

Cezanne
en Provence



Bastide

du Jas de Bouffan

1. WELCOME TO LA BASTIDE DU JAS DE BOUFFAN

By the 18th century, many wealthy families in Aix-en-Provence had magnificent town houses in the city. But something was missing. A country estate, of course!

Jas de Bouffan, which you are visiting now, is a perfect example. To understand its origins, we need to go back to between 1720 and 1740, when the estate was built. At that time, Aix-en-Provence was the capital of the region. Provence's parliament, located not far from where the courthouse stands today, was one of the most important in the Kingdom of France.

The parliament's influence helped create a thriving artistic and cultural scene, along with a distinctive way of life, unique to Aix. Aristocrats and wealthy bourgeois families built elegant town houses in the city centre, especially along the Cours Mirabeau and in the Mazarin district.

At the same time, they commissioned country residences known as bastides, where they could escape the city and enjoy the surrounding countryside.





But what exactly is a bastide? Well, it's a country estate on the outskirts of the city, centred around a large manor house. These estates are mainly found around Aix and Marseille. The word bastide refers to both the house itself and the surrounding property.

Of course, these bastides offered more than just a degree of food self-sufficiency; they also provided a welcome escape from the heat of the city during the summer. And in times of war or epidemics, they served as safe places of refuge.

Bastide du Jas de Bouffan was commissioned by Gaspard Truphème. After making his fortune in the timber trade, he purchased the prestigious office of Provincial Commissioner of War at the Parliament of Aix. And what better way to assert his new social status than to get the leading architect of the day to design a bastide? For this project, he chose Georges Vallon, who had already designed several of Aix-en-Provence's most iconic buildings.

The Truphème family owned Jas de Bouffan until 1859, when it was purchased by Louis-Auguste Cezanne, the painter's father. Originally a hat maker, Louis-Auguste later founded a bank with a business partner. Like Gaspard Truphème before him, buying a bastide was a sign of his growing wealth and social status.

The Cezanne family lived here for 40 years, and it was within these walls that the young Paul Cezanne first picked up a paintbrush. During his frequent visits from Paris, he returned regularly to Jas de Bouffan, where he worked and painted tirelessly.

Louis-Auguste Cezanne died in 1886, and his wife, Anne-Élisabeth Aubert, died in 1897. Their three children – Paul, Marie and Rose – inherited the estate, but decided to sell it. In 1899, Jas de Bouffan became home to its third and final family, the Granel-Corsys.

Each of these three families – the Truphèmes, the Cezannes and the Granel-Corsys – all left their mark on the house, both inside and out. During this visit, you'll discover how the estate evolved over three centuries and how each generation helped shape its history.

Are you ready to step back in time? Then please enter the house and head down the corridor to your left, where you'll find the small drawing room.



2. THE SITTING ROOM

You are now in the small drawing room, which also served as a dining room. This was one of the bastide's main reception rooms. Here, the family would gather to enjoy light meals as well as more formal ones, read or make music together.

To the left of the fireplace, you'll notice a small hidden door. It leads to the servants' corridor, which provides direct access to the kitchen. You'll see that room later in the visit.

As we've already seen, the history of Jas de Bouffan spans three centuries. Over that time, it was shaped by three prominent families: the Truphèmes, the Cezannes and the Granel-Corsys.

Over the years, the estate has continually evolved. Different crops have been cultivated, its grounds have gradually shrunk from around 30 hectares, and each owner adapted the house to reflect changing tastes and needs. Together, these generations left a lasting mark on both the estate and the home.

But what traces did these families leave behind? Just look around the room. The proportions, high ceilings and architectural details all date back to the 18th century, when the Truphème family built the bastide. Now look down. The floor tells a different story.

When Louis Granel-Corsy bought the house in 1899, he replaced the original flooring with this terrazzo, made from compressed coloured stone chips. You'll find the same flooring throughout most of the ground floor. Louis also introduced modern comforts, including central heating. In the corner of the room, you can still see an unusual radiator, which also served as a plate warmer. Later, André Granel-Corsy added the decorative fireplace, which was intended purely for ornament.

To discover more about the history of the house and the changes made over the centuries, take a look at the central table that highlights the key stages in the evolution of Jas de Bouffan.



3. GIRL AT THE PIANO



Jeune fille au piano by Paul Cezanne

Take a moment to look at this painting called Girl at the Piano, painted by Paul Cezanne in 1869. It shows a young woman playing the piano, while another sits in the background, embroidering on a red sofa.

Today, this painting is part of the collection of the Hermitage Museum in Saint Petersburg. It dates from the end of Cezanne's early couillard period. Here, he explores the balance of colours – whites, browns and reds – as well as the harmony of forms through straight and broken lines. His search for an interplay between colour and form would become one of the defining threads running through his entire body of work.

But beyond the technique, there is something particularly moving about this painting because of its subject. The two women are Cezanne's sisters: Rose at the piano and Marie seated behind her. This scene of family intimacy was most likely painted right here, in this very drawing room, where the family would often gather.

Through this intimate glimpse of family life, Cezanne invites us into the heart of the bastide.

When you're ready, cross the corridor to the next room to discover another of Paul Cezanne's paintings.

4. THE DRAWING ROOM

Welcome to the grand salon, the main drawing room of the bastide.

Imagine the buzz of that era: here, the families entertained guests and organised social events. Dinner parties, concerts and parties would have been held here.

When the Cezanne family moved in, the walls were painted a rather understated pale yellow; these were in contrast to the French-style ceiling adorned with lavish multicoloured decorations favoured by the previous owners, the Truphème family.

However, Paul Cezanne was quick to embark on a major redecorating project to create a scheme in perfect harmony with the ceiling.

At the far end of the room, you'll see an alcove. Above this is a relief decoration in a technique known as gypserie or ornamental plasterwork, which also dates from when the Truphèmes lived here. However, the colours that you see today were added by the Cezanne family

The central medallion depicts a woman holding a garland of flowers and hints at the compositions the painter would create just below it.

It was right here in this alcove that Cezanne painted the Four Seasons: Spring, Summer, Winter and Autumn.

Cezanne continued his creative endeavours by producing murals that covered the west and east walls completely: *Entrance to the Castle*, *Landscape with Waterfall*, *Landscape and Fisherman* and *Entrance to the Port*

To give the room a sense of harmony, Cezanne painted trompe-l'œil imitation mahogany panelling on the walls, doors, windows and lower wall panels.

During this period, the artist was dividing his time between Aix and Paris and, as a result, the work was carried out over several years, from 1860 to 1864.

Reconstitution of Grand salon for the exhibition : Cezanne au Jas de Bouffan 2025



However, for Cezanne, nothing was set in stone. He didn't think twice about painting over certain works, including *Entrance to the Port*, to create a copy of Nicolas Lancret's *Game of Hide and Seek*.

Around the same time, he took a bold step by painting a portrait of his father in the centre of the alcove.

In this way, Cezanne gave Louis-Auguste pride of place in the room; a fitting tribute to the man who had played such an important role in his life. Positioned at the heart of the composition, this dark yet powerful portrait is in striking contrast to the rest of the décor.

In his *Landscape with Waterfall*, he added a bather inspired by Gustave Courbet's *The Bathers*, on display at the Musée Fabre in Montpellier.

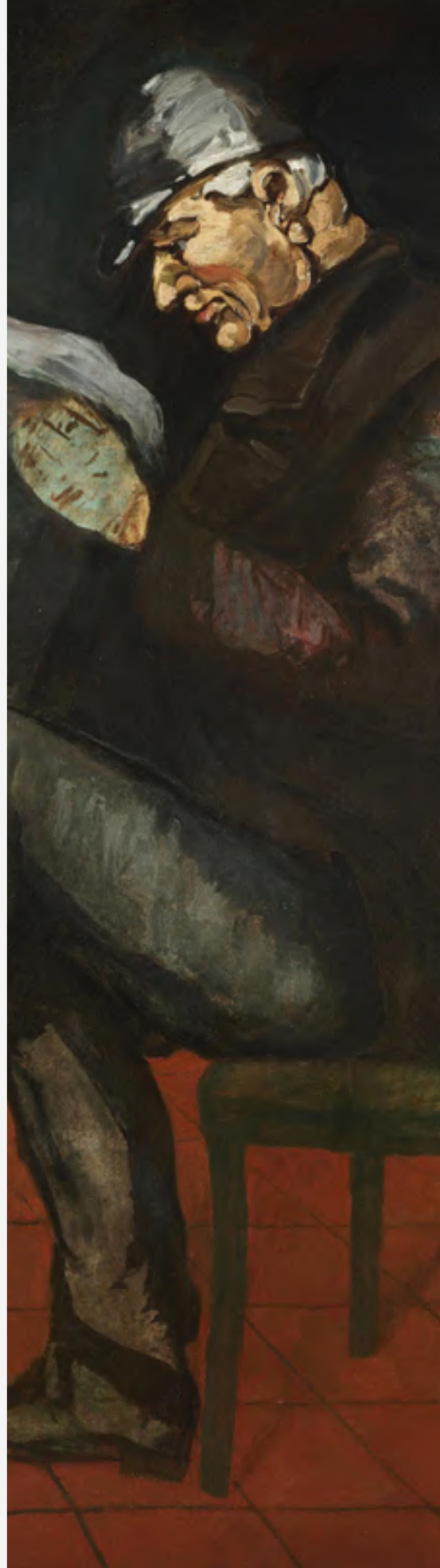
Always in search of something new, he also painted over another scene, *Entrance to the Castle*, in order to create two intertwining works: *Christ in Limbo* and *Mary Magdalene: Sorrow*.

These sombre, tormented and highly textural paintings belong to Cezanne's couillard period.

Next to *Game of Hide and Seek*, he painted a portrait of his friend *Achille Emperaire*, also a painter from Aix en Provence. Here too, the contrast between this small yet powerful portrait and the light, Rococo-style scene is striking. At around the same time, Cezanne caused a stir at the Paris Salon of Painting and Sculpture when he exhibited another monumental canvas of the same subject: *Portrait of the Artist Achille Empéaire*. This painting portrays an ordinary, ailing man who has the dignity of an emperor.

Seated on a floral armchair that resembles a throne, Cezanne's friend is given an almost regal presence. It is this very armchair that suggests the painting was created right here, at Jas de Bouffan.

*Portrait of Cezanne's father
by Paul Cezanne*





Finally, next to *Christ in Limbo*, Cezanne added a final, lighter work entitled *Contrast*.

Here, the first signs of his move towards Impressionism can already be seen in the lighter touch and almost juxtaposed brushstrokes.

It took him nearly ten years to complete this series – ten years of experimentation, research and exploration. From being a decorative painter, Cezanne gradually evolved into an artist. This part of the house was, therefore, a true artistic laboratory for him.

This room encapsulates the story of his early career, from his classical influences and his couillard period to the first signs of Impressionism.

During the years the Cezanne family resided at Jas de Bouffan, the murals remained untouched. But when the Granel-Corsy family moved into the house, they changed things. For them, the decoration was too over the top.

Wallpaper was pasted over some of the murals, while the trompe-l'œil panelling was painted white. After Cezanne's death in 1906, the owners offered these murals to Léonce Bénédict, curator at the Musée du Luxembourg in Paris. He declined the offer, so instead they turned to the art dealer Joseph Hessel, who arranged for the murals to be removed. Removing the murals was a delicate and highly skilled process.

Fortunately, photographs taken at the time show us exactly how it was done. Let's take the portrait of Cezanne's father as an example.

First, the painted surface had to be protected. Next, the wall surrounding it was carefully cut away so that the mural could be removed. The plaster was then scraped from the back, leaving only a thin painted layer, which was mounted onto canvas.

In this way, the mural became an oil painting on canvas – one that could be transported, exhibited and, ultimately, sold.

This technique dates back to the Renaissance and was widely practised for centuries, particularly to supply the art market. Today, however, such interventions are carried out only as a last resort, when a work of art is in danger.

Removing the murals of the portrait of the Cezanne's father

Several of Cezanne's murals were removed in this way :

- the portrait of his father
- the Four Seasons
- The Bather
- Christ in Limbo,
- Mary Magdalene: Sorrow,
- Entrance to the Castle,
- Contrast
- Portrait of Achille Emperair

Only Game of Hide and Seek remained on the wall for some time.

Later, a second process to remove the murals was undertaken. This time, the wallpaper was carefully peeled away to reveal the paintings hidden beneath : The large *landscapes with waterfalls* and with a *fisherman* were cut up into many pieces, and *Game of Hide and Seek* was also eventually removed.

This explains why the murals from the drawing room are now scattered across the globe, in countries as far afield as France, the United Kingdom, the United States and Japan.

But despite everything, the room continued to be used. The Granel-Corsy family repainted the walls white, enjoying the drawing room until 2002.

During a restoration project in 2024, several areas of the room were examined. By carefully scraping away successive layers of paint, the conservators wanted to see if anything had survived underneath.

What they found was remarkable!

Until then, it was believed that all of Cezanne's murals had been removed. Instead, the original ornamental plasterwork and trompe-l'œil panelling were rediscovered. Most extraordinary of all was the reappearance of a work that was completely unknown: *Entrance to the Port*. Hidden beneath a layer of white paint for more than a century, it had survived unnoticed all that time!

Now, make your way up to the second floor to visit Cezanne's studio and find out more about the artist and his life at Jas de Bouffan.

The drawing room in the Corsy era



5. THE PAINTER'S STUDIO

You have just stepped into the heart of Paul Cezanne's artistic world at Jas de Bouffan.

Around 1882, while the roof of the bastide was being repaired, Cezanne's father took the opportunity to create an atelier, or studio, for his son.

So, Louis-Auguste Cezanne had this skylight added to the roof – a bold architectural choice that marked a radical departure from the traditional layout of Provençal country houses. More importantly, it clearly showed his support for Paul's artistic ambitions by adapting the house to meet his son's needs.

The skylight's north-facing orientation was deliberately chosen as it provided constant, neutral light, which was ideal for painting. Cezanne then chose a bluish-grey colour for the walls, which would allow the light to diffuse softly without altering the colours of his paintings.

He would later adopt these same principles at the atelier des Lauves, built in 1901, two years after the bastide was sold.

Over the course of his life, Cezanne worked in almost thirty different studios across Provence and the Paris region. Yet only two have survived to this day: the one at des Lauves and, of course, the one you are standing in today.

Cezanne mainly painted portraits and still lifes in this studio. Today, we are certain that around 20 of his works were painted here.

One small detail has made this possible. Have you noticed the red line running around the walls? The very same line appears in several of Cezanne's paintings.

Art historians long debated its significance, but recent conservation work confirmed their suspicions. The red line provides clear evidence that these works were painted in this very studio.

The conservation work carried out here is not merely about preserving the walls. It is also about advancing research and deepening our understanding of Cezanne's life and of the people who lived here.

We now invite you to explore the rest of this floor, where you'll discover what Aix-en-Provence was like during Cezanne's lifetime, the places that inspired him, and the key moments that shaped his life.



6. LIFE AND CAREER OF CEZANNE

Here, we invite you to discover the man behind the artist: Paul Cezanne. Take your time to explore the people, events and ideas that shaped his life and the century in which he lived.

Cezanne was born in 1839 in Aix-en-Provence into a middle-class family. Growing up in a France that was undergoing profound political, social and economic change, becoming a painter was not part of the future that had originally been planned for him.

Explore these spaces to learn about Paul Cezanne and his life in this bastide.

Constantly moving between Aix and Paris, he observed and experienced these changes throughout his life, gradually becoming a major force behind this upheaval, but in the world of art.

These exhibits reveal his entire journey, encompassing his personal life, historical context and artistic development.

To begin, make your way to the far left, where you'll be introduced to the artist's inner circle, first meeting his family and then his friends.



Self-portrait of Paul Cezanne c.1880-1881

7. FAMILY RELATIONSHIPS

Paul Cezanne was born on the 19th of January, 1839. The first child of Louis-Auguste Cezanne and Anne-Elisabeth Aubert, the couple had not known each other for very long before their son's birth. At the time, Anne-Elisabeth was probably working in Louis-Auguste's hat shop.

Paul was soon joined by a sister, called Marie, born in 1841, and 13 years later by another sister, named Rose. Unusually for the time, their first two children were born out of wedlock, and their parents did not marry until 1844.

Throughout his life, Paul remained very close to his family. Deeply devoted to his mother, his relationship with his father was rather more difficult. It couldn't have been easy for a banker to accept that his son dreamt of becoming an artist, especially as Louis-Auguste had hoped that Paul would one day take over the family business. Over time, however, he warmed to the idea, providing his son with financial support while he was living in Paris, and even had a studio created for him here at the bastide.

Another source of tension soon emerged in the painter's personal life. In 1870, he met Hortense Fiquet, a young woman from the Jura region, ten years his junior and from a modest background. Two years later, in 1872, the couple had a son, whom they also named Paul.

In 1878, Louis-Auguste, on opening a letter, accidentally discovered that he had a grandson.

The revelation caused relations between father and son to deteriorate even further, although they eventually reconciled. Paul Cezanne finally married Hortense in Aix-en-Provence in 1886, just a few months before Louis-Auguste's death.

Throughout his life, Paul had a complex relationship with his father and could be quite critical of him in his letters. Yet he would not tolerate criticism of his father from others. An example of this happened shortly after Louis-Auguste's death, when Auguste Renoir made an inappropriate remark about him. Cezanne immediately asked Renoir to leave the bastide.

The artist was devoted to his sisters. Together with Marie, he cared for their mother after she was widowed in 1886, until her death in 1897. Marie, in turn, took great care of her brother whenever he stayed in Aix.

Rose, meanwhile, married Maxime Conil in 1881, and the couple had six children. Paul became the godfather to one of his nieces, who was called Paule, with whom he corresponded regularly.



Portrait of Louis-Auguste Cezanne, c.1865

8. FRIENDSHIP CIRCLES

Throughout his life, Paul Cezanne made deep and lasting friendships that provided a constant source of support, both in Aix-en-Provence and in Paris.

From when he was young, he was close friends with the writer Émile Zola, the baker Henri Gasquet, the scientist Jean-Baptiste Baille, the poet Antony Valabrègue and the naturalist Antoine Fortuné Marion. United by their love of reading, long walks and exploring the countryside around Aix, they formed a close-knit group whose influence would stay with Cezanne during his entire life.

When Cezanne moved to Paris, his horizons naturally expanded. There he met fellow painters, including Pierre-Auguste Renoir, Camille Pissarro, Claude Monet and Francisco Oller, as well as Achille Empéaire, was also from Aix-en-Provence.



Paul Cezanne and Camille Pissarro

His friendships remained one of the constants throughout his life. Despite periods of separation, personal difficulties and his sometimes irritable temperament, a great number of these relationships, including those with Zola and Renoir, endured for many years. Even when living in modest circumstances, Cezanne never hesitated to open his home to his friends who were in need, reflecting the enormous value he placed on friendship and loyalty.

That same generosity marked the final years of his life. He continued to welcome artists, writers and admirers who came to visit him; first at Jas de Bouffan and later at the atelier des Lauves. It was around this time when the art dealer Ambroise Vollard helped bring his work to a wider audience, while a younger generation of artists was already recognising him as one of the pioneers of modern painting.

These friendships, both old and new, reflect the importance Cezanne placed on loyalty and the lasting bonds he formed with those who followed, supported and loved him. They also played an important role in the gradual recognition of his talent.

Now, make your way down one floor to discover the fascinating conservation work currently underway in Leda's room.

9. LÉDA'S ROOM

Welcome to the most beautiful room in the house: Leda's room.

The decorative plasterwork you see here dates back to the 18th century, when the Truphème family lived here at the bastide. This type of ornamentation was a Provençal speciality and particularly popular in Aix-en-Provence, whose master plasterers were renowned throughout France.

Creating these decorations was a highly skilled and painstaking process. A mixture of plaster and glue was smoothed with water and then sculpted directly onto the walls using very fine tools. The work demanded exceptional craftsmanship and materials of the highest quality.

The decorative scheme is particularly rich and revolves around three main themes. The first is war and power. Above the fireplace is the Truphème family coat of arms, surrounded by military trophies. This reflects the ambitions of Gaspard Truphème, the first owner of Jas de Bouffan, who had purchased the office of Provincial Commissioner of War in 1758. The second theme celebrates the arts. At the centre of the panels are allegories of painting, theatre and the liberal arts. The third and final theme is love. The lower sections of the panels depict nude female figures in suggestive poses, accompanied by Cupid.



Léda and the Swan c.1880

The most striking feature, however, is just above the fireplace. Do you recognise the mythological figure after whom the room is named? It's Leda.

Yet "love" is not the right word to describe her story, as the relationship was anything but consensual. According to Greek mythology, Leda, Queen of Sparta, was tricked by Zeus, who transformed himself into a swan. From this unlikely union, four children were born: Clytemnestra, Helen, Castor and Pollux.

Was Paul Cézanne inspired by this plasterwork when he painted several versions of Leda and the Swan around 1880? It seems very likely.

The influence of the Cézanne family can also be seen in the fine blue border framing the panels. Different periods thus overlap in this room: the decorative plasterwork belongs to the Truphèmes, while the colour scheme is unmistakably that of the Cezannes.

Following the restoration of the ornamental plasterwork, extensive work was carried out to recover the original colours. Where specific sections have disappeared, the conservators recreated them using a technique known as *tratteggio*.

But how does it work? The missing areas are filled in with extremely fine lines of colour. Seen from a distance, these lines blend seamlessly with the original decoration. Up close, however, they are clearly visible, allowing visitors to distinguish between the original work and the restored sections.

Take some time now to explore the rest of the first floor and discover the restoration work carried out here. Then, head back down to the ground floor to visit the last room: the kitchen.

THE FIRST FLOOR

THE CORRIDOR

In this corridor, you can take a look behind the scenes at the restoration of the Bastide du Jas de Bouffan.

A key stage in this restoration project was the work on the wallpaper. In fact, the rediscovery of one of these pieces made it possible to return one of Paul Cezanne's painting to this house: *La Femme à la cafetière*.

This work provides a better understanding of the history of this residence and helps to restore its rich cultural heritage.)



THE GRANEL-CORSY ROOM

In September 1899, the Cezanne family sold the Jas de Bouffan to Louis Granel, an agricultural engineer originally from Carcassonne. After nearly forty years under the Cezanne family's ownership, the estate entered a new chapter in its history.

Louis Granel radically transformed the property. The gardens were redesigned, the ponds restored, an orangery built, and new vineyards planted, turning the Jas de Bouffan into a major wine-producing estate. The country house was also modernised with the installation of electricity and central heating. In the Grand Salon, the murals painted during the Cezanne family's time there were almost all covered over. Only *Jeu de cache-cache*, inspired by a work by Lancret, was preserved.

Despite these changes, the memory of Paul Cezanne continues to attract artists, writers and art lovers. Throughout the 20th century, Jas de Bouffan became a hub for cultural gatherings. The Corsy family hosted many prominent figures from the world of art there. During the first edition of the Aix-en-Provence Opera Festival, the pianist Clara Haskil gave a recital there.

The bastide remained in the Granel-Corsy family until 1994, when it was acquired by the City of Aix-en-Provence. With the purchase of the farm in 2017, the estate was reunited. Today, the Jas de Bouffan continues to fulfil its role as a place of creativity, culture and remembrance.

Granel-Corsy room

10. THE KITCHEN

For this final part of your visit, let's step behind the scenes of the house. You are now in the bastide's kitchen. Unlike many of the other rooms, this one has retained its original purpose over the centuries. You may also have noticed that you had to walk down a few steps to get here.

This is probably because we are now in the oldest part of the house. In fact, the name "Jas de Bouffan" may itself hold the answer. Do you know what the Provençal word *jas* means? It refers to a sheepfold; a protected, walled area for sheep to rest in. As you've no doubt noticed, this elegant house bears little resemblance to anything like that! The name has therefore survived, but the original building almost certainly as not. When the Truphème family built the bastide, they most likely incorporated part of this or an earlier structure, and the kitchen is thought to be what remains of it.

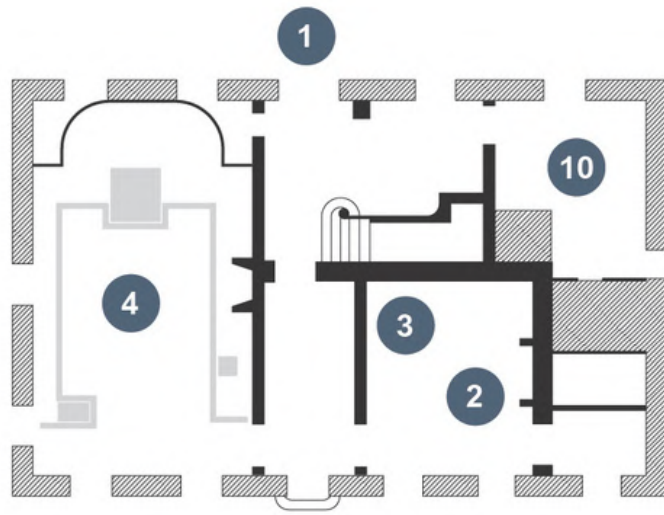
In Provence, the kitchen, with its own distinctive furnishings, has always held a special place in the home. Although the room you see today is not exactly as it was when the Cézanne family lived here, it faithfully recreates the atmosphere of a traditional Provençal kitchen. Notice the many small, specially-made containers. Each ingredient or condiment had its own: the *fariniero* for flour, the *saliero* for salt and the *panetière* for bread. In the past, the owners rarely came into this part of the house. It was a working space where the servants carried out their daily tasks. Yet it was also the true heart of the bastide. Meals were prepared here, laundry was washed, and there was a constant hum of activity.

From the kitchen, the servants could move through the house without being seen. The small staircase you see here is a service stair, known as an *ancillaire*, leading to the upper floors and corridors reserved for the staff. The door behind the table is the servants' entrance. It also leads to a corridor that connects the kitchen directly to the dining room, where your visit began. Please make your way out into the garden. We hope this visit has given you a deeper understanding of the history of the bastide and of Paul Cézanne himself. If you would like to continue exploring his world, why not visit the other sites dedicated to him in Aix-en-Provence?

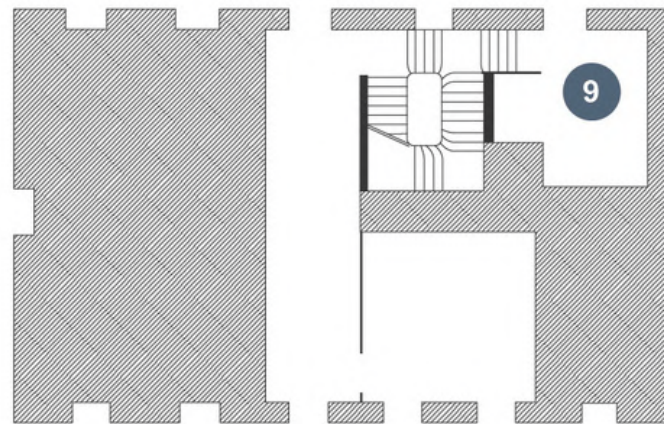
Before you leave, please remember to return your booklet to one of the collection boxes provided. Thank you for joining us today, and enjoy the rest of your day!



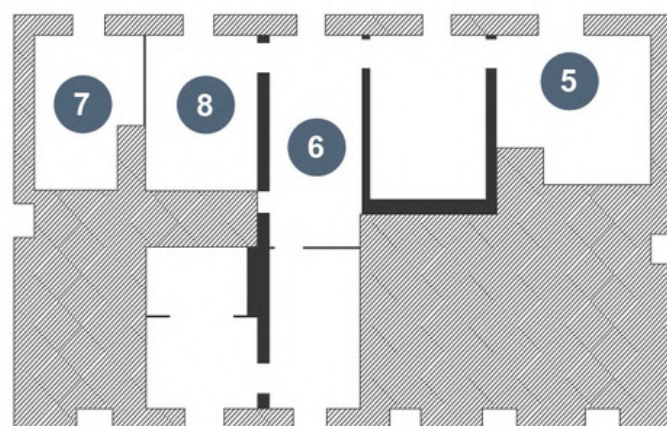
The "potager"



Rez-de chaussée - Ground floor



Premier étage - First floor



Deuxième étage - Second floor

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en Provence