

France: Saint-Rémy-de-Provence, Les Baux & Avignon

Bike Vacation Only

VBT's Provençal trip leaders are more than just guides—they're family! With our deep relationships in Provence, we've got the inside scoop on bike routes only the locals know. Cycle the majestic Alpilles, discovering the vibrant colors that inspired Van Gogh's masterpieces. Experience a stunning spectacle at Carrières de Lumières—a theatre carved from an ancient limestone quarry. Enjoy a fragrant dinner in the home of a local VBT friend, and pedal a traffic-free bike path to the charming village of Chateauneuf-du-Pape—where you'll sample the region's exquisite vintages. Stroll the cobbled streets of Saint-Rémy and Avignon—and enjoy a wine tasting at Chateau de Manissy with another Provençal friend of VBT. Throughout your journey, you'll find the sights, sounds, and flavors of Provence are more vibrant when seen through the eyes of those who call this region home.

Cultural Highlights

- Delve into the imagination of artist Vincent van Gogh on a private guided tour.
- Roll through pastoral landscapes of olive groves, vineyards, farms, and villages, set against the lofty Alpilles.
- Stride across the Pont du Gard, the magnificent, UNESCO-cited Roman aqueduct.
- Join a local guide on a tour of Avignon, the "City of the Popes."
- Explore Chateauneuf-du Pape, where life is lived in its wine.

What to Expect

This tour offers a combination of easy terrain mixed with moderate hills and is suitable for novice cyclists and ideal for experienced cyclists. Our VBT support vehicle is always available for those who would like assistance with the hills.

Tour Duration: 7 Days

Average Daily Mileage: 7-33 miles

Average Cycling Time: 2-5 hours

Group size: 14-20 max

Climate Information

Average High/Low Temperature (°F)

April 67°/45°, May 74°/51°, June 82°/58°, July 87°/61°, August 87°/60°, September 78°/57°, October

68°/49°

Average Rainfall (in.)

April 2.1, May 2.5, June 1.7, July 1.3, August 1.8, September 2.6, October 3.3

DAY 1: VBT Bicycling Vacation begins / Avignon

Meet at the first hotel in Avignon by 2:00 p.m.

Your hotel is set at the foot of the 14th-century ramparts and just steps from the city's many attractions. You have free time to stroll into town for lunch on your own and relax on the hotel grounds as you settle in. At 2:00 p.m., meet your VBT trip leaders for a short introduction, followed by a safety and bike-fitting session and warm-up ride. Tonight, attend a welcome wine reception at the hotel and dinner at a local restaurant.

Today's Ride Choices

Afternoon: Warm-up — 15 km (10 miles)

What to Expect:

Begin your explorations with a warm-up ride around the flat island of La Barthelasse through many orchards.

Cumulative Distance Range: 15 km (10 miles)

Included Meals: Dinner

DAY 2: Chateauneuf-du-Pape / Avignon

Breathtaking scenery and excellent cycling await you on the first full day of your Provence bike trip. After breakfast at your hotel, cycle from Avignon to Chateauneuf-du-Pape along the new cycling path on the island of La Barthelasse. Pause in the village at a wine cellar for an optional tasting of the distinctive red and white wines that reflect the terroir of the pebbly soil and the sunny climate. You can also visit the ruins of the 14th-century castle that was built by Pope John XXII, admire the views of the Rhône valley and the Mont Ventoux, and stroll along the charming streets lined with shops. Enjoy lunch on your own.

After lunch cycle back to Avignon on the bike path or cycle to the right bank of the Rhône, through Roquemaure, a small commune in the Gard department.

Later this afternoon, back in Avignon, join a local guide for a walking tour of the fabled “City of the Popes.” Stroll the timeless cobblestone streets of this ancient city, a UNESCO World Heritage site.

Tonight is free for you to enjoy dinner in one of the local restaurants.

Today's Ride Choices

Morning: Avignon to Chateauneuf-du-Pape — 19 km (12 miles)

Afternoon: Chateauneuf-du-Pape to Avignon — 18 km (11 miles) OR Chateauneuf-du-Pape to Roquemaure and Avignon — 31 km (19 miles)

What to Expect:

Enjoy a morning ride mainly on bike paths from the Gard department to the Vaucluse department where Chateauneuf-du-Pape awaits. After lunch on your own, two cycling options are available. The direct way back to Avignon on the bike path or a slightly longer ride on the opposite side of the Rhône River. Later this afternoon, join a guided walking tour of Avignon inside the ancient city walls. After the tour, you are free to dine on your own in town.

Cumulative Distance Range: 19 – 50 km (12 – 31 miles)

Included Meals: Breakfast

DAY 3: Lirac and Tavel / Wine tasting

Today's ride takes you across the river to Villeneuve-lès-Avignon, where you will ride up to Fortress Saint André and admire the view over Avignon and the Rhône River. Continue into the Gard district on the right bank of the Rhône River. Your route follows the agricultural plain of the river, planted mainly with apples, melons, pumpkins, asparagus, and market-garden produce. Leaving the river valley, you'll cycle through typical Provençal landscapes and vineyards to Chateau de Manissy for a visit to the old château's farm. Enjoy a picnic here prepared by a local friend. You'll also sample some local wine in the cellar's tasting room.

En route back to the hotel, cycle through the village of Tavel, famous for its rosé wine. Here, you may stop for an optional tasting in a wine cellar.

The rest of the day is yours to traverse Avignon on your own. City highlights include the former papal residence—the immense Palais des Papes (Papal Palace). Now a museum, this Gothic building was fortified with walls up to 18 feet (5.5 meters) thick. Or perhaps you'll walk the surviving section of the Pont d'Avignon. Built in the 12th century, this bridge originally spanned the Rhône but has suffered frequent collapses from floods. Only four of its original 22 arches remain. You may also wish to buy a Provençal fabric tablecloth.

Tonight is free for you to enjoy an authentic Provençal dinner in one of the local restaurants.

Today's Ride Choices

Morning: Avignon to Chateau de Manissy — 21 km (13 miles)

Afternoon: Lunch to Tavel to Avignon — 20 km (13 miles) OR Lunch to Tavel to Avignon PLUS — 43 km (27 miles)

What to Expect:

This morning, cycle to Villeneuve-lès-Avignon, then through beautiful and flat agricultural land along the Rhône Valley. Then head away from the river, traversing a low ridge to Chateau de Manissy on the Route des Vignobles. After a picnic lunch, cycle back, passing through Tavel en route. The longer option goes to Lirac before cutting through a forested plateau, making an additional loop to Tavel before returning to the hotel.

Later this afternoon, explore Avignon at your leisure. Tonight is free for you to dine in one of the local restaurants.

Cumulative Distance Range: 21 – 64 km (13 – 40 miles)

Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch

DAY 4: Pont du Gard / Saint-Rémy-de-Provence

After breakfast this morning, begin cycling to Vers-Pont-du-Gard where you will pause for lunch on your own. The stones from Vers, excavated since the time of the Romans and which gave the house façades their pretty color, were used to build the famous aqueduct. Built by the Romans in the first century BCE (and declared a UNESCO World Heritage site in 1985), the Pont du Gard is just one segment of a 31-mile-long (49.9-km) aqueduct built to transport water from a spring in Uzès to the city of Nîmes. Remarkably, the structure was built entirely without mortar, using stones that weighed up to six tons. Consisting of three levels, this bridge appears surprisingly delicate despite the massive stones used in its construction. Much of the aqueduct has deteriorated over time, but this most impressive span still stands. Walk across this stunning architectural achievement.

This afternoon, shuttle to your hotel in Saint-Rémy.

Once settled in, you have time to relax, perhaps in the hotel's outdoor pool or in the beautiful garden with stunning views of the Alpilles. If you are more energetic, you may play a game of pétanque on the boules pitch, billiards, foosball or table tennis, before gathering for dinner at a nearby hotel.

Today's Ride Choices

Morning: Avignon to Pont du Gard — 42 km (26 miles)

Afternoon: Vers to Pont du Gard — 11 km (7 miles)

What to Expect:

This morning, ride your bicycle from your hotel to Pont du Gard for a visit of this impressive aqueduct. You'll stop for lunch in Vers before cycling to nearby Pont du Gard or opt for a longer ride to the aqueduct. After your visit, you will board the shuttle vehicle to the hotel in Saint-Rémy-de-Provence.

Cumulative Distance Range: 11 – 52 km (7 – 33 miles)

Included Meals: Breakfast, Dinner

DAY 5: Cycle to Les Baux / van Gogh tour / Home-hosted dinner

After breakfast, roll into the heart of the Alpilles to Les Baux-de-Provence. Stop at some interesting sites along the way, such as the ancient fortress of Les Baux, which sits on an 800-foot (243.8-meter) rocky

plateau.

The beautiful village of Les Baux has many lookouts with stunning views of Arles, the Camargue, and the Alpilles. As you walk through, pause at the architectural accomplishments of its church, château, town hall, hospital, chapels, houses, and doorways.

Have lunch on your own here. Afterward, experience an extraordinary visual and musical production at Carrières de Lumières, whose spectacular multimedia shows are set in an abandoned limestone quarry. Then cycle back toward Saint-Rémy-de-Provence through the gentle countryside that inspired van Gogh to create more than 150 paintings.

Later, meet up with your trip leaders and walk to meet local historian Mathilde Duvillier by the Saint-Paul Asylum, where Vincent van Gogh admitted himself. Mathilde will guide your small group to many of the places pictured in the artist's works during his time here, enabling you to relate the scenes directly to them. You'll also venture inside the sanitarium to see the carefully reproduced layout and furnishings of van Gogh's room.

After another short walk, you arrive at the home of VBT friend Odile Mifsud. Here, you'll enjoy a home-cooked dinner, flavored by the herbs of her native Provence and the rich tradition of her family cuisine.

Today's Ride Choices

Morning: Saint-Rémy to Les Baux Loop — 32 km (20 miles) OR Saint-Rémy to Les Baux — 10 km (6 miles)

Afternoon: Les Baux to Saint-Rémy — 10 km (6 miles)

What to Expect:

This morning, cycle into the heart of the Alpilles to Les Baux-de-Provence, situated on a rocky plateau. If you wish, you may add an extra loop in the Alpilles before lunch. You may cycle back to the hotel or return by support vehicle after lunch on your own. Later, walk to meet local historian Mathilde Duvillier for a van Gogh tour, followed by a home-hosted dinner at the home of Odile Mifsud.

Cumulative Distance Range: 10 – 42 km (6 – 26 miles)

Included Meals: Breakfast, Dinner

DAY 6: Les Alpilles

After breakfast, prepare for what may be the most beautiful cycling of the entire week. You'll ride through pristine Provençal countryside, passing olive groves and the soaring Alpilles. A small chain extending from the Luberon, the Alpilles are not very wide but rise dramatically out of the Rhône Valley. Their foothills are flanked by the Durance and Rhône rivers.

As you cycle, you can stop to wander through timeless villages. Perhaps you'll explore Eygalières and its lovely stone-built homes lining small winding streets. While here, you might walk to the top of the village to view the panorama, and enjoy a picnic lunch on your own in a cool field, shaded by olive or almond trees. If you're up for a more ambitious riding day, our longer option offers even more delightful scenery.

Later this afternoon, you are free to stroll Saint-Rémy's narrow cobblestone streets, browse the enticing shops, and admire the ancient restored houses with their Renaissance façades.

Tonight, exchange stories of your Provence bike trip as you celebrate with your fellow travelers during a special farewell dinner.

Today's Ride Choices

Morning: Saint-Rémy to Eygalières — 19 km (12 miles)

Afternoon: Eygalières to hotel — 17 km (11 miles) OR Eygalières and Alpilles to hotel PLUS — 40 km (25 miles)

What to Expect:

Start to cycle through the pristine Provençal countryside, passing olive groves and the Alpilles mountains. Consider a stop in Eygalières to explore this Provençal village and its outdoor market. Buy a picnic lunch or try one of the local restaurants—and don't forget to walk to the top of the village to enjoy the panorama.

Cumulative Distance Range: 17 – 57 km (11 – 36 miles)

Included Meals: Breakfast, Dinner

DAY 7: Avignon / VBT Bicycling Vacation ends

After breakfast, transportation is provided to the Avignon TGV train station, arriving at approximately 9:00 a.m. Your tour ends here.

Included Meals: Breakfast

Accommodations

May vary depending on departure date.

Avignon Grand Hotel (Days 1-3)

The Avignon Grand Hotel is set at the foot of the 14th century ramparts and just a few steps from the Palais des Papes. Spacious and friendly common areas lead to quiet and comfortable air-conditioned rooms with a separate living room. Treat yourself to a sunny break at the rooftop pool and solarium, perhaps sipping on a cocktail. Dine at the restaurant, Le Saint Louis, in the historic courtyard lined with beautiful hundred-year-old plane trees, located 300 meters away, in Hotel Le Cloitre Saint-Louis.

Hotel de l'Image (Days 4-6)

Located in the center of Saint-Rémy-de-Provence, the Hotel de l'Image is one of Provence's most charming hotels. Inspired by the theme of photography, it has a gallery, private collection, and a projection hall. It also offers a restaurant, swimming pool, beautiful garden, and stunning views of the Alpilles. And you're sure to enjoy the contemporary styling of your air-conditioned room. Free wireless Internet connections are available throughout the hotel.