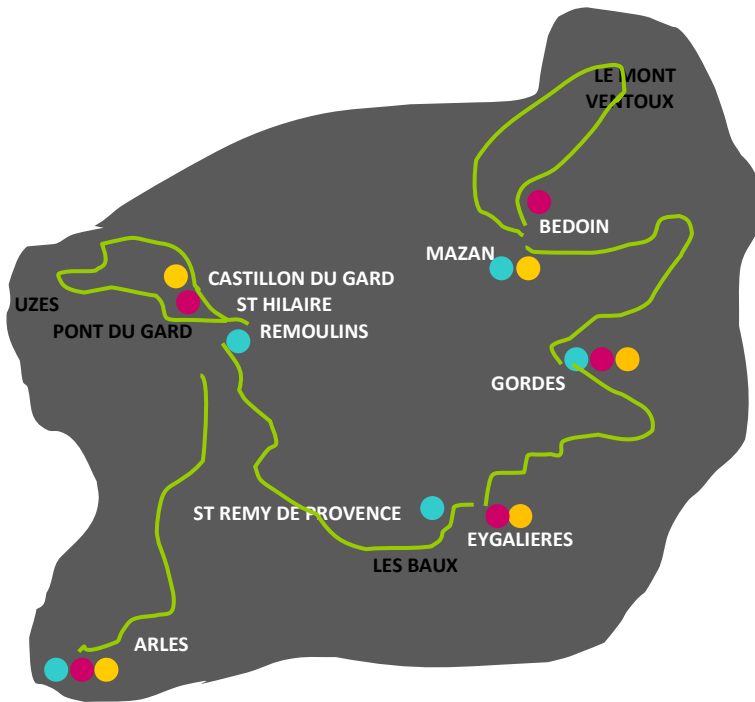




COLOURS OF FRANCE PROVENCE

PROVENCE CHALLENGE BIKE 7 NIGHTS / 8 DAYS



EXPLORE

PROVENCE AT YOUR OWN PACE

Day 1: Arrival in Arles

Upon your arrival in the wonderful Roman town of Arles, you will have time to settle in to your hotel and then perhaps start on some explorations by foot. Visit the spectacular Roman amphitheater where Provencal style bull fights are still regularly held (the bull is not killed), or sit in one of the many popular cafes of the Place du Forum, for an end of the day pastis, like a local. Arles is also where Van Gogh lived from 1853 to 1890 and where he painted many of his most well-known works. At the end of the afternoon you will meet with our trip manager, who will check the fitting of your bikes, and go over your trip package with you. Dinner this evening is included, in one of our favourite local restaurants.

Day 2: Arles to St Hilaire sur Ozilhan 68 Km

You leave Arles after breakfast this morning, heading northwards along the easygoing terrain of the Rhone River plains, pedaling along quiet and tiny roads. You ride into the town of Tarascon (with the castle of Roi-Rene) and crossing the Rhone River into the town of Beaucaire on the opposite bank. Stop there for a break to admire the pretty medieval manor houses, and perhaps to find some lunch. The ride continues northwards through the vineyards and small hamlets east of Nimes, passing through Remoulins on the Gard River, before heading into the beautiful countryside surrounding our final destination, in the small village of Saint Hilaire d'Ozilhan, surrounded by vineyards. You may decide to visit one of the local wineries for a tasting, before your dinner this evening, included. Please note, the Deluxe itinerary stays in the neighbouring village of Castillon-du-Gard).



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Day 3: Loop to Medieval Uzes via the Pont du Gard 80 Km

Today you have a beautiful loop ride through the garrigues and pine forests of the Cevennes region to the west. The route takes you through St Quentin la Poterie, a charming Provencal village, with a history of pottery making and that has become home to many artists today. Continue on to the town of Uzes, with its picturesque Place aux Herbes, its restored Renaissance facades, and perhaps climb up the steps to enjoy the view from the impressive Ducal Palace. Your return ride takes you past incredible Pont du Gard, an exceptionally well-preserved 2000-year old Roman aqueduct (and UNESCO Heritage site). The three arched tiers of this aqueduct-bridge, above the Gardon River, and nestled amongst olive trees and wild rosemary, are quite beautiful, and have become one of the most-photographed sites in Provence.

Day 4: St Hilaire to Eygalieres via St Remy and Les Baux 78 Km

You leave Saint Hilaire, heading to the small Provencal town of Aramon, where at one time the powerful and beautiful Diane de Poitiers ruled as seigneur. The village had one of the most important ports of the Rhone in history, and its bridge is where you will cross over the Rhone River. Ride through the village of Barbentane, where you can take a moment to visit the beautiful Italian Renaissance-style chateau (still inhabited by the Marquess of Barbentane). Ride up into the "Montagnette", with its typical Provencal flora and fauna, to see the Abbey Saint Michel de Frigolet, and perhaps buy a gift in the shop, still run by the monks. You ride through lovely St Remy de Provence, where you can stop to watch a game of boules in the central square, before attacking the hill up to the fortified village of Les Baux de Provence. Take your time to visit the chateau, looking down on the gorgeous Alpilles mountain range as a backdrop, and also the sound and light show in one of the old bauxite mines, with a different artist as its theme each year. The ride from there to Eygalieres is rolling through ancient olive groves.

Day 5 : Eygalieres to Gordes via Menerbes 70 Km; Century option

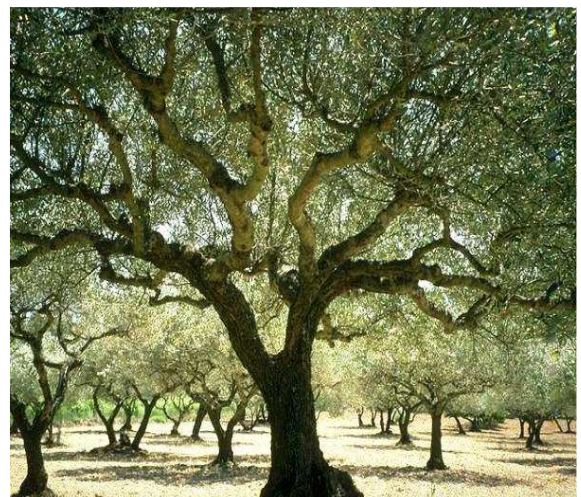
You leave Eygalieres this morning, and head eastwards. You are aiming for the town of Cavaillon, known for the local melons of the same name, smaller and juicer than a cantaloupe, and also where you will cross over the Durance River. From there you continue on through small villages and quiet roads along the plains of the Luberon, curving southwards to visit the villages of Lacoste and Menerbes, made famous in Peter Mayle's book, A Year in Provence. Near the base of Menerbes, stop for a winetasting, and to visit the odd corkscrew museum. Explore the ruins of the Castle of the Marquis de Sade in Lacoste. If you feel like putting a century ride under your belt, take the longer option, adding the villages of Bonnieux and Roussillon. Whichever you decide, save a little energy for the final climb up to your final destination – beautiful Gordes, perched on the edge of a cliff-side. Upon your arrival, you may decide to take the time



to explore the unique borie village (traditional stone huts), on the outskirts of Gordes. Reward yourself with a cool drink in the centre of the charming village before your dinner, included this evening.

Day 6 : Gordes to Mazan via Sault 75 Km

You leave Gordes to ride northwards over the Vaucluse Plateau. The ride has some challenging climbs, but it is stunningly beautiful. After riding through the dense forest, with occasional vistas of the plateau, descend into the lovely town of Sault, famous for its lavender fields. Stop in the historic centre for lunch if you like (a good part of the climbing is done for the day), or at least to visit the artisanal Boyer nougat factory in the centre of town, before continuing on, through the village of Monieux, and following the narrow ridge and rolls of the beautiful Gorges de la Nesque. This protected natural site is home to a variety of flora, as well as the rare Peregrine Falcon, and the Royal Eagle, and the scenery is breathtaking, with occasional views down up to 400 m drop into the canyon of the Gorge. Your ride brings you to the small village of Villes-sur-Auzon, with its ochre-coloured houses, and small village fountains, and where you can stop for a refreshment, before continuing along the last stretch of riding – more forgiving terrain now – through Mormoiron and into charming Mazan.



Day 7 : The Mont Ventoux (60 km)

Here is surely one of the top 20 climbs in all of France – and one of the most popular climbs of the Tour de France! Our ride takes you up via Bedoin – the shorter of the two possible routes, and therefore the more challenging, but traditionally, this is the version against which all passionate cyclists need to measure themselves. The Mont Ventoux, or Sentinel Mountain, at a height of 1912 metres, and with its striking white cap (almost always from the limestone, not from snow) stands out for miles around. Often hit by strong winds, and extreme differences of temperatures between the base and the summit, the mountain is also one of only 368 UNESCO rated Biosphere Reserves in the world, due to its rare and unique flora and fauna, and an incredible mix of microclimates. Our route takes you through Bedoin before starting the 20 km climb. Once at the top, take a moment to give homage to the many cyclists who have shared the challenge. Enjoy the return descent after congratulating yourself, and then loop back to Mazan for a second night, through the pretty village of Flassan.



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Day 8 : Departure

After a final breakfast, we will transfer you to the Avignon TGV train station for your further travels – Bon Voyage!

What's Included

- 7 nights' accommodation in the comfort level of your choice CLASSIC, CLASSIC+ or DELUXE
- All hotel taxes
- All breakfasts, 3 dinners (drinks not included with dinners)
- Bike Fitting and Orientation with our Trip Manager at the start of the trip
- Fully equipped lightweight carbon racing bike
- Detailed maps and step-by-step route notes
- Regional information and advice
- Luggage transfers from hotel to hotel
- Emergency phone call support 7 days a week

