

# Zest

JULY  
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## Walking it off in France

**Kelly Flood discovers a walking weekend in the Languedoc region is an excellent excuse to indulge in local treats**

Once you've checked in to Le Couvent d'Hérépien, a 17th-century convent that's been transformed into a luxury boutique hotel, it's pretty hard to drag yourself out again. But after a breakfast of meats and cheese, we manage to muster the energy for a walk through the area's lovely scenery. Fortunately, the hotel has arranged some extra motivation in the shape of a guide, Dennis.

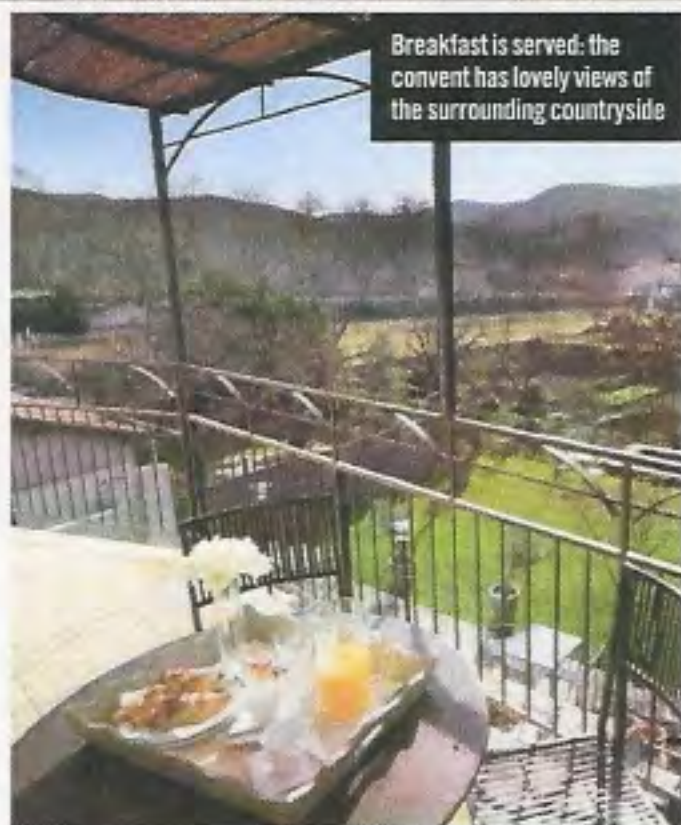
My boyfriend and I don't want a marathon hike and, luckily, Dennis embraces the leisurely pace of life in this part of France; we amble to the top of a hill, stopping as he enlightens us on local history and points out wildlife, such as the elusive wild sheep (I can't spot any, but then his English and my French are on a par. I think he said wild sheep...).

“After a feast of wine and cheese, we tell ourselves that we'll walk it off”

We reach the top and stop for a breather, and the hotel's packed lunch of fresh bread and cheese, before sitting in silence to take in the breathtaking views. It's Dennis who breaks the quiet to tell us about the local vineyards and his own honey. We must look suitably enthusiastic because our journey back down is via a wine warehouse to stock up on local wine, while our generous guide goes via his house to give us a gift of honey.

Back at the hotel, we unwind in the spa, taking a dip in the relaxation pool overlooking the convent's tranquil garden. Before we know it, it's time for dinner (more cheese, fantastic!) at one of the little tables that are tucked into secluded spots around the building and on the terrace – it feels like we have the place to ourselves.

The next day's trip is even more leisurely than the first – a saunter around the winding streets of the sleepy town before lunch at a local restaurant. A feast of local meat, wine and, of course, more cheese. Well, we reassure ourselves, we'll walk it off this afternoon – but maybe after a dip in the pool... →



Breakfast is served: the convent has lovely views of the surrounding countryside



The bedrooms' calm decor reflects the building's heritage – but none of the hardships of convent life

**THE FACTS** Le Couvent d'Hérépien, Hérépien, costs from £107 per suite per night, two sharing (00 33 46711 8715, [www.garrigaeresorts.com/le-couvent](http://www.garrigaeresorts.com/le-couvent)). Ryanair flies from Stansted to Carcassonne from £51.62 return ([www.ryanair.com](http://www.ryanair.com)).