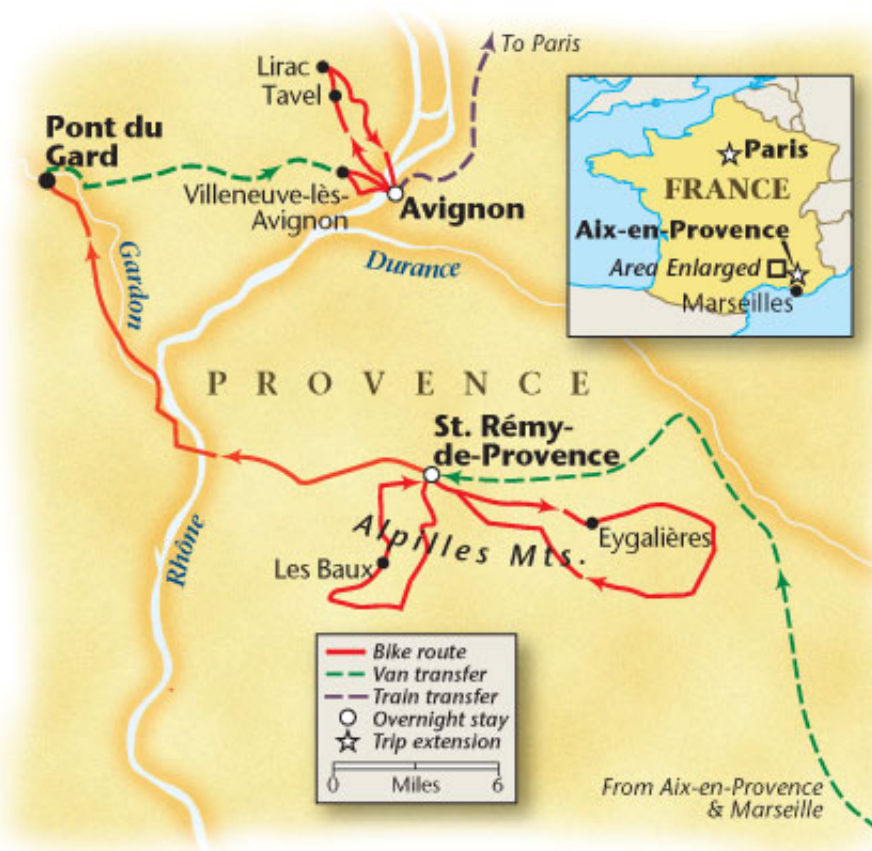


Provence: The Alpilles



DAY 1 Depart from home / Fly overnight to Marseilles

Depart from home for France. The particulars of your arrival overseas are detailed with your flight itinerary.

DAY 2 Arrive in Marseilles and transfer to your Aix-en-Provence hotel

Upon arrival at Marseilles (MRS) Airport, claim your luggage and clear customs. If your luggage is lost, fill in a PIR form before leaving the customs area; VBT representatives are not allowed into the customs area. Make sure that your VBT luggage tags are attached to your bags. This helps the representative identify you.

After exiting customs, enter the arrival hall and look for your VBT representative or driver, who will be holding a VBT sign. Your representative will welcome you to France and arrange for your transfer via taxi or van to your Aix-en-Provence hotel (approximately 45 minutes, depending upon traffic). Important: If you are delayed in meeting your VBT representative at the Marseilles Airport, please call 04 42 93 01 44 from within France. Outside of France, call +33 442 93 01 44.

VBT provides you with City Information that includes recommendations on what to see and do in Aix-en-Provence. Use the rest of the day to relax or begin exploring the city. Dinner is on your own.

Hotel: Hotel Aquabella

DAY 3 Transfer to Saint-Rémy de Provence / Bicycle Vacation begins

VBT Bicycle Vacation Only guests: Meet at the first hotel in Saint-Rémy-de-Provence by 2:30 p.m. If you arrive by train into Avignon, take a taxi at your own expense (approximately 65 euros and about 30 minutes' traveling time). If you are in Aix-en-Provence, you may take the VBT coach transfer to Saint-Rémy-de-Provence at no additional expense (approximately 1 hour). Please meet your VBT representative at 11:00 a.m. in the lobby of the Hotel Aquabella in Aix-en-Provence.

Please contact the hotel to advise the staff of any travel delays or changes, and they will pass your message to your VBT Trip Leaders.

VBT Air Package and Pre-Trip Extension guests: Meet your VBT representative in the hotel lobby at 11:00 a.m. and transfer by bus to Saint-Rémy-de-Provence (approximately 1 hour).

Our inviting hotel here has magnificent views over the Alpilles Mountains. You have free time to stroll into town for lunch on your own and relax on the hotel grounds as you settle in. Please note that rooms may not be ready until 3:00 p.m. At 2:30 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 and dinner.

Hotel: Hotel de l'Image

Meals: B, D

Daily Options: 7.5 miles (12.1 km)

DAY 4 Cycle to Les Baux

Breathtaking scenery and excellent cycling await you after breakfast as you 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. Then, cycle 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. Mademoiselle Duvillier 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, a well-known pastry chef. Here, you'll enjoy a home-cooked dinner, flavored by the herbs of her native Provence and the rich tradition of her family cuisine.

Hotel: Hotel de l'Image

Meals: B, D

Daily Options: 6, 12 or 25.6 miles (9.6, 19.4 or 41.3 km)

DAY 5 Discover the beautiful heart of 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. Maybe enjoy a picnic 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.

Tonight is free for you to stroll Saint-Rémy's narrow cobblestone streets, browse the enticing shops, and admire the ancient restored houses with their Renaissance façades. Dinner is on your own in one of the local restaurants.

Hotel: Hotel de l'Image

Meals: B

Daily Options: 11.9, 22.3 or 38.9 miles (19.1, 35.9 or 62.6 km)

DAY 6 Explore Pont du Gard

After breakfast, ride to the Abbaye St. Michel de Frigolet. Enjoy a visit of this revered site set in a pine forest, which dates to at least 1133.

After your visit, you may shuttle or cycle to the Pont du Gard. Whichever you choose, you'll cross the Rhône River and arrive in the Languedoc region. Built by the Romans in the first century BC (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. Much of the aqueduct has deteriorated over time, but this most impressive span still stands. Consisting of three levels, this bridge appears surprisingly delicate despite the massive stones used in its construction. Park your bike and walk across this stunning architectural achievement. Remarkably, the structure was built entirely without mortar, using stones that weighed up to six tons.

After exploring the Pont du Gard, shuttle to your next hotel in Villeneuve-les-Avignon. Once settled in, you have time to relax, perhaps in the hotel's pool or shady terrace, before gathering for an authentic Provençal meal at your hotel.

Hotel: Hotel La Magnaneraie

Meals: B, D

Daily Options: 11.8, 32 or 41.2 miles (18.9, 51.5 or 66.3 km)

DAY 7 Loop through Lirac and Tavel wine country

Today's ride takes you into the Gard district on the right bank of the Rhône River. Your route follows the agricultural plain of the Rhône River, planted mainly with apples, melons, pumpkins, asparagus and market-garden produce. Leaving the river valley, you'll cycle through typical Provençal landscapes, vineyards and the charming village of Lirac, renowned for its red-wine vineyards for more than 2,000 years. Here, you'll visit an old château's farm and enjoy a picnic prepared by your Trip Leaders. 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 Les Vignerons de Tavel, a cooperative wine cellar.

Tonight is free for you to explore the historic town of Villeneuve-les-Avignon and enjoy dinner in one of the local restaurants.

Hotel: Hotel La Magnaneraie

Meals: B, L

Daily Options: 11.8, 22.3 or 37 miles (19.2, 36.7 or 59.6 km)

DAY 8 Guided tour of Avignon

Sleep in this morning, then linger over breakfast before cycling southeast toward Avignon, the fabled "City of the Popes." Leave your bike outside the city walls and stroll the timeless cobblestone streets. Your small group will meet a local guide for a walking tour of this ancient city. Later, there'll be time to explore some of the city's highlights on your own, such as 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 4 of its original 22 arches remain.

The rest of the day is yours to enjoy. During your free time, you may wish to buy some local pottery or a handmade tablecloth. Try lunch at one of the local bistros, or enjoy a picnic by the river. In the afternoon, cycle or shuttle back to the hotel. Tonight, celebrate with your fellow travelers during a special farewell dinner.

Hotel: Hotel La Magnaneraie

Meals: B, D

Daily Options: 8 or 17.3 miles (13.2 or 28.1 km)

DAY 9 Transfer to Avignon TGV railway station / VBT Bicycle Vacation ends

VBT Bicycle Vacation Only guests: After breakfast, transfer to the Avignon TGV train station, arriving at approximately 9:35 a.m. Your tour ends here. Important: Train departures from the Avignon TGV train station prior to 10:05 a.m. are not recommended. If you depart earlier, you must make transfer arrangements from the last hotel to the train station at your own expense (approximately 35 euros, with a travel time of about 20 minutes).

VB Air Package guests: After breakfast, transfer to the Avignon TGV train station via private coach, arriving at approximately 9:35 a.m., and continue by TGV high-speed train to Paris at approximately 10 a.m. Please verify with your VBT Trip Leaders the time of your transfer from your Paris hotel to the Paris Charles de Gaulle airport before leaving them. Upon arrival in the “City of Light,” you are met by a VBT representative and transferred to your centrally located hotel. VBT provides you with City Information that includes recommendations on what to see and do in Paris.

Hotel: Hotel Rochester

Meals: B

DAY 10 Depart for home

After breakfast*, transfer to the Paris Charles De Gaulle airport for your return flight**. Please ensure you are ready in the hotel reception area at the designated time.

*Please note: For guests with early-morning departures, breakfast at the hotel may not be available. Please check with the front desk to verify the times that breakfast is served.

** VBT transfer times and departure points are finalized in advance and cannot be modified for individual guests. If you extend your stay beyond the scheduled program dates, return transportation to the airport will be at your own expense.

Meals: B