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'NATURE IS THE ART OF GOD'

TRENDING



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Contributing Editor Lucy Self ventures into Dante's Valley of Hell at Baux de Provence and finds Heaven in [Hotel Benvengudo](http://www.gourmetsandco.com/restaurants/3884-restaurant-philippe-gauvreau) (<http://www.gourmetsandco.com/restaurants/3884-restaurant-philippe-gauvreau>)

In The Divine Comedy Dante wrote 'Nature is the art of God'. As I enter into the Valley of Hell, the storm clashes a dramatic symphony and the rain pounds like sheets of steel. Nature seems to be a tool of the gods and today one can effortlessly believe in their wrath! It is easy to imagine how Dante found inspiration for his 'Inferno' at the Baux de Provence. Nature is almighty and never more so than this particular stormy day in October when the heavens finally wash away all the memories of summer and embraces the insistent eager autumn.

With the intimidating rocky cliffs and the ruined stoned village legend has it that sorcerers and evil spirits inhabit the caves and crevices. Known as the Valley of Hell, this dramatic, bleak and jagged mineral world is awe-inspiring. Yet on this particular day, refuge is needed and the cosy welcoming lights of the Hotel Benvengudo, is a lantern in the dark storm.



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— Poolside view of Hotel Benvenuto at night

The family run hotel's hospitality is reflected in every inch of the hotel from the friendly staff , welcoming log fire and charming antique and Provençal décor. The young personnel welcomed me with the same warmth and enthusiasm friends in the countryside would greet me with. The renovated Bastide is beautifully refurbished and the 28 rooms, 6 suites and 3 apartments are restored to perfection with delicate pastel tones.

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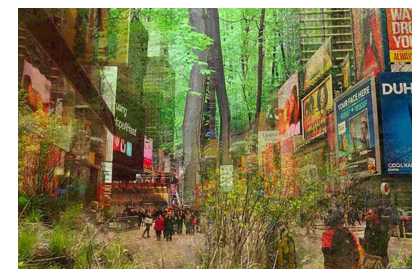


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The restaurant offers an array of Provençal and French cuisine (<http://www.benvengudo.com/les-baux-de-provence-restaurant/>), that is both surprising and delightful in the imaginative creations by Chef Mathieu Groshenry (<http://www.benvengudo.com/benvengudo-hotel-welcomes-its-new-chef-mathieu-groshenry/>). This Avignon born chef, has trained at some of the most renowned hotels and with reputed mentors like Didier Aniés (<http://www.gettyimages.co.uk/detail/news-photo/chef-didier-anies-gives-headwaiter-anthony-boldrini-the-news-photo/468217814>) and Philippe Gauvreau (http://www.gourmetsandco.com/restaurants/3884-restaurant_philippe_gauvreau). ' Le retour de Jardin' is a light and subtle array of lightly steamed vegetables that emphasises the quality of the fresh local produce; the famous specialty of the house, the smoked potted lamb with thyme accompanied by the puree of potato with parmesan and truffles is simply exquisite and deserves its well founded reputation.

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— Photo montage of PopUp Forest Times Square by Hugh Herr

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— Hotel Benvengudo’s restaurant’s elegant dining room

Whatever the season, the fish and seafood come straight from the Mediterranean Sea. The fruits, herbs and vegetables chosen for our Provencal gourmet cuisine are sourced from local producers and the local markets of Provence. Benvengudo’s own olives are grown at the hotel, processed



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locally and then the Provence olive oil used at the Benvengudo Hotel restaurant. The restaurant seats 40 and is open every day from 1st April 1st to 10th October but does close for the winter season.



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— A delicate sample of Chef Mathieu Groshenry aristry.

Thankfully the storm passes as quickly as it arrived and the grey Gothic palette is replaced by a wonderful blue; the sun blinds in its majesty. The hotel's gardens are charming with rose, laurel, lavender and array of scents and colours. Guests flood into the sunlight for games of tennis and tea by the pool , and the storm is but a sheer memory.

One can see how Dante was inspired to write his epic masterpiece at the helm of such awe-inspiring and poetic landscapes. Les Baux de Provence has all the passionate elements for Thespian arts and of course a rather lovely romantic hotel to hide away in.

For more information, including booking details, please visit [Hotel Benvengudo's \(http://www.benvengudo.com/photo-gallery/\)](http://www.benvengudo.com/photo-gallery/) website.

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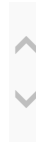
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