genius in their midst.

The story of Van Gogh has always been irresistible from a human perspective, because the man died penniless (having sold exactly one painting), taking his own life in a fit of despair in July 1890, at the age of 37. Born in Holland in 1853, he

SUNFLOWERS



In August 1888, Van Gogh embarked on this series of sunflowers as decoration for the guest room for Paul Gauguin in the Yellow House. Each painting became increasingly brighter, culminating with the fourth canvas, currently at the National Gallery in London. Here a bright yellow background replaces the blue of the previous versions. Three repetitions of the third and fourth versions were painted the following winter.

The Arles *Sunflowers* are so closely tied to Van Gogh that they have become among the most valuable canvases ever painted. A repetition of the fourth version (yellow background) sent shockwaves through the art market in 1987, when it sold for nearly \$40 million at auction—more than quadruple the previous record. It didn't hold long though, another Van Gogh was sold shortly thereafter for over \$50 million.



> [clockwise from top left] *Sunflowers* **First Version**, **Second Version**, destroyed by fire in WWII, **Fourth Version**, and **Third Version**



was the son of a pastor and was drawn from an early age to religion and art. He tried and failed to become a man of God like his father and an art dealer like his uncle, dabbling as a bookseller and English teacher along the way. Eccentric, sensitive, off-puttingly intense, and unlucky in love, he seemed to be constantly rejected by the world. At the age of 27, largely inspired by the socially conscious work of Jean-François Millet, he decided to become a painter. In 1886 he went to Paris, where his younger brother, Theo, an art dealer, introduced him to the Impressionists, encouraged him to paint, and funded his trip to Arles.

In Arles, the late-blooming, self-taught artist, who had now absorbed the lessons of the Impressionists and the pointillism of Seurat, experimented with his own Post-Impressionist style. His developing Expressionist technique rendered ordinary things—a vase of sunflowers, his own bedroom in Arles—in intense colors and muscular brushstrokes that distorted the ordinary, transforming it with a heightened emotion that both reflected the sentiment of the artist and stirred deep feeling in the spectator. His earlier

TIMELINE

YOUTH

1853-1880

March 30, 1853

Vincent Van Gogh is born in Zundert, The Netherlands

July 1869

Begins an apprenticeship with global art dealers Goupil & Cie

August 1872

Works at The Hague branch and begins correspondence with his brother Theo

June 1873

Moves to the London Goupil & Cie branch

1874

Transfers to Paris for three months and then heads back to England

May 1875

Travels to Paris again and is inspired by art he sees there

March 1876

Dismissed from Goupil & Cie, decides to become a clergyman and returns to England to teach

1877

Moves to Amsterdam and attempts to enroll in theology school

December 1878

Gives up his studies and then heads to Borinage, a coal-mining district near

Brussels, to work as a preacher

YOUNG ARTIST 1880-1885

1880

Van Gogh decides to become an artist and moves to Brussels

1881

Takes painting lessons from his cousin Anton Mauve, a member of the Hague School

March 26, 1885

Van Gogh's father dies; he completes *The Potato Eaters*

January 1886

Enrolls in Royal Academy of Fine Arts Antwerp for training, but grows impatient and withdraws two months later

PARIS 1886-1888

February 27, 1886

Van Gogh arrives in Paris

1886

Theo introduces Van Gogh to the works of Claude Monet and the Impressionists

Van Gogh studies with Fernand Cormon

Meets and befriends Paul Gauguin, Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec, Émile Bernard, Camille Pissarro and John Russell

Perfects his skills in self-portraits and experiments in color

1887

Organizes a group show of his and his friends' paintings at a Paris restaurant

ARLES 1888-1889

February 19, 1888

Van Gogh boards a train for Provence and gets off at Arles

1888

Rents the Yellow House, hopes to establish artist colony, and invites Gauguin to join him (he paints *Sunflowers* in anticipation of his arrival)

October 1888

Gauguin arrives and remains for nine weeks

December 1888

Tensions between Van Gogh and Gauguin hit a breaking point

Van Gogh cuts off his left earlobe, is admitted to the hospital, and remains there until January 1889



SAINT-RÉMY 1889-1890

May 1889

Van Gogh voluntarily commits himself into a psychiatric hospital and converts his cell into a studio

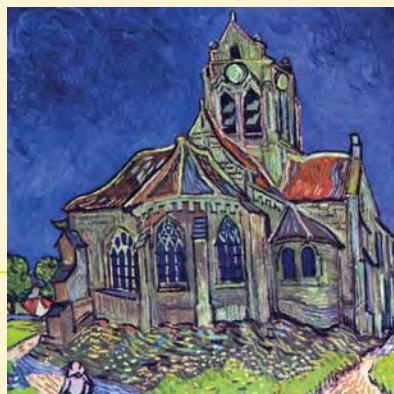
1890

Creates masterpieces *Irises*, *Cypresses*, and *Starry Night* and sends them to Theo in Paris

AUVERS-SUR-OISE 1890

July 27, 1890

Van Gogh walks into a wheat field and shoots himself. He staggers back to his room, where two days later, on July 29, he dies with Theo at his side



- ▲ Place Lamartine and *The Yellow House* (1888)
- *The Church at Auvers* (1890) Musée d'Orsay, Paris



work had been somber and grim (like *The Potato Eaters* (1885), which was based on his time spent evangelizing among poor Belgian miners, and which many consider his first great work of art). But in Arles he finally found the light, what he described in a letter to Theo as “the high yellow note.” (Some historians have

suggested that his obsession with yellow may have come not only from the light of the south but from chemicals firing in his brain high on too much absinthe, which caused him to hallucinate and is thought to produce a sort of yellow vision when taken to excess.)

Van Gogh never achieved his vision of establishing an artists’ commune at the Yellow House, a wish he articulated to Theo in a letter: “If I could find another painter inclined to work in the South, and who, like myself, would be sufficiently absorbed in his work to be able to resign himself to living like a monk who goes to the brothel once a fortnight—who for the rest is tied up in his work, and not very willing to waste his time—it might be a good job. Being all alone, I am suffering a little under this isolation.”

He painted those ubiquitous sunflowers—reproductions of which now hang on the walls of bedrooms the world over—to decorate his guest room for Gauguin, who joined him in Arles in October of 1888. Famously, things did not go well. The psychotic episode that resulted in Van Gogh attacking Gauguin and lopping off his own earlobe—which he presented to a prostitute named Rachel—is one of the art world’s most memorable anecdotes. That story was recently challenged by a pair of German art historians who claimed that it was Gauguin who sliced off Van Gogh’s earlobe with a sword. This claim has been refuted by descendants of the doctors who treated Van Gogh at the time, who insist that the scientific and historical evidence prove that the injury could only have been the self-inflicted result of a moment of violent rage.

“I think the Germans have a book to sell,” says Pierrette Nouet, a city guide who has been giving Van Gogh tours for a decade. “And we’ve said so much about Van Gogh that every so often you have to find something new to say about him. In one sense it’s good because it shows that he’s an artist who, 100 years

^ [top] **Café Van Gogh**

> **Place de la République** and the **Église St-Trophime**



ART IMITATING ART: THE ARTIST'S IMPRINT ON POPULAR CULTURE

MOVIES



ON LOCATION

Lust for Life (1956)

Director: Vincente Minnelli

Based on the best-selling novel by Irving Stone, Vincente Minnelli's biographical account of Van Gogh's life stars Kirk Douglas as the tortured artist and Anthony Quinn as the fiery Paul Gauguin (a performance for which he won an Oscar). Filmed in the real-life locations where the artist lived and worked—a point emphasized even in the film's 1956 trailer—*Lust for Life* follows Van Gogh from the coal mines of Belgium to the French countryside, capturing

the scenes depicted in his work along the way. From a table of potato-eating peasants to women washing clothes by the Pont de Langlois bridge in Arles, Minnelli's cinematic recreations of the paintings are painstakingly true to the originals. The director even went so far as to spray-paint a Provençal field yellow to better match Van Gogh's vision.

Vincent: The Life and Death of Vincent Van Gogh (1987)

Director: Paul Cox

A passionate documentary about the artist, narrated by actor John Hurt, it relays the story of Van Gogh's turbulent life through his letters and work.

Vincent and Theo (1990)

Director: Robert Altman

This biographical film, originally developed as a miniseries for European television, explores the relationship between the artist and his brother through their trials, tribulations, and emotional struggles.

Vincent, The Full Story: A Documentary (2004)

Director: Waldemar Januszczak

This documentary delves into the artist's life and achievements. It is divided into three parts: "From Vincent's Birth to His

Masterpiece," "From the Early Paintings to Arles," and "From Arles to Suicide."

The Eyes of Van Gogh (2005)

Director: Alexander Barnett

This film explores the story of the 12 months the tormented artist spent in the insane asylum at Saint-Rémy through visceral images of hallucinations, memories, and dreams.

Van Gogh (1991)

Director: Maurice Pialat

The final months of the artist's turbulent life are chronicled in this compelling account starring French actor Jacques Dutronc in a passionate and emotionally charged performance.

Dreams (1990)

Director: Akira Kurosawa

This film, based on eight of the director's dreams, takes a journey through magical

realism from the lyrical to the apocalyptic. "Crows" features director Martin Scorsese as Vincent Van Gogh and tells the story of an art student who finds himself inside the artist's work and converses with him in a field. The student then loses sight of Van Gogh and travels through other works in the hopes of finding him.

Starry Night (1999)

Director: Paul Davids

This comedy offers an innovative premise: A woman makes a magic potion that can bring people back from the dead, and Vincent Van Gogh is the first person on the list. Once alive, he is disoriented and shocked to find his work so valuable and well known. He starts stealing whatever he can from galleries and collectors and has a difficult time getting people to believe who he is.

later, can still stir up debate.” Nouet is careful to point out that Van Gogh did sell one painting for “100 francs, which wasn’t nothing at the time.” She cites a good review that was published before his death, challenging the notion that he died in total obscurity. “He wasn’t a martyr,” she says. “Maybe the Arlesians didn’t like him because he acted crazy, drank 70 percent absinthe, screamed all night. But he wasn’t unloved—that’s a legend. He was unknown,” she adds. “Once he became famous, everybody suddenly had a grandfather who knew him. But it wasn’t true.” (As it happens, the world’s oldest woman, Jeanne Calment, who died in 1997 at the age of 122, was an Arlesian. She claimed she remembered seeing Van Gogh in her uncle’s shop buying paint supplies, recalling him as “dirty, badly dressed, and disagreeable.”) Nouet, 58, says that they didn’t learn about Van Gogh when she was in school. As a teenager, she had a one-eared dog named after the artist, and she says that people were always asking her to explain the funny name.

It’s because of tourists from around the world that the city finally decided to offer walking tours tracing Van Gogh’s steps, she says. “When tourists arrive, they ask two things: ‘Where is his house?’ and ‘Where is the Van Gogh Museum?’” says Nouet. “The house was bombed in ’44. And they’re always disappointed when you say that the Van Gogh Museum is actually in Amsterdam.” Visitors are even more shocked to learn that the city does not possess a single canvas painted by Van Gogh. Not even *L’Arlésienne* (1888), which, to the chagrin of the locals, is housed at the Musée d’Orsay in Paris.

The Vincent Van Gogh Foundation is a small private museum in Arles that was established by Yolande Clergue in 1983 to help fill that void. It is full of commissioned paintings, photographs, and other creative work inspired by Van Gogh. Works by David Hockney, Francis Bacon, Fernando Botero, and many other contemporary artists attest to the artist’s legacy and lasting influence on contemporary art. Tourists are sometimes outraged to realize that the foundation doesn’t have any works by its namesake artist, says communications director Souraya Abifarès one afternoon after leading a group of preschool-age children on a tour.



▲ **Painter on the Road to Tarascon** (1888), formerly at the Kaiser-Friedrich Museum, Magdeburg, destroyed by fire in World War II

“There are kids who have some initiation about art, and they know the *Sunflowers* and *Starry Night* (1889), but not a lot, frankly,” says Abifarès. “We work with schoolchildren because it’s not just a museum for adults and to make money—it also has a pedagogical mission to educate children about who Van Gogh was and to encourage young people to become interested in art. Nobody believed in Van Gogh, but we want to believe in young people, to encourage them in ways that Van Gogh was never encouraged.” In the museum is a copy of the petition signed by a few dozen of Van Gogh’s neighbors, who begged the mayor to send the crazy man back to his own family. “The descendants of those people now cringe to think, ‘We had a genius among us, and what did our grandparents do?’” says Abifarès. “If Arles is known around the world, it’s because of Van Gogh.”

Nobody is sure why he got off the train in Arles, a town that was not associated with art. When he lived there, the last famous artist had been Jacques Réattu, a painter who died 20 years before Van Gogh was born and whose name is attached to the Musée Réattu, a contemporary art space perched on the banks of the Rhône. It was the first museum in France to house a permanent photography collection, and it now holds 57 drawings donated by Picasso.

Modern-day Arles has become an international photography capital, with an annual international photography show, Les Rencontres d’Arles. It is also known for its small but influential publishing house, Actes Sud, which focuses on international writers; the Frank Gehry-designed renovation of the former SNCF train repair shops, which will become a major arts complex and second downtown; and the recently bankrupt but widely admired fashion designer Christian Lacroix, who is today’s most famous Arlesian. “It’s a beautiful city that has stayed authentic,” Nouet says. “It’s not a museum. When kids skateboard against the walls of the Antique Theater and people transform the outside of the amphitheater into a parking lot, that’s not good. On the other hand, it’s not a sanctuary that opens at 8:00 a.m. and closes up at night.”

And while you can’t help but notice the city’s Roman ruins (a UNESCO World Heritage site), searching for a trace of Van Gogh is a more challenging proposition. “I call this a virtual tour,” Nouet says, pointing out that the Roman ruins and archaeology didn’t interest Van Gogh. “The problem is that the town was bombarded in ’44, and the places where he lived, slept, and ate are mostly destroyed,” she explains. Nevertheless, art lovers from around the world continue to make the pilgrimage to this city of 53,000 inhabitants, bent on chasing his ghost.

► **Pont de Langlois**, nicknamed the Van Gogh Bridge



ACCESS

AIRPORTS: ✈

Marseille Provence Airport

☎ 33 4 42 14 14 14

🌐 www.marseille.aeroport.fr

Paris to Arles

If you are heading to Arles from Paris, the trip is pretty simple. To journey by train, take the TGV from Paris-Gare de Lyon to Avignon-TGV station (2 hours, 40 minutes) and then a shuttle bus to Arles. If you take the TGV direct from Paris-Gare de Lyon to Arles, it takes 4 hours.

TRAIN: 🚆

TGV France

☎ 33 (0) 8 92 35 35 35

🌐 www.tgv.com

SNCF d'Arles

☎ 33 (0) 8 36 35 35 35

🌐 www.sncf.fr



BUS: 🚌

Arles Bus Station

☎ 33 (0) 4 90 49 38 01

TAXI: 🚖

Arles Taxi Radio

☎ 33 (0) 4 90 96 90 03

TOURISM OFFICE: 🌐

Office de Tourisme

📍 Boulevard des Lices

☎ 33 (0) 4 90 18 41 20

🌐 www.arlestourisme.com

○ Mon-Sat 9AM-4:45PM;

Sun 10AM-1PM

FOR YOUR INFORMATION...



Arles, a UNESCO World Heritage Site, was a 6th-century BC Greek colony that later became a thriving city and stronghold in Roman Gaul. It is home to monuments, museums, festivals, bullfights, and joie de vivre. Situated on the banks of the Rhône River and gateway to the untamed Camargue marshlands (home of the wild Camargue horses and the French cowboys who ride them), Arles combines the natural beauty that attracted such artists as Van Gogh and Gauguin with a rich heritage of important Roman, Christian, and

17th-century architectural sites and monuments. Proud of its heritage and traditions, Arles hosts dozens of historic and cultural festivals during the spring and summer months, as well as some of the most important and colorful bullfighting contests in France.

Weather 🌤

There are two types of wind that blow in Arles: a wind from the south and a wind from the north, which is called the Mistral and dispels the clouds. The winds are unpredictable and can blow anytime in the year. The weather in Arles is mild. Summers are hot (July and August) and winters (January and February) are not very cold. Thus the best period to visit might be late spring (April and May), when it's moderate.



▲ [top] Arles at dawn [bottom] Fontaine A. Pichot

BEFORE YOU GO, GET IN THE KNOW: SUGGESTED WEBSITES AND BOOKS

WEBSITES

Arles Office of Tourism

 www.tourisme.ville-arles.fr

The official website for the tourism office in Arles provides general information, such as maps, weather, and access, as well as dining and accommodation suggestions. There's also a virtual tour, calendar of events, and recommended activities and sights to see.




Van Gogh Museum

 www.vangoghmuseum.nl


The Van Gogh Museum houses the largest collection of Van Gogh's art in the world, and its website features a wealth of information about the artist. It also has sections for education, research, and children.

Vincent Van Gogh Gallery

 www.vggallery.com

Endorsed by the Van Gogh Museum in Amsterdam, this website is a comprehensive resource for the artist's body of work and letters. It also offers biographical information, exhibition and auction information, as well as cultural events.

Vincent Van Gogh Foundation

 www.fondationvangogh-arles.org

Currently only in French, this website features information about the small private museum in Arles that was established in 1983 to honor the artist's life and influence.

BOOKS

The Complete Van Gogh

by Jan Hulsker (Crescent, 1985)

Art historian Jan Hulsker, awarded the Royal Netherlands Academy of Sciences' distinguished silver medal for his contribution to Dutch art and literature, has written several books on Van Gogh. This one is

considered to be the authoritative catalogue of the artist's works.

Van Gogh: His Life and His Art

by David Sweetman (Touchstone, 1990)

A biographical account of the artist's life and work based primarily on the correspondence of Van Gogh, his brother Theo, and his friends. It also incorporates research from scholars and social history.

The Yellow House:

Van Gogh, Gauguin, and Nine Turbulent Weeks in Arles

by Martin Gayford
(Little, Brown and Company, 2006)

This dramatic biographical account, from the renowned art critic Martin Gayford, delves into the brief period Van Gogh and Gauguin shared a home together in Arles, what masterpieces were created during this time, and what happened to each of them as a result of the experience.



Van Gogh in Arles

by Ronald Pickvance

(The Metropolitan Museum, 1984)

This book, which also has a companion edition (*Van Gogh in Saint-Rémy and Auvers*), features excellent images of the artist's paintings and drawings, as well as insightful commentary from its author, a renowned Van Gogh scholar.

Vincent Van Gogh: Life and Work

by Dieter Beaujean (Könemann, 1999)

An examination of the artist's legacy through masterpieces such as *Sunflowers*, *The Bridge at Langlois*, *The Postman Roulin*, *Vincent's Chair*, *Café Terrace on the Place du Forum Night*, plus 11 other paintings.

YEARLY EVENTS

FERRIAS CORRIDAS / BULLFIGHTS

↑ Arles Amphitheater

☎ 33 (0) 8 91 70 03 70

🌐 www.arenas-arles.com



FÊTE DES GARDIANS / CAMARGUE COWBOYS FESTIVAL

↑ Various locations throughout city

☎ 33 (0) 4 90 18 41 20



LES RENCONTRES D'ARLES / INTERNATIONAL PHOTOGRAPHY FESTIVAL

↑ Various locations throughout city

☎ 33 (0) 4 90 96 76 06

🌐 www.rencontres-arles.com

CALENDAR...YEARLY EVENTS

Ferrias Corridas / Bullfights (April and September)

Traditional bullfights in the Roman arena of Arles—known as Feria Corridas—are held around Easter time and then again at the end of September. Between those dates you can also see Camargue-style fighting, teams of bullfighters who try to remove a tassel from a bull's horn (without killing the bull).

Fête des Gardians / Camargue Cowboys Festival (May)

The Camargue, which borders on Arles, is the marshy delta area of the Rhône River. It is also the Wild West of France, home to black bulls, wild white horses, and the French “cowboys,” known as Gardians, who ride the horses and herd the bulls. During the Festival of Gardians, which dates back to 1529 and is held in Arles each May, dozens of Camargue cowboys ride their horses through the streets of Arles and take part in a parade, races, games, and the traditional Provençal bullfights where several acrobatic cowboys

try to snatch a flower from between the bull's horns.

Les Rencontres d'Arles / International Photography Festival (July)

The International Photography Festival is held every July, filling the historic structures of Arles with retrospectives and work by some of the most prominent names in photography as well as by promising contemporary newcomers.

Les Suds à Arles: Festival de Musique du Monde / Arles South: International Music Festival (July)

A ritual since 1996, the international music festival known as “Les Suds” brings together performers from all over the world for concerts as well as courses in dance, music, and voice.

Fête du Costume / Costume Festival (July)

The beauty of traditional 19th-century Arlesian costumes—immortalized in many of Van Gogh's works—is celebrated in the annual Costume Festival, which takes place in the