





traditionally have been planted in front of the house upon completion. This tree sits proudly on the south patio and is a giant beauty, purported to be the second largest plane tree in Provence. This special tree is approximately 200–250 years old, meaning the main house was built between 1770 and 1820. The guest house was built later; a plaque on the exterior wall, above the front door, reads 1859.

I decided to take on the massive job of completely gutting and restoring the entire house while respecting the integrity of the original structure. Although the project seemed daunting, my family is in construction and I spent much of my youth on building sites, absorbing inspiration from my father and, later, my brothers. I had learned from my father that choosing the right professionals—people with history who know their sub-contractors and artisans well, was key. After some research I found the Lafourcade Architecture group, leading experts in historic Provençal house renovation.

I met with Alexandre Lafourcade on site before finalizing the home purchase. He was waiting when I arrived, and already had a clear vision of what needed to be done. We decided to rip out the 1990s improvements, add new rooms to the barn side of the house, and renovate parts of the home that hadn't been touched in generations. We lifted the modern tile floors, knocked down partition walls, recreated the main staircase, replastered the exterior, renovated the separate guest house, and completely rebuilt an old barn that was barely standing.

The process was time consuming, expensive, and challenging, but it was satisfying to restore the beautiful old building to its former glory. We used authentic stone flooring from the Dordogne region on the ground level, and antique hexagonal terracotta tiles on the upper level. For the bathrooms, we were fortunate to have a talented craftsman named Eric Rebour, an expert in *matériaux anciens*, who would call me from Italian stone quarries to discuss options. He assured me that the materials used when the house was built would have come from neighboring countries, and so we used Arabiscato, Carrara, and Calacatta marbles. In the bathrooms Eric installed carved marble splashback panels—styles inspired by traditional French designs.

During the three-year renovation I would fly to France to meet with the architect and sub-contractors roughly every six weeks. I stayed mostly at the Hotel La Mirande in Avignon, a former cardinal's home, where I fell in love





once stayed in as a family. For that room I had also purchased a beautiful blue antique commode in Paris. Its paintwork was old and crackled, revealing multiple layers of color. I asked our interior paint specialist, Christiane Comtat, to paint the newly installed doors to match the commode, only to be told that it would not be right. In moments like this, the American in me wanted to insist, but I realized that as I had engaged experienced artisans it would be best to give them license to create. Christiane antiqued the doors in her choice of blue and it was fabulous. She was right. I learned to trust her, and I was delighted.

Blue, it seemed, came in a myriad of hues. Finalizing the paint colors on shutters and interior doors was surprisingly one of the biggest challenges. Our very talented painter, Jacques Pons, came to the site each day with a box filled with plastic bottles of paint. I told him what I was looking for and he began squeezing and mixing colors into a bucket. It took days of experimentation and I certainly challenged his patience. When we finally found the perfect blue I was worried that, since it was not a pre-mixed paint, he would not be able to match it to the rest of the house. I asked how he would recreate it; he looked at me with some disdain and simply pointed to his eyes. The French are truly masters of color.

The garden was a huge project, managed beautifully by Alexandre's mother, landscape architect Dominique Lafourcade. She would arrive meticulously dressed in a tweed jacket, Hermès scarf, and coordinating orange gardening boots and beret. Dominique realized my vision of a large cypress allée, bringing magnificent trees from Italy and surrounding them with structured hedges filled with roses that bloom almost continually. Around the tennis court she created the "Luberon Garden," inspired by the arid region of