



photo credit: Becky Seiner

WITH HOSTS

Laura Domencic, Director of Pittsburgh Center for the Arts
Chuck Olson, Art Professor, Saint Francis University
Marie Thomas-Olson, French Instructor, Saint Francis University

OVERVIEW

PF/PCA is partnering with Saint Francis University to offer retreats and artist residencies for adults in a centuries-old monastery in the village of Ambialet, France. Saint Francis University's Ambialet site, Le Prieuré, is perched on a hilltop in southwestern France. Nestled in the mountains and overlooking the Tarn River, the monastery offers a quiet refuge to explore, contemplate, and be inspired by the striking panoramic views of Southwest France.

Participants will have access to the renovated 17th century monastery, and will have the opportunity to explore local towns and villages, mountainous landscapes, rivers and valleys, all bathed in incredible light.

IMPORTANT DATES:

January 30 – Application due (no financial commitment)
February 6 – Acceptance notice mailed out
March 6 – Registration & \$300 non-refundable deposit due
May 1 – Final payment due

PF/PCA is offering participants two unique approaches to participate in this travel opportunity, either through a retreat or residency:

Retreats

There are three different retreats offered from which participants can choose, each led by an artist specializing in different mediums and taking place for a duration of one to two weeks. Each of the three retreats offer individuals a semi-structured schedule, with the opportunity to visually and culturally explore a region rich in history, architecture and landscape. Participants travel together to local towns and villages, mountainous landscapes, rivers and valleys on scheduled fieldtrips, but also have the opportunity to work on their own or in small groups. A typical day will consist of photo shoots, demonstrations or critiques with the group in the morning, individual studio time in the afternoon and socializing in the evening. Afternoon sessions in French language and cooking are also available as a part of the program. The price of these retreats include two fieldtrips and transportation between Toulouse rail station or airport (Blagnac) to Prieuré. *Room and Board prices are listed separately. See Your Home In France, page 4, for details.*

RETREAT Descriptions:

Photography on Location with Sue Abramson

July 3 – 12 and July 12 – 19

1 week, \$800 for members, \$1,000 for non-members

2 weeks \$1,400 for members, \$1,600 for non-members

Take advantage of the picturesque landscapes of rural France by capturing what you see through digital photography. Work on individual projects and personal journals with optional instructor facilitated assignments to further enhance your artistic experience. Take part in instructor-lead demonstrations and lectures, group critiques and one-on-one sessions with the instructor for more personalized feedback. *Participants must bring their own digital camera, laptop and tripod and have a basic understanding of their camera and processing software.*
www.sueabramson.com



photo credit: Carol O'Sullivan

Travel Writing with Sarah Leavens

July 19 – Sunday, August 2

\$1,400 for members, \$1,600 for non-members

Explore not only the time-honored tradition of travel writing, but further the phenomena of both traveling and writing as explorations in themselves. Get together with the group prior to our trip to discuss what to expect, read some great (and inspiring!) examples of travel writing, and bind your own travel journal, all in preparation to fully immerse yourself while in France. Participate in daily writing exercises and discussions all while receiving personalized guidance from the instructor. Afternoons and weekends do as travel writers do: grab journal, pencil, and get lost in the place. Students will be able to tailor individual writing projects as desired.
www.sarahleavens.com

Painting/Drawing From Observation with Ron Donoughe

July 19 – Sunday, August 2

\$1,400 for members, \$1,600 for non-members



photo credit: Ron Donoughe

Capture the warm summer light in the southwestern region of France in this plein air drawing/painting workshop. Focus on how premixing parent colors, or mass colors, can help speed the plein-air process while also creating gentle color harmony. Other lessons will include: principles of light, color and value, and how brushwork makes a painting more interesting to the viewer. The class will consist of demonstrations and critiques along with individualized instructor guidance.

www.donoughe.com

Apply today at <https://pfpca.wufoo.com/forms/z13nm3wh09xdmdi/>

Residencies

Artist Residencies

Artist Residencies at Le Prieuré are for one to four weeks to work in the studio, one's room, or on the grounds of the monastery. These are ideal for those wanting a concentrated time to work on their own or to reenergize their studio practice. Painters, musicians, and writers may find the time and space most useful. Residencies are self-directed, with optional participation in discussions, critiques, fieldtrips and afternoon sessions in French language and cooking. The price of these retreats include two fieldtrips and transportation between Toulouse rail station or airport (Blagnac) to Le Prieuré . *Room and Board prices are listed separately. See Your Home In France, page 4, for details.*

RESIDENCY Dates and Prices*:

July 3 – 12: **9 days**, \$600 for members, \$650 for non-members

July 12-19: **7 days**, \$450 for members, \$500 for non-members

July 3-19: **16 days**, \$900 for members, \$1, 000 for non-members

July 19-August 2: **14 days**, \$800 for members, \$900 for non-members

Apply today at <https://pfpca.wufoo.com/forms/z13nm3wh09xdmdi/>

If you need assistance with the application, please contact our Registrar at 412.361.0455.

For questions about the program please email france@pittsburgharts.org

Your Home in France

Accommodations

You will stay in Saint Francis University's newly-renovated facility in Ambialet, located in southwestern France. It is a charming monastery repurposed for dormitory-style housing for SFU's study abroad program. The site is perched on a hilltop overlooking the Tarn River and the village of Ambialet.

There are a few different options regarding accommodations for your stay. The total cost for room and board is determined by the length of retreat or residency you select as well as the type of room you are housed in. See chart below for anticipated housing costs. On-site meals are included within the reflected price.

| Participant rooms | | 7 days | 9 days | 14 days | 16 days |
|-------------------|-----------------|----------------|--------|-------------------|---------|
| <i>Rooms</i> | <i>\$/night</i> | <i>\$/week</i> | | <i>\$/2 weeks</i> | |
| singles | \$110 | \$770 | \$990 | \$1,540 | \$1,760 |
| doubles | \$85 | \$595 | \$765 | \$1,190 | \$1,360 |
| triples/quads | \$70 | \$490 | \$630 | \$980 | \$1,120 |

Living Arrangements: The monastery has dormitory-style accommodations for 25 participants, with a combination of double rooms and triples. The triples have their own bathrooms. The rest of the students share two large bathrooms (one for men, one for women) with multiple sinks, numerous toilets and spacious shower rooms. Each bedroom has a sink and mirror, and each person has a bed, desk, chair and closet. You will have a bed freshly made for your arrival including a blanket, pillow and towel. The housekeeping staff checks on rooms regularly and clears out your trash, and cleans up your sink. Extra blankets are available if needed. There is a very limited number of single rooms available. Plan on having a roommate. You may request a roommate in your application.

The closest airport to Ambialet is Toulouse (TLS), which is your arrival airport. This airport services all the major hubs in Europe. Easy Jet also runs flights out of Toulouse.

Train travel is available through the SNCF, which has a station in Albi and Paris. The extensive train network can take you to destinations throughout all of Europe. You can also take the Eurostar through the "Chunnel" to get over to England. Train travel is efficient, flexible, comfortable, and trains generally run on time. This is a good option for last-minute plans.

Internet Access: There is open-network wireless internet access throughout the entire monastery, though some spots pick up a better signal than others.

Laundry: There are 4 washers and 4 dryers at the monastery, which are free of charge. Laundry detergent is provided. You will have enough laundry opportunities so that having 10-12 sets of clothing will be plenty for a two week stay.

Meals: The Ambialet program has a resident cook who comes in a couple hours before lunch and dinner each day to prepare fresh meals. These meals reflect a typical French cuisine with a variety of different meats and cheeses and every meal comes with a fresh salad. Meals are served buffet style. For smaller appetites, French bread with Nutella, butter, and jam are available throughout the day. You can also brew your own coffee and tea throughout the day. Please note that all participants are expected to help with kitchen duty. A rotating schedule for kitchen duty will be posted in the common dining room.

Mass: Mass is celebrated every Sunday in the church that is part of the monastery. It is conducted in French, but it is usually translated into English.

Medical Care: There are always doctors on duty in Albi, and you will have transportation to a doctor's office if needed. The primary doctor who works with the program speaks English. Doctors will write prescriptions if needed (i.e. if you have the flu or are having trouble sleeping). The hospital in Albi is modern and well equipped like you would find in any major city.

If you are taking prescription medication, make sure you have enough to last you the trip. Mail order pharmacies usually dispense a three month supply at a time. It may be helpful to get a doctor to write a letter specifying what medication you are taking (the generic name) as well as the dosage. This would make things easier should you need to get refills while abroad. If you wear contact lenses, make sure to take an ample supply of lenses, as well as lens solution with you. If you wear glasses, invest in an extra pair to take with you as well. It may also be helpful to know your prescription should you need emergency supplies made for you.



photo credit: Paul Schaaf



Ambialet Staff



Laura Domencic

Laura Domencic: In addition to her role as the Director of the Pittsburgh Center for the Arts, Laura is also an accomplished artist. For the past 15 years, Laura has dedicated her time to curating exhibitions, developing education programs and cultivating environments that explore the transformative power of art in our lives.

Chuck Olson: An accomplished painter and professor of visual arts, Chuck is a Francophile who loves the language, its history, the studio arts, biking, and hiking. When not so engaged, he can be heard playing his guitar somewhere in the monastery or at the village cafe.



Chuck Olson

Marie Thomas-Olson: This professor of French (and a French native) is often found outside of the classroom organizing all day hikes, discussing the daily menu with the “Beau Bernard”, and conspiring with “La Sophie” in the garden. And if you get sick, Marie is an intensive care nurse!

Marie Perez: Since opening day of the building, Marie has been our ‘femme de ménage’, fearlessly and tirelessly tidying up after us -- all with incredibly good spirits and enthusiasm.

Sophie LeQuéré: General ‘handywoman,’ office manager and head gardener, Sophie brings Frenchness right down to the daily level. While preferring to stay in the background, she will step forward to talk about gardens with anyone.



Marie Perez

Eric Sepich: Admissions counselor at Saint Francis University and previous Program Assistant for SFU program at Le Prieuré.

Stefanie Zito: In addition to assisting coordinating the Pittsburgh Arts in France trip, Stefanie is a visual artist and yoga instructor in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. She specializes in painting, drawing and fiber arts and is intrigued by the overlap of physical movement and visual art.

Ron Donoghue: For the past 27 years Ron has been professional artist specializing in plein air painting. His work can be found in many corporate and private collections as well as the Southern Alleghenies Museum of Art, The Westmoreland Museum of American Art, The University Museum at Indiana University of Pennsylvania and The Duquesne Club.



Eric Sepich

Sue Abramson: For nearly 30 years Sue Abramson has experimented with alternative photographic methods in connection with the environmental landscape. Widely exhibited, her work has been nationally and internationally shown. She is Associate professor of photography at Pittsburgh Filmmakers.

Sarah Leavens: Sarah Leavens is a writer, teacher, artist, and baker. She teaches professional writing at the University of Pittsburgh and creative writing and visual art at the Pittsburgh Center for the Arts; selected handmade books and paintings are currently on display at the East End Book Exchange.



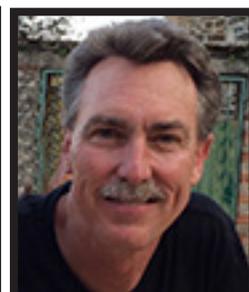
Marie Thomas-Olson & Sophie LeQuéré



Stefanie Zito



Sue Abramson



Ron Donoghue



Sarah Leavens

Staying Connected

Cell Phones: Some cell phones do work overseas, but often at a rather high price. Check with your current provider to add international access to your current plan. It is usually available for an additional monthly fee. Remember, however, that each phone call is charged; your free minutes do not apply for international calls and you will be paying roaming charges. Certain smartphones enable you to send and receive text messages via Wi-Fi so you can stay connected for free at the monastery. It is not absolutely necessary to have a cell phone when you are in France. Many participants go without. However, cell phones can be advantageous when you are traveling independently. (In which case, adding international service to your American plan would make the most sense). A good alternative is to purchase a phone and pre-paid SIM card bundle at a local French provider (Orange, SFR or Bouygues). As it is a pre-paid option, you will not be signing a contract. You can charge up your account with pre-paid cards; (5, 10, 20, and 50 euro denominations at phone stores, grocery stores, gas stations and newspaper kiosks) or sometimes you will be given a printout with an access number to enter. It is a very simple process. You can purchase one of these packages for as low as 20 euros. Ask for a “carte SIM prépayée et sans engagement.” If you happen to already own an unlocked phone, you need only to acquire a SIM card for 2-3 euros. Unlocked phones can be purchased through various online retailers. Amazon is a good place to start. Having an unlocked phone is particularly useful if you would like the option of buying a SIM card from other countries as well, depending on your extended travel plans. The phone you purchase from the French retailer accepts only SIM cards of that provider. You will need your passport in order to purchase your initial SIM card. You will also need to provide them with your local address (use the monastery).

SKYPE: You, your family, and friends may want to download SKYPE (free) to talk to each other over the computer. To download SKYPE visit: [://skype.com/intl/en-us/get-skype/](http://skype.com/intl/en-us/get-skype/). You will need to create a user name. Your laptop may or may not include a Webcam. These are needed if you want to see the people with whom you are communicating. They are available at Wal-Mart or Target for around \$25. Also, for yourself, invest in a headset. Your laptop has a microphone built into it, but having a headset allows you more privacy and doesn't disturb those around you.

Mail:

Your mailing address in France is:
Saint Francis University
Le Prieuré
81430 Ambialet
France



photo credit: Sue Abramson

The address above is where your family and friends may wish to send mail or packages to you. Have them send the packages via USPS, rather than FedEx or UPS, as the delivery will be quicker. They will need to fill out a green customs declaration form, and list all items including the dollar value. If the value is above 45 euros (\$60), YOU, as the recipient are responsible for the customs fee. You can also use this address to shop online. If you are sending packages from France, you will need to go to a post office, “La Poste.” There are several post offices in Albi, as well as a small one in the Géant Supermarché. The bigger post offices also sell boxes and packaging materials. Be aware, however, that many of the employees at post offices have limited English ability.

Money Matters

Spending Money: We suggest you travel with some cash on hand when you leave the United States. This can be changed to the local currency at the airport. During your stay your ATM/debit card is the way to go, but withdraw generously upon visiting an ATM as there are not many near our site and there will be international withdrawal fees for each transaction. Visa and MasterCard are accepted everywhere most places, except in small restaurants. American Express is not as widely accepted, and Discover does not work at all overseas.

Plane Ticket: You are responsible for the cost and booking of your plane ticket to France. We are happy to suggest flights that would be most suitable for the trip. Email france@pittsburgharts.org

Car Rentals: Some participants may wish to have the freedom of exploring on their own, in which case we strongly recommend renting a car. Please note that most cars are operated with stick rather than automatic.

Travel Money: The costs of independent travel vary depending on your lifestyle and taste. A short weekend trip can cost anywhere from \$150 to \$300 depending on the type of transportation, what you choose to buy, where you stay (hotel v. hostel) and what you eat.



*What gardening looks like in Albi
photo credit: Sue Abramson*

Packing

As you begin to pack, be sure to bring with you your flexibility and agility! As always when traveling, things are subject to change without notice. We appreciate and truly value your adjustability and thank you for it in advance.

Airline luggage allowances can change without notice. The most up-to-date information can be found on your airline's website. It is the responsibility of the individual traveler to reconfirm luggage allowances directly with the airline prior to departure. Luggage allowances usually include one checked bag at 50 pounds (23 kg) and are not to be more than the total linear dimension of 62" (be sure to check your specific airline's website for accurate allowances). Depending on what airline you travel, you may be charged for checked luggage. A second bag is always an additional (and usually higher) cost. In addition, you are permitted to bring one carry-on, which will fit in the overhead compartment, plus one personal item such as a purse or laptop bag. Airlines will charge for (and reserve the right to deny) overweight, excess or oversized luggage. While packing for your trip, consider what souvenirs you may wish to travel back with. There is a scale at the monastery to weigh your suitcases for the trip back to the U.S.

Keep in mind that you will be living in a different culture where jeans, sweatpants and t-shirts may not always be appropriate. Shorts and tank tops are not acceptable attire when visiting churches and religious venues. Your French peers dress rather fashionably, as there is a strong societal idea of what is and what is not appropriate to wear. Women wear skirts, blouses, sweaters and occasionally jeans. Men wear pants, jeans, button up shirts, sweaters, and the occasional sport coat. Both men and women wear scarves when it gets chilly. Black and dark colors are currently the norm, especially for evening wear.

The electrical voltage in Europe is 220, as opposed to 110 here in the U.S. Most laptops are equipped to handle both, so all you need is an adapter. Most electrical items such as iPhones, iPods, and electric razors nowadays are compatible with both systems, but you can still bring a converter if you so desire. However, you definitely need at least 2 adapters. The best place to order adapters is eBay or Amazon (search Europe adapter).

Suggested Items to Pack

| | | |
|---|--|---|
| <p><i>recommended carry-on items:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>o passport and driver's license</i> <i>o entertainment for the flight</i> <i>o camera</i> <i>o keys</i> <i>o laptop</i> <i>o credit cards and cash</i> <i>o eye glasses</i> <i>o medication</i> <i>o one change of clothes</i> <i>o cell phone</i> <i>o jewelry</i> <i>o snacks*</i> <p><i>*You can buy water and other beverages airside, after you go through the security checkpoint.</i></p> <p><i>These items should NOT be carried on board the aircraft: toiletries, Swiss army knives, nail clippers or sharp objects</i></p> | <p><i>For everyone:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>o sketch book, pencils/pens</i> <i>o light jacket</i> <i>o scarves, gloves, hat or cap, umbrella</i> <i>o walking shoes</i> <i>o sunglasses</i> <i>o bathing suit, beach towel, sun screen</i> <i>o sandals/flip-flops</i> <i>o shorts, t-shirts, tank tops</i> <i>o toothpaste, toothbrush, floss, mouthwash</i> <i>o hair products</i> <i>o body wash, washcloth or poufs</i> <i>o deodorant</i> <i>o earplugs</i> <i>o razors, shaving cream</i> <i>o travel size hand sanitizer</i> <i>o small sewing kit, safety pins</i> <i>o pocket dictionary</i> <i>o camera, charger</i> <i>o travel alarm clock</i> <i>o allergy medicine, head/cold medication</i> <i>o travel backpack/purse</i> | <p><i>Mens attire:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>o jeans and casual slacks</i> <i>o comfortable shorts</i> <i>o polo shirts/golf shirts</i> <i>o dress shirts - nice t-shirts</i> <i>dress clothes - dress shoes</i> <i>o socks and underwear</i> <i>o gym shorts</i> <i>o hoodies and sweaters</i> <p><i>Womens attire:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>o skirts or dresses</i> <i>o jeans</i> <i>o comfortable shorts or capris</i> <i>o tops and blouses</i> <i>o nice t-shirts</i> <i>o socks and underwear</i> <i>o sweaters</i> <i>o dress shoes and heels</i> <i>o evening wear</i> <i>o feminine products</i> |
|---|--|---|

**Pack any items that might leak in Ziploc freezer bags.*

**Packing as though you don't care to see the clothes again is a good strategy to follow. Consider bringing older clothes that they can still wear but intend to get rid of. They then give them to charity in France freeing up space in the suitcase for the trip home. Bring some nice pieces to wear as some places have dress code.*

Paperwork

Application Form: Fill your application out completely and return by January 16, 2015. Applications can be found at <https://pfpca.wufoo.com/forms/z13nm3wh09xdmdi/>. *Please note that acceptance is not guaranteed until your payment is received in full, along with your waiver and a doctor's note of approval for travel.*

Registration Fee: Upon notification of acceptance for the trip, a \$300 non-refundable deposit will be due to PF/PCA by March 6, 2015. You will receive information instructing where to submit payment. Please note that final payment will be due no later than May 1, 2015.

Waiver Form: Read it and initial where required (each paragraph). **IMPORTANT:** the waiver must be signed and witnessed. This witness can be anyone over the age of 18, who physically sees you sign the waiver. Waivers without a witness will not be accepted.

Medical History: The Medical History form should be completed by you and turned in with your final payment along with a doctor's note of approval for travel.

Withdrawal Policy: The withdrawal policy is included on the application form. Please read the policy carefully before signing the form.

Participants with Disabilities or Special Needs: *Participants with disabilities or special needs should discuss any issues with the director of PCA well in advance to ensure accommodations to fit your needs may be arranged. We will strive to make any necessary accommodations, provided the director is made aware of them in a timely manner. Be aware that not all disabilities can be readily accommodated when studying abroad and that the laws are different in other countries. The Americans with Disabilities Act does not extend beyond the boundaries of the United States.*

Passport Info:

U.S. citizens need a valid passport to travel abroad. You should apply for a passport well in advance to avoid any conflict that may delay your departure. Make sure it is valid for at least six months beyond the end of the program. New passports cost approximately between \$110 and \$140 depending on whether you choose a book and card identification. Expedited service is also available for an additional cost. A passport application, for a first-time or renewing passport applicants, can be found on the U.S. Department of State website (www.travel.state.gov).

Print out the form and read the instructions carefully as you fill it out. Return the application to your nearest post office as soon as possible. If you choose to apply through a passport agency, you will find their locations on the State Department website. In addition to the application, you will need to provide proof of citizenship (e.g., a certified copy of your birth certificate or an expired passport), proof of identity (e.g., valid driver's license), two (2) passport-ready (2 x 2 inches) photos taken within six months of submitting your application, as well as the associated fees for your passport. You can have passport photos taken a number of places, including many local pharmacy locations. Call ahead to check on times for when this service is offered.

It is advised that you make four copies of your passport. One should be left at home with your emergency contact. One copy must be turned in for your file at PCA. The other two should be taken with you. One will need to be left in a secure area. The second should be carried with you but in a different location than your actual passport. It is also strongly recommended that at least one family member have a valid passport for the period in which you are abroad. For more passport information, visit: www.travel.state.gov.