



CHALLENGE BIKING IN PROVENCE



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, helped by the self-guided walking tour we provide. 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 80 Km / 50 Miles

You leave Arles after breakfast this morning, heading northwards along the easygoing terrain of the Rhone River plains, pedaling along quiet and tiny roads on the outskirts of the Camargue, with its salt flats and migrating flamingos. You ride into the town of Tarascon (with the castle of Roi-Rene) and cross 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 your 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. (The DELUXE and CLASSIC itineraries stay in neighbouring villages).

Day 3 : Medieval Uzes and Pont du Gard 76 Km / 47 Miles

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 : To St Remy and Les Baux 42 and 19 Km / 26 and 12 Miles**

Today's ride is actually two: to start, leave Saint Hilaire, heading to the small Provencal town of Aramon, where at one time the powerful and beautiful Diane de Poitiers (mistress to the King of France) 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 admire the beautiful Italian Renaissance-style chateau (still inhabited by the Marquess of Barbentane). Onwards to lovely St Remy de Provence, where you can stop to watch a game of boules in the central square, and take a break, before attacking the second ride: with a serious climb up the Alpilles hills 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, before enjoying the downhill back to St Remy for the night.

**Day 5 : St Remy to Joucas through Luberon Villages 71 Km / 44 Miles**

You leave St Remy this morning, and head eastwards. You are aiming for the town of Cavillon, known for the local melons of the same name, smaller and juicier than a cantaloupe and coveted by the locals. This is 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 if you like. Explore the ruins of the Castle of the Marquis de Sade in Lacoste. Continue on to see two more of the classic Luberon villages, Bonnieux and Roussillon - the ochre cliffs in Roussillon will have you linger, before attacking the final few kilometres to your hotel. Reward yourself at the end of this rolling ride with a cool drink in the centre of the tiny and charming village of Joucas before your dinner, included this evening.

Day 6 : Loop ride to Isle sur la Sorgue and Gordes 73 Km / 45 Miles

A gorgeous ride, starting with a challenging climb up into the Luberon hills towards tiny Murs, the community tucked into a cliffside and warmed by the Provencal sun. Your route takes you through Venasque, considered one of the most authentic of the area's villages, and then descends to the lively town of Isle sur la Sorgue. This compact town, built on the islands of five branches of the Sorgue River, is most well-known today for its huge weekend antique markets. During the week as well, it is worth taking the time to visit the many antique shops and boutiques. Continue on, through the small town of Fontaine de Vaucluse, with its watermill and spring, and Gordes, one of France's "Prettiest Villages" (an official rating), before returning to Joucas for your second night.





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Day 7 : The Gorges de la Nesque 69 km / 43 Miles

You leave Joucas to ride northwards over the Vaucluse Plateau. The ride has some challenging climbs, but it is breathtakingly 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 fabulous 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 the up to 400 m drop into the canyon of the Gorges. It is a favourite for cyclists from all over. 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 Bedoin.

Day 8 : Mont Ventoux or Rhone Wine Route 65 or 75km / 41 or 47 Miles

Choices, choices... Two possible rides today: One of the day's rides falls into one of the top 20 climbs in all of France – and one of the most popular climbs of the Tour de France: The Mont Ventoux! Our ride takes you up 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 Sentinal Mountain - at a height of 1912 metres, and with its striking white limestone cap - 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. If the weather does not comply (the winds can be too strong on some days) you also have the option of a beautiful loop ride through the Roman town of Vaison la Romaine, and then descending along the Rhone Wine Route and villages: Seguret (another "Prettiest Village"), Gigondas, Vaqueyras, and Beaumes de Venise (where you should stop to taste their wonderful dessert wine!)

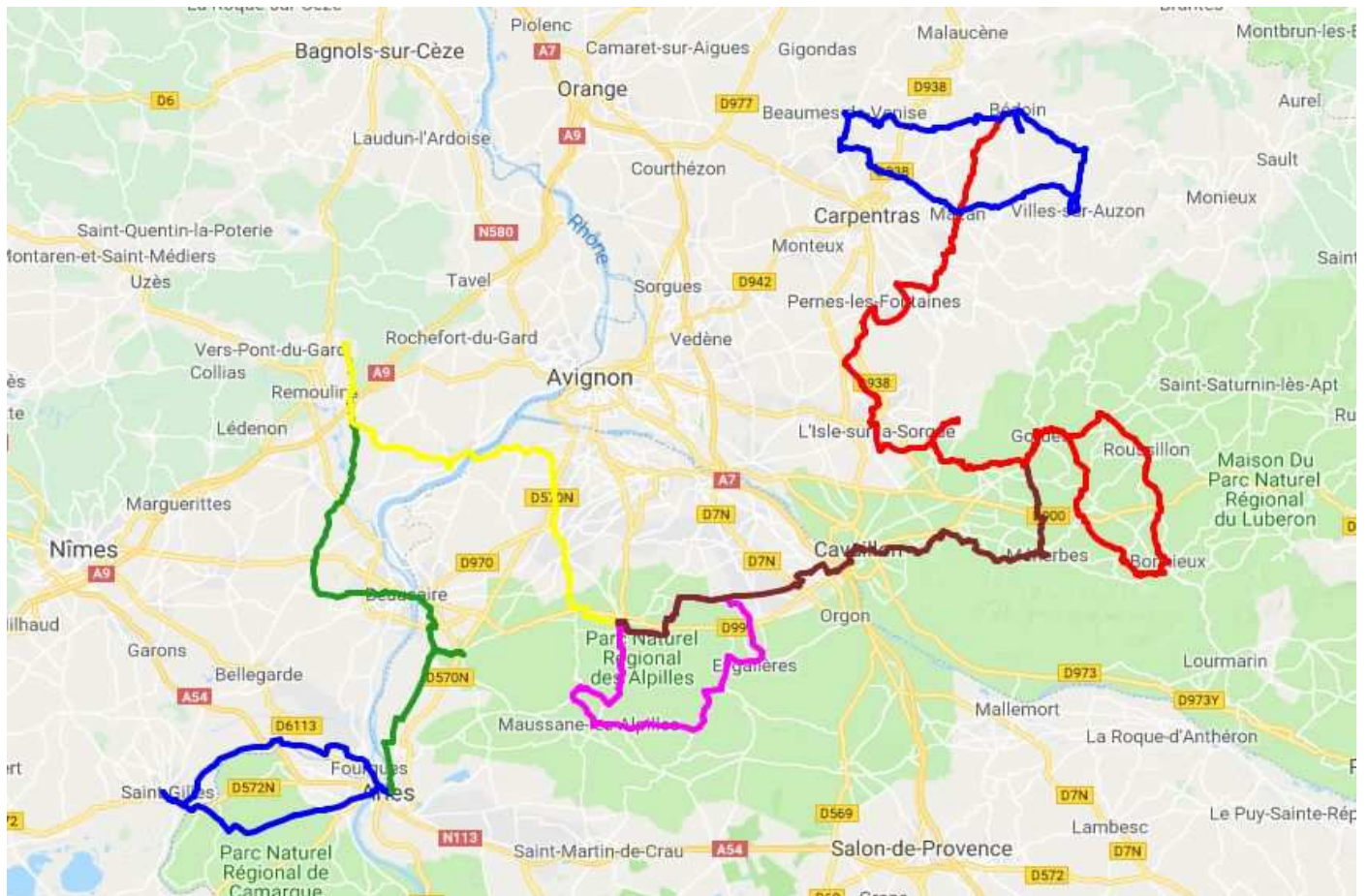
Day 9 : Departure – Bon Voyage!

After a final breakfast, we will transfer you back to the train station in Avignon in time for your further travels.





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What's included in your Provence package:

- 8 nights' accommodation of the comfort level of your choice: CLASSIC, CLASSIC+ or DELUXE
- Hotel taxes
- All breakfasts, 4 dinners (drinks not included with dinners)
- Fully equipped high quality carbon road bike
- Orientation and bike fitting with our Trip Manager at the start of the trip
- Detailed maps and step-by-step route instructions
- Uploadable GPS file to use on a free APP in your smartphone or Garmin (device not included)
* Can be used without international internet plan (offline)
- Regional Information and advice
- Luggage transfers from hotel to hotel
- Transfer to Avignon train station on departure day morning
- Phone call support 7 days a week

