



Provence of the Tour de France

Tour Overview

Tour Dates: You may begin this tour on any day, but please note that bike pick-up and return cannot occur on a Sunday. See [Schedule](#) for blackout dates and additional tour scheduling considerations.

Location: Located in the far southeast of France, Provence is known for its lovely Mediterranean climate, fields of sunflowers, vineyards, the Impressionists, Roman ruins, and that most famous mountain stage of the Tour de France race, the climb up Mont Ventoux, France's highest peak between the Pyrenees and the Alps. For those who dream of completing a Tour de France mountain stage, this tour incorporates the climb up Mont Ventoux into one of its stages. For those who prefer to leave Tour de France mountain stages to the professionals, however, an incredibly beautiful alternate route is provided.

The tour begins and ends in Avignon, 3 - 4 hours from Paris' Charles de Gaulle Airport by express train. Overnight destinations include Avignon, Gordes, Sault, and Vaison-la-Romaine.

Tour Type: Circuit tour

Terrain: The terrain, like everything about this region, is diverse. While there are lots of ups and downs on this tour (some challenging), you will also enjoy long, relatively flat stretches of effortless cycling.

Length: 8 days / 8 nights

Distance: Total: 169 miles / 273 km. Average per day: 33 miles / 55 km

Highlights:

Some of France's most beautiful perched medieval villages -- Gordes, Roussillon, Menerbes, Goult, etc. -- bathed in the warm Provencal sun.

The climb up Mont Ventoux, the roof of Provence and location of the popular Tour de France mountain stage.

The sheer beauty of the Mediterranean landscapes and the play of light that so captivated Impressionists like Van Gogh.

The charming riverside villages of Isle-sur-la-Sorgue and Fontaine de Vaucluse.

The gorges of the Nesque and the Toulourenc Rivers.

Vineyards, wine villages, and free wine tasting opportunities.

Avignon, the region's most colorful and cultured city, with its medieval wall surrounding the city and its former Papal palace.

Daily Itinerary

Day 1: Arrival in Avignon. Spend 2 nights.

Arrive in Avignon at the time of your choosing. No activities are scheduled for this day.

Day 2: Free Day in Avignon.

During your first full day in Avignon, you'll pick-up your bicycle and have the opportunity to take it for a leisurely spin around Avignon or on the beautiful island in the Rhone called the Isle de Barthelasse. In addition, you'll have plenty of time to sight-see, shop, dine and prepare for your next day's departure.

Avignon is a vibrant, sunny, southern city, full of historical sights. Must-sees include the Palais des Papes, the palatial residence of the Popes who moved here from Rome in the 14th century when Rome was politically unstable, and the city's collection of art museums and Romanesque, gothic and renaissance churches. In addition, you will be fascinated by Avignon's centuries old ramparts which completely surround the city's medieval center, as well as the 12th century bridge which partially spans the mighty Rhone River. You'll be staying within the city's walled center, just a few short steps from a multitude of fabulous restaurants and shops.

Day 3: Avignon to Gordes - 42 km / 26 miles. Spend 2 nights.

Following your departure from Avignon and its environs, you'll begin your first full day of cycling on quiet country roads winding through the famous vineyards of the Rhone river valley. Your route today is largely flat with just a couple of climbs and includes numerous opportunities to explore the warm, quiet and welcoming villages for which Provence is widely known. On your way to Gordes, you'll pass through the sleepy village of Jonquerettes, the often lively market town of le Thor, and magical Isle-sur-le-Sorgue with the five branches of the Sorgue River meandering through it. Next you'll visit the source of the River Sorgue at the charming village of Fontaine de Vaucluse. Gushing out of a 230 meter high cliff, the underground spring is the world's fifth most powerful resurgent river. You'll end your day by entering into the region of Provence known as the Lubéron staying for two nights in one of its most magnificent hilltop villages, Gordes.

Day 4: Circuit of the perched villages of the Lubéron - 45 km / 28 miles.

Having entered the Lubéron -- that part of Provence made famous by Peter Mayle in his bestselling memoir, *A Year in Provence* -- on this day's circuit trip, you will see and experience more of the region's magnificent natural beauty, as well as an incredible sampling of southern France's most beautiful villages all perched high atop the cliffs of the foothills. Your route today is largely, gently rolling hills interspersed with some short to mid-length climbs. You'll cycle through deep green forests laced with ochre-colored rock formations and visit quintessentially Provencal villages such as Lacoste, Roussillon, Menerbes and Goult. Like your approach into Gordes yesterday, you'll marvel at the picturesque beauty of these medieval enclaves with their stone cottages clinging to their hillsides overlooking the majestic landscapes below them.

Day 5: Gordes to Sault - 60 km / 37 miles. Spend 1 night.

On today's ride, you'll turn your sights almost exclusively toward the raw, unspoiled, off-the-beaten path natural beauty of the Lubéron. Shortly after your departure from Gordes, you'll skirt the nearby mountains cycling alongside jagged rock walls. Your route today is largely a steady climb, with some exciting roller coaster-like ups and downs. The highlight of this day's ride however is the magnificence of the Gorges de la Nesque with its expansive vistas, hairpin switchback turns and Grand Canyonesque drama. After leaving the Gorges, you'll soon arrive in Sault, the staging point for your Mount Ventoux adventure.

Day 6: Sault to Vaison-la-Romaine - 57.1 km / 35 miles via Mont Ventoux or 46.6 km / 29 miles via easier alternate. Spend 2 nights.

For couples and groups consisting of individuals with different fitness, skill and / or interest levels, the climb-up Mount Ventoux, the mountain made famous by five-time Tour de France champion Lance Armstrong, is optional. The alternative route consists of gently rolling hills interspersed with stretches of flat, effortless cycling and a couple of climbs. The alternative route includes the spectacular scenery of the Valley of the Toulourenc and passes through several beautiful villages as well.

For our adventure seekers, our climb up Mount Ventoux begins in Sault, the most popular approach to the summit due to its more manageable grade overall. From Sault to Chalet Reynard (the point at which all approaches up the mountain converge) the grade ranges from 1% to 6%. Midway through your climb up the mountain's forested eastern slope you'll encounter an average grade of slightly less than 6% for 7 consecutive kilometers.

From Chalet Reynard to the summit, the grade ranges from 6.5% to 10.4% with the steepest grade occurring at the very summit for 1.1 kms. By the time you've reached the mountain's barren summit, you will have climbed 1150 meters over 21.1 kilometers. Of course, your descent to Vaison-la-Romaine is a spine-tingling, hair-raising, thrill-a-minute, once in a lifetime experience as well.

Day 7: Free day in Vaison-la-Romaine.

You'll appreciate a full day to explore magnificent Vaison-la-Romaine. We recommend beginning your exploration of Vaison in the medieval upper town with its narrow, winding streets lined with beautiful gardens, charming shops and wonderful restaurants. Perched above the upper town you'll find the ruins of a 12th century castle and its once mighty fortifications. As mid-day approaches, you'll want to descend the hill on which the upper town rests to experience the convivial ambience of Vaison's lively new town. There, we recommend having lunch and shopping for locally crafted treasures before descending further to spend your afternoon exploring the excavated ruins of an extensive Roman settlement including the homes of its wealthiest residents with their still intact mosaic floors and indoor plumbing. Vaison is indeed a sensual delight!

Day 8: Vaison to Avignon - 69 km / 43 miles - Spend 1 night.

Dominated by exquisite natural beauty and a numerous villages, each lovelier than the last, you may be tempted to devote the entire day to this final stage of your tour itinerary. From Vaison, you'll travel along the edge of the Dentelles (French for lace) Mountains down the Route du Vin to the charming winemaking villages of Séguret, Sablet, and Gigondas. From there, you'll head east for more level cycling, passing through one of France's most exclusive wine appellations, Châteauneuf-du-Pape, a wonderful place to have lunch and explore.

After lunch, you'll cross the Rhone back into the Gard region. Your route will take you down the west side of the Rhone to Roquemaure and then, onto to the Isle de Barthelasse where you'll cycle on tiny back roads through apple, peach and pear orchards and fields of sunflowers. Before returning to Avignon however, we recommend stopping in Villeneuve-lès-Avignon, just across the Rhone from Avignon. Villeneuve is where the cardinals settled when on their arrival in the 14th century in Avignon they found no place to build. In addition to its many splendid sights such as the massive citadel known as Fort St André and the Tour Phillippe le Bel, from here, you'll enjoy incredible views of Avignon and Mount Ventoux.

You will return your rental bikes before 6 pm.

Tour Price: US \$795.00 per person

Children's Price - Children 16 years or younger traveling with 2 adults: \$300.00 per child.

Discounts are available for parties of 5 or more adults.

The tour price includes:

- Tour Documentation: Route instructions, map, Pre-trip Preparation Guide, On-Road Quick Reference Guide, and Sights Guide.
- Bike Rental for 7 Days: Excellent quality hybrid or mountain bike with handlebar bag, map carrier, cyclometer, water bottle cage, rear rack, lock, repair kit, and helmet. Optional pedal cages. Road / racing bikes are available for a supplemental charge.
- Daily Baggage Transfers
- English-Speaking Support Staff
- Reservation of your Accommodations
- Shipping and Handling Charges for US customers
- Basic SAG Support: If you choose not to cycle on one or more days due to weather, illness, etc., AND you notify your Diverse Directions support representative in advance so that you and your bikes can be transported along with your luggage, no additional charges will apply.

The tour price does NOT include:

- Hotels: Because you are free to select from a wide range of hotels -- from charming and basic 2-star to 4-star luxury (where available) -- the cost of your hotel accommodations is not bundled into the tour package price. See our Accommodations Options page for the price ranges of each category of hotel. A list of accommodations options for this tour, with website links, is available upon request.
- Meals: You are free to determine your own budget for meals. A wide variety of options are available -- from creating a picnic from provisions obtained at a boulangerie / patisserie, to dining at bistros and restaurants, or taking meals at your hotel (where available.) Please note that breakfasts are NOT included in France hotel rates. However, hotels with restaurants often offer a demi-pension option, which includes the cost of your room, breakfast, and dinner at a reasonable price.
- Transportation from your home to Avignon and from Avignon to your home.
- Personal expenses
- Insurance
- Shipping and Handling Charges for non-US customers. A shipping & handling charge of US \$15.00 will be added to tour package orders outside the US.

For Diverse Directions' payment terms, cancellation policy, and all terms & conditions, please see [Terms & Conditions](#).