



R I D E & S E E K

Riding on roads that have long been part of cycling folklore we take you on a sensory journey that will live long in the memory.



Les Plus
Beaux Villages
de France®

RIDE & SEEK LOCAL ADVENTURES

Provence Overview

Mike Tomalaris

For many Australians, Mike Tomalaris is the voice of the Tour de France. His National Order of Merit award from the French government this year was a reflection of the esteem he is held in France and an acknowledgment of the 31 editions of the Tour de France he commented on.

Whilst still commentating on Australian TV his new passion is touring the world by bike and we are delighted to welcome him to the Ride & Seek team as both an ambassador and a guide.



Ride with Mike

Come ride with Mike in the enchanting region of Provence. Home to the Ride & Seek European base and one of the great European riding destinations – we think Mike is the perfect host to lead this tour. With the 'Most Beautiful Villages of France' providing the fabric, and Mont Ventoux the challenge, this is a tour to suit all abilities and also includes a non-rider option. Fine food, great wine, stunning vistas along with the inimitable Mike Tomalaris make for a wonderful tour combination.



TOTAL
DISTANCE:

367km | 228mi

ELEVATION:

3645m | 11,959ft

DURATION:

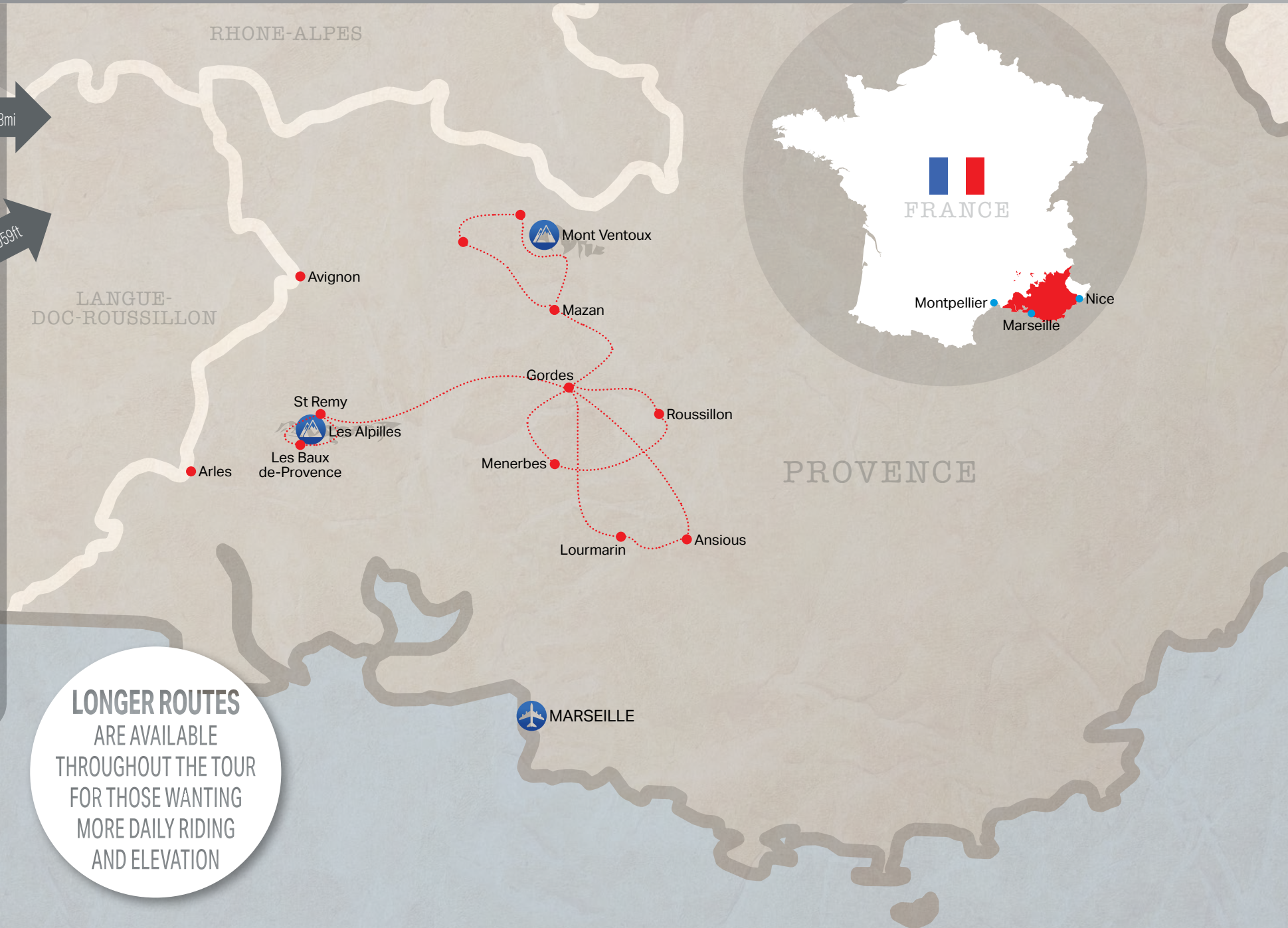
8
DAYS
7 Nights

FRANCE










PROVENCE

LONGER ROUTES
ARE AVAILABLE
THROUGHOUT THE TOUR
FOR THOSE WANTING
MORE DAILY RIDING
AND ELEVATION



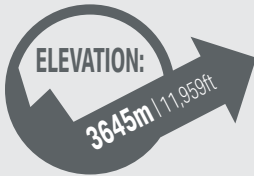
PROVENCE | REGULAR ROUTE

Ride Day	Destination	Distance (kilometres)	Elevation (metres)	Distance (miles)	Elevation (feet)
1	 St Remy de Provence	25	135	16	443
2	 Les Baux de Provence	55	765	34	2510
3	 Gordes	62	603	39	1978
4	 Roussillon	54	495	34	1624
5	 Bonnieux	67	630	42	2067
6	 Mazan	52	405	32	1329
7	 Sault	52	612	32	2008
TOTALS		367	3645	1228	11959
AVERAGES		7 ride days	52	33	1708

ADDITIONAL ROUTES

Distance (kilometres)	Elevation (metres)	Distance (miles)	Elevation (feet)
25	306	16	1004
30	315	19	1034
32	531	20	1742
21	342	13	1122
35	414	22	1358
40	720	25	2362
40	1080	25	3543
223	3708	139	12166
32	530	20	1738

LONGER ROUTES
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Beautiful villages, Impressionist art, Roman ruins and classic scenery...

With its unique micro climate and picture postcard views Provence embodies the very best that the Mediterranean lifestyle has to offer. Riding on roads that have long been part of cycling folklore we take you a sensory journey that will live long in the memory.

Having led tours in Provence since 2002 and explored every inch of the region we wanted to offer a unique take on the region. We have designed the tour with the aim of experiencing what this enchanting region has to offer both on and off the tourist trail. We still visit a number of the classic destinations, such as St Remy de Provence and the Vaucluse, however our itinerary incorporates so much more besides. From Ansouis to Viens, Les Alpilles to Glanum we provide a captivating glimpse of Provence.

Cycling through landscapes painted by Cezanne and Van Gogh it soon becomes clear why so many distinguished poets and painters chose to make Provence home. From the spectacular hill towns of Gordes and Venasque, to a historical exploration of the Roman Glanum and Medieval Les Baux-de- Provence this tour offers an amazing cultural immersion.

Along the way we will sample the iconic Chateauneuf du Pape wines and introduce you to some exceptional lesser known Côtes du Rhône vintages. You will sample a cuisine, blessed with an abundance of natural ingredients, renown for both its flair and freshness. The Provençal gastronomy provides the final piece of what can only be described as the ultimate bike tour jigsaw.

Our Provence itinerary is one of our Local Tours which are designed for the discerning cyclist who wishes to explore a region in depth without too many hotel changes. By its nature this tour provides scope for participants to ride as little or as much as they would like. Each day longer routes are on offer for the more avid riders, but there are plenty of non-rider options for the those looking for more relaxed ways to experience the region.



Les Plus
Beaux Villages
de France®

**Voted the most
beautiful in France**

For a series of our Local Tours in France we have partnered with the French institution 'Les Plus Beaux Villages de France' who recognise and award villages across the country for their beauty, culture and historical value. Being recognised as one of the 'most beautiful villages of France' is a coveted and prestigious title. Thus far there are 157 villages spread across 21 regions with a number of them, for good reason, situated in Provence. We will be visiting 8 of the most beautiful in the area.



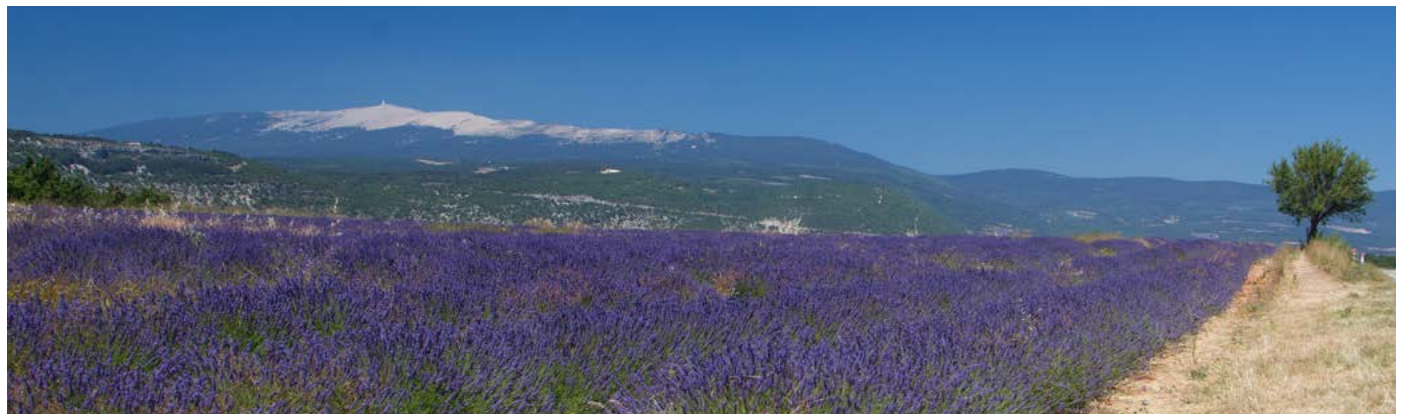


Highlights

- The opportunity to visit and/or stay in no less than 8 Les Plus Beaux Villages. 8 villages voted the most beautiful in all France.
- Wander the streets of St Remy, birthplace of Nostradamus and the site of the sanatorium where Van Gogh painted his final works.
- History across the ages from the Roman ruins of Glanum to Medieval Castles and Abbeys.
- Sample iconic wines from Chateauneuf du Pape and Côtes du Rhône.
- Take up the challenge of one of the most iconic cycle routes of them all – climbing Mont Ventoux. Note that this is an extra loop!
- Most importantly embrace the elements of the good life that Peter Mayle so articulately depicted in his 1989 book, A Year in Provence!
- Experience the quintessential Provençal experience, the weekly market, and delight in the sensory overload.
- Ride along the Gorges de la Nesque – one of our favourite cycling routes across all the tours we run.



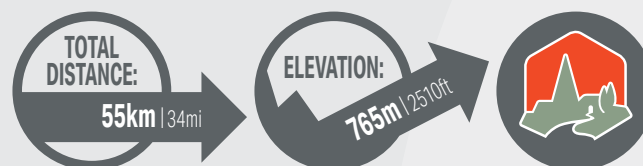
“Fantastic french wine & food, the best villages in france, epic history and top notch cycling. What more could you want on a holiday in provence?”





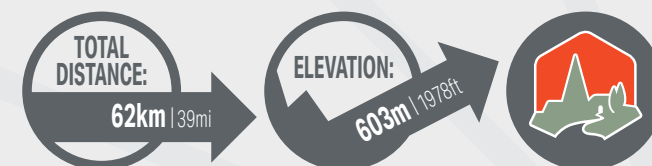
DAY 1 - Parc Naturel Régional des Alpilles, warm-up ride

A gentle but rolling start to the tour as we ride a loop from our home at the Mas de l'Oulvie for the first couple of nights through the Parc naturel régional des Alpilles. This ride is primarily to ensure our bikes are fit and ready for travel but it is a beautiful little circuit. In the afternoon we explore the atmospheric town of St Remy de Provence, previously home to Van Gogh and Nostradamus, and renowned for its art and culture.



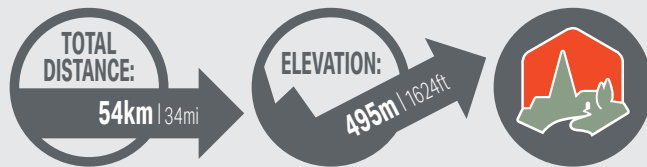
DAY 2 - Les Baux-de-Provence loop

We head deeper into the Parc naturel régional des Alpilles today on a rolling loop ride that meanders through vineyards and olive groves. With an astonishing array of aromas and colours this arid area is characterised by limestone peaks which give the impression of being taller than they really are – who's to know the difference between conquering the Alpilles and the Alps! Today we visit the iconic fortified town of Les Baux-de-Provence and give you the option to investigate Roman Glanum. For those of you wanting to cycle more and visit another Roman ruin we offer the opportunity to ride to the Pont du Gard's younger brother the Pont du Barbegal.



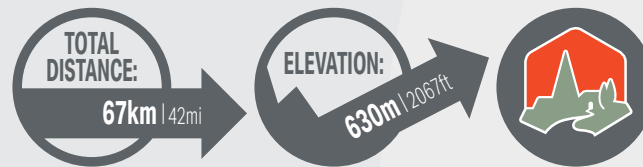
DAY 3 - Les Baux-de-Provence to Gordes

We head east into the Vaucluse region of Provence towards our base for the next couple of days Gordes. After bridging the Durance we head past some of the quieter but best villages of Provence. Oppède le Vieux is one such village whose medieval ghost town is a must wander after lunch. Menerbes is another and offers so much more than just being the setting for the Peter Mayle book. Our destination is Gordes which clings to the side of the Vaucluse plateau. The houses are arranged in tiers around an imposing Renaissance castle and so it is easy to appreciate why the village is considered a jewel of Provence.



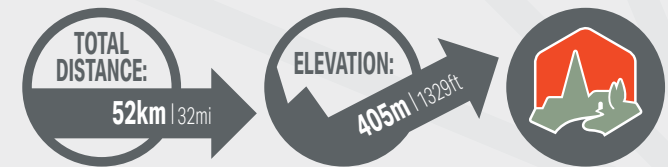
DAY 4 - Gordes Loop to Roussillon

Gordes great location gives us great access to some spectacular riding. Today we enjoy a short loop to the villages of Saint Saturnin-les-Apt and Roussillon. Roussillon is known as the ocre-red village which contrasts fantastically with the deep green pine forests we cycle through on route. The optional extra loop takes us deep into the Provincial hinterland as we head towards more of our local favourites - Viens and Saint Martin de Castillon.



DAY 5 - Gordes Loop to Bonnieux and Lourmarin

Once again we find a series of quiet and picturesque routes as we continue our discovery of Provence's most beautiful villages. We ride first to the village of Lacoste for a coffee and a great view of the surrounding area. From here we climb up to Bonnieux before descending into Lourmarin for lunch under its Chateau. The cycling is again spectacular and the villages we pass through embody the essence of what this part of Provence is all about.



DAY 6 - Gordes to Mazan

We leave Gordes and head north, cruising past the Abbaye Notre-Dame de Senaque on our way to Venasque. After enjoying fantastic countryside riders can choose to head directly north to Mazan or take the longer meander over the Col de Murs. Today's options are a little shorter considering the optional challenge tomorrow of Mont Ventoux! Tonight we stay in the Chateau Mazan, once home to the Marquis de Sade! Don't worry he no longer has any involvement in the running of the hotel!



DAY 7 - Mazan loop to Gorge de la Nesque or Mont Ventoux

Our final day on the bike takes us towards the monolith known as Mont Ventoux as we head north towards Bedoin. For the foolhardy and the brave this iconic Tour de France climb is an option. For those of you looking for a more relaxing end to the tour we will skirt around the mountain known to the locals as 'the Giant of Provence' and up one of the best cycling roads in France - the Gorges de la Nesque. Here we will picnic overlooking the spectacular ravine before re-joining the hill climbers and returning to our Chateau in Mazan for a final delectable dinner.

DAY 8 - Au Revoir

After a leisurely breakfast we organise a shuttle to the TGV train station on the outskirts of Avignon from where fast trains can be caught to a number of European cities.



Our classification system is based on distance, terrain and time in the saddle

Grading bike tours is not easy given that there is an inherent element of subjectivity both in terms of how we judge the tours and how participants assess their respective cycling capabilities. The van support is always available as a sag wagon but we think that it is important to be clear about the difficulty of a tour before you sign up.

The visual symbol we use to present our grading system is the espresso cup. Our logic is that the harder the tour the more coffee shots you will need to complete it. Thus by design, our easiest tours are denoted by a single cup – in reality a cappuccino cup would probably be more apt. Where a tour is deemed to suit participants from

2 levels (ie there are different riding options each day) or if the difficulty sits between the 2 espresso options then we use a half cup grade. Our Provence tour, whilst not a cappuccino tour, is classified as one of our easier Local Adventures and is graded as a one/two cup espresso tour.

With the maximum regular ride distance 52km and our routes seeking out the least undulating path we feel that it fits well under that classification. Obviously some of the longer routes on offer very much challenge this grading, particularly the Ventoux option, but in essence our Provence tour is open to all levels of rider.

Which Ride & Seek **Grading** suits you

Cappuccino

Who am I:
I'm relatively fit and am comfortable with steady hills that are less than 750m in length.

Distance:
30-50km (18-30miles)
Altitude gain:
200-500m
Time in the saddle:
1-3 hours
Terrain:
Flat to undulating

Due espressi

Who am I:
I ride my bike on a regular basis for fitness, to commute, or just for fun. I enjoy an active lifestyle and a physical challenge.

Distance:
50-70km (30-45miles)
Altitude gain:
600-1000m
Time in the saddle:
2-4 hours
Terrain:
Undulating terrain, with hills up to 2 km in length

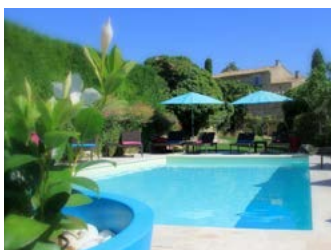


Our hotel choices on our Provence tour have been carefully chosen to provide you with a sense of place through the local owners who run them and the charm of Provence they embrace



Hotel Gounod - 2 Nights

A wonderfully eclectic hotel in the center of St Remy de Provence. Set in a 16th-century coaching inn within the Parc Naturel Régional des Alpilles, this refined hotel is full of character and charm.



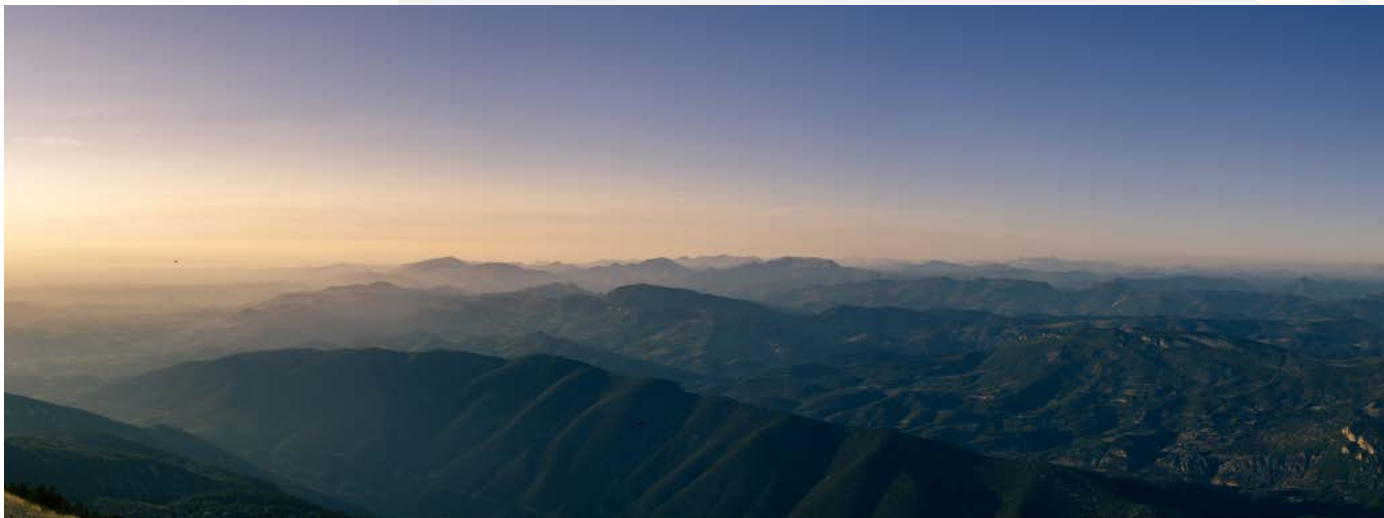
Mas des Rosmarins - 3 Nights

Dating from the early 19th century, this charming hotel looks out over the village of Gordes, the valley and the Luberon Mountains. It's restaurant, Le Clarome is renowned as one of the best restaurants in the Luberon.



Chateau Mazan - 2 nights

A beautiful hotel in the heart of Mazan. Le Chateau was built circa 1720, during France's early Regency Period. The most notorious individual to reside here was the Marquis de Sade. It was here, in 1772, that the Marquis organized the very first Theatre Festival in France.



A strong Italian and Spanish influence

The cuisine of Provence has a distinctive flair that sets it apart from more classic French fare. Blessed with an abundance of natural ingredients that flourish in the region, Provence is unsurpassed for the freshness of its produce and variety of its dishes.

For starters you could try a sweet Cavaillon melon or one of the classified goats cheeses of the region accompanied with some fresh figs. Alternatively you could sample a selection of tapenades on some crispy hot toast or perhaps you'd prefer a simple but exquisite pistou (basil) soup.

Moving on you could stay light with a Nicoise salad or if you'd prefer to sample something richer the regions signature dish bouillabaisse or daube (beef stew) might suit. As an accompaniment the black diamond – truffle – could add an extra complexity to the mix that is already accented by fragrant herbs and rich olive oils.

And to finish it off the master Chocolatier Joel Durand in St Remy could sate your sweet tooth or perhaps the master Nougatier Boyer of Sault might provide a lighter option. Or just keep it simple with some anis candles or marrons glaces (crystallized chestnuts).

Whatever you choose we are sure that you will be blown away by the freshness and flavours that permeate Provençal cuisine and that's before we even start talking about the wines to accompany it.

“Blessed with an abundance of natural ingredients that flourish in the region, Provence is unsurpassed”



2600 years of wine history

Provence is one of France's serious fine wine regions, on a par with Bordeaux and Burgundy. The wines from Provence appear under 3 prefixes Coteaux D'Aix en-, Côtes de- and Les Baux de Provence – all of which you will have chance to sample on this tour.

In contrast to the cultured power of Bordeaux and the elegance of Burgundy, Provençal red wines are earthier with an almost rustic flavour. In this respect they are really interesting since quality commercial wine making is balanced by a real sense of identity.

On our tour we will cycle through some of the most prestigious wine areas that this region has to offer with a focus on the Southern Rhone, the small Les Baux appellation and Côtes de Ventoux. Since wine has been produced in the region for over 2600 years there is a large variety of grapes used in production. We look forward to introducing you to the plethora of wines on offer.

Named by the Romans, headquarters of the Popes, fought over for centuries...

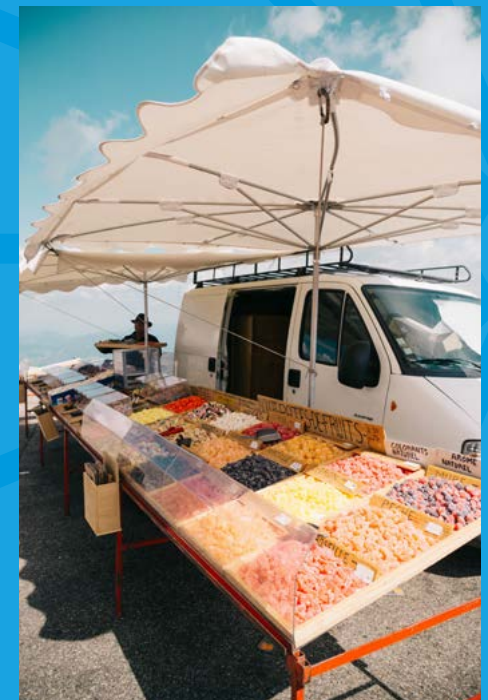
Provence has a rich cultural history dating back to the Neolithic period. The Ligurians, Celts and Greeks all settled here before Julius Caesar's conquest of Gaul in the 1st century BC. The Romans named the area Provincia Romana and the region flourished leaving us classic Roman sites such as the theatre at Orange, the aqueducts of Pont du Gard and it's smaller brother Pont de Barbegal. Another highlight is Arles, once capital of the '3 Gauls' (France, Spain and Britain) and beautiful Glanum near St Rémy de Provence.

After the Roman Empire collapsed in the 5th century, Provence was invaded and fought over for centuries. The Visigoths, Burgundians, the Ostrogoths, Saracens and Franks all left their mark and soon after the turn of the millennium Provence joined the Holy Roman Empire.

Provence again prospered. Cathedrals and monasteries were built and the region's importance in Europe grew. From around the 12th to the 14th centuries Provençal was the literary language of France, northern Spain and parts of Italy, and was the principal language of the medieval troubadours who romanticised courtly love in poems and melodies.

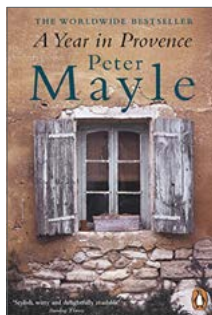
Early in the 14th century the French born Pope Clement V moved the Papal headquarters from Rome to Avignon and the city and region flourished. After 'Good King René of Provence' died, Provence became part of France in 1481, but Avignon and Carpentras remained under Papal control until the French Revolution in 1789.

In recent centuries Provence has attracted many famous artists due to the light and vibrant colours of the landscape - Vincent van Gogh, Auguste Renoir, Henri Matisse, Pablo Picasso, Paul Signac, Raoul Dufy, Claude Monet, Edvard Munch were all inspired by Provence's beauty.



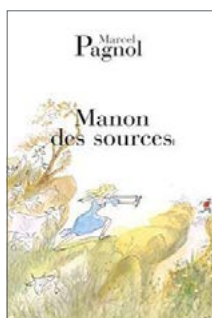
Our Local adventure reading lists are aimed at providing an intimate portrait of each region we visit as we ll as an overview of the country in which we travel.

The books listed though are just some of our favourites so please get in contact if you'd like further re ading list suggestions.



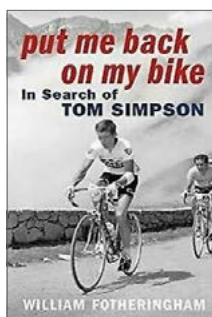
Peter Mayle - **A year in Provence**

In his acclaimed book Peter Mayle writes about the experience of moving to Provence and setting up home. His anecdotes are humourously told and the easy prose makes for a good read.



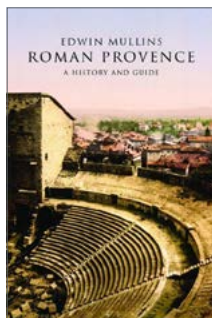
Marcel Pagnol - **Manon des sources**

Marcel Pagnol and Provence are synonymous in many ways. This book follows on from the sad story of Jean de Florette and recounts the story of Manon's attempts to avenge the death of her father. The film is also worth a watch but to fully appreciate Pagnol you need to read this book.



William Fotheringham - **Put me back on my bike**

In his inimitable style Fotheringham takes on the subject of Tom Simpson, the British cyclist who tragically died ascending Mt Ventoux. The book treats his controversial and tragic life in an objective, and sensitive manner.



Edwin Mullins - **Roman Provence**

Provence was the first Roman provincia outside the Alps and it is from this that the region derived its name. Mullins provides a broad overview of the Roman occupation and discusses how this has shaped the region we know today.

WANT MORE INFORMATION?

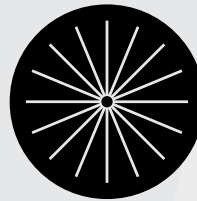
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Find out more information, a recommended reading list, testimonials and much more.

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Provence Overview