

Independent Study Homework

What makes Provence distinctive?

In this essay I will be talking about the different features that make Provence distinctive. I will look at three main things; its history, its culture and its geographical landscape. Afterwards I will compare these features to other places I have been to. Hopefully by the end of this essay you will share my belief that Provence really is an incredible, fascinating and intriguing place with so many hidden wonders that you wouldn't be able to find anywhere else in the world.

Provence has a fascinating history as it has been influenced by so many cultures and countries. Provence has been invaded many times. Even before Provence got invaded by the Romans it had been inhabited by the Celts in nine hundred BC and then invaded by the Greeks in six hundred BC. However in the second century AD Provence got invaded by the Romans and the most famous architecture and historical background from Provence comes from the Roman times. Just like many other areas it never stood a chance defending itself against the might of the Roman army. Intriguingly Provence was the first Province to be taken by the Romans outside of Italy. This gave the Romans plenty of time to leave their mark on the Provencal architecture and history.

Provence has ancient but beautiful architecture other areas can only look at in awe. The Romans are well known for their brilliant and creative architecture and they certainly did Provence proud with their stunning buildings. Examples of these are; the three storey aqueduct outside of Nimes which is sadly out of use however you can now walk along the top of it, the amazing theatre in Orange and the amphitheatre in Nimes, which looks strikingly like the coliseum in Rome. Another part of Provence's history is the village of bories in Gordes. Bories are small, stone, hut-like structures often built on hills. Ever since building structures out of stone was possible, farmers have been using them all over the world as farming complexes for their cattle and crops. They were built all around the world in places like Italy, Peru, Mexico, Switzerland and Turkey but none of these places has bories as amazing and as famous as Provence does. Incredibly these bories have been used and lived in until around the twentieth century in places like Provence! The most famous bories in the world belong to Luberon in Provence. They are called 'The Three Soldiers' this is because they are three bories standing next to each other with cone shaped tops which makes them look like they are wearing a helmet.

Even after Provence stopped getting invaded as much, Provence's history and culture grew more and more interesting. Surprisingly Provence has also had an Indian influence. As Indian textiles were shipped in from India around the seventeenth century and they left a big mark on Provencal fashion and design.

Provence has a history that other countries and areas just can't compare to. Even if you compare Provence to a place like England which has a huge and fascinating history it doesn't really come close. Provence has had many changes in its history such as being invaded by; The Romans (who left a huge chunk of their history and architecture behind), The Celts and The Greeks. This combined with the previous points I have talked about like; the Bories and the Indian textiles prove that Provence has a detailed and distinctive history unlike any other place in the world.

Provence has a rich and diverse culture. Provence is well known by tourists for its lavender fields. In fact that is one of the big reasons why so many tourists visit it each year. A great example of a tourist attraction is the Abaye De Senaue which is an old monastery, however it has huge fields full of lavender. The fields did not always use to have lavender in. They used to be full of wheat and other crops. However as the abbey became out of use they started growing lavender here. These newly planted fields are why so many tourists visit it per year. Although you wouldn't expect it they use the lavender they grow in the fields for food. One of the most remarkable things they sell is lavender ice cream. However the local people don't eat it, it's only really for the tourists to taste. When we went there a couple of years ago my dad tried some and from the expression on his face, you could tell it was disgusting. Even so I have never been to place that sells lavender ice cream. Because Provence has so many lavender plants it also lots of bees. The people in Provence gather honey from these bees and sell it in the local market, thankfully they don't do lavender honey because that would be horrible!

Provence has a history of art which has inspired the people of Provence. In 1888 when Van Gogh had left Paris he visited Arles in Provence this is where he painted some of his most famous paintings such as 'Starry Night' and the self portrait of himself that is most commonly used now. These paintings have inspired other artists to come to Provence and paint scenes and pictures of Provence. He inspired artists such as Gauguin and many other not so famous artists to get outside and paint the world which is in my opinion great. Many people have taken inspiration and followed Van Gogh's footsteps and lots of people sell great paintings in the market. To celebrate Provence's great art work and music there is an international festival called the 'd'Art Lyrique d'Aix-en-Provence' which is held in Aix en Provence and happens once a year, traditionally in July. Along with the paintings, lavender ice cream and honey they also sell olives, they grow them all around Provence.

Provence has some beautiful textiles however surprisingly they are Indian. These textiles started being shipped into France in the seventeenth century and they were a big hit so they were continued to be shipped in and they still are today. We loved the Indian textiles so much that we bought one while we were in Provence and we still have it today! Out of all the countries I have been too I don't think I have seen area with such a rich and diverse culture.

Provence has a interesting geographical landscape and history unlike any other countries. Here is a map of Provence.

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In total Provence has a population of 4,506,151 and has an area of 31,400km squared. Amazingly it has 31 million tourists visiting it every year! That's more than seven times than the local population of Provence! That's even more tourists than London has every year. There are various reasons behind this, including the incredible Roman architecture, like the Pont du Gard aqueduct and the theatre at Orange, the beautiful landscape at Senaque and also the all round pleasant climate. Provence claims that it has 300 days of sunlight which is incredible (even though it may not be entirely accurate) and most of the time the temperature is around 20 degrees C, so it's never too hot, but it isn't too cold either.

An interesting geographical feature of Provence is the ochre rock in places like Roussillon and Roustrel. This is because several million years ago the sea used to cover the area but when the sea dried up, the heavy rain slowly changed the accumulated layers of limestone into ochre coloured sand. However in Provence they used this rock to their advantage and they used and still use the rock to create different colours of paint. In fact the first paintings in Provence were cave paintings made out of ochre paint. I remember going to Roussillon on holiday and getting covered in ochre coloured sand, it was almost impossible to stay out off! Provence is also home to Luberon Valley which was formed tectonic plates moving against each other and therefore forming the Luberon Mountain range. I have travelled to lots of places but nothing really comes close to Provence's geographical nature and the beautiful landscapes. All in all I'm not so surprised that so many people visit it every year because it's a beautiful place combined with a fascinating geographical landscape.

In conclusion Provence has a detailed and fascinating history causing it to have a great mix of rich cultures. This combined with the amazing geographical landscape creates a beautiful area which has unsurprisingly turned into a massive tourist hot spot and I'm really pleased that me and my family will be going there this summer to enjoy the pleasures of Provence. I hope that after you have read this essay you will share the same view as me about Provence and I hope I have inspired you to read and find out more about Provence.