Randonnée Tours
PROVENCE
CYCLING · 6 DAYS
You’ll know it as soon as you enter it, you’ll recognize the unmistakable pace of ease, you’ll smell the unforgettable comfort of lavender, you’ll see the telltale red-tile roofs and you’ll hear the fabled whispers of cicadas; this is Provence, in all its unqualified beauty. Provence’s borders stretch a vast swath of land of southern France and the wealth of diverse scenery here is mind blowing. From its glitzy Mediterranean coasts you can head to snow-capped Alpine mountains, its dense holm oak forests open to vast stretches of scrublands, and from the western Mistral to the southern Marin, even Provence’s elemental changes have borders.

Much of what many of us around the world know of Provence has come to our senses by way of one man’s genius eye, Vincent Van Gogh. In an attempt to enrich his health with the healing properties of the sun’s light and warmth, he painted these luminous landscapes prolifically. In return, despite his famous psychological struggles, he left the world with an art scene, an important chapter in art history, inspired by the simple light, colours and passion of a humble land. And Provence tells the tale he tried to tell the world, that of singular and everlasting beauty.

The scenery that unfurls along our chosen route could be taken right out of a Van Gogh painting. Lavender rows and cypress tree spires, yellow fields and the golden light of the lowering sun, swirling cloud froths set against impossibly-blue ceilings.

We invite you to explore a masterpiece with your own eyes, create your own impressionistic memories and engross yourself in voluptuous Provençal pleasures.

DATES
Start any date between April 1st and October 31st; if you start on a Monday you can visit the Tuesday market in Vaison.

LEVEL
Moderate. This tour offers hills on most days of minor to moderate difficulty.

Cycling average 45km/27miles.

COST
Casual/B&B Accommodation USD$1,360
Single supplement USD$265

Classic Accommodation USD$1,460
Single supplement USD$370

Luxe Accommodation USD$2,230
Single supplement USD$555

WHAT’S INCLUDED?
• Five nights lodging
• All breakfasts, one dinner
• Bike rental
• Detailed map and route instructions
• GPS data of the route (on request)
• All baggage transportation
• Area Manager services for the duration of the tour
ITINERARY

Day 1
Arrival day
Picturesque Vaison-la-Romaine, split in two by the Ouvèze River, is filled with ancient ruins loomed over by the watchful Coline du Château. With a two-night stay here you have plenty of time to explore both sides of the river.

Day 2
Vaison-la Romaine
Today’s delightful day ride takes you east, under the flank of nearby Mont Ventoux; a name synonymous with cycling tradition and heroism. Continue on to charming Entrechaux, spilling out from the grounds of its hilltop castle, it clings to the hillside surrounded by almond trees. Further still lies lesser-known Mollans-sur-Ouvèze, a mountain village unencumbered by summer tourists.

Day 3
Pernes-les-Fontaines
You ride past the Dentelles de Montmirail today, steep and rocky mountains so named for their resemblance to dentelle, lace. The Ouvèze River enriches the vineyards gracing these mountains, producing the famous wines of Gigondas and Vacqueyras. You’ll visit these winemaking villages and Séguret, an artists’ colony and one of France’s official most beautiful villages. Your final destination for today is Pernes-les-Fontaines where you can unpack and relax, you’re here for two nights. If you’re enjoying the Luxe tour you’re staying in the tiny town of Crillon-le-Brave.

Day 4
Explore Pernes-les-Fontaines’ twisting streets, colourful rainbow of houses painted blue, pink, green, and enjoy the many bubbling fountains dotting the town. If you’re staying in Crillon-le-Brave, explore Bédoin and the vineyards sheltered in the shadow of Mont Ventoux. During your ride today the famous vineyards of the Pope’s New House, Châteauneuf-du-Pape, are slowly revealed. Firmly entwined in papal and winemaking history this town begs your full attention.

Day 5
Gordes
Ride into the Luberon Valley, home of Van Gogh’s golden light, Peter Mayle’s Provence and Cézanne’s patchwork greens. Your destination today is Gordes for a glorious two-night stay is the prize of Provence. Gordes has the proud distinction of being one of France’s most beautiful villages and recipient of the Croix de Guerre honouring its active resistance during

WEATHER (VAISON LE ROMAINE)

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Cycling distance: 262-756m/859-2480ft
Elevation gain: 262-756m/859-2480ft

Cycling distance: 40-55km/24-33miles
Elevation gain: 361-609m/1184-1998ft

Cycling distance: 40-80km/24-50miles
Elevation gain: 257m/843ft

Cycling distance: 40-55km/24-33miles
Elevation gain: 361-609m/1184-1998ft
WW II. If you’re here on a Tuesday we recommend experiencing the market, filled with local produce, art and fabrics. **Cycling distance:** 40-75+20km/24-45+12miles  
**Elevation gain:** 430-743m/1410-2438ft

**Day 6**  
Enjoy your final morning in Gordes before continuing on to your next unforgettable adventure.

### OUR BICYCLES

The majority of our bicycle fleet are Cannondale bikes; Cannondale is the premier bicycle manufacturer in North America and Europe. We also maintain a fleet of Van Nicholas Mistral titanium race bikes in Provence. Our Cannondale hybrid bikes in the Provence are new Quick Speed performance hybrids with components as follows:

- **Frame:** aluminum; carbon fork  
- **Crank:** 50/34; **Cassette:** 11-34  
- **Transmission:** Shimano 105; **Gearing:** 2x10  
- **Tire:** 700 x 28C  
- **Saddle:** Cannondale Quick Speed Ergo

**Racing bikes (dropped handlebar) models are as follows:**

- **Supersix 5 105 carbon with components as follows (54 cm; 56 cm; 58 cm sizes):**  
  - **Transmission:** Shimano 105; **Gearing:** 2x10  
  - **Crank:** 50/34; **Cassette:** 11-34  
  - **Tire:** 700 x 23C  
  - **Seat:** Prologo Scratch Pro

- **Synapse 5 105 model with synapse alloy frame, carbon fork and components are as follows (51 cm size):**  
  - **Transmission:** Shimano 105; **Gearing:** 3x10  
  - **Crank:** 50/39/30; **Cassette:** 12-28  
  - **Tire:** 700 x 25C  
  - **Seat:** Cannondale Stage Ergo

- **Van Nicholas Mistral titanium bikes (54 cm; 56 cm; 58 cm; 60 cm sizes):**  
  - **Transmission:** Shimano 105; **Gearing:** 2x10  
  - **Crank:** 50/34; **Cassette:** 12-25  
  - **Tire:** 700 x 23C  
  - *There is an additional fee for the Van Nicholas bikes of $200*

All bikes come with pump, tire levers, spare tube, water bottle carrier etc. Hybrid bikes come with handlebar bags (VAUDE Road II, Vol. 9 L) and rear racks; racing bikes, come with map case but not a rear rack. We tune each bike prior to your arrival so that it is ready to ride for you.
B&B ACCOMMODATIONS

L’Evêché
Vaison-La-Romaine
Within the walls of this large house the proprietors only rent out five rooms, in order spend more time with their guests. It boasts great views of the old town and castle, and each of the rooms is individually and beautifully decorated.

Saint Barthelemy
Pernes-les-Fontaines
St Barthélémy is a delightfully restored 18th Century farmhouse set in shaded parkland by a small stream and waterfall. The comfortable rooms are furnished in Provençal style and the large breakfasts include homemade pastries and jams.

Le Mas des Oliviers
Gordes
Situated on the hillside, the terrace offers a magnificent view on the massif of Luberon. Guests can enjoy the swimming pool, a game of table tennis, or the simple joy of relaxing in the quiet garden.

The itinerary information may vary for your specific departure as we continuously research and develop each trip. Hotel availabilities may also necessitate alterations. ©Randonnée Tours Inc. Revised January, 2013.
CLASSIC ACCOMMODATIONS

Hôtel Le Burrhus
Vaison-La-Romaine
This hotel overlooks a pretty square right in the heart of Vaison. It’s been recently renovated into a chic and trendy space, often hosts funky art exhibits in its comfortable lounges and encourages creativity!

L’Hermitage
Pernes-les-Fontaines
L’Hermitage is charming 3-star hotel in a former bourgeois family mansion, set in vast grounds with century-old trees. You’re surrounded elements of relaxation here: shady patios, a large swimming pool and an unhurried pace.

Hôtel Le Mas des Romarins
Gordes
This is a charming boutique hotel with views over Gordes, in the heart of the Luberon. It has an inviting pool, pleasant gardens and is just a five-minute walk from town.

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LUXE ACCOMMODATIONS

Hôtel Beffroi
Vaison-La-Romaine
Located in the Medieval village, this glorious château built in 1554 is in one of the most beautiful mansions in the Old City of Vaison. It features unique architecture within its walls, a swimming pool and incredible panoramic views of the surrounding countryside.

Hostellerie Crillon le Brave
Crillon le Brave
Located in a tiny hillside village, it is surrounded by vineyards, olive trees and lavender fields. This Relais & Chateaux hotel is listed by Travel and Leisure as one of the top 500 hotels in the world.

La Bastide de Gordes & Spa
Gordes
With incredible views, this 5-star hotel provides an extraordinary setting for your stay. The gorgeous property is built in levels scaling the hill, with a pool, dining terraces and lawns. Its gourmet restaurant should be on your list of must-do dining experiences.

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**HOW TO GET THERE?**

Your tour starts in Vaison-la-Romaine, about 650 kilometers southeast of Paris, due east of Orange. Access is via either Orange or Avignon. Both can be reached via the TGV (the high speed rail network of France), taking approximately 2 h10 from Paris. Transfer to Vaison is via public or private transportation. The tour ends in Gordes. We provide you with more detailed instructions of your arrival and departure in your tour package.

**DID YOU KNOW?**

The Tour de France often passes through Provence with Mont Ventoux featuring as one of the epic climbs. Although not obligatoire, you are welcome to challenge this on your trip. Staying in Crillon le Brave gives you a great base for this.

A stone’s throw from Gordes you’ll find the Village des Bories, an architectural masterpiece of a Provençal life through the times.

A cluster of stone huts, made without mortar, nail or beam, they once agricultural outhouses used in the 18th Century, then turned into farmers’ homes, and now an open-air museum. It’s open daily for visitors.

The low-riding Alpilles were inspiration for a number of artists including Vincent Van Gogh, Frédéric Mistral and Alphonse Daudet. Van Gogh was prolific at painting Provence, and his depictions of the Alpilles contributed to their fame and allure. Provence vacationer Daudet featured this province greatly in his writing, firmly planting Fontvieille and its windmill in the world of art and literature through his Lettres de mon Moulin. The village of Maillance is largely devoted to its native Frédéric Mistral, writer and poet. An outspoken defender of the Provençal cultural identity, he championed for the preservation of the native language, Langue d’Oc. He wrote richly about the province and the Provençal way of life he regarded and protected so much.

**BON APPÉTIT**

It won’t take you long to figure out the people of Provence are serious about the gardens, their vines and their food. Gastronomy is an art from here, but “local” is a way of life, not some 21st Century trend. It’s all about sense of place, terroir, for them. If they don’t know whose goat made that cheese, whose lamb shank is melting in their oven or who pressed the olive soaking their bread, it isn’t on their table. Staples are seasonal so what you eat will depend on the season you travel here. Try every morsel you can, it’s all Randonnée Recommended!

If you’re here in early September you’ll have the distinct pleasure of experiencing the vendange, grape harvest. Join in on the excitement and celebration of the upcoming annual vintage.

The wines of Provence are Greek in origin, arriving sometime around 600 BC with the founding of Marseille. Boasting the oldest vines in France, today the region is well-regarded for its dry rosé production. A perfect summer drink and why not enjoy the world’s best. Stalwart Châteauneuf-du-Pape deserves a mention in any wine talk simply by virtue of its history. Relieved of its papal duty but remaining the most famous Côtes du Rhône wine, this red wine is thick, rich and powerful. It’s not to everyone’s taste but we think sampling a wine on its ancestral soil makes the experience that much sweeter.
OUR CONNECTION

In 1983, I flew to Europe with a bicycle and spent 6 months cycling through France. After several weeks, I remember arriving to Provence and thinking I had found nirvana; cycling from St. Remy to Les Baux and over to Gordes and the hill-towns that make up the Luberon on a day in late fall, with the wine harvest on, I made a note to self- come back here. Two years later, I did and began guiding trips (full disclosure- I guided for B&R for 18 years before starting Great Explorations). In 1989 Peter Mayle’s best-selling novel about his ‘Year in Provence’ was published and the region suddenly (and deservedly) became a favourite place to sojourn, if not for a year, at least for a week. Cyclists love the region because there are so many options for riding- from gently rolling roads through vineyards, to moderate climbs to charming villages. We have three different trips in the region (people often want to return!) - Provence, Provence South, and Haute Provence. The differences between these are subtle. The Provence trip starts from Vaison le Romaine (northwest of Avignon) with overnights also in Pernes les Fontaine, and Gordes. All cycling levels can be accommodated here (Mt. Ventoux is an option on one day), but generally, the riding is easy-going/moderate. The Provence South trip starts from Avignon and is rated moderate, but would be slightly hillier and stays in villages of Uzes, St. Remy and Gordes. Haute Provence is for those that want to challenge themselves- the rides are longer with more climbing and this region, to the north of Mt. Ventoux is a more remote (un-touristed) part of Provence. I have guided hundreds of trips in the region, I enjoy them all equally.

In 2010, with my wife and two children, we decided to live for 6 months in France and it was an easy decision to choose Provence (we lived in Bedoin, at the foot of Mt. Ventoux). For us, it remains a favourite destination and always will.

Robbin McKinney, Randonnee Tours
ACCOLADES

“We had a fantastic experience! Great service from Randonnee staff in Vancouver and our area manager. Love the routes Randonnee chose and the accommodations where we stayed. We’ll certainly do another tour with you in the future.”
Sara Z. & Mark N. – Washington, DC

“We thought the routes were TERRIFIC -- for the most part there weren’t cars at all. We had a range of abilities and yet we all loved the distance and routes. WE WERE VERY HAPPY! All pre-trip materials were extremely helpful.”
Barbara C. – Arlington, MA

Randonnee Tours Since 1989

Randonnee Tours offers exceptional self-guided active vacations in Canada, the United States, Europe and throughout the world. Our tours are meticulously designed and operated by us; this ensures a consistency in everything we offer, from route planning and bicycles to the services provided by our on-the-ground personnel. Each trip is customized to provide you with exactly what you need to ensure a memorable active vacation.

For regions where self-guided tours may not be possible, we also offer guided trips under Great Explorations to places such as Turkey, Morocco, Vietnam, and many other countries. www.great-explorations.com Robbin McKinney, founder and owner of Great Explorations (and Randonnee Tours) has been designing and guiding cycling and walking trips for over 25 years.