

The View From Cezanne's Studio

by Con Chapman

The guide book said the one thing you shouldn't miss in Aix was the view from Cezanne's atelier.

The No. 1 bus dropped me off on a hill and the man standing by the driver said "La bas," down there, and so I walked to where two college girls were standing, waiting for the gates to open at 2, after lunch.



Up the hill came a man waving me off, saying "Don't do it, it's not worth it." He was about my age, less hair, near-sighted like me I guessed from his glasses. "It costs five euros," he said, and the college girls looked at him with studied condescension; how could he know more than their professor had taught them?

"I've lived here all my life," he said. "The view's better up the hill—for free." We climbed higher and he told me he worked in a hotel in town. He pronounced the painter's name *SEA*-son, not say-ZON.

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“Is that how *he* said it?” I asked.

“What—the name? Sea-son, say-zon,” he said,
as if it made a difference only to snobs.



“Up there is the *promenade du peintres*—
the walk of the painters,” he said,
“turn left—you’ll see it.” I thanked him and
made my way up to the peak. An older woman was climbing
ahead of me, slowly, so I turned and looked—
Sainte-Victoire stood there, a shell against the sea of a sky.
I thought I knew then why his brush strokes seemed so rough.

