

# PARADISE IN PROVENCE



From fine dining to vineyard tours, **Lee Irvine** embraces the unassuming luxury that this region is loved for





Where does your mind go when you think of Provence? The glamour of Cannes, the beaches of Saint Tropez, beautiful, rolling fields of lavender in the evening sun? All made even better with some of the finest rosé in the world perhaps?

We were recently in the land of rosé, or, to give it its full name: Provence-Alpes—the variety of activities that are available. Staying only 45 minutes away from Nice by car, we had choices as far and wide as celebrity spotting on a Mediterranean beach to jumping in off-road buggies and heading into the unknown to find a chateau and vineyard before sunset. Admittedly, the beaches were tempting, but having spent the afternoon floating in an infinity pool with views for miles, we opted for an off-road adventure.

The timeless beauty of the sun setting behind vine covered hills as we sipped a glass of rosé was made even more peaceful by the excitement of the 4x4 drive getting there! The first wines poured in slow motion as we relaxed in the grounds of Chateau des Selves, with a golden vista of the region laid out before us.

There was also the option not to travel at all. Central to our amazing resort base were two championship level golf courses, complemented with some of the best



training and golf technology centres in the world. And if golf's not your thing, there's a wealth of other activities to indulge in. You could hike through the dramatic Gorges de Verdon, meander around a provincial market, or even have the hotel organise a helicopter sightseeing trip. Our top tip would be to take some local advice and visit another vineyard. You did know



that Whispering Angel, the world's most popular rosé, is made at the same chateau as the world's most expensive rosé, didn't you? Take a tour around Chateau d'Esclans and they'll show you the care and attention put into each bottle, before you sample the full collection.

And what's the perfect accompaniment to a round of world class golf or a strenuous day of discovering fresh, provincial products? A world class spa of course. I can genuinely say that I was so relaxed after a massage and sauna that I may need to resort to another slow-motion metaphor! It took me almost forever to float across the pool and through to the outdoor vitality pool. We were finally tempted out of the water by our dinner reservations at Michelin-starred Le Faventia, our resort's fantastic restaurant. Concentrating on local foods, the chef, sommelier and staff left us in awe; blue lobster with Thai sauce, sole with courgette flower, white chocolate ganache, black cherries in cherry beer ice, finished with herbs from the garden, which were cut at the table and infused while we finished our perfectly matched wine. A "Soirée gastronomique au Faventia" indeed.

Provence really does have it all. With mountains to the north and Mediterranean beaches to the south, the choice of activities available ticks every box you can think of. That helicopter ride and a trip through the flower fields of world-renowned perfumeries are now firmly fixed on the to-do-list of our next visit.

*We stayed at Terre Blanche Hotel Spa Golf Resort, a beautiful, scenic resort that would be perfect for a secluded getaway, luxury honeymoon destination or your dream destination wedding.*

