

TRAVEL

Château Chic

By Natasha McNamara | 30 September 2013



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Location

Tucked away within the vineyards and rolling countryside of the Languedoc, deep in the south of France.

What's the story?

Château Les Carrasses is a beautifully restored estate comprised of 28 self-catering villas and apartments.

I travelled down in late summer with my family to explore one of my favourite regions in search of the holy trinity of summer holidays - weather, culture and food. When I take my children on holiday I want them to understand that they are in another country where the locals speak and eat differently to us at home - it's getting harder and harder to do this as almost *everywhere* offers an English menu complete with a kids' section offering chicken bloody nuggets and chips. On arrival to Château Les Carrasses our collective mouths and shoulders dropped and we took in the stunning estate, the warm sunshine and incredible scenery. After a few drinks and snacks off the (French) menu we headed for our 4 bedroom villa complete with private garden full of lavender. Almost immediately we knew a week would not be long enough.

The properties are privately owned so you can see the care and attention that has been shown to each home is genuine. From the beautiful contemporary interiors, high quality entertainment equipment/kitchen utilities to the private gardens (some with their own pools) - you could easily never leave home, were it not for the pool. If there were ever a reason to leave the house... With a constant temperature of 28 degrees, the infinity pool set within the vineyards was a popular place for us and the children. Early morning dips were an essential part of the daily routine.



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What about the children?

If you can tear yourself away from the pool, the estate has so much to offer, including tennis courts, a big selection of bikes to just pick up and ride, secret seating areas for a quiet read and walks amongst the grape vines.



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If you need some r&r from the little people, the kids' club is a hugely popular amenity. A little clubhouse in the woods run by two fully trained adults, our kids spent happy mornings playing, building treehouses, making cakes, craft and telling stories.

Eating & drinking

While the accommodation is tailored for self-catering (we are talking fully equipped, well stocked kitchens and BBQs) you can eat at the main château should you be so inclined. All meals from breakfast to dinner as well as snacks and a poolside waiter service are available and you can even order food to your room. The team behind the château is keen for visitors to have the freedom and privacy of a self-catering holiday, but with the luxury of a 5 star hotel - should they want it. We treated ourselves to a few dinners and lunches (plus the odd glass of chateau rosé by the pool *naturally*) and feasted on delights from local fish and salads to steak tartar. Our favourite meal in the château was the sunday evening BBQ. We were looking at incredible quality meat, fish, shellfish, all cooked to order and to our personal specifications before our eyes.

Out and about

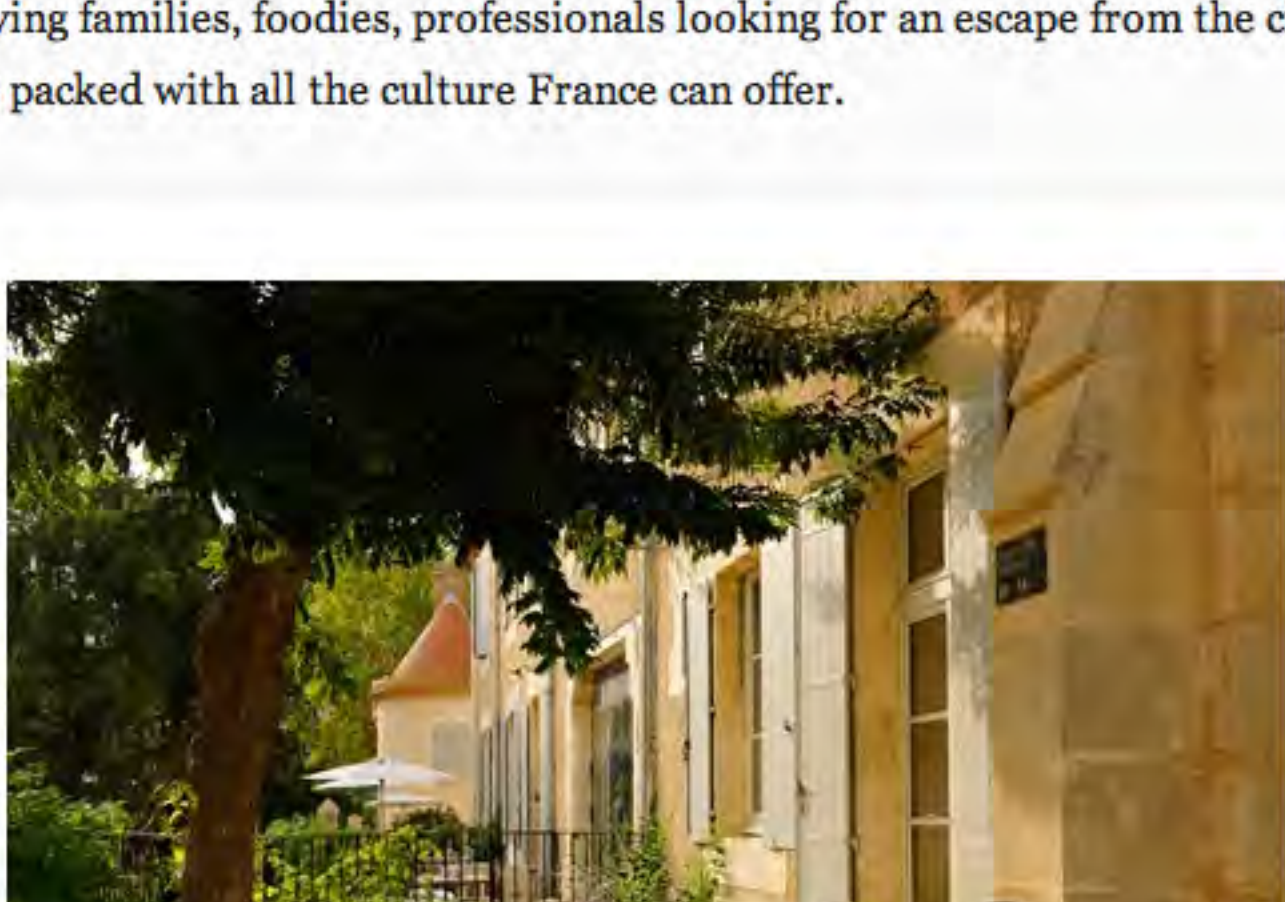
The local village Capestang is about 5 minutes drive from the château with regular local markets and cafés, plus of course the all-important supermarkets. You can take trips along the river by boat or drive alongside it - a beautiful way to take in all the villages, scenery and local architecture. For slightly more adventurous trips, head to Beziers, Narbonne, Montpellier or Carcassonne.

Top tip

A visit to the local winery which bottles the château wines is definitely worth a visit. Relaxed, interesting and informative, you can get your head around the complex processes that go into the bottles we scoop off the supermarket shelves. Guided by the winery oenologist who has both the enthusiasm and knowledge to answer all your questions, there is less of the 'hints of gooseberry' and more about the readiness of the crop, the assessment of the fermentation, the physical process of the grape to the bottle with the attendant care as to temperature control and timing.

What's the crowd?

Chic, boutique-loving families, foodies, professionals looking for an escape from the city in stunning, safe surroundings packed with all the culture France can offer.



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Pack?

Obviously you'll want to look good by the pool so make sure you have appropriate shades and a sun hat. Possibly a fabulous kaftan.

In a nutshell

If you are looking for a family-friendly holiday in the sunshine but don't want to compromise on style, location and lifestyle, then this is the ultimate destination. The staff are fantastic, helpful and knowledgeable. Plus they managed to keep up with our constant demand for house rosé. This is one of the rare occasions that my holiday holy trinity has been met and I would absolutely return here.

Best bit

Early morning swims and bike rides at dusk.

Getting there

You can fly direct from Montpellier, Beziers (closest airport) or Carcassonne (Ryan Air). But if you want to make your stay part of a bigger adventure like we did, you can take the [Eurostar train from London King's Cross to Paris](#) and then take the overnight [SNCF Paris to Carcassonne train](#). The sleeper train is really exciting and obviously sleeping through the journey makes it go a lot quicker. Although I think my kids would have happily stayed on board for another 24 hours!

From Oct 2013 - April 2014, Château les Carrasses are offering a 3 night wine tasting break from 250 Euro per person, which includes 3 nights' accommodation in a Château suite (based on two people sharing), a dinner and a lunch in the Brasserie and a tasting of Les Carrasses wines. Offer subject to availability. For further information on Château Les Carrasses and the wine tours visit [lescarrasses.com](#). To enquire/make a booking please call 0845 686 8067/email resa@lescarrasses.com.

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