

# *Southern Comfort*

Photos by Cécile Lhermitte, courtesy of Domaine du Castellas - Text by Alice White Walker

Submerge yourself  
in spectacular surroundings,  
local food and thoughtful décor at  
the Domaine du Castellas  
— an off-the-radar place  
you won't want  
to share.





A sprawling, 18<sup>th</sup>-century farmhouse built from cut stone and plunged in the middle of endless rolling fields, arriving at the Domaine du Castellas feels like you have stumbled upon a secret. With no neighbors around for miles (unless you count the goats), Castellas has had more than 270 acres of parkland to itself since 1720. Its unique panorama of the Grand Luberon valley stretches east to west, from the Alps to the Ardèche.

A luxury guest house and restaurant, Castellas is open to a lucky few — its intimate size allows for only 20 staying guests at a time. And despite only opening in 2019, it has deep roots in hospitality.

Castellas is owned and run by a French couple from Marseille, Jérôme and Elsa, who fell in love with the area several years ago. When they first arrived, they set up in a house nearby, content to enjoy the quiet country life. Places to socialize, eat and drink were sparser than in the busy southern capital, so when neighbors spoke of Castellas — an *auberge rustique* run by a colorful Sardinian shepherd named Gianni — they visited to find out more.

Gianni and his family had lived on the farm for years, renovating the buildings and garden in a simple, rustic style to let the structure and awesome outdoor spaces shine. A warm and generous soul, he welcomed travelers and guests into his piece of paradise. It wasn't glamorous — basic dormitories and meals on communal tables — but it had heart. Long before it was trendy, Gianni was self-sufficient and organic, harvesting fruit and vegetables from the *potager* and orchards.

After many convivial evenings spent under the starry night sky, the couple fell deeply in love with Castellas and the uncomplicated way of living that came along with it.



No better place for a refreshing plunge!



Built in 1720, Castellas' original structure remains untouched.





So, when, in 2017, Gianni told Jérôme and Elsa that it was time for him to move on, the couple jumped at the chance to buy it. Castellás' history as an *auberge* would continue, just with some extra sparkle and modernities.

Jérôme contacted Alain Agazar, an architect from Marseille, to help him convert the old farm into a plush guest house. Structurally, the farm building was beautifully intact, and the exterior needed no work; the interiors, however, required a lot of attention.

Each room was meticulously restored without compromising the overall character. Walls were plastered white, wooden parquet flooring put in and the original beams were given a good sanding for a more polished look.

The size of the property meant space wasn't an issue, but Jérôme insisted on keeping the experience intimate. There are a total of 10 suites, each individually designed. The décor was selected for maximum comfort and for taking advantage of the breathtaking views. Natural materials like jute and raw wood harmonize with the surrounding countryside and contrast beautifully with the accessories: gold and bronze lighting features and velvet throws. The overall effect is paired-back and warm.

Castellás 2.0 opened for business in 2019, and from April to January 2023, guests are welcome to come, stay and relax in this truly special place.

Among the modern additions are a wellness area featuring a Finnish bath (transformed from an ancient water reserve), a sauna with panoramic views, as well as a game room and a pétanque court.

And the Domaine's restaurant, La Table 1720, retains the communal vibe that had enchanted Jérôme and Elsa years ago. Guests share meals around large wooden tables, feasting on fresh products grown on the farm or by neighboring producers. There is also an outdoor bar, delightfully built around a huge oak tree. And you don't exactly have all 110 hectares to yourself, there are 50 goats (another nod to the predecessor) and 12 chickens for company.

Today, the couple manages the beautiful Domaine while living in their home, a few miles away. Their dream for Castellás has come to fruition, and now they have the pleasure of seeing visitors become as captivated as they were. \*







*During spring and summer, the Domaine's expansive land offers the ideal space to find some zen.*









1. Summer lounging by the Finnish bath – transformed from an ancient water reserve.

2&3. Menus change daily and throughout the year, according to seasonal products.

4. Meals are enjoyed with the backdrop of the Luberon Valley.

#### Opposite

The bar in the “Grand Salon,” constructed from the same cut stone as the building.









*The 10 suites are uniquely designed, and each features a living room, a King-size bed, a kitchenette and an ensuite bathroom.*







*The rooms were designed with comfort and the magnificent views in mind.*



*Sleek modern fixtures married with raw materials keep the décor connected to the natural surroundings.*



[www.domaineducastellas.fr](http://www.domaineducastellas.fr)