



Glorious Minimalism

Along the Camino de Santiago

Photos & Text by Gaëlle Le Boulicaut and Jeremy Callaghan



Every year, Christèle Ageorges and her husband, Hubert Delance, walk a section of the celebrated *Camino de Santiago* (The Way of Saint James) — an epic 500-mile pilgrimage route from the Pyrenees mountains in France to the Spanish town of Santiago de Compostela. Several years ago, their path led them through Lectoure, a quiet hilltop village overlooking the fertile plains between Bordeaux and Toulouse.



“We were instantly enchanted,” says Christèle, an interior and set designer from Paris. They began to explore. Ducking

off the main street of the village, the couple chanced upon the boarded-up remains of what had clearly been a grand building in its day. After some inquiries,

they learnt that the long stone building had been the site of a royal tannery — also known as the *Manufacture Royale de Lectoure* — built in 1754 by the French architect, Pierre Racine.

In the intervening centuries, the tannery had taken on several incarnations — the last as a retirement home. By the time Christèle and Hubert visited, it had been abandoned for 30 years, and on the market for more than a decade. “I’ve always loved abandoned places, even if it’s always sad to see our heritage being damaged,” Christèle says.

Christèle, at a point in her life where she felt in need of a change, was inspired to renovate. “My husband and I were immediately enthusiastic about the idea of restoring it to its former glory,” she says. “I had the opportunity to create a place that felt like home to me.” It was the start of a transformative three-year adventure.

Moving from Paris to the village, they set to work rescuing the abandoned structure, with the idea of converting it into a boutique hotel under the same name. “My vision was to make a place that I would have liked to have stayed” when she was walking the *Camino*, notes Christèle. “I felt it was important to adhere to a sense of sobriety.







The entire building — measuring 1,200 square meters, or 13,000 square feet — was stripped and reduced to its original features. “This was an industrial building, which is significant. It was designed as a tannery, not a bourgeois manor house, so there are no decorative details,” says Christèle. “Maintaining this honesty that the building displayed was important, but so was a space that was comfortable and conducive to reflection.”

Christèle chronicled the renovation on Instagram, and her regular posts soon attracted the attention

of friends, as well as Studio Foltzer, a design studio with offices in Paris and Marseille, who came on board to help. With the aid of a Paris-based architect, François Muracciole, plans for five bedrooms and three suites were drawn up.

Despite the many creative professionals who helped bring the project to life, as a stylist by profession, it was guided by Christèle’s aesthetic vision, which permeates the worn and comforting walls. Each room exhibits traces of its history, touches of contemporary design, and considered color choices.

The renovation incorporates few decorative details, respecting the site’s origins as an industrial building.





The walls feature bespoke lime washes with a velvety texture that add to the monastic feel

The walls feature washes from a collection that she developed specifically for the project, in partnership with Lime Wash, a French Paint manufacturer. The velvety matte texture of the wash adds to the monastic feel of the interior. “Our natural surroundings are my greatest inspiration,” says the stylist. She is particularly drawn to pastel tones: faded pinks; the greens of lichen or artichoke; the beige of dried hemp and the gray of a turtledove. “They are my favorite colors,” she says. The lime wash is applied on top of the pigments with a thick brush, creating an end result that reflects a soft and subtle light. The effect is perfectly suited to the monastic spirit of the place.

After five years of renovations, the new Manufacture Royale opened its doors to guests in 2022. In homage to the pilgrims’ spirit that led the couple on this adventure in the first place, Christèle and Hubert have designated a series of rooms in the restored cellars for walkers of the trail. *Peregrinos* (pilgrims) can take a break from their journey for a couple of days of rest in minimalist, but stylish, comfort.

The premises, meanwhile, have also become a permanent home for Christèle and Hubert, who gave up their busy lives in Paris to devote themselves fully to their new project. Christèle regularly organizes art exhibitions, afternoon teas, micro conferences, pop-ups and cooking lessons, which all ensure a constant flow of creative energy within the old stone walls. Her trademark simplicity is in constant evidence: touches like homemade *citronnade* (lemonade) served in the garden, and the aesthetic stillness of a dried fern frond posed in a vase. *

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“ Our natural
surroundings
are my greatest
inspiration ”







The muted color palette reflects Christèle's partiality for pastels, especially pinks, greens and greys

Christèle's aim was a simple, sober refuge for pilgrims walking the Camino de Santiago

