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A Honeymoon Road Trip Through France And Italy

Take your imagination on the road, through the vineyards and valleys of Provence and Sicily..

by MARIE-CLAIRE CHAPPET / August 2, 2023 in Travel 0



My husband and I don't do sitting still very well. Like any stressed, hardworking people in their mid-thirties, all we do all week is moan about wanting time to relax. Curiously – or predictably, depending how in-tune one might be with our Type A personalities- the moment we get that time, we fill it with busyness.

The same held true for our honeymoon. Faced with two weeks of just-married bliss, we could have jetted off to the Maldives and nestled in to one of those luxury wooden huts over turquoise waters, raising a glass to fellow honeymooners in their neighbouring fancy wooden huts as we dozed away our days and *actually* relaxed. Nonsense. Not for us! Two weeks of driving across Europe please!

Provence was a natural first stop. We got married in South-East France and it is just a few hours' drive from the venue. The Monday after our wedding weekend, we set off for a hotel I had been obsessed with for years but never stayed at: **Crillon le Brave**. Thankfully, it was not a 'never meet your heroes' moment, but a destination which actually exceeded expectations. Perched on a hill in the majestic Luberon, overlooking Mont Ventoux, this is a truly special place. Waking up to unfettered views of the verdant valley below was an indescribable treat. But, then again, every balcony and terrace of this hotel boasted breath-taking views. My camera roll afterwards was essentially 200 snaps of the same thing. But it never stopped, that feeling that you were surrounded by beauty and had to somehow- futilely- capture it.

We spent our days here relaxing by the pool, playing endless games of pétanque, dining on the hotel's superlative food, falling asleep (me) during a sublime couples' massage and taking a picnic in a nearby olive grove with two friends who had gallantly decided to accompany us on the first two days of married life. They called themselves our Honeymoon Consultants and I cannot recommend the notion enough. It quells the wedding blues and you get free



The view from our room in Crillon le Brave

Tearing ourselves away from Crillon two days later was harder than I had expected. (It did, by journey's end- spoiler alert – rank as our favourite hotel). But just as I was beginning to regret our decision to honeymoon on the road, we made it to **Le Moulin**. Set within the offensively charming village of Lourmarin, it is the quiet luxury version of a Stella Artois advert. Provençal authors litter the shelves of your room, savon de Marseille can be found on your sink. We used this hotel as a base from which to explore nearby Avignon (told you we wouldn't stay still for long) which was as wonderful as I remembered. We took shelter from the heat in the cool old stones of the mediaeval Papal Palace and strolled through the streets before the charm of Lourmarin lured us back. A warm summer's evening in Provence is truly unbeatable, and Lourmarin proved this. After a delicious dinner in a local eatery, we bought an ice cream and ambled back to Le Moulin to the soft hum of the village at night.



Apéritif in Lourmarin



Breakfast at Le Moulin

We hit the road again to lose ourselves in Provence's maritime edge: the Riviera. **Les Roches Rouges**, perched on the edge of Saint Raphaël – where we stopped for a seafood lunch en route – was the ideal choice. If Le Moulin was delightful, this place was cool. It oozes 1960s glamour; all whitewashed walls, sharp lines and pops of colourful modern art, all while it bashes you repeatedly over the head with the most ridiculous view of the Mediterranean. Our stay here was genuinely relaxing. I dozed off on a lounge by the pool and woke up ensconced in blue from all sides. Nothing could detract from our enjoyment of this place- not even a midnight run to hospital for infected mosquito bites. (Nobody can tell me I don't know how to honeymoon).

Given our nightly adventure, the next morning's early flight to Sicily was less than ideal. Yet arriving at Palermo airport to be greeted by its mountainous surroundings was truly a wonderful shock to the system. Sicily, I quickly realised, does this a lot: catch you off guard with its endlessly impressive views. Not even the truly psychotic driving which nearly killed us on Palermo's motorways could dent our spirits or – thankfully – our rental car.

It was perhaps our death-defying drive which made us appreciate **Fontes Episcopi** all the more. After road rage, horns and perilous overtaking, the peaceful idyll of this eco resort felt like an oasis in the desert. We had plans to head into nearby Agrigento for dinner, which were abandoned the minute we arrived. Chirruping cicadas, kittens wondering around the grounds, a kitchen brimming to the literal rafters with pasta and fresh vegetables from the garden. Did I mention the kittens? This family-run, boutique hotel set on an eco-farm is a truly special place, as was proven by our evening meal. Each dish a surprise, each more delicious than the next, all served on a candlelit terrace with the crowing of peacocks in the distance and the farm's cat eating from my hand.

