

PROVENCE



Premium Inns Biking

Experience the idyllic lifestyle of Provence. Follow quiet side roads under sunny skies and breathe in the herb scented air. Ride among vineyards and orchards, fields of sunflowers and wild poppies, and pass through aromatic pine forests. Enjoy its warm hospitality and superb accommodations. Dine on "La Cuisine du Soleil" where pungent and earthy flavors come alive with local olive oils, fresh basil, garlic, thyme, rosemary and sage. Visit quintessential Provençal villages and market towns, Roman ruins and natural wonders. Cruise through the sun drenched landscapes that inspired Cézanne, Picasso, Van Gogh and countless other artists. Join Club Toscana in the south of France where the charms of this distinctive region never end.

Trip Dates: all 2008 & 2009 trip dates

Reserve your Provence Biking trip [here](#)
or visit our web site at www.clubtoscana.com

DAY 1 - Castillon-du-Gard

Today's terrain - flat to moderately flat over a gently rolling landscape

Today's distance - 55 km / 34 miles with shorter distance options

As a convenience to our guests, we will meet you at your hotel in Avignon at 9:00 am. or by special arrangement, the main train station or airport. Please be dressed in your biking clothes at our rendezvous. If you are bringing your own biking shoes and pedals, please keep them handy for your trip leader to install them on your trip bike at the start of today's ride.

Bienvenue en Provence! After introductions, your trip leaders will fit your bike, review your trip route instructions, give you a little orientation of riding on French roads with some safety tips and away we will go. Your first ride will take you along the flat side roads of the Isle of Barthelasse, an island dividing the Rhône River. Along our route, admire the palatial residences constructed by the Pope's cardinals and a great monastery founded by Pope Innocent VI during the time when Avignon was the Papal seat of the Roman Empire. As we enter into a Malmont Forest, covered with Mediterranean pines, we will pass through Tavel, surrounded by thousands of acres of France's most sought after rosé vineyards. A Club Toscana introductory lunch with your fellow cyclists awaits us at a charming little village restaurant along the way; and your first opportunity to try "la cuisine du soleil". After lunch, we will continue toward the charming market town of Uzès, site of the Palace of Le Duché, and home to France's highest ranking ducal family. Enjoy a leisurely visit to the town square surrounded by Medieval homes and its lively boulevards bordered by cafés and specialty shops. An optional ride into the vallée du Gardon or a lift in the trip vehicle will take us to the Medieval village of Castillon-du-Gard and our lodging for this evening. Our lodging rests up in the village center with spectacular views of the surrounding countryside from its pool patio. Tonight, we will gather for a delicious meal of Provençal specialties in their elegant dining room.

DAY 2 - Saint-Rémy-de-Provence

Today's terrain - flat to moderately flat over a gently rolling landscape

Today's distance - 50 km / 31 miles with shorter or longer distance options

After a buffet breakfast, we will head down into the vallée du Gardon and its most famous site, the spectacular Pont du Gard, for a visit to this marvel of 2000 year old Roman engineering. Take a few photos. There is also a very informative museum on site that takes you through the methods used to build this aqueduct build without mortar. Our ride will take us through a semi-barren landscape once populated only by shepherds and still bathed by the warm winds of the Mediterranean sea. Quiet side roads through the fragrant Rhône River valley with typical Provençal villages fortified with stone walls will lead us to the quaint Medieval village of Barbentane, with its shady plane trees and the perfect spot for a lunch break. Grab a snack in a café, search out a restaurant or drop in on the market for a personal picnic. A wonderful ride through the Barbentane Forest takes us to the 11th-century abbey of St-Michael-de-Frigolet where monks produce traditional liqueurs made of local herbs. The rest of our afternoon's ride will take us through more villages and along narrow side roads with canals, fruit orchards and busy vegetable gardens to St-Rémy-de-Provence. Wander the old center of St-Rémy or join your trip leader for an informal walk tracing the life and works of Van Gogh from the streets of St-Rémy to his asylum at the 12th-century Monastere de St-Paul-de-Mausole, before meandering to a favorite restaurant and a dinner of traditional French / Provençal cooking. Our lodging for the next two nights is located along St-Rémy's leafy main boulevard with a large garden with water falls, and spectacular views of the Alpilles mountains.

DAY 3 - Les-Baux-de-Provence

Today's terrain - flat to moderately flat with 2 moderate slopes (lifts available)

Today's distance - 55 km / 34 miles with shorter or longer distance options

This morning we will depart a little later. After a hearty breakfast, why not join the locals at St-Rémy's weekly food market where fresh farm produce, art and crafts are proudly displayed. Today's route will take us on a loop ride through the beautiful Alpilles mountains. Their jagged appearance gives the impression of high mountains, but as you get closer, you realize that it is only an illusion. We will stop by an renowned olive oil producer en route to see how olive oil is produced before entering into the rugged Val d'Enfer where natural caves were the source of countless legends of witches and spirits. We will stop at the ancient city of Les-Baux-de-Provence dramatically perched on a rock crag, and the ancient seat of the Rainier Family of Monaco. This is the perfect place for a Club Toscana lunch break. Perhaps tour the evocative ruins of the unique Château des Baux, carved out of the this rocky peak, from where you can see the skyline of Marseille and the shimmering Mediterranean Sea. Our afternoon ride will take us through a landscape of olive groves, fruit orchards and limestone hills blanketed with "garrigue", the wild "herbs de Provence" whose pleasant and aromatic scents fill the air on a panoramic route through the Alpilles on our way back to St-Rémy. On the way, we'll drop in on a noted wine Château for a "degustation des vins". Tonight, why not join the locals at a St-Rémy cafe and try pastis, the traditional dinner aperitif. Dinner is on your own this evening to discover you own culinary and romantic corner of this charming Provençal town.

DAY 4 - L'Isle-sur-la-Sorgue & Gordes

Today's terrain - flat to moderately flat with 2 short moderate slopes (lifts available)

Today's distance - 54 km / 33 miles with shorter or longer distance options

Another great buffet breakfast will start us on our way toward the Vaucluse. Ride along flat narrow farm side roads and through the Durance River valley to Cavailon, the melon capital of France. As we ride into the Vaucluse we'll stop by L'Isle-sur-la-Sorgue, a beautiful small town with canals and home to one of Provence's most important antique markets. Today is the weekly market day, and if you arrive early, you might find that perfect gift for home. The canal side cafés offer a wonderful setting for a lunch break. This afternoon, we'll ride to Fontaine-de-Vaucluse, where the source of the Sorgue River flows out of a large cavern in the mountain side. The ancients buildings here were once home to Petrarch, the 14th-century Italian poet. Take a walk up to the source or visit the ancient paper mill. Meandering side roads will lead us into the majestic Vaucluse Valley and our hotel in Gordes, regarded as one of France's most beautiful villages. Tonight, we will dine at a favourite restaurant under the imposing walls of the town's 12th-century castle.

DAY 5 - Villages of the Luberon

Today's terrain - flat to moderate with 3 short moderate slopes (lifts available)

Today's distance - 54 km / 33 miles with shorter or longer distance options

A breakfast on the hotel's terrace will precede our ride into the Luberon on a magnificent loop ride. Today, we will discover the dramatic landscapes of this valley and the quintessential Provençal villages immortalized by the writer, Peter Mayle in his book "A year in Provence. In the other capital of Roussillon, we will join the artists as they draw inspiration from the 17 shades of ochre. As we pass by the two-thousand year old Roman Pont Julien, we will visit Bonnieux, known for its handicrafts and a great place for a cafe break. In Lacoste, once home of the infamous Marquis di Sade, we can take a walk to the top of the village to view the castle of Sade and its memorable views overlooking the Luberon. In charming Ménerbes, visit an artist's shop or soak up that surreal Provençal sunlight. Our last stop is the village of Oppède-le-Vieux, abandoned in the 19th-century, the village was later settled by artists. Still seemingly void of residents, many of its buildings are still in ruins or covered by vines. The views from its village top castle and church are worth the walk up its cobblestone walkways. Tonight, a celebratory dinner in the hotel dining room will conclude our biking adventure in Provence.

DAY 6 - Avignon - Homeward bound

This morning, after a leisurely breakfast, bid a final farewell to the soothing landscapes of Provence and take a private transfer to Avignon for convenient flights or TGV train departures for Paris, or extend your stay in beautiful Provence. As always, your trip leaders would be more than pleased to help you with any of your post-trip travel planning.

Au Revoir and Bon Voyage !

THIS TRIP IS DESIGNED FOR ALL ABILITIES - We have designed this trip to be suitable for everyone, from the casual or occasional biker with other travel and site seeing interests to the experienced biking enthusiast looking for that extra challenge. Since your preferred biking pace and interests might vary from day to day, we have a daily list of optional routes, distances and route sections to give you exactly the kind of cycling you would like to experience.

For Trip Details including Date & Prices, Trip Activity Levels, Trip Map, Selected Trip Hotels, and Arriving & Departing Information, please consult this trip's web page at: www.clubtoscana.com/provence_s_bicycle_tours_pg.html

NEED MORE TRIP INFORMATION?

[E-mail](mailto:info@clubtoscana.com) or call our professional travel advisers toll free 8:30 am to 5:30 pm (EST) Mon. to Fri., 8:30 am to 1:00 pm Sat. They can answer your trip questions and arrange your travel needs for a truly all-inclusive European Active Vacation.

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