

SKETCHING AND WATERCOLOURING IN NATURE with Alan Johnston

Le Grippault, Richelieu, France
Mon. 27 April - Sat. 2 May 2026

LE GRIPPAULT
legrippault.fr



ABOUT ACADÉMIE LE GRIPPAULT

Le Grippault is a special place in the heart of the Loire Valley, where art, nature and stories come together. We, Leonoor and Jeroen, founded Académie Le Grippault as a meeting place for people who want to connect, create and play. Visitors come here to slow down, to step away from their usual rhythm and surroundings, and to reconnect with their head, heart and hands.

Each year, we invite artists, makers and curious minds to take part in our programme of masterclasses, residencies and cultural events. Several times a year, we host A Week at Le Grippault for those who wish to get a taste of life at Le Grippault — the surroundings, the activities and the encounters with other participants. It's a relaxed way to get to know the place, the people and the atmosphere that make our academy so special.

ABOUT ALAN JOHNSTON



Alan is a British-Luxembourgish author-illustrator of eighteen books in five languages, including one award-winning title in France. A passionate naturalist since the age of 13, he has filled more than 300 field sketchbooks, blending scientific precision with artistic expression to create what he calls "poetic geography." Alan has traveled widely in France and abroad. His work often emerges from immersive travels across diverse regions all over the world. Holding a PhD in Visual Arts, he is also an experienced educator, teaching from primary schools to universities, and collaborating with many cultural institutions in Europe. Leonoor and Jeroen got to know Alan through his work. We bought his lovely sketchbook on the Golfe du Morbihan while we spent our holidays there. We instantly fell in love with his watercolours and vivid descriptions of nature, and starting dreaming about Alan giving a workshop at Le Grippault. We wrote him a letter and that is how this collaboration with Alan started!



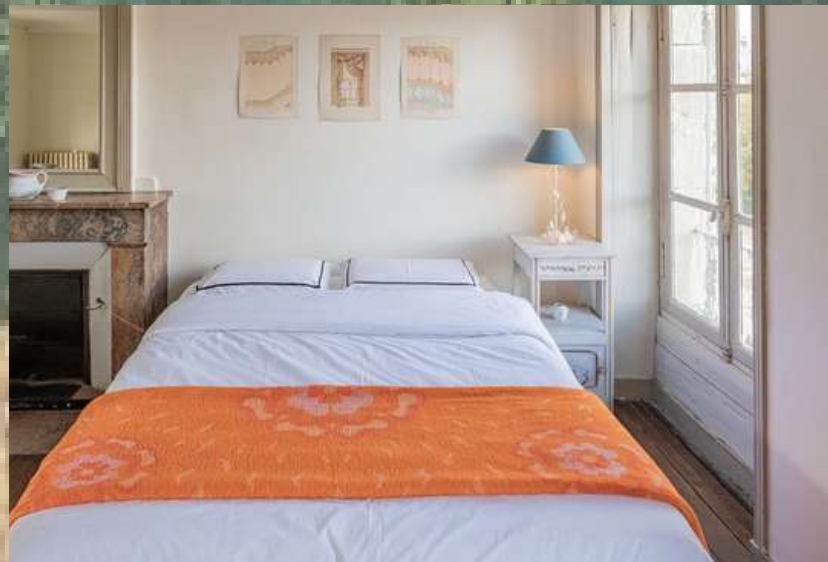
LE GRIPPAULT ESTATE



Le Grippault is a 19th-century estate, originally built as a hunting lodge: a place made for cooking, dining and celebration. In the early 20th century, the wings were added, and since then it has always been home to families. The estate borders Richelieu, a historic town built in the 17th century at the command of the illustrious Cardinal Richelieu. His château once stood right next to our grounds. Our estate covers twenty hectares of open meadows and private woodland. From Le Grippault, it's just a short walk into the village, with its shops and cafés, or you can wander through the woods and enjoy beautiful walks in the surrounding countryside.



ACCOMMODATION



Le Grippault offers eight carefully designed guest rooms, each with its own bathroom. You can book a room for yourself or share with another participant. All rooms and bathrooms are fitted with heating and double glazing. The shared spaces include a generous dining room, a salon filled with books, paintings and collected objects, and a music room with a grand piano. The welcoming kitchen is where Jeroen or our befriended chef Laure cooks for you. Behind the house, you'll find our natural swimming pool and wood-fired hot tub. From the garden, you can wander straight into the woods.



PROGRAMME

This workshop invites you to deepen your looking at nature, through sketching in nature. You'll learn to observe a landscape or a small piece of nature, and translate it into sketches on paper. These sketches could serve as a basis for small watercolour paintings.

Upon your arrival at Le Grippault on Monday afternoon you can settle into your room and take a walk around our domain. You will check your materials with Alan and do a small sketching exercise. During dinner you will have the opportunity to get to know everyone. Tuesday till Friday will be dedicated to working outside. On Wednesday you will have a free day. Académie Le Grippault proposes an artistic excursion in the region. Or, if you prefer, you can use the day to continue working.

You will learn how to make watercolours 'en plein air' from found objects, plants, landscapes, insects... We will work at Le Grippault, at a local vineyard with a mesmerizing view, and at a farm nearby. You will learn how to make cloud studies and wide landscape views. We will work on drawing chickens. And there will be a day of urban sketching in the lovely town and park of Richelieu.

Alan: *"Teaching people to draw and paint nature -in nature- builds patience and the ability to truly look and see. And it's fun. Getting close to nature is a wonderful antidote to stress. My approach is holistic. I include warm-up exercises, right-brain activities, breathing techniques and even simple ball games to loosen the hand. I work as individually as possible, following each person's progress. I don't teach finished "recipes"; I share the know-how that allows students to keep learning long after the class. Teaching is my way of giving thanks, of returning something to the soil, and of raising awareness of the bigger environmental picture. It's also a continuing source of ideas for my own art."*



MATERIALS TO BRING



You are very welcome to bring along a sketchbook you are currently working in. However, please note that Alan can provide high-quality sketchbooks at a very reasonable price. For those who prefer to work on a larger scale, it would be wonderful if you could bring a pad of CANSON MONTVAL Watercolour Paper (200–300 gsm) in A4 or A3 size. Please also bring a putty rubber (or “Gomme mi-pain”, such as the one from Faber-Castell) and a 3B pencil.

Don't worry if you don't have all the materials – Alan will bring plenty of supplies and will be happy to lend you what you need during the workshop.

You are also encouraged to bring any sketchbooks or published books you particularly like and would be willing to share with the group – and, of course, lots of enthusiasm! A more detailed packing list will be provided after registration.



PRACTICAL

Address

Château Le Grippault
47 Avenue de la Coupure du Parc
37120 Chavegens, Frankrijk

Travel

You arrange your own travel. We hope you'll come by train, or share a car journey with other guests. Before the trip, you'll receive a travel schedule so you can coordinate your journey with fellow participants.

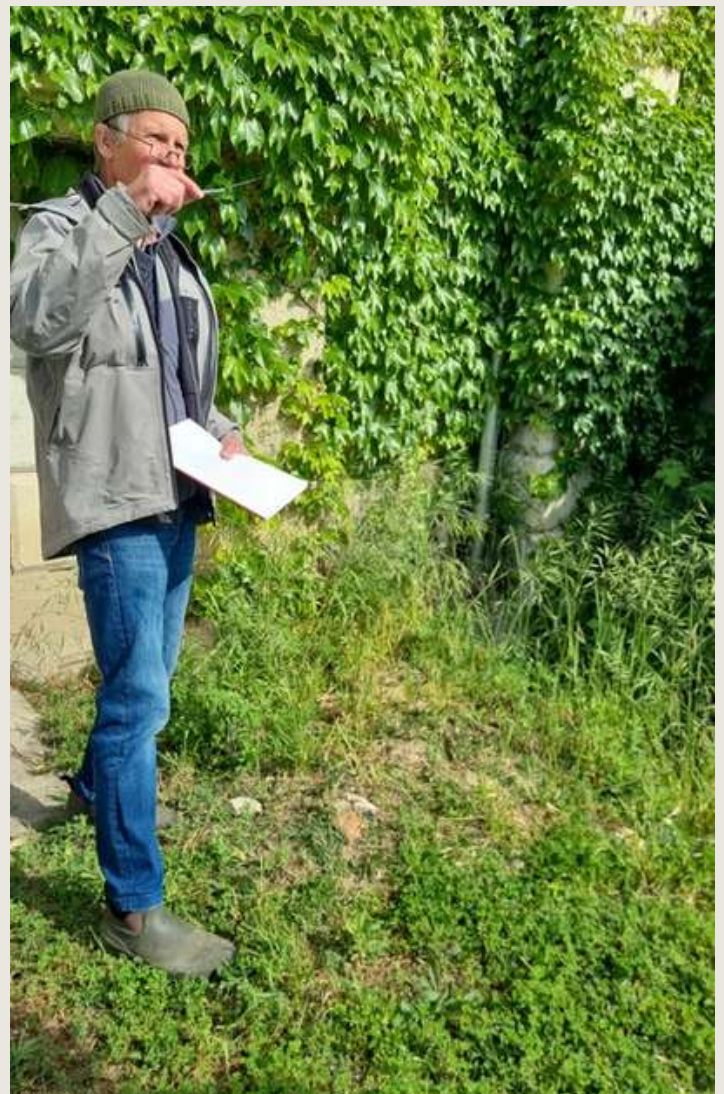
By train: take the Eurostar to Paris Gare du Nord, then the TGV from Paris Montparnasse to Châtellerault (about 30 minutes from Le Grippault). We'll collect everyone travelling by train from there, and we'll let you know which TGV to take. It's quite difficult to reach the house by public transport on your own.

By car: take the A10 towards Bordeaux and exit at junction 25, Sainte-Maure-de-Touraine. From there, it's about 25 kilometres to Le Grippault.

Digital Detox- a week offline

Leave your devices at home, give your loved ones our emergency number, and spend a week living fully in the here and now of Le Grippault.

You can also leave your phone with us for safekeeping. All options are open for discussion.





PRICES

Single room: **€1,280**, including 10% VAT

Shared room: **€950** per person, including 10% VAT

Our prices are based on four days and five nights and include:

- Transport to and from Châtelleraut TGV station (30 minutes)
- Excursions
- Three meals a day
- Towels and bed linen
- Extra activities with our neighbours, such as massages, horse riding or tastings, are not included in the price but can be booked in advance.

Please note: The number of single rooms is limited, so early booking is recommended.



MORE INFORMATION & REGISTRATION

Would you like to register or do you have any questions?

Don't hesitate to get in touch with us at:
info@legrippault.fr

For more information and plenty more photos, visit our website:
www.legrippault.fr

Or have a look on Instagram: @legrippault

For a great tv-item about Alan and his work, do watch this [video](#).

We look forward to welcoming you to Le Grippault!

