



Provence 2010 Itinerary

Which country is the most visited in the entire world? France! And why is that? If you simply look at the geographical landscapes you will see that almost every type of climate and terrain can be found in this Gallic jewel. From the perfumed hills of Provence with their ancient olives groves to the lush heavily wooded valleys of the Dordogne in the southwest to the pristine Alpine pastures along the Swiss and Italian borders. Provence has become the dream destination of many travellers wishing to experience a culture where people work to live, where dining can be a six-hour experience, where every day brings another festival featuring local produce, artisans, a renowned classical or impressionist painter... the list goes on. Imagine having your pick of daily markets in towns that are a stone's throw from your villa, where you can purchase the freshest cheeses, spices, sausages, olives, fruits and vegetables for your evening meal. Imagine biking to historical towns such as Arles, Avignon and Les Baux to discover Gallo-Roman structures dating back to 100BC, medieval towns crowning the hilltops, a Papal fortress that is so solid, it is sure to last another 1000 years.

Contrary to some tours where you travel to a different accommodation every day, we will for the first week be staying in one location, a lovely Provençal villa, which will be our departure point every morning to a different discovery. For those who do not wish to bike, we will have car or van transportation to meet up with the bikers. Bike routes will be through flat terrain or gently rolling hills and will vary between 25 and 60 km round trips. However, it is not all biking: one day is reserved for a visit to the Pont du Gard, a 2000 year old Roman viaduct and the Rhone Valley vineyards. The last three days will be spent closer to the Mediterranean where we will visit several coastal villages and towns.

Trip at a Glance

TRIP PRICE

\$3,395 double occupancy
\$750 single supplement

DURATION

11 days, 10 nights

LEVEL

Easy to intermediate riding

DATES

September 18-28

Maximum group size: 10

Some highlights:

- Biking to Les Baux-de-Provence followed by a climb to a quaint village and the remnants of a medieval castle
- Biking through the Camargues, and its beautiful landscapes, to the fishing village of les Saintes Maries-de-la-Mer
- A visit to the old roman town of Arles
- A cooking class in a French hostelry in the heart of Provence
- A visit to the Papal city of Avignon, not forgetting the compulsory singing of *Sur le Pont...!*
- Lunch with a French family in the Côtes du Rhone
- Wine tours
- A boat tour through the *calanques* near Cassis
- Gourmet dinners

This area, known as *le coeur de Provence* (heart of Provence), will awaken your senses with its perfect blend of passionate and witty people, history, famous painters, colourful markets, delicious food and wonderful wines. To make you feel slightly less guilty of imbibing in such pleasures, we have thrown in some biking!

Itinerary:



Day One Saturday, September 18 - arrival

Arrive in Marseille by plane or Avignon by train. We will meet you and take you to our own private villa. In the afternoon we will check out our bikes and after that you are free to explore. In the evening we will dine early and give an overview of the tour.

Meal: Dinner

Day Two- Sunday, September 19 - Côte du Rhone area

This morning we will take a short bike ride to the nearby village of Fontvieille dating back to 100 BC, famous for supplying all the rock for the building of Arles, and a visit to the windmill made famous by French writer Alphonse Daudet who wrote *les Lettres de mon moulin*. At lunch we will dine with a French family living in the Côte du Rhone hills, not far from Châteauneuf-du-Pape. In the evening we will dine at the villa.

Total distance cycled: 25 km

Meals: Breakfast/Lunch/Dinner

Day Three – Monday, September 20 - Arles

Today we bike from the villa to the ancient city of Arles, built by the Romans, past rice fields and fruit orchards. In Arles we will visit the Museum of Antiquity, climb the steps leading to a perfectly preserved Roman amphitheatre, visit the hospital and courtyard where Vincent Van Gogh spent a year recovering from illness.

Total distance cycled: 25 km

Meals: Breakfast/Dinner



Day Four – Tuesday, September 21 - Les Baux de Provence



Today's bike ride will take us through the *Alpilles* (foothills) with some magnificent views across olive groves, vineyards and mountains. It will take us through the small towns of Paradou and Le Destet before entering the market town of St. Remy-de-Provence. From there we bike up to the old fortress village of Les Baux-de-Provence, where we will spend the afternoon exploring the ruins of the fortress, look at the awe-inspiring views across the valleys and mountains, and shop in the quaint village.

Total distance cycled: 60 km

Meals: Breakfast/Dinner

Day Five – Wednesday, September 22 - St Remy de Provence

Today we drive to one of the area's famous markets in St. Remy-de-Provence; later we take in a cooking class and lunch before driving to one of the most famous and well-preserved of the Roman engineering marvels: Pont du Gard.

Total distance cycled: 0 km

Meals: Breakfast/Lunch/Dinner



Day Six – Thursday, September 23 - Avignon

Today's bike ride takes us to Avignon where we can walk through this extraordinary walled city with its winding criss-crossed narrow streets; we will visit the *Palais des Papes* where six popes resided and of course sing *Sur le Pont d'Avignon* on the famous bridge. The walled city is famous for its festivals, great shopping and wonderful little cafés and restaurants.

Total distance cycled: 55 km

Meals: Breakfast/Dinner

Day Seven – Friday, September 24 - Saintes Maries-de-la-Mer

We cycle from Arles to *Saintes Maries-de-la-Mer* through the beautiful wild bird sanctuary that covers most of this marshy landscape in *Camargues*, home to wild horses and flamingos. The terrain is completely flat as we are cycling through the Rhone delta to the Mediterranean coast. *Saintes Maries-de-la-Mer* is a well-known pilgrim site and so we will of course visit the local church dedicated to the two *Maries* after which the town is named. For lunch try the local fish soup with a glass of white wine.

Total distance cycled: 50 km

Meals: Breakfast/Dinner



Day Eight – Saturday, September 25 - departure from villa to the Mediterranean coast

As we drive away from the villa in the Alpilles and our gracious hosts, the road winds gently towards the sea. Once on the coast, we will relax in St. Cyr-sur-Mer, walk through the town that borders on the Mediterranean and visit the town where the famous Provençal writer Marcel Pagnol lived before checking into our accommodation in Aubagne.

Meals: Breakfast/Dinner

Day Nine– Sunday, September 26 - Cassis

Today we will discover the *Calanques* to the east of Marseille. *Calanques* are rocky inlets that can only



be visited by boat or accessed along narrow footpaths, so we will choose the easy route and take to the sea from Cassis. The boat will take us along the coast and into a number of the inlets. The sparkling Mediterranean, the rocky cliffs with pine trees growing in spots you wouldn't think possible make for a wondrous experience. In the afternoon we will drive along the Route de

Crete (crest) which will afford us spectacular views of Cassis and the Mediterranean.

Meals: Breakfast/Dinner

Day Ten – Monday, September 27 - Bandol

After a good breakfast we will drive to the town of Bandol on the coast. Bandol is known for its fine wines, so of course today we will visit some vineyards and try out some of the local wine. In the afternoon, we will visit the ancient port of Marseille and have dinner in town.



Meals: Breakfast/Dinner

Day Eleven – Tuesday, September 28 - Departure for Canada

After a good breakfast we take you back to either the train station or the airport in Marseille for your return to the real world with wonderful memories (and perhaps souvenirs).

For the most part on this trip you will not experience strenuous riding days with the exception of our ride through the Alpilles. A comforting part of this trip is the van. We make it very clear that as our guest you should never hesitate to use the van when the cycling is no longer pleasant for you.

TRIP TOTAL: We will bike on five of the ten days for a total of 215 km averaging 40 km per day.

What's included

- All accommodations
- A review with your guide each morning at breakfast to go over the day's exciting route or sightseeing schedule
- Highlighted regional maps with background on each noteworthy sight and plenty of options to try along the way
- All entrance fees to historic sites and museums
- Support vehicle that sweeps the day's route distributing refreshments, picking up your purchases, and offering lifts to the accommodations.
- All breakfasts and dinners
- Lunch with a French family in the Côtes du Rhone
- A cooking class with a local French chef
- Guides who look after your every need
- All transportation from rendezvous to final drop-off
- All baggage transport
- Surprise memento of trip

What's not included

- Lunch and any alcoholic beverages
- Bike Rental. We can arrange rentals; just let us know the type of bike you want.

Overview of Provence



Our Bike Routes

