



The girls: Vanessa & Bianca

The date: July, 2001

The destination: Languedoc, France

After the last production with Franziska and Louisa in southern France went so well, I really wanted to go there once again this summer. This time I had, among others, a certain destination in mind: the Cote Vermeille, the very last section of the French Mediterranean coast, the last kilometers before the Spanish border. Here, the Pyrenees reach as far as the sea and form a magnificent, wild coast of black rock.

We spent weeks waiting for better weather. In Germany, it was terrible; in southern France, not much better. Finally, it looks like we have a little luck. Since we're traveling a bit farther this time, we've divided the journey there into one and a half days - I'm not driving 1400 kilometers in one go. Booking the hotels was a pain in the neck this time: it's the high season, and I kept hearing the same thing: "c'est complet"; but in the end, I managed to pull it all together.



Saturday, July 21st, 2001: First day of journey

2:30 p.m.: I pick up Heike, my makeup artist. This time I got a big Audi from the car rental service, and for our quantity of baggage, we also somehow do need this format.

4:30 p.m.: We meet up with Vanessa and Bianca at the main train station in Frankfurt. They've both just arrived with the train coming from the direction of Dresden. They've never been to southern France and are in the best of moods.

7:30 p.m.: For the interim stay, I've sought out a nice private hotel on the edge of the city of Freiburg. From here, we can drive a comfortable day's pace to the Cote Vermeille tomorrow. The evening is still young, there is enough time to drive around the city center and look for a nice restaurant. The southern German metropolis gives every effort on this tepid summer evening to live up to its reputation: it's warm, it's lively, it's beautiful.

Sunday, July 22nd: Second day of journey

8:45 a.m.: Finally, all the baggage is in the car. I've pressed a little, because we have nearly 1000 kilometers ahead of us today, and I would like to arrive not so very late, so that we also still have something of the evening.

2:30 p.m.: A highway rest stop near Nimes. Nowhere are there such pretty highway rest stops as in France, and this one is especially nice: light limestone and shady pines let the southern mood emerge, there are even cicadas. "La Languedocienne" is the name of the route - even the highways have charming names in this country!

6:00 p.m.: We are already in Argeles sur Mer, not far from the Cote Vermeille, much earlier than I had expected. I had tried to find a hotel in one of the beautiful towns directly on the coast, but I had to be content with the further inland-situated Argeles. Still, the city is quite nice.

6:30 p.m.: However, we don't want to spend the evening here. We drive to Banyuls, a place in a picturesque setting in a bay on the coast. The girls are excited: much sea, much view and a strong atmosphere. We swim a little, then we go to one of the restaurants on the beach promenade and eat fish and seafood.



Finally in the south! First, off to the beach.



Going topless and making the men crazy - Vanessa looks forward to it!



Skilled: Heike and the seafood.



Romantic: the bay of Banyuls at night.



Monday, July 23rd: First day of work

5:30 a.m.: Enough vacation mood; from today, it's time to work. Vanessa is with Heike, getting made up; Bianca can sleep a little later today.

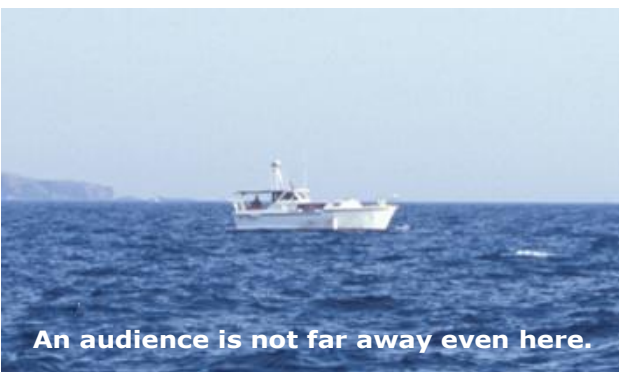


Makeup studio by dawn's early light.



6:30 a.m.: I look out the window and get a huge fright: the streets are wet! Damn, it's raining, I think and dart into Heike's room, cursing, while she's working on Vanessa. But, Heike is able to calm me down: just before, a street cleaning vehicle had driven through and caused the flood. Uff! Clean folks, those French!

7:15 a.m.: I'm with Vanessa on location, a wild, rocky section of coast. The sea is shining in the light of the rising sun. Super! Only, the sea



An audience is not far away even here.

urchins are making life hard for us. There are so many that you can only move about with great care.



The horror of the Cote Vermeille: sea urchins!

10:15 a.m.: I'm finally back at the hotel with Vanessa. Actually, breakfast is served only until 10 a.m.; but with a little effort and a tip, we are able to still get something. Bianca is already ready.

11:00 a.m.: We drive together again on the coast, now it's Bianca's turn. Vanessa would like to stay in the car and read, which was a good choice: the descent on the steep bluff is long and hard here. I don't find it overly challenging, but Bianca has completely another opinion. Despite the mountain boots I lent her, she is still quite afraid. I'm glad that Heike is along to help Bianca with moral support and to gently guide her down. Upon finally reaching the bottom, the kid likes it here after all. Besides that, we are all alone here: only we are crazy enough to climb down here, and with a boat, one can't land on the rocky coast.



A seafaring passenger.



Base camp at the fortress.



2:30 p.m.: Enough with the coast. We also still want to head a piece back in the northwest direction and drive a bit further inland today.

5:30 p.m.: Actually, it's already a bit late, but I'd still like to do something today. I've got some fortress ruins in mind that lie on a western slope high over land and that should offer good lighting conditions in the evening. And I figured right: in a good atmosphere, I work with Vanessa until shortly before sunset.

9:15 p.m.: Finally done for today. We still have to drive a whole hour to get to the hotel. Actually, we wanted to have a little bite to eat; but now, nobody wants to anymore and would like to just go to bed. I have a guilty conscience because I torture my people so. Still, the hotel is very pretty, situated directly on the marketplace in a little town.



The old ruins says goodbye magnificently.

Tuesday, July 24th: **Second day of work**

7:30 a.m.: This time, Bianca had to get up early; I drive with her to a little river which is spanned by a picturesque bridge. We work on the rocky banks and in the shallow water. An angler is there, but fortunately, Bianca isn't so sensitive about spectators. I just have to be careful not to get any rods or floaters in the background.



Early morning in a small French town: the market men are already at work.

10:00 a.m.: Back at the hotel, eat breakfast, and then pack Vanessa and Heike in the car. We drive

once again back to the river, but in the meantime, we are no longer alone there: a sizable swimming bustle has taken over. In spite of this, I quickly shoot a couple of rolls of film with Vanessa. The French are tolerant; in this country, one can get away with a few things in this respect! The only problem is, I need to have the picture background free, which restricts me a bit. After a half hour, it gets too full for us anyway.



Return journey: wide is the car, narrow is the path.

12:30 p.m.: On my location scouting in the spring, I tracked down an old village lying completely in ruins, and for a seemingly long time, such that the decay had reached a pronounced picturesque stage. The village is located a few kilometers away from the nearest street, but fortunately, one can drive up with the car - a hike schlepping baggage in this heat is something I wouldn't expect of us. It's worth it, though: super light disposition and enough pretty corners to bring the production to a well-rounded close. In the meantime, a French extended family shows up with the minivan, but takes off again after a short sight-seeing tour.



A break: it's lovely in the shade.

5:00 p.m.: Done! We've worked enough; I don't want to overdo it. Besides, I would like to stop a little earlier today, as compensation for the overrun yesterday evening. We make a short swim break at a river on the way, then it's back to our little hotel on the marketplace.

7:00 p.m.: In France, a good time to go to a restaurant. We're the first guests; we can choose our table and we get great service. We sit under sycamores and put away a three-course meal including wine - a lovely end!



End: it's even better in the water!

Wednesday, July 25th: **Day of departure**

Since we've meanwhile advanced a good piece of the way back, we manage to make the return journey in one day. I just don't understand how it is that the Dutch so enjoy traveling with a trailer: on the Rhone valley highway, it's one big Dutch

trailer caravan. It gets a bit pressed with tailgating. We still manage to stick somewhat to schedule and drop off the girls punctually in Frankfurt.