



Provence of the Caesars Tour

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, its Papal palace and Roman ruins. Most people are somewhat familiar with this region of France which was made popular by Peter Mayle's best-selling book, [A Year in Provence](#). What many people don't realize is just how diverse are the many areas that comprise Provence, nor how deeply rooted the region's history is in that of ancient Rome.

In the deep south of France, the tour begins and ends in Avignon, 3 - 4 hours from Paris' Charles de Gaulle Airport by express train. The vegetation, light, and ambiance is Mediterranean. Overnight destinations include Avignon, Uzès, Aiguèze, Orange, 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: 160 miles / 260 km. Average per day: 32 miles / 52 km.

Highlights:

Marvel at the sheer beauty of the Mediterranean landscapes, vegetation (fields of sunflowers) and the play of light that so captivated Impressionists like Van Gogh.

An incredibly varied geography including mountain ranges, semi-arid *garrigue*, rolling vineyards, and cliff-studded river valleys.

Enjoy free wine tasting opportunities nearly everywhere along your route.

Explore Roman ruins as impressive as those of Italy; particularly the grand aqueduct of the region, the Pont du Gard, the Triumphal Arch and coliseum at Orange, and the multi-tiered ruins of beautiful Vaison-la-Romaine.

Perched medieval villages bathed in the warm Provencal sun.

Avignon, the region's most colorful and cultured city, with its medieval wall surrounding the city and its former Papal palace (the popes resided here during the 14th century.)

Daily Itinerary

Day 1: Arrival in Avignon. Spent 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 Uzès - 53 km / 33 miles. Spend 1 night.

Just a short distance beyond the hustle and bustle of Avignon, you'll enter the world-renowned Provençal countryside. The first village through which you'll cycle, 16th century Aramon, feels forgotten by time. If you're visiting in September, you may even experience a running of the bulls! From Aramon you'll continue to Théziers, another medieval village set amidst the rolling hills of the Gard, and then on to Remoulins, gateway to the Pont du Gard. Constructed by the Romans in the 1st century to transport clean drinking water to the Roman city of Nîmes, this remarkable aqueduct bridges the Gard today as it has for 2000 years. The area surrounding the aqueduct is a park, complete with riverside beaches and a lovely picnic area. Plan to picnic here for lunch amidst its splendor. When it's time to leave, you'll actually cycle across the Pont du Gard.

From the Pont du Gard, you'll cycle on tiny traffic-free roads through lovely vineyards and the charming villages of Sanilhac and Sagriès. As you begin the final 10 km's of the day's ride, you'll encounter the first of several climbs on your way to Uzès. Uzès commands a striking pose, sitting on the tip of a limestone plateau overlooking the Alzon valley. Established as a duchy in 1565, Uzès is still often referred to as the Duchy of Uzès. Its medieval core has been restored to its old grandeur, featuring such notable monuments as the Duchal Palace, the Eglise St. Etienne, the Cathédrale St. Théodorit, and the Tour Fenestrelle, a 12th century relic of a former Romanesque cathedral destroyed in the Wars of Religion. From its numerous sidewalk cafés, Uzès is a lively place to people-watch and soak up local color.

Day 4: Uzès to Aiguèze / St. Martin d'Ardèche - 56km / 35 miles. Spend 2 nights.

You're going to love the non-stop beauty of this day's scenery. In fact, the route itself is the real sight seeing treat today. You'll begin your day with a challenging climb out of Uzès to the top of a plateau. Your route then takes you through beautiful countryside and several medieval villages to the enchanting town of Goudargues, known to the French as the Venice of the Gard (with its many canals, you'll soon understand why).

Beyond Goudargues, you'll have the opportunity to take a short side-trip to a truly unique natural site: the Cascades du Sautadets. Here, the River Cèze has carved out channels and cavities in the 5 million year old limestone rock to create a spectacular series of waterfalls and pools in which you can take a refreshing dip. Just a stone's throw from the falls is the village of La Roque-sur-Cèze, classified as one of France's most beautiful villages. The village, built on a rock peak overlooking the Cèze, is dominated by the traces of the former castle and its chapel, sloping cobbled streets, and houses made with creamy stones and curved-tiles cornices.

If you elect to stay in the fairytale-like hamlet of Aiguèze, your cycling ends here; otherwise you'll continue on to St. Martin. Aiguèze is a charming 14th century village perched high upon a cliff

overlooking the Ardèche river. Beyond the turnoff for Aiguèze, you'll descend to the Ardèche River and your entry into St. Martin via a narrow suspension bridge. Sitting by the river at the eastern entrance to the Gorge of the Ardèche, St. Martin is a small riverside village with a relaxing ambience and offers a multitude of leisure time activities.

Day 5: Free Day in Aiguèze / St. Martin.

For a relaxing Provencal experience, Aiguèze / St. Martin can't be beat. Enjoy the riverside parks and beaches, sit by the pool at your hotel, or simply stroll the tiny lanes of these sister villages. Or, for a more active approach to your free day, kayak down the Ardèche -- complete with rapids -- and / or cycle the winding road that towers above the gorge on the St. Martin side of the river. Along this road, you'll find magnificent vistas and several fascinating underground caves offering guided tours.

Day 6: St. Martin to Orange - 42 km / 26 miles - Spend 1 night.

Before those hamstrings completely stiffen up, it's time to hit the road again for a relatively short ride to Orange. Today's ride is again beautiful; you'll pass through vineyards, rolling countryside, and lovely villages like Pont-St-Esprit with its medieval bridge over the Rhone. Arriving early into Orange, you'll enjoy the better part of your day exploring its many sights. Upon entering the city, you can't miss one of its most compelling landmarks, the Roman Triumphal Arch. One of the best preserved of the Roman gateway arches, the Arc de Triomphe has marked the entry into Orange for 2000 years.

You mustn't miss the Roman theater either; it's the best preserved not only in Provence but also in the whole of the Roman empire. During the summer, an international music festival is held at the theater. Adjacent to the theater, are the ruins of the Roman theater district. Finally, you'll enjoy exploring the lively old town of Orange, where you'll be staying. When you're tired, linger over a coffee at a sidewalk café while soaking up the local color.

Day 7: Orange to Vaison-la-Romaine - 36 km / 22.5 miles - Spend 1 night.

Today's ride takes you deep into vineyard country and through the beautiful villages of St-Cecile-lès-Vignes, Cairanne, and Rasteau, before reaching your destination, 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 - 70 km / 44 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 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.

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](#).