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# HATTIE WEST

COPYWRITER & BLOGGER

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## TWO CHATEAUX TO VISIT IN THE SOUTH OF FRANCE



Not so long ago St Pierre de Serjac and Les Carrasses were a pair of unloved châteaux that had fallen into disrepair. Now, having had new life breathed into them, both have been beautifully restored. Derelict outbuildings and old wine cellars have been transformed into state-of-the-art self-catering villas, immaculately decorated and many with private pools, in addition to a large infinity pool available to all guests. This is laid-back luxury at its best; a formally informal experience of France's Languedoc region.

We checked into St Pierre de Serjac first. On being shown to our villa it was love at first sight; the vast airy bedrooms were amongst the nicest we've stayed in. The high ceilings boast decadent chandeliers alongside exposed beams, tall arched windows overlook a private pool, and a little beyond that lie acres of rolling emerald vines from which the château makes its own wine. Downstairs the slick designer kitchen is juxtaposed with a vast ornate gold mirror and large black metal-framed doors open out to a private terrace and pool.

Outside our villa, an amble around the grounds would bring you to a spa, tennis courts, a restaurant and the château's main infinity pool where we clocked up many hours playing countless games of Uno, and there was a large shallow step the children could happily potter around on. Whilst we loved being there during the day the pool was equally magical lit up at night when the air was thick with the sound of cicadas, which we experienced after keeping the smalls up late for dinner in the restaurant: one of the memories that we will hold onto tight.























The second half of our trip was over at sister hotel Château Les Carrasses, a turreted fairytale castle geared up for families with a kids club operating in summer months, and the chateau's latest offering a mini farm (aimed at children but I wasn't the only mummy sneaking up there after kids bedtime with leftovers). We regularly visited Marcello the donkey and his farmyard crew of sheep, chickens, rabbits and more and are now officially in love with Pygmy goats, who would bound over to see us when we called them and enjoyed a tickle under the chin.

We soon slipped into a lethargic daily routine of eating breakfast on the rooftop terrace with panoramic vistas of the infinity pool, vineyard and restaurant on one side and courtyard and orangery – thought to have been designed by Gustave Eiffel – on the other. Over lunchtimes Olly would head back to our villa for Tabby's nap and enjoy some peace by the private plunge pool whilst Kit and I would head to the main pool to watch the swallows dip and dive, read Bluey books and swim. This was magical on a personal level too since Kit, usually wary of water, had a total change of heart and instead we struggled to get him out of the pool.

Outside the château, we tackled trips to the beach in Sérignan, a Saturday morning market in Pézenas and a couple of trips for supplies to the supermarché. I only mention the latter because, despite a strong dislike for them in the UK, supermarkets in France are FUN. Ripe, red tomatoes picturesquely spilled out of baskets akin to a Daylesford display and wooden crates were stocked with rainbow vegetables. Baguettes and croissants to feed permanently hungry small people and cartons of gazpacho would promptly find their way into our trolley, as well as goodies like espadrilles, sunhats and, not quite so chic, some Spiderman sunglasses, but they made Kit very happy.

If we'd had more time Narbonne and Béziers were on our hit list, but we did manage to book a table for dinner at Serjac and Carrasses sister hotel Château Capitoul. The fact that we ran out of time for everything we wanted to do only confirms we'll have to come back. A bientôt!

































*Part of this trip was complementary. Thank you to Château St Pierre de Serjac and Château Les Carrasses for having us and working with me on this. All opinions and content my own.*

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