

# Cognoscenti magazine

## La Bastide de Voulonne Cabrieres d'Avignon

**Because life is short**

All across France, enterprising families are converting old farmhouses into rustic lodging establishments, offering a welcome refuge to guests who are increasingly fleeing stressful jobs and hectic city lives for much-needed holidays in the countryside. The farm/family/demeures d'hotes segment is one of the fastest growing in the hospitality business today, and **Cognoscenti Magazine** is pleased to bring your attention to one special example of this accelerating trend: **La Bastide de Voulonne**.

Housed in a lovely 18<sup>th</sup> century farmhouse with a large inner courtyard, La Bastide de Voulonne has been open for 7 years. Today it offers guests a choice of 10 spacious and comfortably furnished rooms. In our simple but charming "La Fontaine" room, the famous red ochres of nearby Roussillon bring vibrancy, with mustard-yellow lamps providing nice color contrast. Daylight, fresh air, and peace and quiet are abundantly present.

True, the room lacks "hotel" amenities like mini-bar, mini-safe, or evening turn-down service, and the TV received only three static-filled French channels—but most of the guests we talked to seem willing, even happy to trade these modern pleasures for the pastoral ones that are on offer.

Outside there's a grand old plane tree that's more than two centuries old. It stands a majestic watch over the front entrance to the house. Spend a moment or two here and you're likely to spot ducks, waddling lazily across the lawn. Behind the house, a path crosses the property, leading to a secluded swimming pool.

Sophie Rebourg and husband Alain own and operate the property. In an interview with visiting editors, Sophie explained how much she enjoys "the pleasure of seeing clients come back. It's the direct contact with clients—that's what's unique to *demeures d'hôtes*."



*Bastide de Voulonne: a charming guest home in Provence*

Gracing the guest house's cozy dining room is a huge bouquet of roses, lilacs, mimosas, begonias and red and yellow tulips. Here flavorful 3-course meals are offered 4 nights a week. The style is informal: dinner is served "en table d'hôtes." Complimentary apéritifs are poured before dinner, then everyone seats around a large table—a highly convivial atmosphere in which to meet other guests. Over dinner, we chatted with a lively international clientele, and calculated that guests from no fewer than 4 different continents (Europe, North America, Africa and Australia) dined with us! In an age of dwindling community, this feature is so popular that "some of our clients come back just for

our ‘table d’hôtes’,” says Sophie. Everything we tried from chef Alain’s kitchen was fresh, tasty and wholesome—we especially liked the dorado with green beans and stuffed vegetables, with chocolate cake for dessert. There’s also a modest but well-chosen wine list that focuses on local Côtes du Lubéron offerings, including a light-to-medium bodied 2000 *Chateau Val Janis* that displayed soft tannins, fine herbs, and raspberry on the palate.

After a country-style breakfast (chickens on the property provide the eggs), many guests spend their days visiting the nearby villages with their local markets (there’s one almost every day somewhere in the area), or head off on nature walks or bicycle excursions. The hotel is well-situated, just minutes from the cliffside village of Gordes, and the “Bories,” famous for its ingenious and ancient mortar-free stone structures, is also close by. La Bastide de Voulonne is quite popular with couples who have young children—the kids quickly form an international brigade with others of their own age, playing on the spacious grounds while giving their parents a chance to relax with one another.

This article was written by contributing editors to *Cognoscenti Magazine*.

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