

France: Provence & St. Rémy

Tour-Only Itinerary

Spring breezes carry the scent of sage, rosemary, and wild thyme as you climb along a ridgeline, and radiant sunlight warms your face. A patchwork of olive groves and vineyards stretches far across the valley below, while further up the trail, Les Baux's medieval buildings peek out from chalky white hillsides dotted with cypresses and red poppies. Exploring southern France's most beautiful villages, each walk prompts the same question: What could possibly be more picturesque? The vibrant Van Gogh landscapes surrounding St. Rémy? The fragrant lavender fields outside Sénanque Abbey? The piles of purple artichokes, luscious red cherries, and white asparagus at the open-air market in Gordes? Every day, this walking tour in Provence finds new ways to delight your senses.



Highlights

Follow the ridgeline of the windswept Alpilles on a walk with awe-inspiring 360-degree views before stopping in the medieval village of Les Baux-de-Provence for lunch.

Stay in delightful, local accommodations imbued with Provençal charm, where friendly owners greet you with warm hospitality and a glass of wine.

Rub elbows with locals as you explore the colorful stalls of open-air markets in quaint towns like St. Rémy, Gordes, and Bonnieux.

Gain a deeper appreciation for the work of Vincent Van Gogh, as you visit the sites where he created some of his most iconic paintings.

On all Self-Guided Adventures you can count on ...



A local representative
available 24/7.



Gracious accommodations
that are a clean, comfortable
home away from home.



Detailed maps & route notes
featuring turn-by-turn
directions and places of
interest.



Experts to handle all the
details, including moving
your luggage between hotels
while you're out exploring.



Scheduled taxi transfers to
bring you to and from each
day's walks.



Access to a Self-Guided
Flight Concierge—ask our
knowledgeable team to find
flights that sync with your
planned trip.



Delicious meals—many
are included.

Activity Level

This tour is one of our Self-Guided Walking Adventures, rated easy to moderate, with an average of 6 to 8 miles per day and limited options. There are daily ascents and descents—with some steep sections—up to 1,000 feet. Walks are through oak and pine forests, rugged hills dotted with Mediterranean herbs and shrubs, terraced farmland, and hillside vineyards. The terrain includes single-track trails, mostly cobbled but also loose stones or gravel. The terrain also includes farming tracks, some dirt roads, and occasionally a paved country road. This diverse itinerary combines both the Alpillés and the Luberon mountain ranges, passing scenes painted by Van Gogh as well as golden hilltop villages, with plenty of time for trailside picnics and to explore archaeological sites or markets. Remember: preparation is the key to ensuring your

tour readiness; the more you walk or participate in aerobic exercise prior to your trip, the more you will enjoy your experience!

DAY 1

Arrival in Avignon. Transfer to Saint-Rémy-de-Provence

You are met in Avignon and transferred about 25 minutes to the classic southern French town of Saint-Rémy-de-Provence at the foot of the Alpilles Mountains. Renaissance mansions, restored homes, and historic buildings line the winding streets of the town, which has the distinction of being the birthplace of Nostradamus. With scenery that inspired many a great artist—most notably Vincent Van Gogh—Saint-Rémy-de-Provence is a blend of natural beauty and Provençal life with its cobblestone streets, old fountains, and sidewalk cafés. It is also home to a legendary open-air Wednesday market, with vendors selling fresh vegetables, bread, wine, olive oils, herbs, spices, and much more from stalls throughout the curving alleys and shady squares of the old town. Relax with an apéritif of chilled *pastis* (the local anise-flavored liqueur) at your accommodation, beneath the shade of the fig trees your hotel is named for. Dinner tonight is a short walk away at a local restaurant.

Accommodation: Hôtel Sous les Figuiers, Saint-Rémy-de-Provence

Included Meals: Dinner

DAY 2

Van Gogh loop

6.2 miles, easy to moderate, 800-ft. elevation gain and loss. Additional optional detour: 5 miles, challenging, 1,000-ft. elevation gain and loss

Today you follow the Van Gogh trail through the landscape that inspired the artist. Along your walk, you'll find replicas of paintings displayed beside the very scenes that inspired them. Viewing Van Gogh's works beside the Trinquetaille Bridge, the Rhone Waterfront, and the Hospital Garden, you'll see how these everyday settings appeared in the artist's eyes. Next, explore the ancient Roman ruins of Glanum. Once a powerful city, Glanum's most important monuments include an imposing triumphal arch and a mausoleum. At one time Glanum was a religious compound with many temples, and today several ornate pillars remain. Perhaps as a continuation of your Van Gogh tour, you'll make a visit to the Saint-Paul de Mausole,

a former monastery now a psychiatric hospital where Van Gogh spent his final year. During a tour you can view the room where Van Gogh stayed during his time at the institution. Afterward, follow a winding botanical path up a gradual trail to the crest of the Alpilles Mountains. Aromatic herbs and wildflowers carpet the hills as the views extend far into the horizon—a perfect setting for a picnic lunch. Upon your return to St. Rémy, the rest of the day is at your leisure.

Accommodation: Hôtel Sous les Figuiers, Saint-Rémy-de-Provence

Included Meals: Breakfast

DAY 3

Saint-Rémy-de-Provence to Les Baux-de-Provence. Transfer to Gordes

6.2 miles, easy to moderate, 900-ft. elevation gain and 350-ft. elevation loss

Today, once again, you leave St. Rémy on foot ascending the Alpilles, but this time you'll take a different path to the top. Follow a rolling trail along the ridge to awe-inspiring 360-degree views, which continue as the path gently undulates toward the fortified medieval village of Les Baux-de-Provence, set atop a rocky perch. Here, you'll stop to eat lunch (before 2 p.m. if you opt for one of the many restaurants in town), and then take some time to explore the village itself, one of the official "most beautiful villages of France." Enjoy spectacular views from the Chateau des Baux fortress, an area atop a high, rocky pinnacle dotted with the ruins of castle walls. You may opt to visit the exciting Carrières de Lumières museum, famed for its unique, all-encompassing audio-visual shows (entrance fee included in tour price). A one-hour afternoon transfer takes you to the Luberon Mountains and the village of Gordes, your home for the next two nights, and classified as another one of the "most beautiful villages of France." After settling in at your hotel, you step out for a dinner of Provençal specialties. Perhaps you'll try ratatouille, *boeuf en daube* (beef cooked with olive oil, vegetables, and herbs), or savory lamb followed by a dessert of *calissons* (crushed almond and candied melon "cookies").

Accommodation: Mas de la Beaume, Gordes

Included Meals: Breakfast, Dinner

DAY 4

Abbey de Sénanque loop

6.2 miles, easy to moderate, 800-ft. elevation gain and loss

The paths around Gordes are lined with old stone walls, lone farmhouses, and *bories*—centuries-old round shepherd’s huts constructed from dry stone. Many *bories* were an end to a means for the ancient shepherds and farmers who created them—as they cleared their fields, they repurposed the stones to create a shelter. Follow a path into a valley, and soon you’ll come upon the 12th-century Sénanque Abbey, sitting amid some of the very few lavender fields in the area (which are in bloom from late June through July). Founded in 1148, today the abbey is home to Cistercian Monks who tend the lavender fields and also keep honeybees. Enjoy a delicious picnic lunch, admiring the peaceful scenery, and be sure to visit the abbey before your return hike. A somewhat steep climb brings you back to Gordes. Stop along the way and take in stunning vistas of the town and landscape below. Back at your hotel, late-afternoon relaxation may include a refreshing swim before a drink and another delightful dinner.

Accommodation: Mas de la Beaume, Gordes

Included Meals: Breakfast

DAY 5

Goult to Bonnieux OR Lacoste to Bonnieux

7.5 miles, easy to moderate, 1,050-ft. elevation gain and 800-ft. elevation loss OR 3.5 miles, easy to moderate, 750-ft. elevation gain and 200-ft. elevation loss

Today you can choose from two walking options. For the longer option, a short taxi transfer brings you to the Calavon Valley and the timeless village of Goult—perhaps the least-known and least-visited of the “most beautiful towns” in the Petit Luberon area. Starting at the town’s Romanesque church, medieval lanes lead you to the restored 18th-century Moulin de Jérusalem—one of the few remaining windmills that were strategically placed on the region’s ridges to grind grain. With sweeping views of the Calavon Valley below, you make your way past *bories* and farmhouses to the neighboring village of Lacoste, once home to the infamous Marquis de Sade, a shameless hedonist whose free-thinking (and free-living lifestyle) landed him in prison. The Marquis’ 11th-century château sits tall above the town and has been recently purchased (and restored) by fashion designer Pierre Cardin. Continue back into the valley (or begin from here if you choose the shorter walking option) through cherry orchards, vineyards, and truffle oak plantations. As you near the village of Bonnieux, the first thing you’ll see is its 12th-century church tower peeking out from under a canopy of massive cedar trees. This hillside town boasts superb

architecture—evidence of the town's former wealth when it was the residence of bishops. There are many dining options to choose from for lunch—some with spectacular views over the valley—before settling into your in-town hotel. Late-afternoon relaxation may include a refreshing swim before dinner at a favorite local restaurant.

Accommodation: Le Clos du Buis, Bonnieux

Included Meals: Breakfast, Dinner

DAY 6

Bonnieux to Buoux

7.3 miles, moderate, 1,000-ft. elevation gain and 900-ft. elevation loss

Leaving your hotel on foot, you follow country roads through truffle oak plantations and fields of lavender to the Col du Pointu (Pointu Pass), which separates the Petit Luberon from the Grand Luberon. From here, make your way through oak forests to the unfinished medieval castle of Buoux, and then up to the 12th-century Romanesque Chapel of Sainte-Marie. Continue downhill to the timeless village of Buoux, a handful of tightly knit stone homes gathered around a few cobbled streets, a hotel, and a café. Set amid sheer towering cliffs, Buoux is a rock-climbing mecca of global renown. From the village, your path leads to the edge (but not too close!) of an impressive limestone cliff, overlooking the wild Aigebrun Valley, formed by the once-powerful Aigebrun River down below. Farther along the ledge, you will find a beautiful cobbled track that zigzags gently down to the base of the canyon to a remote 17th-century goat farm. Here, you may enjoy a cold refreshment on the shaded terrace with views of the ruins of the Fort de Buoux, a remote ridgetop castle, high on the cliffs above. A late afternoon transfer returns you to Bonnieux for a farewell dinner at a restaurant of your choosing.

Accommodation: Le Clos du Buis, Bonnieux

Included Meals: Breakfast

DAY 7

Departure from Avignon

You bid farewell to Provence, and a complimentary transfer back to Avignon is provided after breakfast (approximately one hour).

Included Meals: Breakfast

What's Included

Tour Only

Boutique accommodations	✓
9 meals: 6 breakfasts and 3 dinners	✓
Detailed water- and tear-resistant Route Notes and maps	✓
Orientation meeting with a Country Walkers representative	✓
Local representative available 24/7	✓
Entrance fees and special events as noted in the itinerary: Les Carrières de Lumières	✓
Scheduled taxi and luggage transfers (Please note: If unable to walk, it is possible to transfer with your luggage from one accommodation to the next; there may be an additional charge.)	✓
Travel assistance available 24/7 provided by Allianz Global Assistance	✓
Access to Self-Guided Flight Concierge—Ask our knowledgeable team to find flights that sync perfectly with your planned trip.	✓