



The girls: Nastassja & Manuela

The date: July, 2002

The destination: Provence, France

**A**fter the first two extremely successful trips in 2001, the south of France has become my favourite area for production. A friendly climate and good accessibility are a big plus, next to the wonderful locations. While the last two trips led us to Languedoc, which is situated more in the western part, this time we are going right to the heart of the Provence region: the valley of Apt!

From a technical viewpoint, this was a premiere for me. Having received numerous recommendations from colleagues, I purchased a digital camera. My Nikon D1x had performed brilliantly during several tests, and this will be my first time using it professionally.

### Tuesday, July 2nd, 2002: **Day of arrival**

**9:00 a.m.:** It is time to get on the road. Since the south of France is not so terribly far away, we always travel by car. When I say "we" I mean Nastassja, Manuela and Heike, the make-up artist. The weather at home is horrible, but I trust the German service forecast weather, which promised wonderful sunshine for the south of France. And luckily enough, the forecast was correct!

**10:00 p.m.:** After ten hours on the motorway and one-and-a-half hours on a country road, we have finally arrived at our destination: a cosy little hotel in a small village, close to Gordes, that I remembered from an earlier trip. Just like the village, the little hotel is a typical Provence stone house that is more than a hundred years old. We

are staying in a guest house with three rooms to ourselves.



**Nice stay here: our little hotel.**

### Wednesday, July 3rd: **First day of work**

**6:00 a.m.:** The morning shootings just after sunrise have worked out so satisfactorily in the past, that I decided to work in the same way. For Manuela, who is quite adventurous, I chose a

location that seemed remarkable to me. Close to Gordes, there is an old oil mill that was built directly under a rock. The mill hasn't been used for ages, but since a big part of the plant was built



**Preparing for the first shoot.**



from stone or was carved directly into the stone, a lot of the original architecture is still there - a thrilling setting for our pictures.

*7:30 a.m.:* Manuela is enjoying the walk to the mill in the cool morning air and my spirits are high as I see my vision becoming reality. The low morning sun is sending it's rays through the few and very small windows of the otherwise dim room, shedding warm and lovely light. And the new camera has passed it's first test. Since it is still rather dark, I have to work at an extremely high sensitivity level. This is an advantage of digital technique.



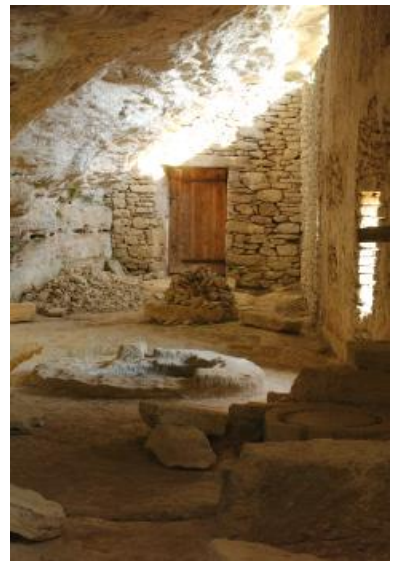
*10:30 a.m.:* We 've made a good start. We are back at the hotel

**Down in the mud: Manu is up for any kind of fun!**

to pick up Heike and Nastassja. Our next stop is a little ravine with a waterfall in the hills. It is about half-hour drive by car.

*12:00 p.m.:* The canyon's opening faces east. I feared there wouldn't be enough sun at noon, but my fear was unfounded. The crickets seem to favour this place, as well: their noise can't be escaped. Heike adjusts the make-up while I am starting to shoot with Nastassja. Just as we want to shoot, a German family shows up and settles down at the little waterfall we had chosen for our shooting. Unfortunately, there aren't so many waterfalls around for us to choose another one. The German tourists don't seem to realise that they are in the way. There is nothing for us to do but wait.

*12:30 p.m.:* We can finally start! Nastassja is not really a professional model but she seems very talented. She starts to pose beautifully right away, as the light is softened by a few thin clouds. After about an hour, I take Manuela into a stone cave to do a little double session. It is rather dark in there, but digital technology helps us out.



**What a location: the old oil mill.**



**...it even comes with a spot for changing clothes!**



**A little freshening up...**



**...and then into the mountains!**

*1:30 p.m.:* A small problem arises. My new notebook had shovelled the picture data onto its hard drive for the last hour or so to make room on my memory cards, causing the notebook's rechargeable batteries to give up on me. Darn! Now I am standing here with a notebook that doesn't work and four memory cards that are full and can't be emptied. Full of regret because I could have spent all afternoon at this location, I decide to call it a day.



*4:00 p.m.:* In order to obtain electricity, we have to go back to the hotel, although this proves to be quite a detour that I would have preferred to avoid. While the others are ha-ving a late lunch, I am now finally loading the data from the memory cards onto my hard

disc. I find the loss of time quite aggravating because I still have some work lined up on my schedule.

*6:00 p.m.:* We couldn't start back on the road until about an hour ago, and it took us another hour to get to our next location, a small church.

Meanwhile, clouds darken the light and the mood is just as dark, but we'll manage somehow.

*9:00 p.m.:* Finally, we have reached the end of our workday. We are happy to be back at our hotel. The waitress doesn't seem to like the fact that we are speaking English when we address her and doesn't understand a word we say.



**Wet hair? No problem!**



**At the nicest moments, the computer fails!**

8:00 a.m.: Today it is Nasti's turn for the morning photo shoot. I am taking her to the famous quarries of Rustrel. The coloured rocks are a fabulous background, but as with all great tourist attractions, you can only work there in the morning. We make it there just before eight. Actually, it's much too late. Somehow, her spirits aren't what they were yesterday; her poses aren't quite as dynamic as they were the day before. Still, we are getting quite a bit of work

accomplished before the first tourists show up around nine o'clock and totally ruin her inspiration. "I am not a peep-show," she growls even though nobody even looked at her. From that moment on, she keeps an eye on the approach of what she considers an enemy attack, and I realise that it doesn't make sense to continue working there.

11:00 a.m.: Today, I transferred the data from the memory card in the hotel, so there wouldn't be another disaster with my notebook. On our way to the next location, we buy food for lunch, so the girls won't lose their good mood again.

2:00 p.m.: We've finally made it to the second location, a wonderful rocky landscape. Everybody had lunch, the make up has been freshened up and we can go on working. At first, both girls together. Then a solo shoot for Nasti. A cheap rag from Hennes and Mauritz proves to be an outstanding prop and amidst the Provençal landscape it doesn't look as tacky as it did in the store.

4:00 p.m.: I decide to take a drive to one last location to work with Manuela, even though I know that this decision will account for another long and tedious day. It is a long drive and Heike prefers to get dropped in a nice small town. I run the heavy BMW along the curves of a



**High above the valley of Apt: the fortress city of Gordes.**



country road, angry about the fact that the good locations always have to be so far apart, while the girls are probably wishing they had never met me.

*6:00 p.m.:* While looking for locations last year, I found a nice little remote spot in the Verdon-Canyon with a waterfall and a little creek. The path leading there is quite adventurous and Nasti has enough common sense to stay in the car. Manuela, however, loves to climb and is quite amused about the idea of taking a shower under a waterfall. Unfortunately, the light is not good, and the creek I had been looking forward to

proves to be a rocky dried-out gutter in mid-summer. Who would have expected that? I am annoyed.

*9:00 p.m.:* On our way back, we picked up Heike again. She had spent a nice evening in that small town. We are disappointed to find out that the restaurant in our village is closed for the day. We drive to Gordes, which is just a few miles away and considered one of the most beautiful cities of the Provence area. In the evening, however, it seems pretty dead and we have to resort to a second-class pizza place.

## Friday, July 5th: **Day of departure**



**I will miss it:  
our village  
fountain.**

*9:00 a.m.:* We actually manage to get started on time and we leave our small hotel in the little village on the little hill not without regret. There is a lot of traffic on the motorway again. I had taken that into account, but I hadn't expected it to be so jammed. In spite of all the problems, I am confident that this trip has again proven to be worth the effort.