Celebrating Andre Le Nôtre, the Visionary behind French Garden Design

Paris & the Ile de France

2013 marked the 400th anniversary of Andre Le Nôtre, the visionary landscape designer who created the legendary gardens at Versailles for Louis XIV. His classical garden style has been imitated all over Europe for centuries. Explore his most breathtaking gardens in the Ile de France with AAV’s specialist guides to open the gates!

Begin at Vaux le Vicomte, Le Nôtre’s first major garden design and arguably his most impressive. Contemplate the optical illusion of the reflecting pools and learn about the hydraulic system that still supplies them with water today.

Stroll along the paths lined with beech trees that frame the vast visual perspective with the statue of Hercules as its focal point in the distance. You will understand why the young Sun King Louis XIV commissioned Le Nôtre to create his own monumental landscaped park and gardens at Versailles.

Start the next day at Versailles where your specialist guide will explain how Le Nôtre spent his entire lifetime working with Louis XIV to carve these spellbinding gardens out of swampy land and to find water to activate the fountains. Follow the Sun King’s own Garden Manuel which suggests the best way to visit them!

Explore its walks lined with walls of greenery and the world’s largest outdoor sculpture collection, nearly 2300 works inspired by classical antiquity. Discover its numerous groves and open-air salons, such as the wondrous Water Theatre Grove, destroyed in 1775 and today reinterpreted in honor of Le Nôtre. Try to time your visit for the Musical Fountain Shows during which the masterly water features literally dance to the rhythm of music.

Afterwards, drive back to Paris through the Parc de Saint Cloud, where Le Nôtre’s monumental hillside gardens for the Duke d’Orleans are still preserved even though the castle itself was burnt down in 1870. Stop at both the Grande Gerbe to admire the masterly way in which Le Nôtre imposed an orderly design on this complex landscape overlooking the River Seine, and at the Grande Cascade to marvel at this masterpiece of water and stone!

Enjoy a privileged excursion north of Paris to the Château de Chantilly to explore the magnificent gardens designed by Le Nôtre for the Prince de Condé. Admire his great entrance terrace and vast waterworks surrounding the Renaissance castle, which is mirrored in reflecting pools. It houses the Condé Museum, the second largest collection of masterpieces in France (after the Louvre!). End your day with a stroll through this great hunting park which is dotted with architectural follies and waterworks – a true fairytale!

Learn how Le Nôtre honed his landscape design skills as a boy in the Tuileries Gardens under the guidance of his father and grandfather who had worked there since its creation for Queen Catherine de Medici. Marvel at how its geometric plan forms part of Paris’ monumental Historic Axis by linking the Louvre Palace to the Place de la Concorde and the
Champs-Elysées, with the Place de l’Etoile as its focal point to form one of the world’s most breathtaking perspectives!

This bespoke 4-day survey of André Le Nôtre’s celebrated French Garden style includes private tours of the finest royal gardens in Paris and the Ile de France with exclusive access, luxury accommodation and transportation, a specialist historian/guide, the assistance of our Académie Hostess and all entrance fees and taxes.

The exclusive AAV tour can be customized to meet your interests and requirements. Available all year, through April through October are best for optimal garden conditions. Price upon request.