

HIKING JOURNEY

Gastronomic Trail Through Hidden France

WALKING IN PAYS BASQUE, CORBIÈRE AND DRÔME, FRANCE

14 DAYS



WALKABOUT
GOURMET ADVENTURES

Journey Overview

Our walk begins in Ainhoa in Pays Basque in France, which is very different from its neighboring regions and best illustrated by the unique Basque language. Nestled between the Atlantic Ocean and the high peaks of the Pyrenees, the Basque country offers a superb variety of terrains, wild and cultivated, all enjoying a remarkably generous climate.

We then move along the Pyrenees range, westwards to Carcassonne in the heart of the picturesque Aude region, where the reputable “Corbière” wine is produced. Carcassonne is known the world over as the best-preserved fortified town from the Middle Ages. Built originally by the “Cathare”, dissidents of the mainstream catholics, the old city went through a long history of glory and destruction, wealth and abandonment to finally be saved and restored in the 19th century.

We explore this spectacular region with walks in the “Causses” area around the village of Minerve, the secret vineyards of Corbière hidden in the pretty countryside outside of Carcassonne. We experience the beauty of the 17th century “Canal du Midi” winding its way between villages, in the shade of giant plane trees.

Our third and last base for this tour is in the lovely little hilltop town of Grignan in the “Drôme Provençale” just outside of the Rhône valley. Grignan is known for the renaissance chateau sitting at the top, host to many festivals and concerts in the summer months.

Here we are at the heart of some of the best names for the “Côte du Rhône” wine. The countryside is a patchwork of vineyards, lavender fields, olive and apricot orchards, truffle oak tree plantations and occasional cereals fields. The region is incredibly charming and the people are generous and friendly. In many villages, time seems to have simply stopped still. Our walks take us through various parts of the countryside, up and down some high hills, through farms and villages and we don't forget to sample some of the local marvels as we visit olive mills and wineries. In the nearby town of “Vaison la Romaine” we witness the remains of ancient days when Romans had established themselves in the region.

Journey Schedule

DAY 1

Biarritz – St Jean De Luz – Ainhoa

DAY 2

Ainhoa – Sare – Ainhoa

DAY 3

Ainhoa – Gite D’etape Esteben – Dancharia

DAY 4

Walk From San Sebastián to Pasajes

DAY 5

Ainhoa – Siran – Chateaux De Lastours

DAY 6

Siran – Canal Du Midi Circuit

DAY 7

Siran – Carcassonne – Free Day

DAY 8

Siran – Lagrasse – Notre Dame Du Carla – Minerve – Siran

DAY 9

Siran – Grignan – La Grande Tuillière – Grignan

DAY 10

Grignan – Dieulefit – Poët Le Laval – Eyzahut

DAY 11

Grignan – Nyons – St Pantaléon Les Vignes – Beauvoir Chapel – Rousset Les Vignes

DAY 12

Grignan – Free Day

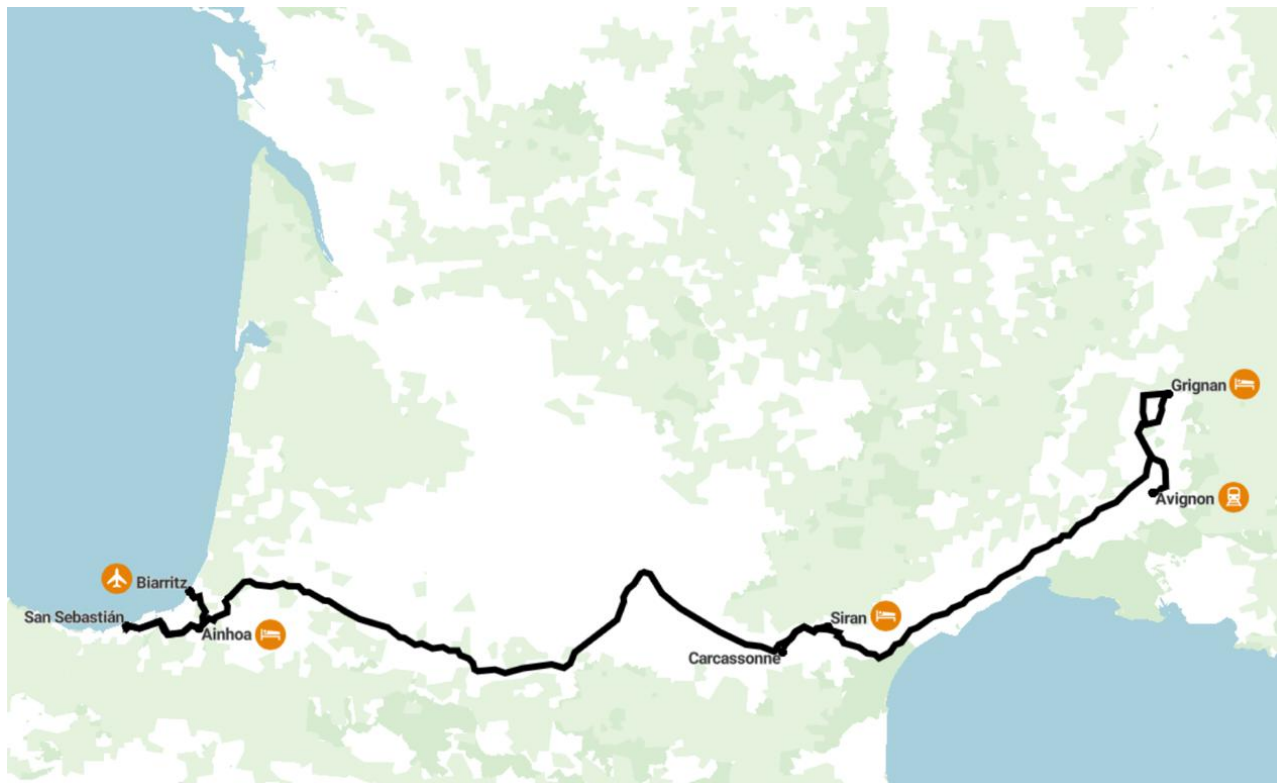
DAY 13

Vaison La Romaine – Saint-Romain-En-Viennois to Faucon Circuit Walk

DAY 14

Grignan – Avignon

Journey Itinerary



DAY 1

Biarritz - St Jean De Luz – Ainhoa

This morning we meet at 10.00 a.m. at –

Hotel Saint Julien, 20 Avenue Carnot, 64200 Biarritz

<https://hotel-saint-julien-biarritz.fr/en/>

It is a comfortable and central hotel near the old harbour in Biarritz. Please book direct. From the charming old-worldly town of Biarritz we have a short drive to Le Moulin de Bassilour. This lovely old mill, now also a bakery, produces a variety of interesting

bread, particularly the Pain de Mais and one of the best Gateau Basque we have eaten. A lovely spot for our first morning tea and to indulge in one of the famous Gateau Basque cakes!

Our next stop is St Jean de Luz, one of the most picturesque Basque towns on the French Coast. The fishing port, the beautiful Basque architecture and a fine sheltered beach and harbour, combine to make a superb site and excellent place for lunch. The port of St Jean de Luz maintains a strong fishing tradition. Sardines are caught off the Portuguese and Moroccan coasts, anchovies in the Bay of Biscay and tuna off the French coast in summer and northern Africa in winter.

After lunch we have a short drive to our hotel and base for the next 4 nights in Ainhoa in the lower Pyrenees. It is one of the most picturesque villages in Pays Basque. Our cosy hotel dates back to the 17th century and has been classified as an historical monument.

Once, an ancient hostel on the pilgrim's road to Compostela, nowadays, it is an extremely comfortable 3 star hotel with a secluded garden and swimming pool. It is renowned for its elegant dining and the restaurant has earned, in recent years, a Michelin star.

AINHOA



DAY 2

Ainhoa - Sare – Ainhoa

This morning we leave the beautiful village of Ainhoa to join our walking track. The countryside is a mixture of open fields and forest which blends in beautifully with the architecture of the region. It is a very rural area and we are likely to see farmers tending the land.

In the afternoon we arrive at the classified village of Sare, surrounded by superb Basque farmhouses and right in the heart of the old smuggling region. The Basques never recognized the legality of the frontier and considered the transportation of goods “night - work”, while avoiding customs’ formalities, as perfectly natural. With over 20 kilometres of easy mountain passages nearby, Sare became an important smuggling centre.

From here it is only a short drive back to Ainhoa.

 **5 HOURS**

 **AINHOA, FRANCE**



DAY 3

Ainhoa - Gite D'etape Esteben – Dancharia

After breakfast we leave our hotel and follow the “Stations of the Cross” up the hill to a small chapel. Here you might get the first amazing view of the eagles and vultures which inhabit this part of the French Basque country . They are very plentiful in this region and during our walk we get quite close to their nests... an unforgettable sight. We allow some time to take in the incredible views into the lower Pyrenees mountains and the Atlantic coastline back to Biarritz . Our walk continues through lush farmland where cattle and sheep will be seen grazing during the summer months. Below the rural farm of Esteben we break for a late lunch. In the afternoon we retrace our trail down the hillside past some shepherd shelters. Keep your eyes open for the local Pottoks - they are an endangered, semi-feral breed of pony's native to the Pyrenees of the Basque Country in France and Spain. They are considered an ancient breed of horse, particularly well adapted to the harsh mountain areas they traditionally inhabit. We return to Ainhoa where we could be tempted to call into a local bar for a coffee or early pre dinner drink.

 **5 HOURS**

 **AINHOA, FRANCE**



DAY 4

Walk From San Sebastián to Pasajes

After breakfast we drive to San Sebastián in Spain. Located on the southern coast of the Bay of Biscay, it is home to architectural pearls of the Belle Epoque. We allow some time to visit this picturesque city, which has three beautiful beaches, a charming historic centre, bursting with cafés, bars and restaurants. Here we can try the tasty Pintxos – a style of tapas on skewers.

Our walk is a part of the Camino de Santiago's impressive trail along the coast but it also leads us to Pasajes de San Juan, one of the most beautiful villages at the end of our walk!

From San Sebastián our trail goes along the sea on the Ulía mountain that borders the east side of the city, just after Zurriola beach. It soon turns into steps (and there are quite a few!) – definitely a good warm-up for the upcoming walk. From the top of the stairs, there are fantastic views of Zurriola beach and the town. We continue through the greenery, then overlooking the rugged coastline and descend alongside the Faro de la Plata (Silver Lighthouse), again using stairs, but this time downwards and right along the water.

We will first arrive in the harbour village of Pasajes de San Pedro and across the water we will see the beautiful Pasajes de San Juan. The water between the two fishing villages flows into an inlet through which large boats arrive from the sea at Puerto Pasajes, the harbour entry. An impressive sight! From the village of San Pedro to Pasajes de San Juan we take a small green, red and white boat (the colours of the Basque flag) and in a couple of minutes we are on the other side. This lovely boat trip will seem too short, so take full advantage of it, making sure you are looking around you from the beginning. We have time for a stroll through the town before returning to Ainhoa. Time permitting, we stop for a drink at one of the cosy little squares and enjoy the view from the waterfront terrace. On our way back we by-pass the village of Espelette, which has become very famous for "le piment" – the red pimentos which are drying in the sun, hanging from the facades of the village houses. They are the classic image of several Basque villages and are ground into a powder to provide a mild spice and are an essential part of the Basque cuisine today.

At night sit back and enjoy some of the best regional food the Basque country has to offer. Between the traditional country cooking and the coastal dishes there is a wide variety of local specialties. The delicious "piperade" sauce, often eaten with the

Bayonne ham is based on the red pimentos of Espelette. The pimento festival is held in the village during the last week of October. Ttoro, sometimes known simply as “fish soup” is another delicacy from this region or the ewe’s cheese known as Fromage de Brebis and manufactured following traditional practices and renowned throughout France. The perfect wine to complement our meals is the Irouleguy, which grows in the heart of the Basque country on vineyards and the steep mountainsides of the Pyrenees. The red is superb with red meat, sauces and cheeses while the rose is delightful with fish and seafood.

 **5 HOURS**

 **AINHOA, FRANCE**



DAY 5

Ainhoa - Siran - Chateaux De Lastours

This morning we leave the beautiful village of Ainhoa and drive to Cambo-les-Bain and Hasparren where we will join the A80 to Carcassonne. Here we leave the "Autoroute des deux Mers" and drive to the charming chateau in Siran, our base for the next 4 nights. Located in the heart of the Minervois region, it is a restored 16th century country house built on a wall dating from the middle ages.

After checking in to our hotel we drive direction Montagne Noire to visit the ruins of the Chateaux de Lastours. The four castles of Lastours - Cabaret, Surdespine, Quertinheux and Tour Régine - are built at an altitude of 300 metres and are a remarkable sight, hidden deep in the rocky valley overlooking the River Orbeil and the village below. The chateaux have a long and legendary history - the most ancient parts date from the Bronze Age where the burial chamber of a young girl was found. The figure is known as the Princesse au Collier - the "necklace princess" as she was found covered with several objects including amber beads and Egyptian jewellery.

The chateaux also have their fair share of Cathar history - at the time the lord Pierre Roger de Cabaret was linked to the religion and allowed the Cathar parfaits (priests) to take refuge there until 1229 when the chateaux were finally taken by the northern Crusaders. After the Crusade, the King of France re-established the site, adding the fourth Tour Régine and the chateaux continued to play an important role in regional politics until the revolution, when they were abandoned. The chateaux were classed as a Monument Historique in 1905.

We return to our hotel in Siran where we enjoy a tasty dinner made from fresh and seasonal ingredients.

 **2 HOURS**

 **SIRAN, FRANCE**

DAY 6

Siran - Canal Du Midi Circuit

Although the Romans first had the idea and several French kings pursued it to no avail, in the end the construction of the Canal du Midi was largely the work of one single man, Pierre- Paul Riquet, the Baron de Bonrepos. Riquet found the solution to supplying water to the canal's highest point at Naurouze, channelling spring water from the Montagne Noire. Sharing expenses with the Sun King in exchange for concessions in operating the canal, Riquet spent most of his own fortune and the rest of his life on his grandiose project and died a few months before it was finished.

The 360 km network of navigable waterways linking the Mediterranean and the Atlantic through 328 structures (locks, aqueducts, bridges, tunnels, etc.) is one of the most remarkable feats of civil engineering in modern times. Built between 1667 and 1694, it paved the way for the Industrial Revolution. The care that Pierre-Paul Riquet took in the design and the way it blends with its surroundings, turned a technical achievement into a work of art.

Linked to the Canal de Garonne, the Canal du Midi made the transport of goods between Bordeaux on the Atlantic Ocean and Marseilles on the Mediterranean Sea far quicker and safer - by avoiding the possibility of attack from the pirates and slave traders of North Africa's Barbary Coast.

A haven of tranquillity, this ancient waterway meanders lazily through countryside that has changed little down the centuries.

Our walk begins in Homps, an ancient commercial port, where the regional barrels of wine were loaded into boats for the journey to Bordeaux. The small village today is charming and quite tranquil, making it hard to imagine its busy past.

We leave the town and soon reach the banks of the Canal du Midi. They are bordered almost all of the way by plane trees, sometimes pine trees, poplars or cypresses. We cross several locks before we turn off and continue our walk through an area of extensive farmland, rich in fruit orchards, olive groves and in particular, vineyards. The wine in this region can be superb.

We soon reach our vantage point at an old watchtower from where we have fantastic views right across to the Pyrenees.

We continue our walk through the fields until we reach the canal, which we will follow back to the charming port of Homps. Perfectly located on the canal side, it is a great spot to enjoy a glass of Minervois wine from the village cellar and watch the boats slowly pass by.

We return to our château in Siran and the evening is at your leisure.

 **5 HOURS**

 **SIRAN, FRANCE**



DAY 7

Siran - Carcassonne - Free Day

Today you can sleep in, relax and discover the village of Siran. We think the impressive medieval city of Carcassonne is a highlight to see and we offer a lift in the late morning to spend some time exploring the old centre.

The ancient Cathar stronghold of Argens Minervois is a reminder that the peace and tranquillity of the region was once shattered by the 13th century crusade against the Cathar, or Albigensian “heretics.”

Classified as world heritage by UNESCO, you can admire one of the most beautiful fortifications of Europe, a fairytale collection of drawbridges, 52 stone towers and atmospheric cobbled streets.

We return to our hotel and get ready for dinner in a gourmet restaurant.

 **5 HOURS**

 **SIRAN, FRANCE**



DAY 8

Siran - Lagrasse - Notre Dame Du Carla - Minerve – Siran

After breakfast we drive to Lagrasse, officially one of the "most beautiful villages in France". It was built around an old Benedictine abbey dating from the time of Charlemagne. The town, on one bank of the river Orbieu, is linked by stone bridges to the abbey on the other bank.

Lagrasse is also famed for its medieval houses and streets, a covered market and a lovely 12th century hump-backed bridge.

It has become a centre for potters and artists and many of the medieval houses have been converted into studios and exhibition spaces.

After a leisurely stroll through this picturesque village and buying our lunch, we follow a stony track, winding our way upwards for at least a kilometre. Our trail is sheltered and rare flowering plants line either side. Eventually it levels out and we reach Notre Dame du Clara, consisting of the church, renovated in 1875, a stone side building and a stone sheepfold, offering shelter through its round arches. We make the most of this place and enjoy its peace and tranquility before we continue to a giant cross on the very peak of the hill. The views across the valleys interweave with each other, topped with churches and cypress trees - are just magnificent.

We return to the church and take the downhill track, which is leading to the abbey of Lagrasse. Here we re-join our buses and on our return encounter the wines of the Minervois.

They developed initially in the plain and were subsequently planted in the higher grounds of the Minervois by monks who undertook the development of the Minervois.

The Minervois suffered the devastation of the crusades led by Simon de Montfort and the tragically famous siege of Minerve - in the heart of Minervois, an important site during the Cathar conflicts. With the major economic development during the XVIII century, the canal, created by Pierre-Paul Riquet, had a great influence on the Minervois (classified world heritage by UNESCO). The Minervois wine producers developed a policy of quality from the 1950s and obtained AOC classification in 1985, making Minervois one of the largest wine producing regions in the Aude. The grape varieties of the Minervois are Syrah, Mourvèdre, Grenache, Carignan, Cinsault, and

Piquepoul for the red. Marsanne, Roussanne, Maccabeu, Bourboulenc, Clairette, Grenache, Vermentino and small grain Muscat for the white.

 **4 HOURS**

 **SIRAN, FRANCE**



DAY 9

Siran - Grignan - La Grande Tuillière – Grignan

Today we leave our comfortable chateau in Siran and travel east to Grignan in the Drôme. It is a fortified hillside village clustered tightly around a large Renaissance château, one of the greatest in eastern France.

Grignan was made famous by the Aristocratic Madame de Sévigné, remembered as one of the world's greatest correspondents. Madame de Sevigne (1626–96) paints an extraordinarily vivid picture of France at the time of Louis XIV, in eloquent letters written throughout her life to family and friends. A significant figure in French society and literary circles, whose close friends included Madame de La Fayette and La Rochefoucauld, she reflected on both significant historical events and personal issues and in this selection of the most important letters, spanning almost fifty years, she was at times humorous and melancholic, profound and superficial. Whether describing the new plays of Racine and Moliere, speculating on court scandals including the intrigues of the King's mistresses or relating her own family concerns, Madame de Sevigne provides an intriguing portrait of the lost age of Le Roi Soleil.

Near the castle of Grignan, in a quiet hamlet, between vineyards and lavender fields, is our charming Clos de la Tuillière, a 17th century Drôme Bastide. Idilically located in the heart of a

park with an outdoor swimming pool.

After our check in and lunch, we set off for a circuit walk around Grignan to explore the scrub oaks, the fields of lavender, vineyards and truffle plantations. Old dry-stone walls line the way and on our way back we can enjoy the beautiful views of the castle and the surrounding mountains in the distance. Our hamlet of La Grande Tuillière was once the site for making tiles. We return to our Clos and tonight enjoy dinner at our hotel. The restaurant boasts an excellent kitchen with an abundant use of vegetables, olive oil and typical spices of the Provence, such as rosemary, thyme, basil, oregano, bay leaf (laurel), marjoram and sariette (summer savoury).

 **2 1/2 HOURS**

 **GRIGNAN, FRANCE**

DAY 10

Grignan - Dieulefit - Poët Le Laval – Eyzahut

Grignan has a charming uncrowded market, which is held every Tuesday. The quality of the products is just as good as at a larger market and you can purchase everything you need for our picnic lunch.

After stocking up the supplies, we drive to Dieulefit, a lovely town (pop. 3,100) in the Jabron Valley. It is known for its healthy climate, its artists (pottery, wool) and the Picodon goat cheese produced in the region since 1991 and protected by its own A.O.C. appellation (if you didn't buy it already at the Grignan market - here is your second chance). A bit old fashioned, Dieulefit brings you back to the times where you did all your shopping in small stores on the main street and where the weekly market was, and still is, a place to buy your groceries from the farmer and exchange news.

Dieulefit has roughly 30 pottery makers and a pottery school - the Maison de la Terre du Pays de Dieulefit. After a stroll through town we drive to Poët le Laval. On the way and time permitting, we might visit one of the better, known artists of this region.

Poët le Laval - The "Pogetum Vallis", in Latin the "Hill in the Valley" was founded in the 13th century as a preceptory of the Knights Hospitallers of the Sovereign Order of Saint John (today's Knights of Malta). The name is justified, the old village lies on a hill in the picturesque Jabron Valley. The Knights Hospitallers built a small castle, church and fortified the village. It was soon elevated to the status of Commanderie. In the late 19th century it fell into disrepair as most of the population built their houses in the Jabron Valley closer to their fields. The Vieux village has now been lovingly restored, thanks also to many non-residents who have vacation homes here.

From the château on top of the village we walk the maze of alleys, stairs and terraces. Most of the houses in the Vieux village date from the 15th century, including a remarkable pigeon tower. The oldest part of the Château is the Donjon (tower), which dates from the 12th century. The walls are 13ft/4m thick at the base. The Commanderie was frequently enlarged and its style changed until the Knights Hospitallers left Le Poët Laval for a better life in Montélimar at the end of the 16th century.

After our visit we leave the village behind and climb up the side of the mountain towards the Grand Pas and Montagne du Poët. Passing the Châtelard castle, towering high above us, we continue now on a smaller track, descending through an oak forest.

We pass a lonely farmhouse and join a GR that takes us up to Eyzahut, a very remote hamlet in the Drôme Provençale,

The name of Celtic origin (Eagle's nest), Eyzahut is in the heart of the Dieulefit country. Its Lords were the commanders of Poët - Laval in the Middle Ages.

Tall cliffs dominate the village and the ridges are accessible by a number of trails. After a stroll through the village we will continue through the forest back to the pass from where we enjoy an exceptional panorama over the plain of the Roubion and the Rhone Valley. We re-join our buses and return to Grignan.

 **4 HOURS**

 **GRIGNAN, FRANCE**



DAY 11

Grignan - Nyons - St Pantaléon Les Vignes - Beauvoir Chapel - Rousset Les Vignes

The mountains get a little steeper this morning as we head to Nyons. The valleys are sheltered from the Mistral wind and make this region ideal for olive growing. The Nyons's region prides itself in producing one of the best olive oils in France. The 250,000 olive trees in this region produce an average of 400 tons of olives de table (for eating) and 200 tons of olive oil per year. There are about 1,000 growers and 6 oil mills in the region. The olive oil carries the label AOC Nyons (Appellation d'Origine Contrôlée) and is made from the Tanche olive, a sturdy variety unique to this area. They have large pits, a sweet meaty flavour and lack bitterness. The skin of Tanche olives is wrinkled, because they are harvested in December, after the ripe olives have begun to shrivel a bit with the cold. The oil from the Tanche olive has a slightly nutty flavour – an excellent choice for the hearty Provençal cuisine. Nyons's olive growing is a major agricultural activity and we will learn more about it on a visit of the Olive Museum. It is dedicated to the ancient and modern history of the olive tree and olive oil production. Many tools, presses and equipment used throughout the centuries are here on display. After our tasting and buying lunch, we continue and drive the short distance to Saint Pantaléon les Vignes, where we start our walk through a picture postcard landscape. It takes us into the heart of the Côtes du Rhône vineyards and through olive plantations. We pass the ruins of an ancient castle and the chapel of our Lady of Health, which was built by locals to escape the plague. We continue along the ravine of Croupis and more vineyards before we arrive in Rousset-les-Vignes. It is a charming village with an old Clunisian priory, mediaeval houses and a feudal château. From here we follow some steps and a stony track up to the Notre Dame de Beauvoir Chapel (14th century) where we can admire the beautiful scenery and stop for a late lunch. The descent is easy and after a short break in Rousset-les-Vignes we continue through more vineyards and apricot orchards back to Saint Pantaléon. Here we re-join our buses and return to Grignan. Dinner tonight is at your leisure.

 **4 HOURS**

 **GRIGNAN, FRANCE**

DAY 12

Grignan - Free Day

A day to reflect on our experiences and the rich history of this country. This is a France that still lives for long lunches and relaxation. The grounds of the Manoir de la Roseraie are perfect for strolling or lounging by the pool or perhaps even writing some letters of your own.

Walk up to the Château from where you have wonderful views over Grignan with its tiled roofs and the surrounding countryside. Stroll through the narrow alleys and sit in one of the open-air cafés. There are a number of cute small stores and an excellent bookstore.

In the late afternoon we drive to the imposing Château Suze la Rousse that towers over the village and its Côtes du Rhône vineyards like a fortress. What began in the 12th century as a modest wooden fort on the Suze (suz means hill in Celtic) was later transformed by the Les Baux, one of the most important families in the Provence, into a fortified small château, which served as a hunting lodge. Marguerite des Baux received it as a dowry, when she married Hugues de Saluces in 1390. The beautiful Marguerite had flaming red hair, so the story goes, hence the château became known as Suze the Red, Suze la Rousse! The couple and subsequent generations of what became known as the Baume - Suze clan enlarged the château, changing its style and finally adding the magnificent grand staircase. During the religious wars (1562-1598), the conflict between Protestants and Catholics in France, François de La Baume Suze was one of the military leaders on the Catholic side in the Provence. Another highlight was the visit of Catherine de Medici and her son, King Charles IX in 1564. The château was pillaged during the French Revolution. The last Baume-Suze heir, the Marquise de Bryas, who died without heirs in 1958, donated the château to a foundation caring for orphans. They were unable to maintain it and in 1965 it was bought for 90,000 Francs (Euro 14,000) by the Drôme Department.

Today the château houses the Université du Vin and a small museum. The university provides training to future wine professionals (wine growers, sommeliers) in France but also conducts wine tasting programmes lasting a day, a weekend for wine aficionados or just a couple of hours. The vine garden on the grounds has cultivated the seventy main types of vines from all of the great wine producing countries. After

our “class of the glass” – the mission of the university to transmit the knowledge across many disciplines – we return to our Manoir in Grignan.

 **GRIGNAN, FRANCE**



DAY 13

Vaison La Romaine - Saint-Romain-En-Viennois to Faucon Circuit Walk

After breakfast we drive to Vaison la Romaine. The Puymin and La Villasse archaeological sites, right in the middle of the town are one of the most important Roman heritage sites in France. Other notable sights are the Roman Bridge spanning the river Ouvèze, the medieval town and castle ruins on the cliffs of the left bank of the Ouvèze, Notre Dame de Nazareth Cathedral and St. Quenin Chapel.

It will be difficult to leave this bubbly scene behind but after spending the morning in town, buying our lunch and visiting the Roman site, we have to get ready for our walk. We drive the short distance to Saint-Romain-en-Viennois, a fortified circular village, built on a promontory and lined with plane trees and chestnut trees.

We leave the village to the north and the surrounding landscape is dominated by undulating green hills between the Côtes du Rhône vineyards. On our way we pass the small Lauzon Gorge and continue through the fields to Puyméras.

The village is perched on a rocky hill, topped by the ruins of its castle and destroyed during the Revolution. Narrow streets, staircases, beautiful old houses, fountains and lavoirs compose the village, not to mention the belfry and the Romanesque church. As we walk along the village's narrow streets, we discover some remaining old houses. Our trail to Faucon is surrounded by beautiful countryside, alternating between lavender fields, cultivated land and unspoilt hills, with Mont Ventoux as a distant backdrop.

Faucon is a small walled village perched on a hill with a magnificent panorama of the Alps and Mont Ventoux. The houses are built with local stone and as a result give an architectural unit and a lot of character to the village.

Faucon is fully dedicated to vines and wine. In this area of Cotes du Rhone, two wineries practice organic farming and other crops go to co-operatives.

Faucon is also the homeland of the apricot "Orangé de Provence ". It was an agricultural engineer from Faucon, Charles Cornu, who brought the first specimen from the Balkans, known as the "Polish" that spread throughout Provence.

Above the place des tilleuls (linden square), near the church, the "rue du belvedere" leads to a medieval arch that overlooks the valley and frames a beautiful view of the north face of the Mont Ventoux.

The town had its wall of which the remains of towers can be seen looking towards the Ventoux. From the "Rue de l'Aparand", we discover some remains of the feudal castle.

After our visit of Faucon we make our way to the bottom of the village and take the direction of Saint Marcelin les Vaisons and soon follow the signs to the Ayguette campground.

From here we follow a small paved road back to Saint-Romain-en-Viennois. Here we re-join our buses and return to Grignan.

 **4 HOURS**

 **GRIGNAN, FRANCE**



DAY 14

Grignan – Avignon

After our last breakfast on the terrace of our charming hotel, we drive to Chateauneuf-du-Pape. It is a medieval village on the side of a hill, guarded by the ruins of an ancient chateau towering high above. From the chateau we have an outstanding view in all directions, mostly of vineyards, of course. Off to the east and south, the Rhône River winds across the fields and in the afternoon sun it turns silver. The village streets are narrow, curving around the hillside or climbing up and down between the houses. The buildings are old but everything is very thoroughly restored and this is clearly a tourist town and its purpose is to sell wine. The village was once circled by two concentric walls. The outer wall enclosed the chateau and the entire village as far as the main road at the bottom of the village, while the inner wall enclosed the chateau and only the highest part of the village. A literal translation of Châteauneuf-du-Pape, "the Pope's new house", is actually true. The Popes of Avignon built a summertime chateau (their summer palace) here to get away from the hustle and bustle of the Palais. Apart from the foundations, only two walls (towers) remain of the chateau but they're the ones facing the village and they're still high and imposing, giving a good feeling of what it was like here centuries ago. Not far from the ruin is the Cave Le Verger des Papes. Here they know their wines and we can appreciate the opportunity to become more educated about the wonderful wines of Chateauneuf-du-Pape. Starting with the whites which are a delightful surprise, we continue to taste some of the most amazing wines of the region. The Châteauneuf-du-Pape wine is thick, harsh, powerful and richly coloured. The red wine is elaborated with 13 authorized and controlled grapes - varieties among which are Syrah, Grenache and Clairette. The cave also has a restaurant attached to it where we can sit and have lunch on their terrace before we drive to Avignon. Drop off will be at the main railway station at approximately 4.00 p.m.

Journey Accommodation

Hotel Ithurria - Les Collectionneurs, Ainhoa

NIGHT 1 - 4



Chateau De Siran - Hôtel & Spa, Siran

NIGHT 5 - 8



Le Clos de la Tuilière, Grignan

NIGHT 9 - 13



Journey Notes

TOUR INCLUDES

Experienced guides.

Pick up at Hotel Saint Julien, Biarritz on Day 1 and drop off at Avignon Railway Station on Day 14.

Price includes transport between Biarritz on Day 1 and Avignon on Day 14.

Twin share accommodation from Day 1 to Day 14 including 13 breakfasts, 11 dinners and entry fees.

NOT INCLUDED IN TRIP COSTS

Transport before and after "the walk", lunches, 2 dinners, evening drinks, in-between meal snacks, laundry, medical expenses and items of a personal nature.

WHAT TO BRING

Daypack, proper walking boots or shoes, walking socks, waterproof raincoat, sun hat, sunglasses, sun cream and bathers. We can also recommend telescopic walking sticks but we always have some spares in the vehicles.

As we are restricted with the amount of luggage we can carry in our vehicles, please ensure that your CASES DO NOT EXCEED 20 KG's per guest.

PRE-WALK PREPARATION

We suggest that prior to your walking holiday you prepare yourself to obtain a level of fitness that will allow you to enjoy your walking holiday.

This, of course, is dependent upon your existing fitness level. Remember, the fitter you are, the more you will enjoy the holiday!

Start with some short walks which include stairs or hills and increase the length of walks over a couple of months.

We suggest you carry a backpack with water, camera, jacket, snacks, etc. to assist you with your preparation and allow you to get used to the extra weight on your back.

We also ask that your boots are comfortable and well-worn in.

Perhaps enjoy some walks through our local national parks and over uneven surfaces to gain confidence with your boots or new walking shoes.

PLEASE NOTE

Single rooms can usually be arranged for a supplement. Please ask for details. We will endeavour to match people together if they would like to share a twin room with another guest to avoid paying the single room supplement. However, as this is not always possible, 'single' clients will have to pay the supplement.

All walks during the 14 Day tour are optional. Guests can choose to have more free days than the one already included in the itinerary.

The walking pace on the walks is leisurely. Guests do not have to be experienced, although a good level of fitness is necessary.



Get in touch and book your journey today.

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Follow the journey.



Quality Practices

Committed to exceeding your expectations with great customer service and the highest standards of quality practices, Walkabout Gourmet Adventures complies with the National Tourism Accreditation Program (ATAP).



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