

Tartarin de Tarascon is an hero of once-popular stories by Alphonse Daudet. An ebullient and boastful Provençal, he survives astonishing adventures and mishaps as an amateur big-game hunter, a mountaineer ... in Alpilles

Season

From end of March to middle of November except in summer time (from end of June to middle of October) when the paths through the Provence Mountains are off limits due to the high risks of fire.

We recommend you to book this tour 3 or 4 months before the departure date if you plan to walk it in summer time. Great demand and few rooms!



Difficulty: grade 3

The 3 first stages are easy and grade 3 reflects the length of the 3 last stages (and the nature of the terrain).

The total altitude gain is about 500 meters a day, some ascents or descents could be steep. This walk requires a reasonable degree of walking experience and a current good state of fitness. The trail is well marked with red and white GR signs and the route is easy to find.

Itinerary

8-day and 7-night self-guided walking holidays

Day 1 : Arrival at ARLES. This town, located in the heart of the Provence, is the gateway to the Camargue. Arles is a town rich with two thousand years of history. It is appreciated for its Roman and Medieval monuments, some of which – including the amphitheatre, the Alyscamps, Saint Trophime Cloister, and the beautiful portal of the Saint Trophime Church – are designated by UNESCO as world heritage monuments. Stroll through this city of art and history and discover all these monuments and more - Lodging and breakfast in a 2-star hotel

Day 2 : Tour of ARLES and its surroundings (15 km). You will leave Arles along the former Via Aurelia, a roman way, to discover Les Alyscamps, one of the most beautiful Christian burial sites. This romantic path lined with sarcophagi, is all the remains of the vast cemetery that surrounded the city between the 3rd B.C. and the 13th centuries. You continue walking through the plains and along the canals that were so often painted by Van Gogh, a long-time resident of the city. These canals are used to evacuate water of this wet and marshy area converted to-day in huge ricefields. Back to Arles. Spend your evening wandering the narrow street of Arles, and discovering the art in the city's architecture - Lodging and breakfast in the same 2-star hotel

Day 3 : ARLES – FONTVIEILLE (14 km) You will walk across Arles and leave the city heading to the Abbey of Montmajour. This Benedictine abbey was built in the 12th century on a rocky spur in the midst of marshy land that has since dried up and been turned into rice fields. In the 18th century, after a period of decadence, monks added new, magnificent buildings, but they were sold as national property during the Revolution. Today, only the 12th century buildings – the Church of Notre-Dame and the cloister, one of the most beautiful in Provence – have been restored. After the visit, you will to Fontvieille through the plain. The small city center is ancient and charming and spotted by old wells - Half-board accommodation in a 2-star hotel

Day 4 : FONTVIEILLE – MAUSSANE LES ALPILLES (20 km). You will begin the walk climbing towards the famous Alphonse Daudet windmill, which gives a lovely view of the Alpilles landscape and the Montmajour Abbey. The hike continues through the Alpilles to the ruins of the Aqueducts of Barbegal. The Romans built these aqueducts on the slope of the cliff and used them as hydraulic mills for processing food. You will continue across the Alpilles and through the olive trees to the typical Provencal village of Maussance-les-Alpilles. Half-board accommodation in a 2-star hotel

Day 5 : MAUSSANE – SAINT REMY DE PROVENCE (20 km). You will walk through the vineyards and olive trees to Les Baux de Provence, a stone fortress that dominates the whole of the valley. This old village, abandoned in the 18th century, was restored to life in the 20th century by those who bought the old houses and mansions that had been left behind. Take the time to stroll through the narrow streets, admire Saint Vincent's church, Penitents Blancs Chapel and the château. There is a breathtaking panorama from the keep of the château over the Crau Plain and Camargue. You will leave the village by way of the Val d'Enfer, a narrow valley cut out of the plateau and framed by abrupt cliffs, and walk through the Alpilles towards the Lake Peirrou to enter into the city limits of Saint Remy. This city will call to you to walk along its narrow streets, to gaze upon the lovely hotels and residences, and to sit beside the fountains of its shaded squares - Lodging and breakfast in a 2-star hotel

Day 6 : EYGALIERES – ST REMY DE PROVENCE (20 km). Transfer by taxi to the Saint Sixte Chapel, just outside the charming village of Eygalières, from which rises a square-shaped keep, all that remains of an ancient château. Surrounded by olive trees and the Alpilles as backdrop, Eygalières is one of the most beautiful villages in Provence and has attracted painters and photographers for years. You will follow the Alpilles range and climb the mountain along the Vallorgue Pass and the Pas de l'Aigle to reach the Caume Plateau. The landscape is beautiful ! The white peaks (no more than 350-400 meters in height) stand out in contrast to the deep blue sky. The environment is wild, rocky and covered with a few small Mediterranean bushes that fragrance the air. You will follow the downward slope of the Vallon de Saint Clerg to the ancient city of Glanum. For many centuries this city was an important commercial center on the road to Avignon. Today, only the city center has been modernized. You will see traces of the past, among them the Arc de Triomphe, the door to the city that stands as a symbol of Rome's victory over La Gaule and Le Mausolée. You will end the day in homage to Van Gogh, visiting the monastery of Saint Paul de Mausole where Van Gogh was housed for one year and completed numerous paintings.

Lodging and breakfast in the same 2-star hotel

Day 7 : ST REMY – TARASCON (26 km). Through the olive trees and vineyards you will head to the canal des Alpines and walk along it for several kilometers. Then you penetrate into the Alpilles mountains walking up a narrow valley to reach a forest track running on the crests and leading you to the Saint Gabriel chapel, a beautiful Romanesque building at the foot of Alpilles. You continue your way through the rice fields and along canals to Tarascon dominated by the massive medieval chateau of King René - Half-board accommodation in a 2-star hotel

Day 8 : TARASCON. Tour ends after breakfast. Before leaving Tarascon, we recommend you visit the feudal castle which is one of the best preserved in France and was the former residence of René d'Anjou, count of Provence. You can also visit the Cordeliers cloister, the Sainte Marthe church, the town hall styled in the manner of Louis XIII, the archways of the Rue des Halles, and the famous Tissus Solerado museum.

Access to and from

Outward journey

By train : TGV trains up to Avignon or Marseille, change to Arles.

By car : You will arrive in Arles by following highway A7 to route N570 by way of Rognonas and Graveson

Where to park : supervised underground parking available close to the Tourism Office of Arles

Inward journey

By train : On return, links by train between Tarascon and Avignon or Marseille where you catch TGV trains to Paris

Getting back your car : links by trains between Tarascon and Arles

Accommodation

3 nights with accommodation in 2-star hotels on half-board basis

4 nights with accommodation in 2-star hotel on night and breakfast basis

Accommodation is normally in large bed or twin-bedded rooms, with en-suite facilities (at least shower, washbasin and toilet) when available, which is 95% of the time. However, you can stay in remote spots or small villages where there is little or no choice of accommodations and where facilities may be limited. In this case, you will share a bathroom or shower room and toilets with some other people on the same storey.

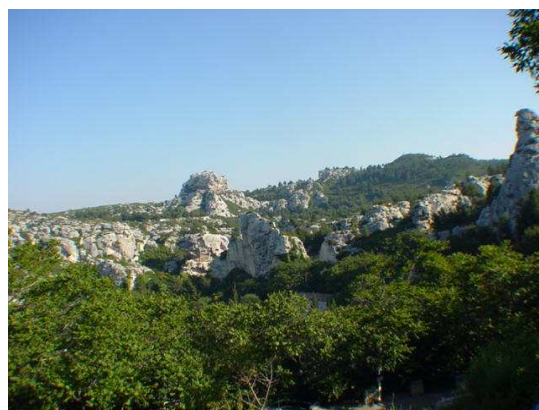
Picnic lunches are not included in the tour but are available from the hotel on request the previous evening, alternatively picnic materials can be bought at the stop village or at each of the towns and villages along the route. We indicate in the route notes where there are suitable restaurants or cafés for lunch stops. We recommend you to carry food and drinks if there are none convenient to the trail.

Included

- o Twin share accommodation with private facilities
- o Baggage transfer between hotels (except for STD option)
- o Route notes and maps
- o 3 dinners
- o Emergency phone number (8:00am to 7:00pm every day)

Not included

- o Visa fees, transportation fees to and from the walk area
- o Insurance (strongly recommended on all trips)
- o Transfers except those mentioned above
- o Drinks
- o Additional meals
- o Spending of personal nature e.g. laundry, souvenirs, phone calls...



La Caminade trademark of Sentiers de France

59 bis rue du Mûrier – BP 40226 – 37542 Saint Cyr sur Loire cedex – France
Tel : 00 33 (0)970 445 924 Fax : 00 33 (0)134 292 260 E-mail : contact@randolacaminade.com
Sarl au capital de 7630 euros –TO agreement n° LI 0940100008 –
Garantie bancaire APS – Assurances RCP : Covea risks