

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 Luberon 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

No major difficulty, you walk 6 to 8 hours a day. Grade 3 reflects the length of some stages (between 25 and 32 kilometers) and the nature of the terrain. The total altitude gain is about 500 to 700 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 or yellow splashes.

Itinerary

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

Day 1 : Arrival at FONTAINE DE VAUCLUSE (in early afternoon if you can). This small town is well-known for its spring and for the mysterious hole from where the Sorgue river gushes out. Petraque, poet and humanist (1304-1374) lived here for many years. You have to visit the St Veran Romanesque church, the remains of the castle of the Cavailon Bishops above the valley and stroll to the Sorgue spring at the bottom of a 230 meters high vertical cliff. This resurgence, one of the most important around the world, has a variable rate of flow from few m³ to more than 100 m³ per second in high water time - Half-board in a 2-star hotel

Day 2 : FONTAINE DE VAUCLUSE – GORDES. (22 km) You leave Fontaine-de-Vaucluse and walk through the first hills of the Monts du Vaucluse where alternate olive trees, vineyards, some cultivations or oak and pine forests. You go up through some small valleys and across some forests to reach la Basse Pouraque, isolated farm in the woods. You continue walking through the forest to reach the Vallon de la Senancole where is nested the Cistercian Senanque abbey. Austerity and aestheticism are the main features of this abbey that lived numerous difficult times but has preserved most of the original Romanesque buildings (12th century). Then you head to Gordes through this small valley. Half-board in a 2-star hotel

Day 3 : ROUSSILLON –ST SATURNIN LES APT (23 km – 7 hour walk). You will leave this typical village after visiting the church decorated with beautiful Italian wall-paintings in trompe l'oeil. You will walk to Roussillon. Built on a rocky spur, this typical Provencal village is surrounded by ochre quarries and cliffs. Take pleasure in a stroll through the narrow streets that circle around the belfry and the church, and discover the beautiful ochre cliffs called La Chaussée des Géants. Then you make your way to Gargas through a magnificent countryside covered with vineyards and past ochre quarries dug into hills covered with pines. You will arrive at St Saturnin les Apt, village built on a rock over which the ruins of a medieval castle and two windmills keep watch.



Half-board accommodation in a family-run hotel (all facilities in the room).

Day 4 : RUSTREL - VIENS. Transfer by taxi to the Rustrel village. After visiting this typical village, you head to the "Colorado de Rustrel", large quarries area where ochre was extracted. Working and erosion carved numerous picks, sheer cliffs, narrow corridors, some earth pillars, colours of which vary from bright yellow to blood red. You can visit this Ochre massif through several way marked paths. Then you keep on walking to Viens after passing above the Gignac village. Viens is an old fortified village with beautiful 12th century houses near the Sarrazine Gate and the castle. The Romanesque church is below the village. Dinner, night and breakfast in a guest-house (chambre d'hôte)

Day 5: VIENS - CERESTE. you walk around heading to the St Ferreol chapel. You keep on through the Cavalon valley and through the wild and impressive Oppedette Gorges up to the village of Oppedette, small isolated and timeless village. The path running on the edge of the Vaucluse plateau leads you through other isolated villages to the remains of the Carluc priory, former abbey built in the 12th century before reaching Cereste, old town erected on the Via Domitia –roman way from Italy to Spain - Dinner, bed and breakfast in a guest-house (chambre d'hôte)

Day 6: CERESTE - CUCURON. (23 km – ascent: 780 meters – 8 hour walk). A taxi drives you to the Aire des Masques pass above Cereste. From here, you walk up to the ridge of the Grand Luberon mountain through the wooded Vallon (small valley) des Agasses. You take the track running along the crests to the Mourre Negre (the highest summit in Luberon – 1125 m) from which is a 360° breathtaking panorama. Then you walk down the other side through the Vallon de Lafayette and via the charming Ermitage chapel to the typical village of Cucuron. Visit of the village – Lodging and breakfast in a 2-star hotel.

Day 7 : CUCURON – APT. (22 km –altitude gain : 550 meters). You will head towards the charming Provencal village of Vaugines. You will admire its charming church dating from 13th C. surrounding by cemetery before entering into this typical village along narrow streets lined with beautiful old houses. Then you will climb the Grand Luberon again, pass the crests before going down to Buoux. You will make a detour to admire the Buoux Fort, built on a rock spur above the Aigue Brun Valley. You will arrive in the village of Buoux and pass by the small, stone-covered Sainte Marie Chapel in the middle of the town's cemetery. You will follow this trail as it takes you by the Renaissance château of Buoux and through small orchards all the way to Apt, laid in the Cavalon Valley and known for its crystallized fruit and preserves - Lodging and breakfast in a 2-star hotel

Day 8: APT. End of the tour after breakfast. We recommend you to take time to visit Apt, Ste Anne cathedral, the medieval gate, Porte de Saigon and to stroll along the beautiful narrow streets of the old city.

Access to and from

Outward journey to Fontaine de Vaucluse

By train : The nearest station is the Avignon TGV station. Scheduled buses between Avignon and Fontaine de Vaucluse or transfer by taxi.

By car : Go to to Avignon along A7 motorway, then take the N100 road to Isle sur Sorgues and Fontaine de Vaucluse

Where to park : We don't recommend you leaving your car in Fontaine de Vaucluse (free unguarded car park). We urge you to park it in the pay 24 hours guarded car park, closed to the Avignon centre railway station and take bus to Fontaine de Vaucluse

Inward journey from Apt

By train: On return, scheduled buses between Apt and Avignon TGV or centre rail stations or taxi

Getting back your car : taxi to Fontaine de Vaucluse

Accommodation

5 nights with accommodation in 2-star hotels or chambres d'hôtes (guest house) on half-board basis

2 nights with accommodation in 2-star hotel on lodging 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 5 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...

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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
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