



Luberon, Lavender & Grape 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, Roman ruins, and Mont Ventoux, France's highest peak between the Pyrenees and the Alps, made famous as a frequent mountain stage of the Tour de France race. 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: Moderately challenging to challenging. The "challenging" portions are limited to a few long climbs, but the cycling effort required for these climbs should not be a deterrent to the average cyclist. Though this itinerary features the same overnight destinations as the very challenging Provence of the Tour de France tour, it has been designed for those who wish to enjoy the scenery with less strenuous cycling.

Length: 6 days / 7 nights

Distance: Total: 146 miles / 235 km (assuming the longest of the 3 options for the circuit of perched Luberon villages.) Average per day: 29 miles / 47 km.

Highlights:

- Some of France's most beautiful perched medieval villages -- Gordes, Roussillon, Ménerbes, Goult, etc. -- bathed in the warm Provencal sun.
- The fragrance and colors of the lavender fields around Sault.
- The Mediterranean light, vegetation, and views through the dense Luberon forests.
- 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.
- Spectacular views of Mont Ventoux from your scenic ride along the Toulourenc River.
- The option of being shuttled to the summit of Mont Ventoux with your bikes to enjoy the spectacular alpine views and a most exhilarating descent without the grueling climb. This option is available at no additional charge
- 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

Arrive in Avignon. Spend 2 nights.

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

Day 1: Free Day in Avignon with Optional Cycling to the Pont du Gard (Roman Aqueduct)

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. You'll 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.

On this, 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. Alternatively, you may take a scenic 60-km / 37-mile day trip ride to the Pont du Gard, one of Provence's greatest wonders. Constructed by the Romans in the 1st century to transport clean drinking water to the Roman city of Nîmes, this remarkable aqueduct bridges the River Gard today as it has for 2000 years.

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

On your first required day of cycling you'll depart bustling Avignon on a series of new bike paths and bike routes -- nicely protected from city traffic -- and will soon find yourself on quiet country roads winding through the famous vineyards of the Rhone river valley. The first half of today's route is almost completely flat with the exception of a climb to the sleepy village of Jonquerettes. You'll continue easy cycling through the lively market town of le Thor and on to Isle-sur-le-Sorgue, often referred to as the Provencal Venice owing to its being traversed by five branches of the River Sorgue. With its blocks of riverside cafes and restaurants, Isle-sur-la-Sorgue makes a wonderful rest stop before beginning the second, more challenging half of the day's ride.

Next you'll visit the charming village of Fontaine de Vaucluse. Squeezed into the sharp end of a narrow valley, the village takes its name from the beautiful and mysterious spring feeding the river Sorgue. This spring comes from deep underground - nobody knows how deep. In the 1950s, Jacques Yves Cousteau came with a submersible to explore the depths but did not find the bottom. Gushing out of a 230 meter high cliff, the underground spring is the world's fifth most powerful resurgent river. This extraordinary phenomenon forms the crystal-clear Sorgue river, which soon turns a startling emerald; and it's this vivid hue that dominates the village of Fontaine de Vaucluse.

After tearing yourself away from Fontaine de Vaucluse you'll begin your climb in earnest into the Luberon, with ever expanding views and more charming villages as you make your way to one of the Luberon's most magnificent hilltop villages, Gordes.

If the Luberon were a country, Gordes would be its capital. This is the Parthenon of Provence, an imposing edifice born of stone that has always attracted its share of attention because it is just so good-looking. Inevitably, Gordes is officially one of The Most Beautiful Villages in France. It's not just the stunning view of Gordes as you approach it; Gordes is also a pleasure to explore from within, along its tight alleyways and arcades. There are many restaurants and cafes, from simple to refined; some bakeries and food stores; and a thriving arts scene. Your explorations will take you to the spots where the view outward from Gordes is also spectacular, high over the Luberon plain.

Day 3: Circuit of the perched villages of the Luberon - 42 km / 26 miles, 38 km / 24 miles, or 26 km / 16 miles.

Today you'll have the entire day to delight in the perched villages of the Luberon -- that part of Provence made famous by Peter Mayle in his bestselling memoir, [A Year in Provence](#). With a choice of 3 cycling loops from which to choose -- in accordance with your cycling skill and your enthusiasm for climbing -- today's ride is truly one of the highlights of this tour. The options range from 42 km / 26 miles with 5 challenging climbs to 26 km / 16 miles with 2 challenging climbs. Whichever option you choose, you'll cycle through deep Mediterranean forests laced with rugged limestone outcroppings, and each of your climbs will be rewarded with absolutely stunning views.

Depending on the route that you choose, you'll have the opportunity to visit some or all of the quintessentially Provencal villages of Lacoste, Roussillon, Ménerbes, Goult, and Joucas. Both Ménerbes and Roussillon are officially classified as among "The Most Beautiful Villages in France."

A visit to Roussillon is included in each of the day's cycling options as it is just too special to be missed. Not only does it occupy the highest point in the area (i.e. unobstructed views), but it is also adjacent to the ochre quarries responsible for the amazing colors of its buildings. From the center of the village you can take the Ochre Walk, an incredible nature walk through ochre-colored hills, a color you've most likely never seen in nature.

You'll marvel at the picturesque beauty of each medieval enclave you choose to visit today, with their stone cottages clinging to the hillsides overlooking the majestic landscapes below them.

Day 4: Gordes to Sault - 35 km / 22 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 Luberon. In fact, the majority of today's cycling is through the dense forest of the Luberon, gradually climbing to the plateau on which Sault sits. To reach Sault from Gordes via the most manageable terrain, your route takes you through an area that feels remote, passing through very few villages. But the beauty of the landscape and the views are mesmerizing, and you must may find yourself in a deeply meditative and relaxed state by the time you reach Sault. The route does have a few steeper portions, but we've kept today's cycling distance low enough to ensure a relaxed ride.

As you make your final descent into Sault you'll enter lavender country in earnest. Keep in mind that the best time to see the lavender fields at their peak is from mid-to late June. Sault is a lively and colorful village with all the services and conveniences you'll need for a relaxing afternoon and evening. And does this town cater to cyclists, being one of the primary staging points for those making an assault on Mount Ventoux.

Day 5: Sault to Vaison-la-Romaine - 46.6 km / 29 miles. Spend 1 night.

Today you have two options for your ride to Vaison-la-Romaine. You may cycle the lavender route to the east of Mont Ventoux through the spectacular scenery of the [Valley of the Toulourenc](#); or you may have Diverse Directions shuttle you and your bikes to the summit of Mont Ventoux and begin your cycling to Vaison from there. Both routes offer stunning scenery. If you choose the free shuttle option we simply ask that you notify your Diverse Direction's support representative of your decision no later than 7:00 am on Day 5.

If you choose the Valley of the Toulourenc option you'll cycle most of the day in the shadow of Mont Ventoux, which rises as if from nowhere from the floor of the plateau. The route is relatively easy on the legs, with just a few climbs towards the valley's end, and passes through several beautiful villages. If you choose the Mont Ventoux option you'll enjoy alpine views and the descent of a lifetime. The Mont Ventoux and Toulourenc Valley routes converge in the wonderfully medieval village of [Entrechaux](#), nestled around the base of its ruined castle and just a short distance from Vaison-la-Romaine.

Most of the hotels we recommend in Vaison-la-Romaine are located in the medieval upper town, a peaceful quarter with narrow, winding streets lined with beautiful gardens, charming shops and

wonderful restaurants. The views are magnificent. Perched above the upper town you'll find the ruins of a 12th century castle and its once mighty fortifications.

After settling in, you'll want to make the short walk / descent to the convivial ambience of Vaison's lively new town. Highly recommended is a visit to the excavated ruins of an extensive Roman settlement, right in the heart of downtown Vaison. You'll get a fascinating look at the homes of its wealthiest residents with their still intact mosaic floors and indoor plumbing.

Day 6: Vaison to Avignon - 69 km / 43 miles - Spend 1 night.

Today's route begins with a gorgeous ride along the *Route du Vin* (the Wine Road) through the charming winemaking villages of Séguret, Sablet, Gigondas, and Vacqueyras -- and with the constant backdrop of the rugged Dentelles Mountains. From there you'll head west to 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 into the Gard region. Your route takes you down the west side of the Rhone along tiny back roads through fields of sunflowers and apple, peach and pear orchards. Before returning to Avignon we recommend a stop in Villeneuve-lez-Avignon, just across the Rhone from Avignon. It was in Villeneuve that the cardinals settled when upon their arrival in the 14th century they found no remaining place to build in the papal city of Avignon. In addition to its many splendid sights such as the massive citadel known as Fort St André, the Papal Monastery of Val de Benediction, and the Tour Philippe le Bel, Villeneuve commands incredible views of Avignon and Mount Ventoux.

Tour Price: \$795.00 per person

- **Children's Price** - Children 16 years or younger traveling with 2 adults: \$375.00 per child.
- **Tour Deposit:** \$250.00 per adult and \$100.00 per child. Deposits are charged when tour materials are sent and hotel availability has been confirmed.
- **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 6 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, unless expedited shipping is required.
- 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.
- SAG services beyond Basic SAG Support: If you have begun your cycling and feel that you cannot complete the day's cycling, you may call your support representative for a ride to your next hotel for yourself and your bike. This SAG service is provided at our cost, based on the time and fuel required, without markup. Thus, the cost of this service varies depending upon the distances entailed. The cost of SAG services beyond Basic SAG Support are billed to your credit card following your tour.
- Transportation from your home to Avignon and from Avignon to your home.
- Personal expenses
- Insurance
- Postage Charges for non-US customers: The postage required to send your tour materials by US Postal Service Priority Mail will be added to tour orders made from outside the US. This charge averages \$20.00 for delivery within 6 - 10 business days.
- Expedited Shipping (all nations): If the shipment of tour materials must be expedited, the express mail charges will be added to the tour package price

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