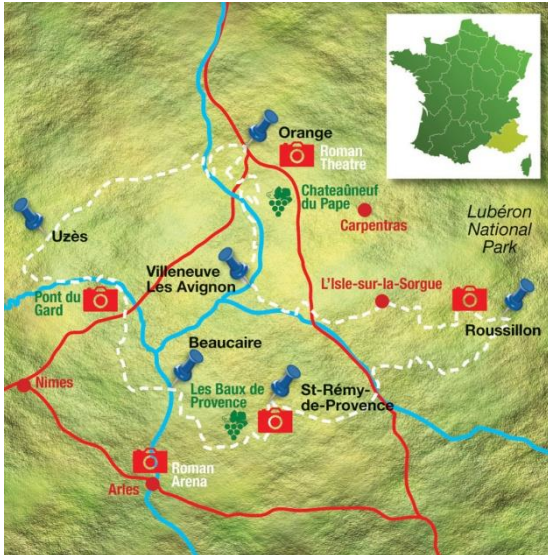


Cycling Safaris

PROVENCE 2024

Guided Tour

Guide cycling with group | 240 km | 7 nights / 8 days



Provence is one of the most beautiful regions of France, particularly the Lubéron National Park made famous in Peter Mayles 'A Year in Provence'. Naturally this tour explores the Lubéron, but we'll also introduce you to an amazing Roman heritage, including the Roman Theatre in Orange, the excavated town of Glanum and the majestic aqueduct at the Pont du Gard, perhaps the highlight of the week.

Provence boasts a distinctive cuisine featuring fresh herbs, olive oil, and a huge variety of locally-grown produce - easily the best region in France for vegetarians - and depending on the season we help ourselves to cherries, apricots, peaches and figs. It's an interesting wine region too, including famous Châteauneuf du Pape, it's lesser known but very classy neighbours Gigondas and Vacqueyrac, and Tavel, rated by many as the finest rosé wine in France.

Our tour will take you through beautiful towns and villages, along back-roads, tracks and cycle paths, past olive groves and vineyards.



TOUR ITINERARY

Day 1 Saturday Arrival in Avignon

Arrive at the hotel in Villeneuve Les Avignon. Most people arrive in Avignon by TGV either from Paris or from London, although there are some direct flights to Avignon and to Nimes. Our first night is spent at the Residence les Cedres with our host, Christophe.

Day 2 Sunday Avignon to St. Rémy de Provence 22 miles / 36 km

An easy day to get into the swing of things. We'll take advantage of a cycle path to follow the River Rhone almost as far as Aramon, where we cross the river and continue our way to St Rémy de Provence. In St Rémy we'll visit the Roman town of Glanum just outside the town. Dating from 27 BC, Glanum was part of the Romanisation of Provence, but was abandoned 300 years later after the town was overrun by the German Alamanni tribe. By the time the population left Glanum for St Remy, just a mile away, they had built two huge monuments, a mausoleum and a triumphal arch. The town itself, with its underground water systems broken and blocked, became submerged in mud and scree sediments from the nearby Alpilles, so until the 1920s Glanum had disappeared, there were just two huge Roman monuments next to the road which is now the D5. It wasn't until 1921 that anybody realised that on the other side of the road was a hidden Roman town. It's great, fascinating, and we'll go and have a look.

On the way we'll pass the asylum where Vincent Van Gogh voluntarily committed himself after his tempestuous time in Arles. St Remy itself is a very pretty town, lots of nice bars and restaurants. We'll stay at the Castelet des Alpilles, and we'll eat in the heart of St Rémy.

Day 3 Monday St. Rémy to Cavaillon 30 miles / 48 km

We set off due west, as if we were headed back towards the Rhone, but we turn onto the D27 to cycle through the Alpilles to Les Baux de Provence. This must be the most beautiful stretch of cycling on any Chain Gang tour. This road is reason enough for somebody to invent the bike. We follow the little river, the Gaudre de Valmouriane, winding through spectacular scenery as the Alpilles begin to build either side of us. Truly beautiful.

We've a decent climb into Les Baux, a fascinating, ruined fortress. Ruled over for centuries by (alleged) descendants of Balthazar, one of the biblical 3 Kings, this fortress was able to wreak havoc throughout Provence and as far afield as Toulouse. Eventually it became part of France, but following a rebellion was destroyed by none other than Cardinal Richelieu of Three Musketeers fame. Ten years later it was given to Monaco (the current Marquise of Les Baux is Princess Caroline of Monaco) and in the 19th century was the site for the discovery of aluminium ore, hence 'bauxite'.

Astonishingly, Les Baux became such a backwater that it effectively disappeared. Rediscovered after World War II, it's been excavated and restored to what we see today - a ruined fortress surrounded by tourist shops! Don't let me put you off, Les Baux is fascinating and has some of the best views you could possibly imagine.

Today we'll visit an olive farm at Maussane Domaine Plaines Marguerite and we finish our day in Cavaillon in a delightful old quarter of the town at the Hotel de Parc.

Day 4 Tuesday Cavaillon to Montoux 29 miles / 47 km

Having left the Alpilles behind, we cycle into the Lubéron. Today, there is a memorable hill! First of all we'll visit the beautiful village of Gordes, where we'll take a break and enjoy this delightful village. Then it's away into the Lubéron, climbing to visit the iconic Abbey de Senanque - even the Michelin guide calls the Abbey 'iconic', so I'm on safe ground. Leaving the Abbey we're still climbing a beautiful road through stunning Lubéron scenery, and we'll earn our spectacular descent into Carpentras.

We stay just outside Carpentras in Montoux, and we'll enjoy stunning views of Mont Ventoux, The Giant of Provence, which we definitely DON'T have to cycle up!

Day 5 Wednesday Monteux Roundtrip

26 miles / 41 km

Tonight we're returning to Monteux, so you get a day off packing! And today we explore some fabulous wines from some of the best appellations in Provence.

There's some more climbing today, but less than yesterday, and the scenery is beautiful. On our little loop today we'll cycle through the appellations of Beaumes de Venise, Gigondas and Vacqueyras, after Chateauneuf du Pape probably the best appellations in the Cotes du Rhone region. We'll visit the Domaine de Durban (AOP Beaumes de Venise) and Caveau Gabriel Meffre (AOP Gigondas). Today is a beautiful ride, nice and leisurely, very pretty scenery, and we'll learn a lot about some very good wines.

Day 6 Thursday Mouteux to Orange

18 miles / 29 km

We leave the hills of the Lubéron behind. Today is a day of two halves. In the morning we stay on tiny roads as we head towards Courthézon, and we'll visit a very interesting vineyard, the Caves Jamet. We'll learn a lot about the rukes of appellations - and not all of it good! The motorway cut this vineyard in half, and as a result the owner produces Chateauneuf du Pape, and Vin de France (the lowest classification available). It's the same wine! He's a fascinating and funny guy, you'll enjoy Caves Jamet. In the afternoon we arrive in Orange. Until recently this town was home to the French Foreign Legion, but it's more famous as a retirement town for retired Roman soldiers, and today boasts a truly spectacular Roman Theatre - we'll visit before dinner.

We'll also have a look at the huge triumphal arch that dates back to the reign of Augustus. The Theatre and the Arch together are classified as a UNESCO World Heritage Site.

Day 7 Friday Orange to Avignon

22 miles / 35 km

A pretty flat day, just a short climb at the end of the day. Leaving Orange, we've a short ride on back roads to the world-famous wine village of Chateauneuf du Pape. It's a thriving place, completely devoted to its famous wines, and we'll visit the Domaine de Nalys to find out what the fuss is about. We'll also learn about olives in their beautiful olive groves, where we'll picnic when weather permits.

After lunch, we'll cycle along a series of islands in the Rhone as far as Avignon. We'll have plenty of time to explore Avignon, it's a wonderful place. Completely surrounded by its 3-mile wall. In the 14th Century, fleeing chaotic violence in Rome, Pope Clement V moved the papacy to Avignon, which became the base for a total of 7 popes. One of these, Benedict XII, supervised the completion of the largest gothic building in France, the vast, fortified Papal palace. We'll have time for a look round, but in fact the most spectacular aspect of the palace is to view it from the outside and marvel at the sheer size of the thing. There's a marvellous atmosphere in the centre of Avignon, open squares full of cafes, restaurants and street performers.

Leaving Avignon, we cross the Rhone for one last time and climb the short hill back to Villeneuve les Avignon and the Residence les Cedres. That's it, one final dinner together at the Hotel Les Cedres, and tomorrow we part company. Temporarily, I hope.

Day 8 - Saturday

Homeward bound! Transfer back to Avignon TGV or the airport possible.

2024 GROUR TOUR DATES

June 1
August 3
September 14

2024 TOUR PRICE

€2080 per person sharing
+ €435 single supplement

If you are travelling on your own we will endeavour to find a roommate for you

WHAT THE TOUR PRICE INCLUDES

- 7 nights hotel accommodation with breakfast
- 7 evening meals
- Luggage transfers
- Route notes and maps
- Tour guide that accompanies the group
- Bike hire, with panniers, water bottle, helmet, etc.
- Details of all hotels and restaurants
- All routes available in GPS form
- Cycling jersey
- Vineyard tasting fees
- Transfer from Avignon TGV train station to first hotel

Not included: E-bike rental: €175, Admissions to museums

BIKE / FITNESS



We use Trek FX3 Hybrid 27 speed touring bike with aluminium frame and Shimano gear system.

Level of difficulty: Provence - *** Moderate level of fitness required.
Distances are no more than 40 miles a day, but hilly terrain.

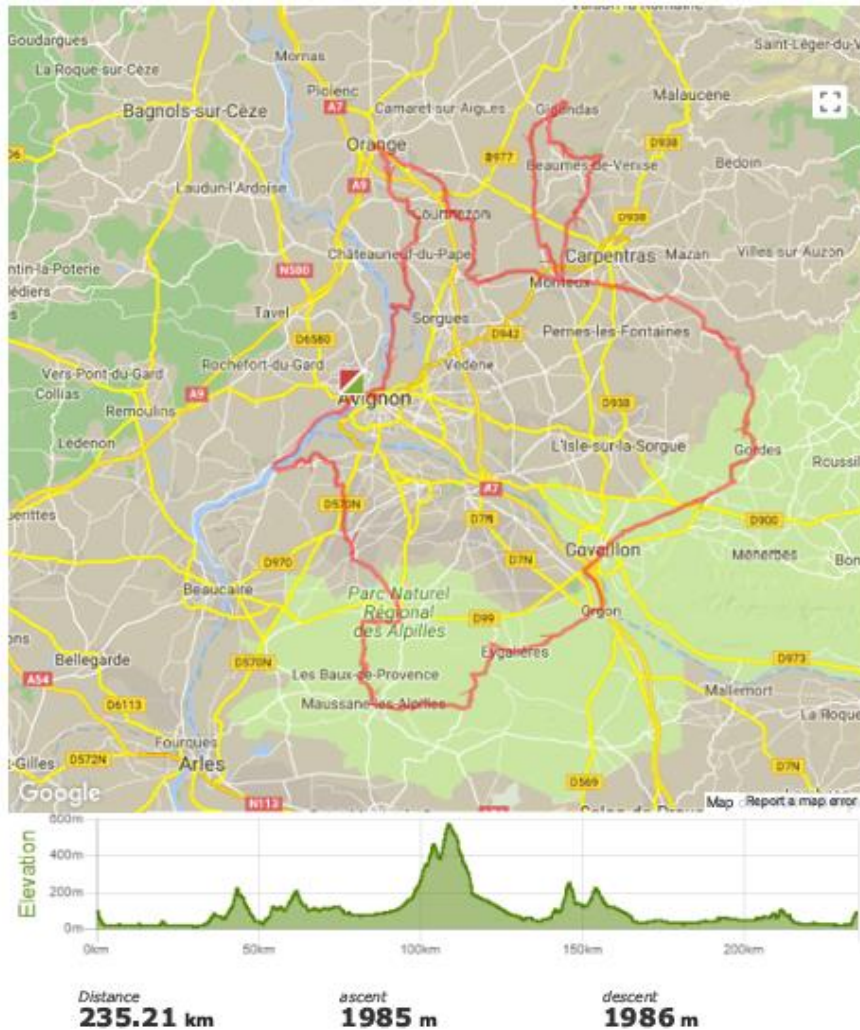
Average daily distance	31 miles
Maximum daily distance	38 miles

***** Training camps / sport cyclists. 50 to 80 miles per day, hills an integral part.

**** Distances and / or hills make this a challenging tour suitable for people who exercise regularly.

*** Moderate level of fitness required. Distances are no more than 40 miles a day, but hilly terrain.

** Distances and terrain are slightly easier, suitable for people who are not strangers to exercise, but don't get out as often as they'd like!



GROUP, GUIDE AND BACK-UP SERVICE

The maximum group size on these tours is fifteen people and one, sometimes two guides. Each person has their own route details, as well as a guide who cycles with you, while your luggage is locally transferred each day. There is no “sag” wagon as such but we can arrange to collect the weary!!

TRAVEL INFORMATION

For journey on the train: We will arrange a transfer on Saturday from the train station in Avignon. Please let us know your arrival time.

Alternatively, you can be met at 17:08 from Paris and Charles de Gaulle airport or 17:18 from Paris Gare de Lyon and brought to the starting point at Les Eyzies. At the end of the tour you will be brought back to the train station in time for the 09:14 departure to Charles de Gaulle airport (Paris), and later departures for Gare de Lyon and London (via Lille). Both local transfers are included in the tour price.

From/To London:

Outward Journey	Departure London St Pancras Int.	08:57	Change of train in Lille Europe
	Arrival Avignon TGV	17:08	
Inward Journey	Departure Avignon TGV	09:51	Change of train in Lille Europe
	Arrival London St Pancras Int.	16:03	

Note, there is a change of trains in Lille Europe. Local transfers are from Avignon TGV station to your first hotel and from the last hotel to Avignon TGV.

From/To Paris Charles de Gaulle Airport

Outward Journey	Departure Ch. De Gaulle Airport	13:58
	Arrival Avignon TGV	17:08
Inward Journey	Departure Avignon TGV	09:14
	Arrival Ch. De Gaulle Airport	13:02

Paris Gare de Lyon Train Station

Outward Journey	Departure Gare de Lyon	14:37
	Arrival Avignon TGV	17:18
Inward Journey	Departure Avignon TGV	10:14
	Arrival Gare de Lyon	12:56

Please take careful note of the train times above. Our transfers are scheduled to meet these designed trains, if these trains times are inconvenient please contact us so that we can be sure of arranging appropriate transfers.

What happens if I miss the train? Can I get the next one?

If you do miss the train, try and arrange to get on the next one. If you have to pay for another ticket you are responsible for the cost; depending on circumstances, you may be covered by insurance. Please call the owner of the first hotel - you will have a list of all the hotels as well as contact details for the outbound journey as part of your pre-departure pack. We will arrange transfers from the train station at the later time.