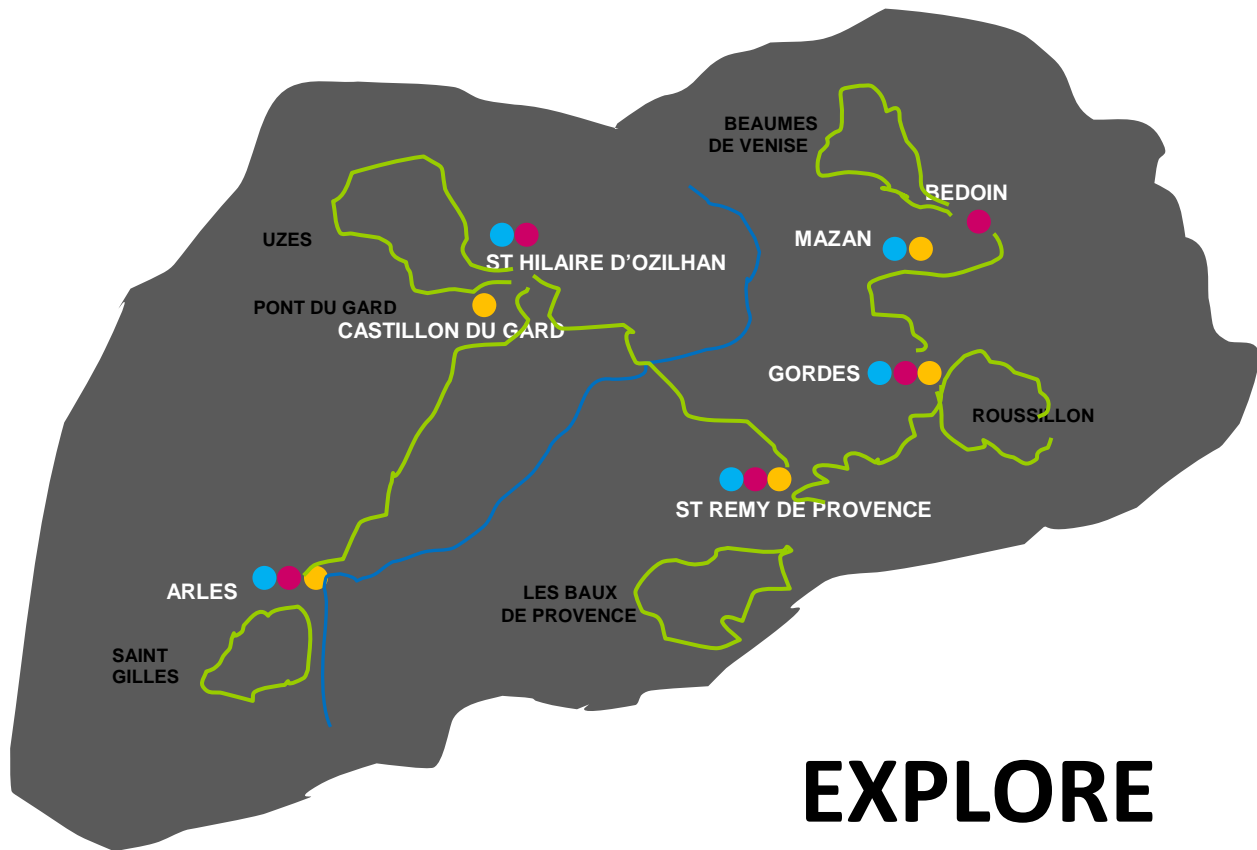




COLOURS OF FRANCE PROVENCE REGION

10 NIGHTS / 11 DAYS
I want it ALL



EXPLORE

PROVENCE AT YOUR OWN PACE

Day 1: Arrival

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 once lived 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 : Loop ride to St Gilles 42 km

Your ride is a great first full day, taking you out into the scenic Natural Reserve of the Camargue just south of town. You skirt along the edges of this natural river delta, (the largest in Europe!), which, dotted with marshy land and fields of rice, is home to hundreds of species of birds including the famous migratory flamingoes. The ride takes you westwards to the charming town of St Gilles, where you can take some time to explore, find some lunch and visit the UNESCO listed Abbey Church with its spectacularly worked stone facade, before returning to Arles for a second night.



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Day 3 : Arles to Saint Hilaire d'Ozilhan 47 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 your final destination, in the small village of Saint Hilaire d'Ozilhan. (Please note, the DELUXE itinerary stays in the neighbouring village of Castillon-du-Gard, and the CLASSIC in nearby Remoulins).

Day 4 : Loop ride to Uzes and the Pont du Gard 50 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.

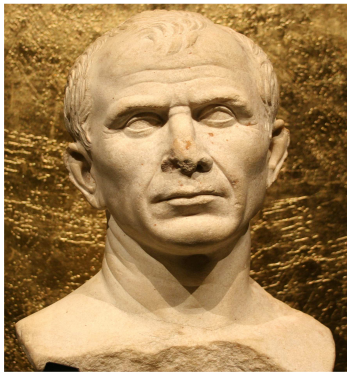
Day 5 : Saint Hilaire to St Remy de Provence 40 km

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. Then detour slightly northwards to 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), and perhaps stop for some lunch. Your ride takes you around the Montagnette hill, but if you wish, take the option 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. Finish along orchard-dotted plains into St Remy de Provence. Your dinner this evening is included.



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Day 6 : Loop to Les Baux de Provence 50 km

Your ride today is spectacular, bringing you through olive groves and vineyards to the fortified village of Les Baux de Provence. There is a big climb in the morning, but it will be worth it! And of course you get the glorious downhill back into St. Remy at the end. Take your time to visit the chateau of Les Baux, 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. You may also wish to stop for an olive oil or wine tasting along the route... Decide if you want the long or short option, to leave more or less time to relax in St Remy in the afternoon. St Remy is where Van Gogh was incarcerated in the Saint Paul de Mausole hospital for a year (and where he completed an astonishing 150 paintings!), but it is also worthwhile visiting the archeological site of Glanum.

Day 7 : St Remy to Gordes 52 km

You leave St Remy this morning, and head eastwards. You are aiming for the town of Cavailon, 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. You may decide to detour into the centre of town for lunch or refreshment, before continuing on through small villages and quiet roads along the plains of the Luberon. Today's ride is quite easygoing, but you will want to save some energy for the 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 8 : Luberon loop ride 42 Km

Your ride today is a great one: a little rolling, but quite beautiful, and taking in the classic sights of the Luberon. The loop route includes many of the Luberon villages originally made famous in Peter Mayle's book, *A Year in Provence*, allowing lots of exploration. You'll pedal through Roussillon, with its ochre cliffs, mined for the rich pigments, Menerbes, with its shady main square and odd corkscrew Museum, and also Lacoste, with the ruins of the castle of the Marquis de Sade. Each village has its own personality and charm. At the end of your ride, you can decide to pedal down (but don't forget you have to come back up!) into the valley to visit the Cistercian Abbey of Senanque, perhaps in time to see the monks during vespers, and to admire the lavender fields.



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Day 9 : Gordes to Mazan 41 Km

After a leisurely final breakfast in Gordes, your route continues northwards, heading into the plains south of the impressive Mont Ventoux. Along the way you ride through 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. Afterwards, you continue northwards through lovely towns and villages, vineyards, and forested countryside. You'll ride through the small village of Venasque (considered by many as the most authentic village of the Venaissain region), and on towards the tiny but beautiful town of Mazan. Your dinner this evening is included in the excellent restaurant of your chateau hotel. (please note the CLASSIC+ itinerary stays in neighbouring Bedoin).

Day 10 : Loop into the Vaucluse 38 or 50 km

Your final ride today is beautiful, taking you through several picturesque villages, such as Flassan, Ville sur Auzon, and Blauvac; each worth some meandering, and always with the impressive Mont Ventoux as your imposing backdrop. You will pedal along lovely quiet roads, and through some of the oldest vineyards in all of France. We recommend the detour into the town of Beaumes de Venise; not only is the town quite charming, but if you feel like it, after finding some lunch, you can stop for a tasting of their wonderful sweet white wines, or some of the Cotes de Rhone reds. If you prefer, take some time to explore at the shop of the local olive mill to taste the fruity artisanal olive oils. The ride finishes back on the flats to return you to Mazan for your final evening.

Day 11 : Departure – Bon Voyage

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

What's included in your package

- 10 nights in charming hotels of the comfort level of your choice CLASSIC, CLASSIC + or DELUXE
- All breakfasts, 5 dinners (drinks not included with dinners)
- Fully equipped quality hybrid bike
- Orientation with our Trip Manager
- Detailed maps and step-by-step route notes
- Regional Information and advice
- Luggage transfers from hotel to hotel
- Transfer to Avignon train or centre on departure day morning
- Emergency phone call support 7 days a week