

FAIRBRIDGE GARDEN SOCIETY  
VISIT TO THE COTE D'AZUR  
Friday 11 May – Wednesday 16 May 2012

This tour of gardens and museums in the South of France has been timed to coincide with the rose season, and hopefully with a taste of summer warmth. It will include private gardens as well as those open to the public, and, we hope, all of those listed below.

**In Menton:**

**Jardin botanique exotique du Val Rahmah:** This is a lush and exuberant garden, beautifully kept, with many rare tender plants that thrive in its sheltered valley. Pretty little kiosks are smothered in roses and by other climbers in this bucolic paradise.

**Clos du Peyronnet:** William Waterfield, a very expert plantsman, has been following his father and grandfather in gardening on the hillside overlooking the bay of Menton. He has a significant collection of rare plants and some magnificent mature trees with vibrant climbers scrambling through them. There are wonderful vistas through the garden and around the house.

**La Serre de la Madonne:** Created by Major Lawrence Johnston from 1924 while he was also laying out the gardens at Hidcote Manor, the property is now owned by a French Government agency, the Conservatoire du Littoral. It is not well kept so we will not include a visit, but keen garden buffs can take a taxi there in free time.

**Nearby just across the frontier in Italy:**

**La Mortola (Giardini Botanici Hanbury), Ventimiglia:** Planted by Sir Thomas Hanbury and his botanist brother Daniel from 1867 on a 100 acre site on a steep promontory, this is a remarkable garden, now managed by the University of Genoa. On arrival, Carolyn Hanbury will kindly talk to us and give us a refreshing drink before we descend winding paths, sweeps of steps, passing pools, fountains, a belvedere, the house, palm trees that still have scars of war from the 1940s, and on down to the parterre of lavender and roses.. The old Roman road, along which Roman Emperors' armies marched 2,000 years ago, is sunk below garden level near the sea.

**Villa Boccanegra, Ventimiglia:** Ursula Salghetti Drioli, who loves roses and pelargoniums, irises, etc, is a generous and enthusiastic gardener whose very steeply terraced property runs down to the sea.

**Along the coast:**

**Jardin Exotique de Monaco:** Again on a cliff and this time overlooking the royal palace and marinas for enormous yachts, this garden has very safe paths and a massive collection of cacti and succulents. They are so healthy and happy that even cacti sceptics might be won over.

**Villa Kerylos, Beaulieu-sur-Mer:** Built in 1908 in an exact as possible recreation of the style of architecture of ancient Greece, it is furnished in a similar style. The garden is certainly not authentic Greek.

**Villa Ephrussi de Rothschild, Sean-Jean-Cap-Ferrat:** The villa is a pink-painted architectural gem, and one of the most stunning and magnificent compositions of house and garden in the area. The interior houses a major collection of *objets d'art* and surrounding the villa are nine gardens in different styles ranging from Florentine to Spanish to Japanese as well as French, each abundant with flowers or shrubs and neat as a new pin.

**Gardens around Grasse:**

**Domaine du Prieure, Tourettes-sur-Loup:** Joanna Miller, doyenne of English gardeners in the South of France, has been gardening here for 40 years, and specializes in roses of all sorts, climbing into trees, draping over a pergola or in bushes bursting with buds. May is also the month of the bearded iris, of which Joanna has a good collection, and they thrive on her dry, limey soil. Olive trees and agaves are a fine contrast.

**Domaine du Camp de Tende, Chateauneuf de Grasse:** This garden is youthful, having been created for William and Irene Hayward by the celebrated French designer, Jean Mus, in the last 10 years. The arresting approach is through a grove of ancient (but newly transplanted) olive trees under which lavender billows. The house crowns a gentle slope, and below lies an extensive swathe of shrubs, crossed by meandering paths and enlivened by water trickling into shady pools. Some of the shrubs are clipped into globes and mounds, and the composition is dramatized by extra tall and slender cypresses planted like punctuation marks amongst them.

**Villa Fort France, Grasse:** This garden, on many levels, was created in 1930 by Lady Fortescue and is now the property of Valerie de Courcel, an artist, and her husband. They garden organically, and allow annuals to self seed with careful encouragement and manage the whole with a light touch, and an artistic eye. White daisies lighten shady corners and near the house are borders packed with shrubs and perennials. A most interesting feature is the

way in which Valerie has grafted together the branches of espaliered plane trees, so that now it is impossible to tell where each tree begins and ends.

**Villa de Noailles, Grasse:** Designed in the 1930s by the Vicomte de Noailles who was a friend of Lawrence Johnston, this was a very modern garden in its time, and still inspires designers through its classic features.

**Villa La Mouissone, Grasse:** For 15 years, Maggie Lockett and her husband have been pushing the boundaries of their garden further into the trees and the olive groves, and it is now garden of great variety on a slight slope. There is a vine walk, lavender beds, a potager, a boule park, gravel gardens and a bamboo terrace, plus flowers and citrus trees near the house and the swimming pool.

#### **Museums:**

**The Fondation Maeght, St Paul-de-Vence** has paintings, drawings and sculpture dedicated to living art. Aime and Marguerite Maeght made this superb collection. In and around a building by Catalan architect Josep Lluís Sert, and opened in 1964, there are works by Pierre Bonnard, Georges Braque, Marc Chagall, Eduardo Chillida, Alberto Giacometti, Fernand Leger, Joan Miro and others.

**Matisse Museum, Nice:** Born in 1869, Henri Matisse was the principal artist of the Fauve group, whose works were full of distortions and flat patterns and painted in violent colours. Matisse later turned to North African and Near Eastern art for inspiration. He moved to Nice in 1914 and thereafter painted the long series of still-life subjects which are his main *oeuvre*. He died in 1954, and left his work to the city of Nice.

#### **For free time in Menton:**

**Les Colombieres** (may or may not be open) and the **Jean Cocteau Museum**, due to open in November.

We will be staying in Menton at the **Hotel Napoleon**, which is on the sea front and in easy walking distance of the old part of the town where there are shops and restaurants. The manager is English, the rooms are comfortable and there is a gym and small swimming pool with sun loungers, and the only bad news is that some of the rooms have a mountain as opposed to a sea view. The hotel is also used by Martin Randall for his tours.

The precise programme will be arranged when flight timetables are published. Several of the gardens are terraced, with uneven paving and no handrails on flights of steps, so sensible shoes and agile legs are essential. Raincoats are equally essential as rain is a regular feature of weather there, and can be very heavy.

The cost of the trip includes five nights B&B in Menton, two dinners and six lunches, all coach transport and entrance to the listed gardens and two museums. It does **not** include transport from the UK to Nice but we will recommend flights for you to book when the timetable is published. A deposit of £250 per person is due now for your name to enter the draw. (See below). As we don't have a crystal ball to tell us how the Euro and sterling will be related next year, we are showing you the price in Euros. When the balance of the trip is due in March, we will re-calculate the cost in sterling and subtract the balance already paid. At the current exchange rate (according to XE currency converter) 1 Euro = £0.8758.

The cost of the trip, excluding the flight, is as follows:

		current exchange rate
Per person in a single room, mountain view	1,400 Euros	(£1,226.13)
Per person in a single room, sea view	1,500 Euros	(£1,313.73)
Per person in a twin/double room, mountain view	1,250 Euros	(£1,094.86)
Per person in a twin/double room, sea view	1,300 Euros	(£1,138.66)
Per person in a suite for 2 people, sea view	1,500 Euros	(£1,313.73)

The return flight to Nice in June 2011 cost £192

We do strongly advise that you take out travel insurance for cancellation, loss of baggage and medical expenses, and request that you also bring a European Health Insurance Card.

If you have any special dietary requirements, or any questions about the trip, please contact May on 07958 912271 or email [maywoods1@btconnect.com](mailto:maywoods1@btconnect.com), or Dottie on 020 7731 0128 or email [dottie@lundell.uk.net](mailto:dottie@lundell.uk.net).

If you would like to come, please send a cheque as a deposit for £250 per person to Dottie Lundell, 1 Edenhurst Avenue, SW6 3PD and state preference for a sea or mountain view. If we have more people applying to come than we can take, we will draw names out of a flower pot on Monday 26 September, inform everyone of the results, return unused cheques and run the trip again in 2013.

We hope you want to join us!