Bicycle Tours in France: Bicycling the Best of Provence

OVERVIEW

Explore the best Provence has to offer. Culinary highlights include a splendid Mediterranean feast of Côtes-de-Rhône wines, exquisite olive oil from a local olive press and more Roman ruins than you will find even in Italy. France's small country roads will lead through the secrets behind the local artisans savoir-faire. And we'll give you the chance to taste it all from special visits and markets right up to special dinner at a local chef's home. You'll also visit the places where Van Gogh and Cézanne painted a majority of their most well-known paintings. This trip gives you a superb view of both medieval and Roman masterpieces such as the theater and arena in Arles, the impressive Pont du Gard, and the medieval jewel of Uzès. A great bike tour for friends or couples where one partner likes to ride more than the other.

If you prefer a longer tour, check out our 11-day option Best of Provence Plus! the Luberon and Aix-en-Provence

HIGHLIGHTS

Côtes du Rhones wine villages, Van Gogh country, Informative wine tasting, Olive mill visit, Châteauneuf du Pape, Uzès, Pont du Gard, Arles, special dinner at a local chef's home, Saint Rémy, The best of Roman Provence, Mont Ventoux.

TOUR FACTS

Tour Style	Classic: Learn more about our Classic tours at https://www.experienceplus.com/choosing-the-best-tour/styles/classic
Includes	8 days, 7 nights accommodation; meals as noted in itinerary; special visits listed in itinerary
Countries	France
Begin/End	Arles / Seguret
Arrive/Depart	Paris: Charles de Gaulle Airport (CDG) or Marseille Provence Airport (MRS)
Total Distance	312 km (198 miles)
Avg. Daily Distance	53 km (33 miles) per riding day
Tour Level	

Please Note: We may have small itinerary changes to this trip after you download this PDF document. If you have booked this trip and there are major changes, including changes to towns or activities, we'll email you directly. However, you should always be sure to refer to the online itinerary for the most up-to-date trip information including arrival and departure tips before you depart for your trip:
https://dev.experienceplus.com/bike-tours/france/provence/best-of-provence-biking

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DATES & PRICES

Dates	Price	Single Supplement*
May 31, 2024	USD$4695	USD$550
Sep 13, 2024	USD$4695	USD$550
Sep 27, 2024	USD$4695	USD$550

DAILY RIDE SUMMARY

Day	Distance/Gain	Terrain	Day Level	Notes
1	Test ride			
2	32km / 236m (20mi / 774ft)	Rolling hills		Longer optional ride available
3	49km / 539m (31mi / 1768ft)	Hilly		
4	62km / 466m (39mi / 1528ft)	Rolling hills		
5	55km / 671m (34mi / 2201ft)	Hilly		Today's ride is an optional loop ride
6	68km / 734m (43mi / 2408ft)	Rolling hills		
7	53km / 912m (33mi / 2991ft)	Hilly		Longer optional ride available
8	Last Day			

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ARRIVAL INFO

Meeting time 2 p.m. - on Day 1, meet your fellow cyclists and Tour Leaders at the Day 1 Hotel specified on the itinerary.

Note: As you are planning, remember that the hotels listed in our itineraries are our primary hotels and are - in rare cases - subject to change. Before you make arrangements, check with us if your tour departure is guaranteed. If your tour departure is out further than 6 months, please also check with us as there might be slight changes to the itinerary.

The below information will help you plan your arrival. For more tips or other routes, you might like Rome2Rio. The fare and timing information listed below is approximate.

We recommend flying into the the Charles de Gaulle Airport (CDG) in Paris or the Marseille Provence Airport (MRS)

How to get to Arles train station from CDG

1. Airport shuttle to the Aéroport CDG 2 TGV station. Train station is located beneath the airport (5-20 min/no cost)
2. Train from Paris Roissy Charles de Gaulle Airport to Arles. (Train change in Avignon or Marseille) (3.5-4 hours/Fares vary)

How to get to Arles train station from MRS

1. Airport shuttle bus from mp2 (platform 2) of the Marseille Airport to the "Marseille-Provence Airport - Vitrolles - TER" train station. (5 min/no cost)
2. Train from the "Marseille-Provence Airport - Vitrolles - TER" to Arles (direction AVIGNON, not MARSEILLE) (30 min/fares vary - TER trains have a fixed price and do not need to be pre-booked). Be sure you choose a train that stops in Arles as there are also direct trains to Avignon. (The track is the closest one to the station entrance. For connection overview, See map)

- **Note:** There are automated machines to purchase your TER train ticket at Vitrolles, but if you are more comfortable you can purchase from a human at the Marseille train ticket booth, which is just outside the airport to your right.

How to get to the Day 1 Hotel from Arles train station

- Taxi from the Arles train station to the Day 1 Hotel (5 min/EUR 15-20)
- Or walk 15 minutes. See map

Look up French train schedules and book tickets, if necessary, SNCF.com or Trainline.eu. Questions? See our information on taking trains in Europe here or ask us.

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We offer a complimentary ExperiencePlus! shuttle from the ending hotel to the *Avignon TGV train station - **Arrival at 10:00 a.m.**

Reservations required. Please make your shuttle reservation by emailing us **no later than 30 days prior to your tour start date**

- ***Note:** The Avignon TGV station is 6 km outside of Avignon center but is well-connected to the town center, if you are planning to spend time there.

The below information will help you plan your departure. For more tips or other routes, you might like Rome2Rio.

We recommend flying out of the Charles de Gaulle Airport (CDG) in Paris or the Marseille Provence Airport (MRS)

How to get to Marseille Provence Airport (MRS) from the Avignon TGV Train Station

1. Train from Avignon TGV to Vitrolles Aéroport Marseille-Provence (Gare TER) train station. One change at Marseille Saint Charles. (1.5 hours/fares vary
2. Airport shuttle from the Provence Airport (MRS)-Vitrolles train station to the airport. (5 min/no cost)

How to get to Charles de Gaulle Airport (CDG) from the Avignon TGV Train Station

- Train from Avignon TGV to Paris Roissy Charles de Gaulle Airport. (2.5-3 hours/fares vary)

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Arrive in Arles

DAY 1: Fri, Oct 1st

Highlights Roman monuments of Arles, gourmet dinner with a local chef

Meet today at our hotel in Arles on the banks of the Rhône River. The Romans bridged the Rhône here during the 1st Century B.C., and today the city has a well-preserved Roman theater and arena. The latter is still used for Provençal bullfights. We will get our bikes fitted and enjoy a short test ride before a special introductory meal together in a local chef's home.

Distance 18 km (11 mi)

Meals Dinner

Lodging Hotel Le Calendal

Bicycle to St Rémy

DAY 2: Sat, Oct 2nd

Highlights Market in Arles or Saint Paul de Mausole, charming St Rémy

This morning Arles puts on one of the largest outdoor markets in France. You'll have plenty of time to check it all out before taking a short but scenic ride to St Rémy. This afternoon you can explore St Rémy or take an extra loop ride that goes through quaint medieval Provençal towns including Maillane, home to writer Frédéric Mistral, a proponent of Provençal culture and winner of the 1904 Nobel Prize for Literature.

Distance 32 km (20 mi)

Gain 236 m (774 ft)

Terrain Rolling hills

Level

Meals Breakfast, Dinner

Lodging Hotel Le Castelet des Alpilles

Bicycle to Les Baux-de-Provence

DAY 3: Sun, Oct 3rd

Highlights Les Baux, Roman ruins, Van Gogh sites

St. Rémy is where Van Gogh painted several of his most famous works during a year's residence in the local sanitarium. You'll appreciate the views that inspired him as we support a ride to Les-Baux-de-Provence and into the Alpilles hills. There is much to explore in St Rémy this afternoon including the Roman ruins of Glanum, Van Gogh's sanitarium and the great shopping in town.

Distance 49 km (31 mi)

Gain 539 m (1768 ft)

Terrain Hilly

Level

Meals Breakfast

Lodging Hotel Le Castelet des Alpilles

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Bicycle to St. Quentin la Poterie

DAY 4: Mon, Oct 4th

Highlights Pont du Gard, castle visit, ceramics of St. Quentin, olive mill visit

We'll start the day with an olive oil tasting at a local olive press located just a few kilometers outside St Rémy. On our ride today we will cross the Rhône at Tarascon where you can visit the perfectly preserved 15th-century castle. Our route will then continue north to the Pont du Gard which is arguably the most extraordinary Roman ruin in all of Europe. It dates to 20 B.C. when it was built to support the aqueduct that carried water from Uzès to the Roman town of Nîmes. Later this afternoon we'll arrive in St Quentin la Poterie a small town with a long tradition of pottery making going back to prehistoric times. The craftsmen of St. Quentin contributed their pottery making skills to decorate the Palais des Papes in Avignon in the 14th Century.

Distance 62 km (39 mi)
Gain 466 m (1528 ft)
Terrain Rolling hills
Level
Meals Breakfast, Dinner
Lodging Hotel Entraigues

Rest day in St. Quentin la Poterie

DAY 5: Tue, Oct 5th

Highlights Optional bike ride to Uzès and local vineyards

We'll be in St Quentin again tonight, so you can decide whether you want to ride today, relax by the pool, or enjoy exploring the winding streets of St Quentin. We will also offer a shuttle into medieval Uzès for those who wish. If you chose to get out on your bike, we'll take a loop ride south to Uzès and ride through rolling vineyard country.

Distance 55 km (34 mi)
Gain 671 m (2201 ft)
Terrain Hilly
Level
Meals Breakfast
Lodging Hotel Entraigues

Bicycle to Séguret

DAY 6: Wed, Oct 6th

Highlights Ceramics of St. Quentin, visit to Châteauneuf du Pape, Côtes du Rhône vineyards and villages

Today we head into the heart of the Côtes du Rhone vineyards with some of the most prestigious wines in the south of France including the renowned Châteauneuf-du-Pape. We'll have a beautiful ride through small villages and open countryside before arriving at Châteauneuf where you can get a cafe lunch on your own, or picnic at the castle, a former summer palace of the Avignon Popes. You can also partake in a wine tasting of your choice at any of the countless local wineries. Our route continues on to Séguret surrounded by vineyards and set against the foot of the Dentelles de Montmirail mountains- our little paradise for the next two nights.

Distance 68 km (43 mi)
Gain 734 m (2408 ft)
Terrain Rolling hills
Level
Meals Breakfast, Dinner
Lodging Domaine de Cabasse

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Vaison-la-Romaine and Côtes-du-Rhône vineyards

DAY 7: Thu, Oct 7th

Highlights Roman vestiges and medieval castle in Vaison, picturesque wine villages (Sablet, Beaumes-de-Venise), optional climb up Mont Ventoux.

You can take a day off the bikes and relax at the hotel or pedal our loop ride to Vaison-la-Romaine and the nearby quaint villages known for their wines. Vaison offers some great insight into Roman and medieval life and architecture with its Roman ruins, archaeological museum, and imposing castle. The rest of the loop continues through wine country and Provençal villages with the giant Mont Ventoux set in the background. For those who want to push their limits there is also the opportunity to climb Mont Ventoux, the most illustrious Tour de France climb! You also have the option to take on Mont Ventoux (49 km) and forgo the loop ride. Regardless of what you decide it's guaranteed to be an amazing day!

Distance 53 km (33 mi)
Gain 912 m (2991 ft)
Terrain Hilly
Level
Meals Breakfast, Dinner
Lodging Domaine de Cabasse

Tour ends with shuttle to Avignon TGV Train Station

DAY 8: Fri, Oct 8th

Highlights Bon Voyage!

We will shuttle you to the Avignon Train Station and send you on your way home, or to continue your travels!

Meals Breakfast

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WHAT'S INCLUDED

When you book a tour with ExperiencePlus! our goal is to ensure your only focus each day is to hop on your bike and explore scenic cycling routes in new destinations. Inclusions may differ depending on which tour style you pick but all ExperiencePlus! tours include the three most important aspects of a guided bike tour.

- Superb tour leaders who are fun and multilingual, bi-cultural experts, and cycling enthusiasts. They will support you and help you navigate confidently on and off the road.
- High quality bikes selected for the terrain you are cycling on and correct bike fitting to ensure comfortable cycling.
- Thoughtfully designed itineraries and routes that take advantage of stunning cycling destinations and the freedom of bicycle travel.

PRE-TRIP SUPPORT

- Bicycle training programs designed specifically for your tour and fitness level.
- Planning tips on what to pack, hotel recommendations and other helpful details from our Travel Planning Pages: https://ep-2023.localhost/travel-planning/
- A gift of your choice (cycling jerseys, socks, or a t-shirt) as our way of saying thanks for choosing ExperiencePlus!
- *Traveler services including assistance booking extra nights at the tour starting and ending hotels. (*Explorer Tours excluded)
- See "What's Included" for tour-specific inclusions and be sure to check the "Keep in mind" section under "Tour Summary" online.

BICYCLES

For a full list of what's included with your bike see: https://ep-2023.localhost/what-to-expect/our-bikes/. If you would like to bring your own pedals and shoes we recommend doing so. On Explorer tours we include a GPS device on all bikes. We ask that you bring your own helmet to ensure the best fit. If you would like us to provide you with a used helmet, please contact us.

NAVIGATING, DAYSHEETS AND VAN SUPPORT:

Each day you'll receive a daily briefing with a highlighted route map. About 14 days prior to your tour, we will provide you with access to RideWithGPS Experiences, our platform to distribute information on each tour day's activities, meals and ride, as well as GPS-routes.

Daily information also includes Tour Leader phone numbers, hotel information and interesting historical and cultural information. On Classic, Bike and Boat and Expedition tours we also navigate using our signature chalk dust arrows. Our arrows make navigating very easy—you may never need to look at the map. On Explorer tours the terrain and destinations are not always conducive to using chalk arrows so we'll ride as a group or you can navigate on your own with the GPS tracks. On tour you will have a support van providing water and snack resupply, mechanical assistance, a lift for tired cyclists, and luggage transfers. On some itineraries the van will not be able to follow sections of the route that stray from the road for example onto cycling paths.

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Need More Miles? On many days it is possible to add miles to the day, just talk to your tour leader about your options.

Need Fewer Miles? If you aren't sure about your abilities or how much you want to ride remember the support van is available to offer snacks, encouragement, a lift over the next hill, or to the next hotel. You are on vacation and we're here to help make it perfect for you.

TIPPING YOUR TOUR LEADER TEAM:

If you feel your tour leader team has demonstrated great expertise and service, common practice within the travel industry is to tip. Tipping is voluntary and greatly appreciated, and gratuity amounts vary widely. Should you decide to leave a tip, as a guideline, we suggest 5% of the tour cost per traveler — this is for the entire tour leader team, not each tour leader. You can give the tip to any member of the tour leader team, as they share it evenly. In order to avoid social tensions, we encourage you to tip as individuals and not as a group. If you feel your tour leaders did not quite meet your expectations, please let us know. *Tips are included in Expedition pricing.

PHOTOS:

By reserving space on tour, you agree that ExperiencePlus! may use, re-use and reproduce any images, photos or videos sent to us, or that are taken by our guides or other travelers, in any medium, including but not limited to print, electronic media, or Internet, free of charge and without your right to inspection. If you do not want us to use any images of you, you must inform us or your tour leader in writing at the start of the tour.

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OUR TOUR STYLES

We realize that one size does not fit all and there are as many ways to travel by bike as there are different types of cyclists and travelers. No matter what you are looking for in a cycling vacation, we have a tour with just the right pace for you.

Classic Tours: Dream of traveling through a region by bike? then our Classic style bike tours are for you! Our unique chalk arrows lead the way as you explore small villages and world-class cities while traveling at your own pace.

- Tour Length: 7-15 days
- Hotels: 3-4 stars, most itineraries include at least one two-night stay at the same hotel.
- Road Type: Pavement, bike paths.
- Multi-night Stays: Occasionally
- Navigation: Chalk Arrows
- Price: $$$
- Tour Levels: 1-4.5

Explorer Tours: Travel further off the beaten path - we let the destination dictate where we ride, not the road surface.

- Tour Length: 7-8 days
- Hotels: 2-3 stars, occasional multi-night stays at the same hotel.
- Road Type: 30-50% gravel or hard-packed dirt, the rest pavement.
- Multi-night Stays: Occasionally
- Navigation: Group riding and GPS
- Price: $$
- Tour Levels: 1-4

Bike and Boat Tours: Spend days cycling and your evenings relaxing on a private boat as you cruise to your next port.

- Tour Length: 7-8 days, some itineraries have land-based extensions available.
- Barge/Boat: 3-4 star, same cabin for the entire boat trip.
- Road Type: Pavement
- Navigation: Chalk Arrows
- Price: $$$
- Tour Levels: 1-4

Expedition Tours: Multi-week tours where you spend long days on the bike with the added satisfaction of pedaling across multiple countries.

- Tour Length: 15-40 days
- Hotels: 2-4 stars, typically there is a 2-night hotel stay every 5-7 days.
- Road Type: Pavement with occasional hard-packed dirt or gravel.
- Multi-night Stays: On rest days
- Navigation: Chalk Arrows
- Price: $$$
- Tour Levels: 4-5

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Bike Tour Levels

We know that travelers have different cycling abilities and preferences for the number of miles, elevation gain, and type of terrain they want on a bicycle tour. We have rated each day of our tours on a scale of 1-5. Our Tour Level's are an average of the day rating on tour. We recommend looking at the daily summary on the PDF and Website Itinerary to see details about each day's ride.

LEVEL 1 - 1.5

Level 1 - 1.5 days will be mostly flat and the distance will rarely exceed 50 km. Level 1 - 1.5 tours are suitable for beginner cyclists, those traveling by bicycle for the first time, or multi-generational groups with a desire for a nice and easy bike tour with plenty of opportunities to stop and enjoy the scenery.

- **Average daily mileage:** 20 - 50 km. (12-30 miles) Be sure to check the day by day itinerary description for the tour you are considering for specific mileages.
- **Gain:** 0-400 M (0-1200 ft)
- **Terrain:** Mostly flat with occasional gentle climbs at a grade of less than 3%, that are sustained for a maximum of 3km. There might be a steeper but short climb.

LEVEL 2 - 2.5

Level 2 - 2.5 days are ideal for riders newer to bicycle touring looking for a bit of a challenge.

- **Average daily mileage:** 30-60 km (18 - 38 miles). Be sure to check the day by day itinerary description for the tour you are considering for specific mileages.
- **Gain:** 400 - 600 m (1200 - 2000 ft)
- **Terrain:** Mostly rolling terrain around 3%. Presents multiple 3% to 4% climbs. May present an occasional steeper climb.

LEVEL 3 - 3.5

Level 3 - 3.5 days are great for active individuals (who run, bike, swim etc. on a regular basis).

- **Average daily mileage:** 50-70km (30-45 miles). Be sure to check the day by day itinerary description for the tour you are considering for specific mileages.
- **Gain:** 600 - 900m (2000 - 2800 ft)
- **Terrain:** Multiple Climbs with grades of 4 - 6%.

LEVEL 4 - 4.5

Level 4 - 4.5 days are the best riding days for avid cyclists or very active individuals who are excited to challenge themselves on a bike.

- **Average daily mileage:** 70-90km (45-55 miles) Be sure to check the day by day itinerary description for the tour you are considering for specific mileages.
- **Gain:** 900-1000m (2800-3600 ft)
- **Terrain:** Presents multiple steep climbs (6% to 8% grades), 1 to 3km long. Alternatively, 4 — 6% grades for 6 kilometers or more.

LEVEL 5 (EXPEDITION)

Our Expedition tours designed for strong riders looking for the challenge of riding across countries or continents. Long daily mileages mean limited van support so we recommend these tours for riders who feel confident that they can ride every mile.

- **Average daily mileage:** 120 km (75 miles). Be sure to check the day by day itinerary description for the tour you are considering for specific mileages.
- **Gain:** 500-2000 m (1600- 6500 ft)
- **Terrain:** Expect and be prepared for any and everything.

REMEMBER

A tour level is the average of the days so we recommend you look at the day level on each day of the itinerary to help you better understand what to expect from your tour.

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TO DO ONCE YOU'VE BOOKED!

- ☐ Read through your Reservation Confirmation and After you Book Information (link sent to you by e-mail), it has important information to help you plan your trip!
- ☐ Check the date on your passport. The expiration date should extend three months past your date of return to your home country.
- ☐ Complete the Customer Information Form: https://ep-2023.localhost/travel-planning/customer-information-form/
- ☐ We recommend you take out travel insurance. Find details at https://ep-2023.localhost/travel-planning/travel-insurance/
- ☐ Choose a bicycle training program: https://ep-2023.localhost/travel-planning/bicycle-tour-training/
- ☐ Peruse our country-specific Travel Planning Pages: https://ep-2023.localhost/travel-planning/

6 TO 3 MONTHS PRIOR TO TOUR START DATE

- ☐ Refer to your Tour Packet/Itinerary to see step-by-step arrival and departure information for your tour, meeting place and time, if a reservation on a complimentary ExperiencePlus! Shuttle (if applicable) is required, along with other important information to help you plan your arrival and departure.
- ☐ Reserve your flights after you know you have a confirmed tour departure. Please check with our office if you do not know if your trip is confirmed.
- ☐ Book your pre and post-tour hotel nights.
- ☐ Begin your chosen training program
- ☐ Final payment is due 90 days (120 days for Bike & Barge/Boat tours) prior to the tour start. Please refer to your Invoice and the Final Payment Reminder e-mail which we send 10 days prior to the due date for detailed instructions.

6 TO 2 WEEKS PRIOR TO TOUR START DATE

- ☐ Start reading one of the books or watching one of the movies from our Reading and Movie Lists: https://ep-2023.localhost/travel-planning/.
- ☐ Plan what you are going to pack and start packing! Refer to the Packing Lists for suggestions, and see luggage limits at https://ep-2023.localhost/travel-planning/packing/.
- ☐ We'll email you your access code to Digital Daysheets, Hotel Itinerary, Participant Roster, names and contact information of your Tour Leaders, emergency phone numbers, and other important departure information about 2 weeks prior to your tour start date. All this will be provided to you via a feature called Experiences via the RideWithGPS App (tracks available but not necessary for navigation on Classic, Expedition and Bike & Boat tours).

DAY OF YOUR FLIGHT

Get as much sleep on the plane as you can. Pack one day of cycling gear in your carry-on just in case. See you soon!

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