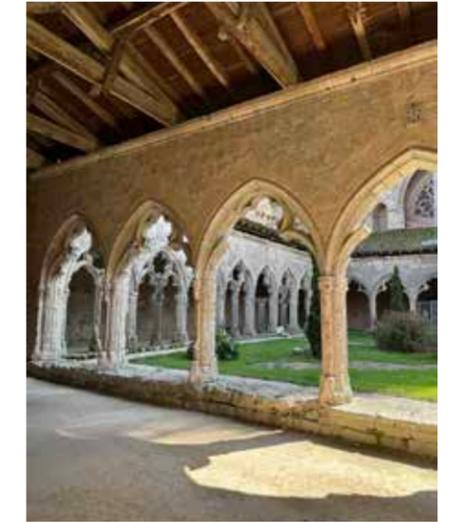


Southwest France with a Eugene Connection

A slow-travel journey through Lot-et-Garonne, guided by local connections, beautiful villages, and unforgettable food.

NANCY D. BROWN, TRAVEL WRITER



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Slow travel in southwest France is a pleasure. Add an Airbnb vacation rental owned by a farming family from Eugene, and you have the perfect holiday.

We flew into Barcelona, though travelers may also choose to fly into Bordeaux, France. From there, we picked up a rental car and drove to the small town of Aiguillon, where our host, Stephanie Schiffgens, was raised. Stephanie and her husband own Gotlands Appletree Farm in Eugene and visit France often. For our group of three, she thoughtfully put together an itinerary. Our May visit to this Lot-et-Garonne hideaway coincided perfectly with strawberry season and local farmers markets.

The Most Beautiful Villages of France

Our itinerary highlighted several villages designated as *Les Plus Beaux Villages de France*, an official recognition of the country's most beautiful villages. In Lot-et-Garonne, we visited Pujols, Nérac, Fourcès, Penne-d'Agenais, and La Romieu.

Medieval Villages

The medieval village of Pujols, with its timbered houses and narrow streets, is perched on a hill overlooking the Lot Valley. In Penne-d'Agenais, visitors can walk through the Porte de Ferracap, a historic landmark. Wander the pathways of Fourcès and visit

the Château de Nérac, the childhood home of King Henri IV. In La Romieu, seek out the UNESCO-listed cloister of the Collegiate Church of Saint-Pierre and learn about the village's charming connection with cats.

Eating Our Way Through Southwest France

Our host welcomed us with a basket filled with local products waiting on the farm table. We began our mornings at the Aiguillon Farmers Market, followed by coffee and croissants at L'Épi du Roy bakery. One highlight of our southwest France journey was a visit to a goat farm near the town of Marmande. At *La Chèvrerie des Sources 47*, visitors can tour the farm, purchase fresh goat cheese, and even stay overnight. Reservations are required for all visits.

Chocolate lovers should not miss a stop at Maison Guinguet, known for its chocolate and chocolate-covered prunes. To round out the experience, a visit to the Latour-Marliac water lily garden in Temple-sur-Lot is sure to inspire any gardener. Established in 1875, this historic garden in Lot-et-Garonne is said to have inspired Claude Monet.

A future column will explore Seville, Spain. For more travel adventures, follow [@Nancydbrown](#) on Instagram.