

## Provence : Heart of Provence

*7 days, 6 nights*

*6 days walking*

As it descends from the southern Alps, the River Durance makes a slow loop around a limestone plateau known as the 'Luberon', a rugged, wooded region that stretches for about 65 kilometres between Cavaillon, in the east, and Manosque, at its western extremity. The western end is known as the 'Petit Luberon' and the eastern end as the 'Grand Luberon'. The two sections are divided by the Combe de Lourmarin (the old pathway), which cuts across the mountains between the charming villages of Bonnieux and Lourmarin. It's a beautiful region, rich in colour and contrasts, with vivid sprays of scented lavender, bright green vines, ochre-coloured villages and austere white limestone hills. This is the heart of Provence, an area that has attracted artists and writers for centuries, with dozens of lovely villages to explore, ancient forts, spectacular abbeys and countless other geographical and historical sites. There are some marvellous walks in the area, following the GR9 from the medieval village of Viens to picturesque Rustrel, or hiking across rocky escarpments down into dramatic gorges, where ochre was once mined. Provence is also known for its food, with garlic, olives and olive oil playing an important role in the preparation of many dishes.

### Tour Aventure Trekking

Agence de voyages LI 02A.06 0002 - Garantie Financière de 137204€ : APS - Contrat RC : n°86 410 716 Gan Eurocourtage IARD

RCS AJACCIO 489 755 470 - Membres du SNAV - E-mail : [info@tour-aventure.com](mailto:info@tour-aventure.com) - Web site : [www.tour-aventure.com](http://www.tour-aventure.com)

Corse - Sardaigne : 1 rue du Général Fiorella 20 000 Ajaccio Siret : 489 755 470 00015 - Tél : +33 (0)4 95 50 72 75 - Fax : + 33 (0)4 95 21 42 95

Autres destinations : 15 rue Charles de Gaulle 09100 Pamiers Siret : 489 755 470 00023 - Tél : +33 (0)5 61 68 37 64 - Fax : +33 (0)5 61 68 25 83

## Program

### Day 1 : Start of holiday in Apt

Installation in your accommodation in Apt. You may choose to walk to the nearby village of Saignon, depending on your time of arrival.

#### Walk in Apt via the 'Bellevue' rock

A walk to the village of Saignon, perched on top of a hill behind a large rock that towers over the valley. Saignon is a peaceful little village that you can easily explore on foot. Opposite the town hall there is a pretty 12th century Roman church and while walking through the narrow streets you will see ancient fountains, picturesque shady squares and beautiful old houses with intricate doorways. It is worth climbing up to the 'Rock of Saignon' where you can enjoy a marvellous panoramic view of the plains and the Luberon range. If the weather is fine, you can see Mont Ventoux, the Lure Mountains, the Alps of Haute Provence and even the heights of Avignon! Thanks to its rock, Saignon played a key defensive role for the town of Apt, attacked through the centuries by numerous invasions... although not yet by tourists! Distance : 10km, duration : 3h30, dénivelé plus : +230m, dénivelé moins : -230m.

### Day 2 : Cereste to Viens

The walk starts at the ruins of the Priory of Carluc, located near the Domitia Way, the Roman Via Domitia (one of three ancient road systems in the region) that once passed through Apt and Bonnieux. Here you can see the last remains of an 11th century priory and the 12th century chapel, still intact, is surrounded by a Carolingian necropolis consisting of about ten tombs dug out of the rock. From here you join the GR97, one of the famous long-distance paths ('Grande Randonnée') that traverse France. You arrive at Opedette, a tiny hamlet built at the end of a spur, bordered to the East and West by rocky escarpments known as the Gorges du Calavon. From Opedette to Viens the path follows these gorges, with lovely views. Depending on your energy levels, you may wish to take an additional circular walk from Viens, known as the 'Circuit des Bories', where you'll find old dry-stone dwellings (bories), constructed without mortar, that are typical of the region.

Distance : 14km, duration : 5h00, dénivelé plus : +567m, dénivelé moins : -400m.

### Day 3 : Viens to Rustrel

Surrounded by magnificent countryside, and perched on a rocky outcrop, Viens is an ancient village with a charming medieval atmosphere. It boasts a Renaissance château, restored in the 14th century, where you can enjoy a panoramic view from the Montee de la Pousterle to the Lure gorges. Continuing along the GR97, in the direction of Rustrel, you have the opportunity to hike along the famous 'ochre route'. The mining of ochre began more than a century ago, and Rustrel soon become an important production centre. Today, after a long decline, the exploitation is almost at an end, although the 'Colorado Provençal', as it is known, has received a second lease of life, attracting numerous visitors each year. Your route takes you past an incredible succession of rusty-coloured rocks, golden cliffs and red earthen chimneys that rise majestically out of the vegetation. Rustrel itself is dominated by a beautiful 17th century château, and during the summer months visitors can relax in the municipal outdoor swimming pool. The village is also known for its 'Côtes du Ventoux' wines.

Distance : 16km, duration : 5h30, dénivelé plus : +235m, dénivelé moins : -455m.

### Day 4 : Saignon to Buoux via the Mourre Negre

For the more courageous, departure from Saignon, one of the oldest villages in France, perched on a huge rock and providing an amazing panoramic view of the area. From here you have the option of walking up through fragrant woodland and lush green fields to the Mourre Nègre, the highest point in the region, at 1125m, where you enjoy another spectacular panorama. On a clear day you can see right across to the Southern Alps. You then continue to your

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'auberge' just outside Buoux, your base for the next two nights.

Distance : 15 km by the Mourre Nègre, duration : 6h00, dénivelé plus : + 615m, dénivelé moins : - 715m.

#### Saigon to Buoux via the Aigue Brun valley

From Saigon, a second choice of walk that passes through the Aigue Brun valley to Buoux along the plateau des Claparèdes.

Distance : 10km or 7,5km, duration : 5h30 or 3h00, dénivelé plus : +115m, dénivelé moins : -90m or -215m.

#### Day 5 : The village of Bonnieux

A circular walk from Buoux allows you to discover the many layers of history in this region, with impressive views of the Aigue Brun Valley. The limestone cliffs around Buoux are equally interesting; they were once a retreat for hermits in the 15th century and now they offer an exciting challenge for rock-climbers. You continue towards Bonnieux and doubtless you will spot its church tower long before the rest of the village comes into view. Built on a plateau above the valley, it is one of the finest villages in the area. Some of its houses date back to the 16th century and, if you climb the 86 stone steps to the old church, you'll enjoy an outstanding view of the mountains of the Vaucluse, with Mont Ventoux towering in the distance. While here, don't miss the Boulangerie Museum that houses an interesting display on bakery and bread production. You return to Buoux for the night.

Distance : 17km, duration : 6h00, dénivelé plus : +270m, dénivelé moins : -270m.

#### Day 6 : Buoux to Apt

Today's walk takes you up through the village of Buoux, where you can visit the ancient fort, well worth a detour if only for the excellent view of the valley and into the deep ravines of the Aigue Brun River. You then follow the GR9, across the Plateau of Claparedes, which brings you to the outskirts of Apt, the last stage of your walk through the heart of Provence. Apt is situated in the centre of the Luberon Nature Reserve, and is reputed for its local products. It is known world wide for its candied fruit, and the Saturday morning market is one of the great sights of the region, with fresh fruits, goat cheeses and many other local products available for sale.

Distance : 11km, duration : 5h00, dénivelé plus : + 135m, dénivelé moins : - 365m.

#### Day 7 : End of holiday in Apt

End of your holiday in Apt. Possibility to do a circular walk and discover the Pays Aptois.

#### Pays Aptois

The walk starts in Apt and follows the GR9 in the direction of Saint Satunin les Apt. Discover small hamlets typical of the Pays aptois region.

Distance : 10km, duration : 3h30, dénivelé plus : +250m, dénivelé moins : -250m.

This programme is an example of the itinerary we aim to adhere to. It may be possible, if situations arise that are beyond our control, for the itinerary to be modified.

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## Details

### **Level of difficulty**

The walks are on good footpaths and trails, the terrain is varied but often rocky. You need to be used to walking and take regular exercise to enjoy this holiday.

### **Price**

- From 2008/01/01 to 2008/12/31 : Price per person in Double room 580 €, Price per person in Single room 685 €

### **Price includes :**

Half-board accommodation (except days 1 and 6), transfers D2 and D4, luggage transfers, the dossier containing your maps, route notes and all necessary details needed for your holiday.

### **Price does not include :**

Entrance fees, additional transfers, drinks, picnics, additional activities, holiday insurance and travel, evening meals day 1 and 6.

### **Encadrement**

Self-guided walking.

### **Carrying**

You will need to carry a day sack only, with your water bottle, camera, picnic and gortex jacket.

Our bag-moving service means you can travel light during your walks.

Your main luggage - will be transported by vehicle between the different night stops. We ask you to please limit your main luggage to between 10-15kg to facilitate the transportation and carrying for the taxis. It is also important to consider that it may be necessary to carry your bags short distances at the start or end of your holiday. (Consult with us for left luggage facilities)

### **Accommodation/food**

#### **Accommodation**

- Half board In double room in hotels or chambres d'hotels : except day 1 and day 6 : dinners are not included.

#### **Food**

- Continental breakfast (tea, coffee, milk, butter, jam)
- Evening meals in gites, often based on local specialities.
- Pic-nics and drinks not included.

### **Starting point/end**

Starting point : At your accommodation in Apt, depending on your time of arrival.

End : At your accommodation in Apt, after breakfast.

### **Organisation**

We propose a self guided, independent formula. You choose your departure date and we will take care of all the rest between the initial rendez-vous time through to the dispersion point. We transport your bags between the hotels, provide the maps and good walking route notes. This is a way of enjoying complete flexibility, you dictate the pace and rhythm of your holiday.

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### **Your transfers during the holiday**

Day 2 : At 9h00, transfer by taxi, from your accommodation in Apt, to Prieuré de Carluc.

Day 4 : At 9h00, short transfer by taxi, from your accommodation in Rustrel to Saignon.

### **Dates**

Every day from April to October. Bookings from 2 people or more.

### **Number of participants**

From 2 people

### **Access**

Either by train : Avignon station, or by air : Avignon or Marseille airport.

### **Bibliography**

#### **Provence**

- Steffen Lipp 2004

#### **France**

- Lonely Planet Publications 2005

### **Practical info**

#### **How to get to Luberon:**

##### - By train:

TGV direct from main cities (Paris, Lyon, Toulouse), arrives in Avignon or train from Marseille to Cavaillon, then regular buses to Apt from the station, around 4 buses per day; allow 1h30 travel time.

Information : [www.sncf.fr](http://www.sncf.fr)

##### - By car:

Location : Paris 742 km, Lyon 271 km, Marseille 80 km, Avignon 56 km, Aix en Provence 50 km.

Provenance autoroute from Paris, Lyon, Marseille, to Avignon ; then N100 from Avignon to Apt, 56km distance.

##### - By air:

Avignon – Caumont, tel : 0033 4.90.81.20.39

Marseille – Provence, tel : 0033 4.42.14.14.14

### **Parking**

#### Free parking, no surveillance, in Apt :

- in front of police station (avenue des Bories)

- The Pépinière d'entreprises

- Calavon (below the town centre)

- School car park (in front of lycée)

#### Parking at your accommodation:

Depending on availability, possible to park your car at the accommodation's car park in Apt for the week.

### **Supplementary nights in Avignon :**

Hôtel Angleterre, Bd Raspail, tel 0033 490863431

Hôtel Blauvac, rue Bancasse, tel 0033 490863411

Hôtel Ibis, Pont de l'Europe, Bd Dominique, tel 0033 490820000

Hôtel Kyriad centre, Place de l'Horloge, tél 0033 490822145

Hôtel Magnan, rue Portail Magnanen, tel 0033 490863651, near to the train station in the town centre.

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## **To carry in your luggage**

### - Bags

A small day pack for your water bottle, camera, picnic and waterproof.

A bag, rucksack or suitcase for your main luggage 10kg maximum per person.

### - For Walking

Good walking shoes or boots with a good grip sole

Walking socks.

Warm fleece

Shorts and T shirts.

Swimming costume or trunks

Towel

2 Walking poles (optional)

Water bottle (one litre minimum)

Personal first aid kit with good blister protection

### - For your picnics

A good cutting knife, fork, spoon, plastic cup and plate

some plastic bags

### - Sun and rain protection

Sunglasses and sun cream

Sun hat

Wind and waterproof jacket (Gore-tex stlye)

### - Relaxing time

Trainers or open sandals

Warm Fleece and casual wear

## **With your service**

The Tour Aventure team is present and always at hand to ensure the smooth running of your holiday. We are on the ground and ready to assist in any eventuality.

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