

Travel Journal – Day 12: Gréoux-les-Bains – Saint-André-les-Alpes – Entrevaux – Nice

Our final day in France greeted us with a **gorgeous Provençal sun**, as if to give us a golden send-off after an unforgettable journey that had taken us from **Paris to Nice**, through **vineyards, villages, mountains, and markets**.

We gathered for the last time at **Villa Borghese** to load the bus. Alex, ever meticulous, had the bus gleaming and ready for our final stretch together. Gwen took the microphone to **guide us through our last day**, setting the tone with a mix of emotion and celebration.

We drove out of Gréoux and onto the legendary **Plateau de Valensole**, an expansive tableland known for its **rolling fields of lavender, wheat, and almond trees**. Even though we were just ahead of peak bloom, the **neatly planted rows and soft waves of green and purple** hinted at the vibrant spectacle this place becomes in June and July. The **light played off the landscape**, creating a dreamlike scene — a painter's palette of lavender, sage, and gold.

We skirted the edges of the **Gorges du Verdon**, often called the “**Grand Canyon of Europe**.” Under the brilliant sun, the **limestone cliffs glowed white**, while the **Verdon river** far below sparkled in hues of **emerald and turquoise**. The contrast of **forest greens, grey rock, and azure waters** made for a **magical atmosphere**, filled with colour and silence.

We continued to **Saint-André-les-Alpes**, a peaceful mountain village nestled near the source of the Verdon. There, we stopped at **the smallest café in town**, a true local haunt. The terrace was alive with **karaoke-singing locals**, offering us a glimpse of genuine Alpine village life. We tasted **navettes**—traditional boat-shaped Provençal biscuits—**flavoured with local lavender and honey**, delicate and lightly sweet, the perfect morning treat.

Following the lakeside road, we paused at **Saint-Julien-du-Verdon**, on a scenic bridge over **Lac de Castillon**, where reflections of the mountains danced on the water's surface.

We then followed the **Var river** valley, winding down toward the sea. The scenery gradually shifted from Alpine to Mediterranean as we reached **Entrevaux**, a dramatic medieval village built into the rock.

At the entrance to the old village, we were warmly welcomed by **Soledad**, who shared with us her **freshly baked pissaladière**—a **classic Niçoise tart** of slow-cooked onions, black olives, and anchovies, on a thin, savoury bread crust.

Pissaladière recipe:

- Thin bread dough base
- Caramelized onions slowly cooked with thyme and olive oil
- Anchovies arranged in a criss-cross pattern
- Black olives tucked into each diamond of dough
- Baked until golden and deeply aromatic

Entrevaux itself is like a time capsule. We entered via a **drawbridge**, passing the impressive **17th-century Vauban fortifications**. Once a strategic stronghold guarding the border of France, the village retains its **winding medieval streets, stone houses, ancient fountains, and vaulted passageways**. No one climbed to the citadel — instead, we all **wandered the shaded lanes**, soaking in the sense of **living history** and quiet Provençal charm.

Before we left, we regrouped for **one last drink as a group** in the village café, toasting to the journey, to each other, and to the memories now etched into our hearts.

Then, it was time for the final drive — the road that would take us out of the mountains and into **Nice**, where our journey would end. There were smiles and a few quiet tears as we pulled into the city. After days of shared meals, new friendships, laughter, discoveries, and stories, we had arrived at the end.

A final "voilà, voilà",
Gwen