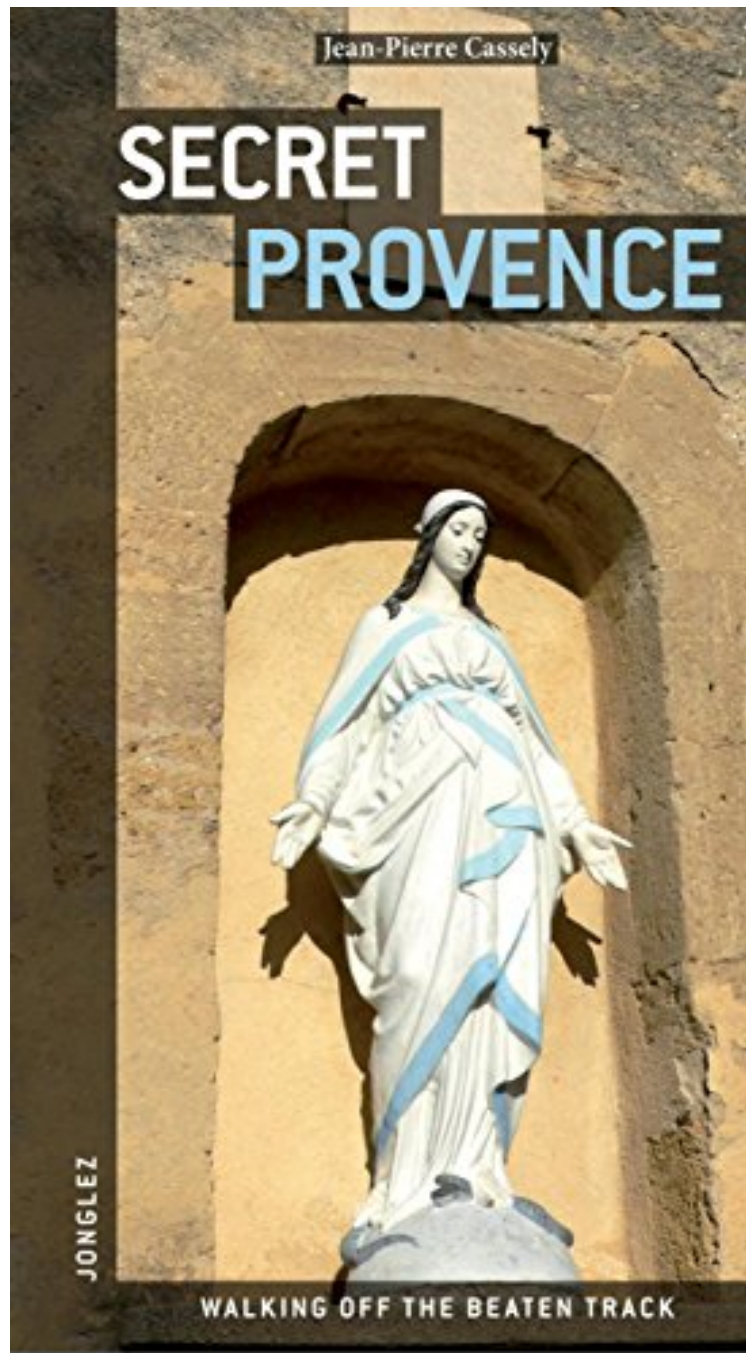


Secret Provence

Jean-Pierre Cassely

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Jean-Pierre Cassely : Secret Provence before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my

time, and all praised Secret Provence:

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Not a comprehensive guidebook! but full of interesting trivia and quirky sites
By Craig MACKINNON
First off let's be clear: this is not a comprehensive guidebook. It is not even a guidebook for people visiting Provence from other countries. If you have 2 weeks in Provence, you'll be wasting your time looking up these sites. If, however, you are lucky enough to live here, or if you are able to stay for months at a time - university students, backpackers, people on sabbaticals, etc. - this book will take you to some very interesting places that aren't in the normal guidebooks. Written by a journalist, who specialized in those quirky or feel-good end-segments that newscasts like to close with, this book collects his various discoveries. It is subtitled "off the beaten path", and that's a perfect name. Want to see the aqueduct at Pont-du-Gard? Not in this book. Want to see Mary Magdalene's skull? That's here, along with St. Peter's ulna, a cannonball stuck in a wall, phallic ironwork on a balcony in Aix, and the largest chimney in Europe. Perhaps the best part of the book, and something that would make it worth your while to read even if you are unable to use it as a guidebook, is the fact that each site has a full-page description, including some Provençal history, and it's written with a journalistic (but not sensationalistic) flair that will keep you well-entertained.

A statue of pregnant Virgin Mary, an astronomical observatory in a former nuclear missile silo, a hotel room in a tree or a gipsy caravan, primitive Provençal artists, the mark of Christ's knee, a fountain that flows with wine, a caiman dedicated to the Virgin Mary, a church in a theatre, an erotic medieval bas relief, a countess who returned to life, a Provençal Villa Medicis, a false volcano at La Roquebrusane, a "sheep bridge" at Arles, a rain-making saint, an alchemist's garden, a magic palindrome at Oppède... Provence is not limited to postcard clichés about fields of lavender or picturesque villages where pastis-drinking inhabitants pass the time playing pétanque. For those who manage to stray from the beaten paths, Provence is full of surprising features and curious sights that will amaze residents as well as visitors who thought they knew all there is to know about this region.