

# Cycling Safaris

## PROVENCE 2010

### Day 1 Saturday

Arrive in Avignon - City of the Popes

Arrive at the hotel in St Didier. The recommended route is via TGV to [Avignon](#), where we may have enough time to stroll round this walled town, one-time home to the Popes and the capital of Vaucluse.

### Day 2 - Sunday

Cycling in the Lubéron Hills

This is a tough day, only 29 miles but including 2 tough climbs. Today's cycling is not for softies.

We get the chance to visit the Fontaine de Vaucluse where a resurgent spring bursts into a gorge to form the source of the River Sorgue. The flow of this spring varies a lot, but can flow at 150 cubic metres a second. That's a reasonable size river just coming out of a hole in the ground - the Loire is only 6 times bigger. Attempts to survey the spring have gone beyond 1,000 feet deep.

We also visit the restored Village des Bories featuring 20 stone huts in traditional style dating back 500 years.

We finish today at Gordes, perched high on top of a hill. Not easy, but a beautiful village with views of Mont Ventoux, 'The Giant of Provence' and a landmark for Tour de France fans. Don't worry, we don't go anywhere near it. 29 miles

### Day 3 - Monday

St Rémy de Provence - Where Van Gogh Painted his Sunflowers



A longer day than yesterday, visiting small villages and spending much of the day on cycle tracks.

This is **Peter Mayle** country, passing Ménerbes and Bonnieux among the foothills of Le Petit Lubéron. We end the day in St Rémy de Provence underneath another small range of hills, the Alpilles.

St Rémy was the birth-place of **Nostradamus**, and much later [Van Gogh](#) lived here.

St Rémy is known for its aromas of wild herbs and was built close to the Roman village of Glanum following its destruction by Teutons.

Glanum still boasts a magnificent mausoleum and commemorative arch, and it's still worth a visit. 38 miles.



### Day 4 - Tuesday

Wine Tasting at Spectacular Baux de Provence

Today we visit Les Baux-de-Provence, nice and early to avoid crowds. This area gave its name to Bauxite, the ore from which we get aluminium, although mining has long-since stopped. The wines from **Les Baux** are also worthy of note, having been granted their own appellation status 15 years ago (we'll visit a vineyard at **Les Baux**, Ch. Dalmaran, perhaps for a pre-lunch tasting?).



The real highlight, though, is **Les Baux** itself. The village is built on top of a 200 metre high outcrop, and overlooking the village are the ruins of the fortress. The Lords of **Les Baux** claimed descent from [King Balthazar](#) of biblical fame (a likely tale). From its powerful position **Les Baux** was a key stronghold for anyone with designs on Provence. And there were plenty. Finally it was Cardinal Richlieu who resolved the problem by destroying the castle, but it still looks amazing. Which is why, unfortunately, more than 2 million people visit every year.

Today we leave the Vaucluse behind and cross the Rhône to spend the night in Beaucaire at the Hotel les Doctrinaires. This is a beautiful old building, with gourmet food and impeccable service in a secluded courtyard. 21 miles.

### Day 5 - Wednesday

The Most Spectacular Roman Aquaduct in the World



Today we visit the most spectacular site of the week, the Pont du Gard, considered one of the wonders of the ancient world.

The bridge was built by the Romans to carry water across the River Gardon as part of the aqueduct that carried water from Uzès to Nîmes. The bridge is 275 metres long and 48 metres high, and is made up of three tiers. The bottom tier still carries road traffic, and it's possible to walk across the top level.

If time allows, we can visit a vineyard at Domaine Malaric for a **wine tasting** on our way to Uzès, a charming medieval village overlooking the Alzon valley. We stay at the Hotel St genies, just outside town, and stroll in to Uzès for perhaps the finest gourmet food of the week. 28 miles.

### Day 6 - Thursday

More Amazing Roman Wngineering - The Ampitheatre in Orange



We're in different countryside here as we head back towards the River Rhone. This is Côtes du Rhone territory, and we can stop off for a **wine tasting** at a vineyard in Laudan if the mood takes us. The river here is huge - in fact in French technically the Rhône is not a river. The four largest rivers in France are designated as Fleuves - the Loire, the Garonne, the Seine, and of course the Rhône. We end today in Orange. This is the original seat of the Dutch royal family and [William of Orange](#), and is the origin of the state of

the same name in South Africa, as well as the county in California. When you visit, though, the most obvious things are the amazing Roman monuments.

The theatre at Orange is considered the best preserved of all Roman theatres - it still hosts operas every summer, and boasts seating for more than 8,000 people. The stage is 200 foot wide, and is overlooked by a huge statue of Augustus.

We stay at the Hotel Le Glacier in the centre and eat nearby at the Garden Restaurant. 29 miles.

### Day 7 - Friday

Chateauneuf du Pape and the Rhône Valley.

After a gentle morning's cycle close to the Rhône we visit **Chateauneuf du Pape**, one of the best known **appellations** in France. Like a lot of **appellations** in France, the rules governing production in **Chateauneuf** are



idiosyncratic and bizarre. There are 13 grape varieties allowed to be used within the **appellation**, which include the well known Syrah

but also traditional Provençale varieties such as Mourvedre and Cinsault. **Appellation** rules also require that a minimum of 5% of all grapes picked are discarded. We'll visit Domaine de la Solitude and taste some fine



**Chateauneuf du Pape** as well as learning more about one of the more interesting wine growing areas in France.

Today we have the option of visiting **Avignon**. It adds a few miles, but for anyone who didn't have the opportunity of visiting the Palais des Papes last Saturday, they should take a look today. A combination of grandeur and paranoia led to the huge Palais des Papes, and to the cleared area around the Palais that serves to add to its grandeur. Avignon also boasts wonderful views of the Rhône and across the river to Villeneuve-lès-Avignon.

We end our week in Villeneuve les Avignon at the delightful Residence du Cedres. 22 miles (39 miles via Avignon).

### **Day 8 - Saturday**

Homeward bound!

## **GROUR TOUR DATES**

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June 19

August 21

September 4

September 18

## **TOUR PRICE**

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€1320.00 euro per person sharing

€1570.00 euro for single occupancy

## **WHAT THE TOUR PRICE INCLUDES**

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- 7 nights hotel accommodation with breakfast
- 7 dinners
- Guide cycling with the group
- Luggage transferred locally
- 24 speed hybrid touring bike
- Fixed transfer from Avignon to your hotel at the tour start
- Fixed transfer back to Avignon at tour end.