

Roman Heritage

Fitness level

1 2 3 4 5 Relaxed/Moderate

Tour highlights

- The stunning Roman Theatre at Orange
- Pont du Gard – a World Heritage Site
- Winetasting at Châteauneuf-du-Pâpe
- Flamingos in the Camargue
- Follow in the footsteps of Vincent Van Gogh at Arles and St-Rémy



Itinerary

Day 1 We arrive at our hotel near Isle-sur-la-Sorgue. In the afternoon we fit bikes, then relax by the pool or take a short trip into the village, famous throughout France for its antiques market. Early arrivals can ride to the Fontaine de Vaucluse, the famous resurgent spring of the river Sorgue.

In the evening, we sit down to the first of many gourmet meals, washed down with wine from the slopes of Mont Ventoux, whose imposing profile dominates the region.

Day 2 A relaxed start to the week as we cross fruit fields on quiet lanes towards Châteauneuf-du-Pâpe and a tasting at one of its celebrated vineyards – a special treat for wine-lovers. It's then a short hop to **Orange** for lunch.

After lunch, we visit Orange's **Théâtre Antique** – built around 10AD – and the enormous and well-preserved triumphal arch which straddles the Via Agrippa. From here, we cross the River Rhone to **Tavel** and our hotel. A pool awaits, and you can stroll the lanes – and perhaps find a cellar to taste Tavel's famous *rosé* wine before dinner.

Day 3 Today we climb gently through vineyards and then descend to **Bagnols-sur-Cèze** to wander the ancient lanes before lunch. Back on the bikes, we pass through **Cavaillargues**, home to two châteaux, before reaching St-Quentin-la-Poterie, a centre for

ceramics and an ideal place for a coffee stop.

Our final stretch of the day brings us to the medieval city of **Uzès**. The *Tour Fenestrelle* – or windowed tower – of its cathedral, and the château of the Duchy of Uzès, are among the medieval sites to visit, and there are boutiques galore to satisfy any shopping urges! Our hotel nestles in the old town beneath the cathedral.

Day 4 Today our destination is a stone's throw away in the village of Collias on the banks of the river Gard.

The highlight of the day is the **Pont du Gard**, an aqueduct built by the Romans as part of a system to carry water from Uzès to Nîmes. You can complete the journey from Collias to the bridge by canoe, seeing the splendour of the **Gard gorges** – and the bridge itself – from the water.

After lunch we return to Collias on quiet roads, taking in the scent of wild thyme and rosemary. The end of the afternoon can be spent by the pool or cycling the upper reaches of the Gard.

Day 5 From Collias there's a short climb before we sweep onto the plains of the Camargue. Next stop is **Bellegarde**, with its 13th century castle keep. After lunch in the small town of St Gilles, we ride through the northern fringes of the Camargue, where a wealth of birdlife can be viewed from towers on the Etang de Vaccarès.

We cross the Rhône to our hotel in the

1: Gordes. 2: Cycling through vineyards at Châteauneuf-du-Pâpe. 3: Breathtaking Pont du Gard. 4: The *Théâtre Antique* at Orange. 5: A relaxed wine tasting.

heart of ancient **Arles**. Before dinner you can look around Arles' Roman Amphitheatre – or next door's equally-impressive Roman Theatre. Other highlights include the 15th century **St-Trophème Cathedral**, with its shaded cloister and the **Van Gogh Museum**.

Day 6 This morning, we take quiet roads through olive groves before tackling the short stiff climb to **Les Baux**, a beautiful village perched on a rocky outcrop. The effort of the climb is rewarded by sublime views of the **Alpilles** hills.

From here, we drop to **St-Rémy-de-Provence**, birthplace of Nostradamus and celebrated subject of Van Gogh's paintings. After lunch, we can stroll around the Roman monuments known as **Les Antiques**.

In the afternoon, we pass the magnificent abbey of **St-Michel-de-Frigolet** to reach **Barbentane**, our final destination. The village boasts a medieval watch tower and a 17th century ducal palace with perfectly-kept classical gardens. Our final celebration meal is in the heart of the village.

Day 7 After breakfast, you can stroll into the village before we depart on our onward journeys. An additional night's stay in nearby Avignon is highly recommended.