

Letter B02
Arles, 18th March 1888

My dear Bernard,

Having promised to write, I want to begin by telling you that the country struck me as being as beautiful as Japan for the limpidity of the atmosphere and gay colour effects. The water makes patches of a beautiful emerald and a rich blue in the landscapes, such as we see in crepons [Japanese prints]. The pale orange setting sun making the land appear blue. Splendid yellow suns.

Meanwhile I haven't really seen the country in its normal summer splendor.

The costumes of the women are pretty and especially on Sunday one sees on the boulevard very naive and well-found colour arrangements. And that without doubt will become even brighter in summer.

I regret that life here is not as cheap as I had hoped it would be, and up to now I have not found better bargains than you would find in Pont Aven.

I started out by paying 5 Fr. and now I am down to 4 Francs a day. It would be necessary to know the locals here and to know how to eat bouillabaisse and aioli [garlic paste] and also one needs to find an inexpensive little bourgeois pension. If there were several of us, I am given to believe, conditions would be more advantageous.

There would be perhaps a real advantage as well for artists who love the sun and colour that exist in the Midi. If the Japanese are not working in their country it is certain that their art continues in France. At the top of this letter I am sending you a small sketch of a study that I am trying to make something of – sailors with their sweethearts going up to the town, which is profiled by the strange silhouette of its drawbridge on a huge yellow sun [F 544, JH 1369]. I have another study of the same drawbridge with a group of washerwomen [F 397, JH 1368]. I will be happy with a word from you to know what you are doing and where you are going. A good cordial handshake to you and to our friends,

The best to you,
Vincent