

Romantic Southwest France

Destination Photo Workshop with Harold Davis

Wednesday, April 29, 2020 to
Thursday, May 7, 2020



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Pigeon Tower at the Mas de Garrigue

- Day 1: Wednesday , April 29** *Welcome to Toulouse:* Meet at the Grand Hôtel de l'Opéra at [Page 2](#)
4 p.m. After exploring the local highlights with Harold and a local guide, we'll enjoy a Welcome Dinner at the Brasserie de l'Opéra. (D)
- Day 2: Thursday , April 30** *Transfer to Mas de Garrigue:* We'll travel by private coach with [Page 3](#)
a stop along the way to visit Albi and for lunch on the way to the Mas de Garrigue in Calvignac. (B, D)
- Day 3: Friday, May 1** *Exploring the Area:* Today we will photograph the farm and [Page 4](#)
gardens at the Mas de Garrigue, the hilltop village of Calvinac, and wander on foot to the banks of the Lot River. (B, L)
- Day 4: Saturday, May 2** *Saint-Cirq Lapopie, Chemin de Halage, and Pont Valentre:* [Page 5](#)
Nearby Saint-Cirq Lapopie is thought to be the most scenic village in France. (B)
- Day 5: Sunday, May 3** *Castelnau-Bretenoux, Carennac & Collonges-la-Rouge:* [Page 6](#)
Today we explore with private coach and guide the chateau of Castelnau-Bretenoux, villages of the northern Lot, and the ancient red sandstone town of Collonges-la-Rouge. (B, D)
- Day 6: Monday, May 4** *Villefranche-de-Rouergue and Cordes-sur-Ciel:* Today we will [Page 7](#)
visit a fascinating provincial city on the Aveyron River and try to time our visit to Cordes-sur-Ciel for sunset. (B, L)
- Day 7: Tuesday, May 5** *Cajarc and the Mas de Garrigue:* We will spend the day close to [Page 8](#)
home enjoying the wonderful photographic possibilities near at hand, and exploring the regional township of Cajarc. (B)
- Day 8: Wednesday, May 6** *Exploring the Area:* With a box lunch provided by our host [Page 9](#)
Sarah, we will set out with our private coach for a day of photographic exploration. (B, L, D)
- Day 9: Thursday, May 7** *Transfer to Toulouse:* After breakfast, we will bid farewell to the [Page 10](#)
Mas de Garrigue and travel back to Toulouse for transfer to the airport or train station. (B)
- About the Trip** A quick note for photographic travelers [Pages 11-12](#)

Day 1: Wednesday, April 29

Check-in and Group Meeting

Included meals: Welcome Dinner at Brasserie La Rotonde

Hotel: [Grand Hôtel de l'Opéra](#)
1 Place du Capitole
31000, Toulouse, France
+33 (05) 61 21 82 66

Welcome Dinner: [Brasserie du l'Opéra](#)
1 Place du Capitole
31000, Toulouse, France
Tel: +33 05 61 21 37 03

Check in at the hotel: 3:00 pm
Group meeting in lobby: 4:00 pm

Planned Activities:

The [Grand Hôtel de l'Opera](#) is an historic and luxurious 4-star hotel located in the heart of historic Toulouse, sometimes called “the Pink City.” Your adventure to the Southwest of France includes pre-paid, first night accommodations at [Grand Hôtel de l'Opera](#). Please note at check-in that you are with the Harold Davis group. The hotel has each of your names with the reservation.

At 4:00 pm we will meet at the lobby of the Grand Hôtel de l'Opéra, and then explore fabulous local highlights of Toulouse with a local guide and Harold on foot. We will end our jaunt with a Welcome Dinner hosted by Harold at Brasserie de l'Opéra at 7:30 pm, which is right there at the hotel.

From Harold's blog: Pont Neuf, Toulouse

On a sunny and warm early spring day I explored Toulouse in southwestern France. Heading down to the Garonne River, I found the banks occupied by... [click here to read more...](#)



Pont Neuf, Toulouse

Day 2: Thursday, April 30

Transfer to Mas de Garrigue in Calvignac

Included meals: Breakfast at the Grand Hôtel de l'Opéra, and a Welcome Dinner hosted by Harold at the Mas de Garrigue.

Planned Activities:

10:30 am morning transfer from the Grand Hôtel de l'Opéra by private coach to [Mas de Garrigue](#), Calvignac, France. We will take a side trip to stop along the way in the World Heritage city of Albi. The sites to visit in central Albi include the Toulouse-Lautrec Museum (this artist was born near Albi), the famous fortress-cathedral in Albi from the Albigensian Wars, and Pont Vieux over the River Tarn. We will also have lunch on your own in Albi, and then proceed to the Mas de Garrigue.

After we arrive at Mas de Garrigue, there will be time to explore the area immediately around the Mas de Garrigue on foot and get to know our new home for the week.



The Mas de Garrigue is a restored 15th-century hunting lodge and fortified farm. Photo courtesy of Sarah Lloyd.

Day 3: Friday, May 1

A Day at Home at the Mas de Garrigue

Included meals: Breakfast and Lunch at the Mas de Garrigue.

Planned Activities:

We will photograph the farm and gardens at the Mas de Garrigue, explore the local area, and wander on foot to the banks of the Lot River. This will be a day to settle in, meditate, and enjoy contemplative photography.

Lunch at Mas de Garrigue.
Dinner on your own with local transport to be arranged.

From Harold's blog:
Morning on the Lot River

Meandering by slow roads, I crossed and recrossed the Lot River in the southwest of France. Parking by the river, a trail led me back along cliffs for about a mile. There were ancient steps carved in the rock down to the water, and I descended...[click here to read more...](#)



Morning on the Lot River

Day 4: Saturday, May 2

Saint-Cirq Lapopie, Chemin de Halage, and Pont Valentre

Included meals: Breakfast at the Mas de Garrigue.

Planned Activities:

Private local transportation will pick us up at the Mas de Garrigue mid-morning and take us the short distance to the medieval village of Saint-Cirq Lapopie. Saint-Cirq Lapopie is nestled on a mountain crag with stunning views of the Lot River valley. It is thought to be the most scenic small villages in France according to a number of different sources.



After visiting Saint-Cirq Lapopie, we will proceed via a scenic route to the nearby Chemin de Halage an ancient trail beside the Lot River that is part of the Way of Saint James. There are endless possibilities for photographing reflections along the banks of the Lot River.

From there, we will proceed to Pont Valentre, famous for never being captured during the Hundred Years' War in the city of Cahors.

From Harold's blog: Saint-Cirq-Lapopie

Saint-Cirq-Lapopie is an ancient village perched high on the cliffs high above the Lot River about thirty miles from Cahors. In France, Saint-Cirq-Lapopie is widely regarded as one of the most beautiful—if not the most beautiful—preserved medieval villages...[click here to read more...](#)

Saint-Cirq Lapopie

Day 5: Sunday, May 3

Castelnau-Bretenoux, Carennac & Collonges-la-Rouge

Included meals: Breakfast and Dinner at the Mas de Garrigue.

Planned Activities:

Coach and guide will meet us early at Mas de Garrigue for a full day of photography and sight seeing to the north of the Lot River valley.

We will start by visiting the extraordinary Château de Castelnau-Bretenoux located high atop a hill with overlooks across several river valleys including the Dordogne.

Next, we will continue on to the town of Carennac which is famous for lovely Court du Prieure, a small courtyard next to the 12th-century priory.

We'll round out the day with a visit to Collonges-la-Rouge, which is an ancient abby and town constructed entirely out of red sandstone. The abby dates to the 8th century and is on the Compastella and Rocamadour pilgrim routes.

Harold will host a group dinner at the Mas de Garrigue on our return.

From Harold's Blog: Dawn in the Lot Valley

Last night a wild storm blew down the Lot River valley, with thunder, lightning, and even some hail. For much of the night rain...[click here to read more...](#)



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View from the Mas de Garrigue at dawn.

Day 6: Monday, May 4

Villefranche-de-Rouergue and Cordes-sur-Ciel

Included meals: Breakfast and lunch at the Mas de Garrigue.

Planned Activities:

In the morning we will photograph locally, review images, and just plain relax. Following lunch at the Mas de Garrigue, we will be met by our coach and guide.

We will head to Villefranche-de-Rouergue, a fascinating and varied city that straddles the Aveyron River. This is a bastide town that boasts a superb heritage and idyllic setting dominated by the red roof tiles typical of the French Midi.

After exploring Villefranche, we will continue by coach to Cordes-sur-Ciel which is known as one of the most spectacular ancient villages in France. Perched on a fortified mountain, and very prosperous in the middle ages, Cordes-sur-Ciel is sometimes nearly completely surrounded by fog and makes a gorgeous subject for photography. We'll have a light early supper on our own in Cordes-sur-Ciel, and if the Gods of Photography and Weather are with us, we will photograph Cordes-sur-Ciel from across the valley at sunset before returning to the Mas de Garrigue.

From Harold's blog: Cordes-sur-Ciel at Dawn

I set the alarm for an hour before sunrise. When it rang in the darkness well before dawn, I put on the warmest clothing I had with me and...[click here to read more...](#)



© Harold Davis

Cordes-sur-Ciel at Dawn

Day 7: Tuesday, May 5

A Day for Photography at the Mas de Garrigue

Included meals: Breakfast at the Mas de Garrigue

Planned Activities:

We will spend the day close to home at the Mas de Garrigue, enjoying the wonderful photographic possibilities that are near at hand. Private local transport will take us to the nearby town of Cajarc where there are plenty of places to get lunch and several interesting bridges to photograph. Depending upon interest level, we may also head into Figeac where there is a fascinating medieval old town.

From Harold's blog: Lot River Valley

Today we walked to the small town of Calvignac, France perched on a rocky crag, and about 3 kilometers from the Mas de Garrigue. The weather threatened rain, and was misting when we set out. But along the way...[click here to read more...](#)



Lot River Valley

Day 8: Wednesday, May 6

Exploring the Area

Included meals: Breakfast, Box Lunch, and Farewell Dinner at the Mas de Garrigue.

Planned Activities:

After breakfast at the Mas de Garrigue, private transportation will be at our disposal for touring as we choose on this final day within the Parc naturel régional de Causses du Quercy. (The Parc naturel régional de Causses du Quercy is the national park surrounding the Mas de Garrigue.) We will also visit a number of ancient villages that make excellent photographic subject matter.

Sarah will provide us with a tasty box lunch for our travels and we will return to a festive Farewell Dinner hosted by Harold at the Mas de Garrigue.

From Harold's blog: Valentre Bridge

The city of Cahors in the southwest of France is a slightly gritty provincial capital—but back in the middle ages it was fabulously wealthy. Protected on three sides by the river Lot, Cahors was nevertheless sacked, abandoned and rebuilt...[click here to read more...](#)



The ancient fortified Pont Valentre in Cahours.

Day 9: Thursday, May 7

Group Transfer to Toulouse

Included meals: Breakfast at the Mas de Garrigue.

Planned Activities:

After breakfast, our coach will meet us for our return transfer to Toulouse with stops at the airport, train station, and, if desired, at the Grand Hôtel de l'Opera.

From Harold's blog: Chemin de Halage

Under the cliffs beside the Lot River, and below the picturesque medieval village of Saint-Cirq-Lapopie, the Chemin de Halage makes for spectacular walking, and...[click here to read more...](#)



© Harold Davis

Fishing on the Lot River

About the Trip

When and Where to Meet

The [Grand Hôtel de l'Opera](#) is an historic and luxurious 4-star hotel located in the heart of historic Toulouse, sometimes called “the Pink City.” Your adventure to the Southwest of France includes pre-paid, first night accommodations at Grand Hôtel de l'Opera. Please note at check-in that you are with the Harold Davis group. The hotel has each of your names with the reservation.

We will meet in the lobby of the Grand Hôtel de l'Opera, at 4PM on Thursday, April 19, 2018. From there, we will proceed on a walking tour with local guide of historic downtown Toulouse, and a Welcome Dinner hosted by Harold. Please be checked into the hotel before we meet. (See page 2 of the Itinerary for details.)

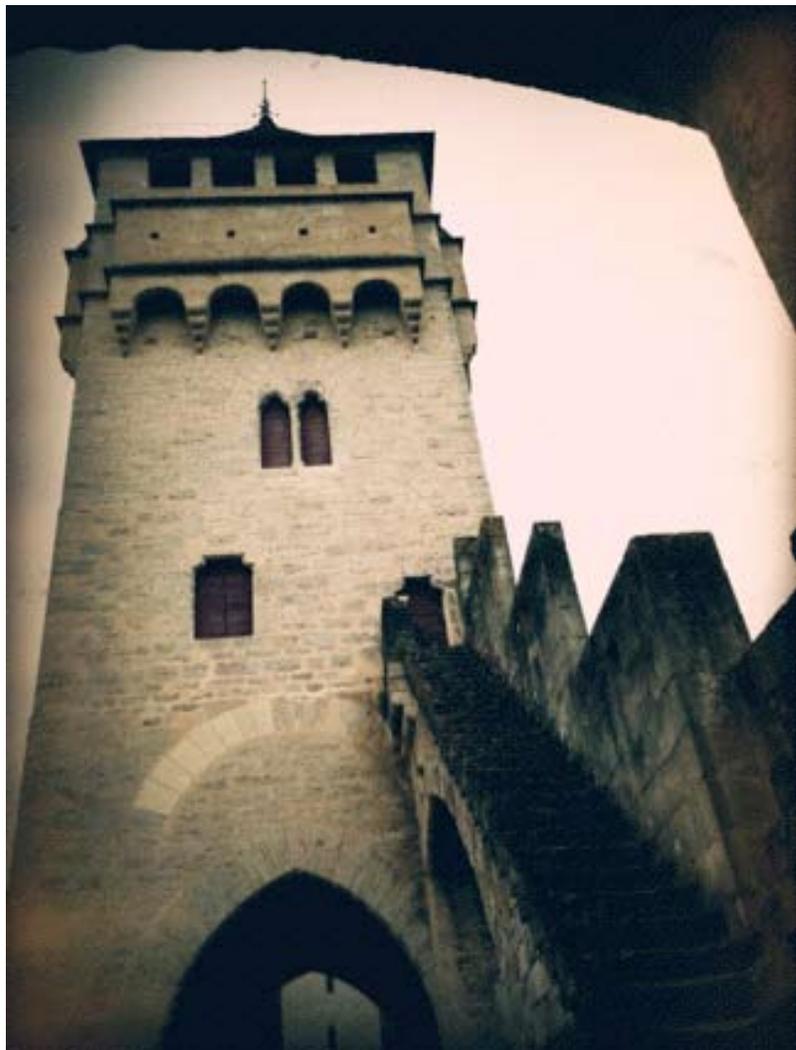
Subject to Change

Weather, lighting, and conditions often vary in the field, and the specific excursions outlined in this itinerary are therefore subject to change.

What to Expect in Weather

This is a spring photo trip, exploring Toulouse and Southwest France. Generally, the weather at this time of year in France is very nice and temperate. However, spring rain showers are likely, so you should come prepared to protect both yourself and your camera from rain. As Ansel Adams put it, *If you don't go out in the rain, you can't photograph a clearing storm.* Spring days are

Continued next page



Pont Valentre Tower

About the Trip, continued

long, but it can also mean that nights in April and May can be chilly. Please plan to bring a warm layer, as well as a wind/rain shell. The Mas de Garrigue has a nice swimming pool that Harold has greatly enjoyed, but others have found a bit on the cold side.

General Items to Bring with You

As noted above, we recommend layered clothing. By all means, bring good walking shoes and socks that will pad your feet to keep them from blisters. Do make sure your shoes are broken in before the trip to avoid rub spots on your feet.

Please keep in mind that French power plugs are shaped differently than American plugs, so you will need to bring a converter for the plugs for your chargers.

On the topic of credit cards, it is advisable to let your credit card company know about your travel plans, e.g. let them know that you will be in France.

Most European credit card terminals are set to work with chip-and-pin credit cards. While magnetic strip credit cards can still be used, by and large US banks have caught on to the security benefits of chip-and-pin. So please check with your credit card issuer at the same time as you inform them of your travel plans to make sure that they have issued you chip-and-pin credit cards.

Photographic Items to Bring with You

Please bring a camera, tripod, wide-angle and telephoto lenses, and a remote release. You may want a head lamp in case we do evening and night photography. Bring plenty of memory cards, your charger, and extra batteries for anything that takes batteries.

Harold travels with his laptop, processes his images on-the-fly when he can, and presents on various photographic topics of interest to the group. You are welcome to bring your own computer if you would like to process your images and to experiment with the techniques that Harold shows. Bringing a laptop is not, however, required. If you do bring a computer, please be sure to include a card reader.

Contacting Harold and Phyllis

If you have any questions at all, please contact Harold by email at harold@photoblog2.com or Phyllis at phyllis@bearhome.com. Harold's mobile phone when he is on the road in Europe or the US is +1.510.295.3982.

Travel Arrangements and Questions

We are happy to assist with advice about travel arrangements upon request. Please be sure to ask us if you have any questions. We will do our best to help with any concerns you may have. Thanks!
