



Randonnée Tours

Provence to Côte Drive & Stroll 13 Days

Summary

Length

13 days/12 nights

Dates

Start any date between
March 15 and October 15

We recommend you to start your trip on a Monday so that you can enjoy the provençal market in Vaison held every Tuesday.

Level

35 to 140 km driving daily
(21 to 88 miles)

On most days there are at least two walks to choose from, typically two to four hours in length

Travelling in Provence is a sensual experience. As you move slowly through the landscape smell the wild thyme and rosemary. Stop to admire the texture of olive trees against old stone walls. Taste fresh chèvre mingled with piquant tapenade. Listen to the splash of fountains in village squares lined with rustling plane trees. Go slowly and savour!

Itinerary



Day 1

Arrive in Avignon and pick up your car. Head for Château-neuf-du-Pape to walk amongst world-

renowned vineyards, then continue to Orange, a walker's delight, with some of the finest Roman monuments in Europe. Your destination is Vaison-la-Romaine, a bustling town with interesting shops, a romantic medieval quarter, and extensive Roman remains.

Day 2

Explore Vaison before driving into the rugged Drôme to Nyons, famous for its olive oil. Pass fields of lavender on the way to Dieulefit, with a long history of pottery production, and Le Poët-Laval, officially listed as a Plus Beau Village. Enjoy a walk into the gorgeous countryside before heading for Buis-les-Baronnies, a herb and flower centre known particularly as the central depot for the linden flower harvest. Then it's on to Mollans-sur-Ouvèze, before returning to Vaison.

Day 3

Travel through vineyards, ringed by hills and mountains. Walk from Gigondas, a delightful Côtes-du-Rhône wine

village, into the spiky Dentelles, limestone mountains eroded by the wind. Then continue to Beaumes-de-Venise, known for its sweet, white dessert wine. From the château ruins overlooking the town, walk to the superb Romanesque chapel of Notre-Dame d'Aubun. Then follow the route through Crillon-le-Brave, Bédoin, St-Didier, and Venasque to today's destination, Pernes-les-Fontaines.

Day 4

Today you'll head for Gordes, a striking perched village that has become an artists' colony. Along the way visit Fontaine-de-Vaucluse where you can walk to the resurgent spring that is the source of the Sorgue River. Extend your route through Murs and Joucas in the limestone countryside of the Vaucluse. Enjoy walks to a village of dry-stone huts known as bories and to the magnificent Cistercian abbey of Sénanque, set in a peaceful, remote valley.





Randonnée Tours

How to get there?

The tour begins in Avignon, which is on the TGV train line from Paris.

Car rental offices are next to the train station. It's also possible to start in Orange, a little farther to the north. Orange also has car rentals.

We'll provide you with instructions on how to reach Avignon and Orange by train.

The route descriptions guide you to Nice, where you can drop off your car either near the train station or at the airport.

Itinerary

Day 5

Drive into the Luberon, made famous by Peter Mayle. One of the day's highlights is red Roussillon high on ochre hills. Visit the ochre quarries before heading to Goult, walk to olive terraces dating from the Middle Ages and a ruined Celtic hilltop oppidum. Then on to Lacoste, a beautiful village rising in tiers up a hill crowned by the ruined castle of the Marquis de Sade. Savour the silence at Fort de Buoux, once a stronghold of pre-Roman Celtic Gauls and inhabited right into the 17th century, before returning to Gordes.

Day 6

Today's drive takes you through the famous villages of the Luberon Valley — Ménerbes, Bonnieux, Lourmarin, Cucuron, Ansouis. Arrive in Aix-en-Provence, a cosmopolitan city of grand boulevards, fountains, shops, and cafés, said to be the most beautiful small city in France.

Day 7

Explore Aix, with its fountains and fine 17th - and 18th-century mansions. Relax at chic cafés sheltering under the canopies of huge plane trees - the mirrored Les Deux Garçons is the most famous. The Impressionist painter Cézanne lived and worked in Aix. Follow his footsteps on the Circuit Cézanne, find sites he painted, including the pyramid-like wedge of Mont Ste-Victoire, and finish with a visit to his house and studio.

Day 8

Leave Aix behind and head into an undiscovered hinterland, wild white limestone country. Picnic at the Refuge de Cézanne, with Mont Ste-Victoire looming overhead. In the wild and rugged Ste-Baume mountains, follow the Way of the Kings to a cave sanctuary where Mary Magdalene is supposed to have spent her last years. Arrive in Moissac-Bellevue.

Day 9

Spend a day in the magnificent Haut Var region. Discover France's Grand Canyon, the spectacular Gorges du Verdon, carved deep into the earth by the wild Verdon River. Explore Moustiers-Ste-Maries, nestling against a cliff at the western edge of the gorge and famous for its ceramics.

Day 10

Take a step back in time as you wind your way through authentically Provençal villages. Pause at the Abbaye du Thoronet, one of the most impressive medieval abbeys in Provence, then continue through deep forests of pine and chestnut trees, as well as cork oaks, covered by their characteristic lumpy bark or smoothly orange if the bark has been harvested. Today's destination is St-Tropez.

Day 11

Enjoy the bustle of this pretty fishing port, stroll through streets of pastel houses to the Quai Jean-Jaurès, lined by chic cafés and artists selling their work. Visit the Musée de l'Annonciade, housed in a converted 16th-century chapel and displaying an array of Post-Impressionist art from the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Then head out to some of the lovely villages perched on the hilltops behind St-Tropez.

Day 12

Follow the spectacular coastline to Nice. Along the way, take a walk on the Esterel Coast, with its red and mauve rocks descending to the turquoise sea. Pass through Cannes, famous for its film festival, and explore the Cap Antibes, where millionaires make their home. If you like, turn briefly inland to St-Paul-de-Vence, a beautiful village in a dramatic location and an art centre since the 1920s.

Day 13

There's time for a final stroll around Nice before heading off to your next adventure.



Randonnée Tours

The Price includes:

- 12 nights hotels
- All breakfasts and 4 dinners
- Detailed route instructions and map
- NOTE THAT CAR RENTAL IS NOT INCLUDED

Accommodation

Classic



Hôtel Le Burrhus

Vaison-La-Romaine

This hotel overlooks a pretty square right in the heart of Vaison. The hotel has been recently renovated, and often hosts art exhibits in the hotel's lounges.



L'Hermitage

Pernes-les-Fontaines

A charming hotel in a former family mansion, set in grounds with 100-year old trees. There are lovely gardens and a large swimming pool.



Hôtel Les Romarins

Gordes

A charming boutique hotel with views over Gordes, and an inviting pool and gardens. The town is only a five minute walk away.



Hotel des Augustins

Aix en Provence

Formerly a 12th century Augustine Convent, this charming hotel is only a short walk from shopping, restaurants and museums. Rooms are tastefully decorated in Provencal decor and antique furnishings.



La bastide de Calalou

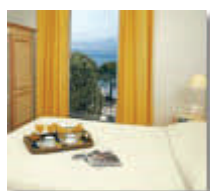
Moissac Bellevue

Perched on a hill within the Parc Nature de Verdon and amidst 10 acres of century-old olive trees, Bastide du Calalou is a delightful and quiet retreat. Refined Provencal cuisine can be enjoyed in the restaurant.

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Accommodation

Classic



La bastide Du Port

Saint Tropez

Located only three minutes from the center of Saint-Tropez and 30 meters from the sea-front, this hotel has a beautiful view of the Gulf. The rooms are air-conditioned with stylish décor.



Le petit Palais

Nice

Located in one of Nice's most prestigious neighborhoods, this hotel was converted from a 19th century mansion. Le Petit Palais is a very quiet hotel with 25 rooms overlooking roofs of the old town (la Baie des Anges) to the sea.

B & B



L' Evêché

Vaison-La-Romaine

This is a huge house, but the proprietors only rent out five rooms to spend more time with their guests. There are great views of the old town and the castle, and each of the rooms is individually 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. Large breakfasts include home-made pastries and jams.



Le Mas des Oliviers

Gordes

Situated on the hillside, there is a magnificent view on the massif of Luberon. Guests can enjoy the swimming-pool, a game of table tennis, or just relax in the garden.



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Accommodation

Luxe



Hotel Beffroi

Vaison-La-Romaine

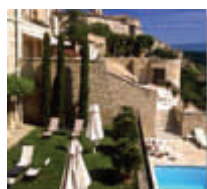
Located in the medieval village, this chateau features lovely gardens and a pool. It is in one of the most beautiful 16th century mansions in the Old City of Vaison; you can enjoy a panoramic view of the surrounding countryside.



Le Crillon le Brave

Crillon

Located in a tiny hillside village, it is surrounded by vineyards, olive trees and lavender fields. This 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 4-star hotel is an extraordinary property, built in levels with pool, dining terraces and lawns. Rooms are large and exquisitely appointed.



Villa Marie

Saint Tropez

Dramatically situated on a hillside in a magnificent 3-hectare pine forest, Villa Marie boasts views of the Bay of Pampelonne and its beaches. Charm and style are hallmarks of this boutique hotel.



La Perouse

Nice

This 4 star establishment is just a short walk from Old Nice with a magical setting overlooking the Mediterranean. The hotel has been tastefully renovated and offers a sophisticated and relaxed ambiance with refined Provencal interior design and contemporary comfort.