

...  
: on your feet

# *A sculpture off the* **old block**



---

## **Kate Maynard**

describes a unique art holiday which is rewarding in more ways than one.

**D**o you like the idea of returning from a holiday with more to show for it than sunburn and a dicky stomach? Then stone carving in France might be right up your *rue*. On a stone carving holiday in rural Normandy you can create your very own sculpted masterpiece while enjoying the charm of a small, typically Norman hotel surrounded by a lush garden and open farmland.

Week-long sculpting courses at the hotel are led by Sally Hersh, a professional sculptor, letter carver and sundial maker who also

teaches in West Sussex. 'The proportion of dentists and doctors who come on my courses is curiously high,' says Sally, which is why she approached *Vital*. 'Everyone arrives very excited and we have had wonderful weeks outside in the fresh air and sunshine but protected under the large marquee which has sides that are rolled up every morning.'

All-day tuition takes place in this covered outdoor workshop. The cost of the holiday includes full board at the hotel with sumptuous gourmet food and wine provided by the hotel 'patron' in his family-style country dining room. The hotel itself is 30 minutes





from the harbour town of Honfleur which is located on the southern bank of the Seine estuary, about 95 miles from Paris or accessible from Le Havre or Caen ferry ports.

If the last time you carved anything was your name, in a tree trunk, fear not, for Sally encourages a mixture of new and more experienced students. She provides support for those ready and able to get stuck in, and detailed instruction for beginners on all aspects of carving and completing a carving.

A brochure sent before the course start date explains that students prepare a 'maquette' (a small clay or plasticine model) in advance, of something they would like to carve. Popular choices have included cats, torsos or even a large head – something quite fluid or tactile is a good choice. 'Last year one man made a Morgan car,' says Sally. 'It was only 12 inches wide but he was thrilled with it!' The instructions also mention unsuitable items such as a horse standing on thin legs, which stone can't support.

Students also have to take a piece of stone with them and a couple of other items which are listed in the instructions and available to buy in the UK. In Sally's 35 years of experience she has sculpted in limestones, soapstone, marble and alabaster, as well as bronzes. 'I like finely marked stone so that its beauty blends in with the sculpture and enhances it and does not overwhelm the design in any way,'



On opposite page: *Virages*, a sculpture by Sally Hersh. Above (top): A student on last year's course receives advice. Above: Saint Simeon Hotel.

she says on her website, where a gallery of her past work can be viewed.

What better way to relieve the stress of your everyday life could there be than taking a mallet to a slab of stone? You are bound to become engrossed as you chisel away and transform stone into art. The therapeutic benefits of being creative in this way, while also enjoying everything rural France has to offer, will make this holiday one you'll never forget. Not least because you'll take home the best possible souvenir!

**The 2007 stone carving course will run on two separate weeks: 2-7 September and 9-14 September and costs £495 per person, based on full board sharing a double room. During this time the hotel is reserved for these courses and can accept a maximum of ten students only on each of the weeks. For further information contact Sally Hersh on 01798 861248, email [admin@sallyhersh.com](mailto:admin@sallyhersh.com) or see [www.sallyhersh.com](http://www.sallyhersh.com).**