

Secret Provence

Hotel-to-hotel independent cycling

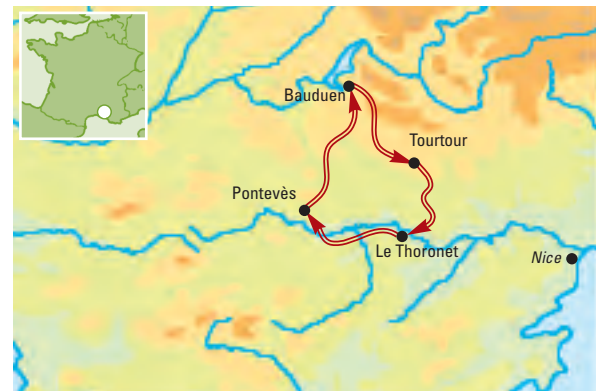
- Cycle through ancient villages, sleepy squares, olive groves, vineyards and scented lavender fields
- Lac de St Croix, Gorges du Verdon, medieval Tourtour and picturesque Cotignac
- Wonderfully varied hotels – all with private swimming pools
- Superb Mediterranean cuisine; world-famous wines; watersports galore
- Choice of 8 or 10 night holiday - with other options on request



We think this is the perfect corner of Provence for a cycling holiday. It's an area of great natural beauty, away from the tourist haunts, midway between the Mediterranean coast and Maritime Alps.

There's varied cycling and not too much traffic; plenty of sunshine, yet cooling breezes; lots to see and do. You cycle through shady wooded hills, attractive Clochemerle-style villages, and discover "perched villages" with sites and monuments going back 2,000 years.

Everywhere, you'll enjoy the typical scents of Provence, the fragrance from the region's wild herbs, the tang of pine trees and the scent of lavender. And all less than an hour's drive from the coast. All hotels are of a very good standard and in lovely settings, and all have swimming pools. Wine-tasting opportunities galore!



SECRET PROVENCE | DAY BY DAY

Day 1 Arrive at Le Thoronet

We meet you at Les Arcs station and take you (35 mins) to your hotel.

Day 2 Le Thoronet to Pontevès 32km/20mi or 37km/23mi

A lovely leisurely cycle today beneath huge pink cliffs, dotted with little villages, vineyards and tempting picnic spots. Highlights include Carcès (great wine tasting and lake) and picturesque Cotignac with its C13 church and fortress and amazing troglodyte dwellings!

Day 3 At Pontevès

Walk to the ruins of the castle or cycle to nearby Barjols, a little town utterly dominated by water (it has four rivers running through it, 16 lavoirs and 27 fountains) - pottery and tambourines are made here too!

Day 4 Pontevès to Bauduen 39km/24mi

Pedal north through the forest of Pelenq dotted with hidden châteaux. Past the *village perché* of Fox Amphoux, inhabited since the iron age. Then on via the pretty hill village of Moissac-Bellevue: spectacular views right across the region.

Day 5 At Bauduen (optional 2-night extension, see below)

You really are spoiled for choice here! Our friendly hotel is right on the shores of the gorgeous Lac de Ste Croix and offers direct access to the beach for swimming. Nearby, the lower gorges of the Verdon are well worth exploring and, unlike the Grand Canyon upstream, are much less crowded.

Day 6 or 8 Bauduen to Tourtour 39km/24mi

Wonderfully varied cycling today perhaps stopping off for lunch in Aups, a medieval country town with ramparts, a ruined castle and pretty wrought iron campanile - good markets Wed & Sat. Then onto Tourtour - superb views out over the Massif des Maures - and one of our favorite ★★★ hotels with two pools and jacuzzi.

Day 7 or 9 At Tourtour

Explore this pretty village, complete with medieval streets, ramparts, hidden squares and delightful alleyways. Or take one of our favourite bike rides along the ridge to gorgeous Ampus (12km/7.5mi round trip). Alternatively just relax by the hotels pools.

Day 8 or 10 Tourtour to Le Thoronet 42km/26mi or 47km/29mi

Your day starts with a wonderful downhill whizz through pine forests to Villecroze, a picturesque village founded by a retired Roman General and later the site of a Templar commandery. On to Salernes - famous for its colorful tiles and pottery - then via the Bresque Valley to medieval Entrecasteaux: fortified Gothic church and C17 château. Your final stretch takes you up through a series of sleepy hamlets and back to Le Thoronet in time for a swim and laze by the pool before dinner.

Day 9 or 11 Leave Le Thoronet

Return home after breakfast.

Optional 2-night extension in Bauduen

There's simply so much to do in and around Bauduen that we are proposing two additional nights (making four nights in total) in order that you can really get the most out of your stay. Stroll or cycle around the original hilltop village - tiny streets, artisan craft shops, tempting cafés and restaurants - rent an electric boat, canoe or pedalo to explore the hidden creeks surrounding the lake and village. There are gentle walks and challenging hikes through the lower Gorges du Verdon, or you can kayak through the gorge before visiting the excellent Museum of Pre-history. Other options include cycling to Les Salles-sur-Verdon, following the fascinating botanical walk, or taking a taxi to the wonderful Grand Canyon.

SECRET PROVENCE | WHERE YOU STAY



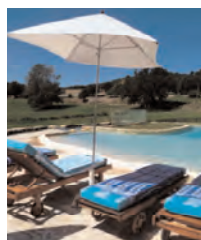
Hostellerie de l'Abbaye
★★
Le Thoronet
Days 1+8



Hotel le Rouge Gorge
★★
Pontevès
Days 2+3



Hotel les Cavalets
★★
Bauduen
Days 4+5 (plus extension)



L'Auberge St Pierre
★★★
Tourtour
Days 6+7

For extra nights we recommend Bauduen and Tourtour, and city add-ons can be arranged in Nice.



Dates and Prices

Departs every two days **Tour Only**

2012 departures

Apr 3-May 25	\$2,898
Sep 22-Oct 8	\$2,898
May 27-31, Jun 8-12	\$2,938
Sep 2-20	\$2,938
Jun 2-6, Jun 14-Jul 8	\$3,012
Aug 29-31	\$3,012
Jul 10-Aug 27	\$3,049
Child (any dates, see notes)	\$1,809

Singles: Add \$58 per night for sole occupancy of a double room.

Child: Over 2 and under 12, sharing with 2 adults.

Holiday type: Independent cycling, hotel-to-hotel, no minimum group size.

Departs: Every two days from Apr 3 to Oct 8.

Duration: 9 days (8 nights). This holiday may be adapted into a 10 night version - just add \$383 per adult and \$181 per child to the prices above.

Meals: Continental breakfast and evening meals.

Other details: For "What your holiday price includes," see "Holiday Planning" section pp 48-51.

Tailor-made travel choices

Nearest Arrival Airport: Nice Airport

Flights can be arranged from most US/CANADA airports, with connecting transfers as required, prices and details on request.

The above prices include our standard transfers: Les Arcs, Draguignan train station at 16:37 (transfer to hotel, 35 mins, provided). **Return:** Les Arcs, Draguignan train station by 10:51 (transfer provided).

Rail options: Nice Ville to Les Arcs, Draguignan 15:28/16:37. Return: Les Arcs, Draguignan to Nice Ville 10:51/12:04 Mon-Fri, 08:50/10:04 Sat & Sun.

Second Class French Rail: Add \$58 per person, round trip.

First Class French Rail: Add \$86 per person, round trip.

Tour only: Transfers included from Les Arcs, Draguignan train station at 16:37, and back to Les Arcs, Draguignan train station departing hotel at 10:00 Mon-Fri, 08:00 Sat & Sun.

C08P2