

Walking in Provence: the perched village of the Luberon

8 days / 7 nights

With each turn in your path, the Luberon Mountains offer a new discovery: 1000 year-old perched villages rising spectacularly from the valleys below, many of which are considered the most beautiful in France; open fields laden with poppies and wildflowers; centuries' old stone huts that offer the most intimate of picnic spots; beautiful trails far from the beaten track. Beginning in the town of Isle-sur-la-Sorgue, with its antiques and Venice-like canals, your journeys will take you through the mysterious springs of Fontaine de Vaucluse, famed villages such as Gordes and Bonnieux, the spectacular Aiguebrun river, and some of France's most beautiful walking paths to link it all together.

YOUR PROGRAM

Day 1 - Isle sur la Sorgue

Arrive in the town of Isle-sur-la-Sorgue, veritable island of a village, surrounded by the crystal clear waters of the Sorgue river, where you will be greeted for an information meeting. The town's Sunday market is among the most colourful in Provence, while its canals are bordered by quaint cafés, restaurants, and antique shops. Lose yourself among a labyrinth of narrow streets and in the town's warm, Provençal charm.

Dinner on your own and night in Isle sur la Sorgue.

Day 2 - Fontaine de Vaucluse - Gordes

A short transfer by taxi will take you to Fontaine de Vaucluse, the mysterious spring that heads the Sorgue River. Through cedar forests you follow a 300-year old mur de la peste: a stone wall built to protect Provence from the 1720 plague. After walking through Cabrières and its castle, the path leads to Gordes, a town built of majestic grey limestone, rising dramatically out of the valley and crowned by its Renaissance castle.

Dinner on your own and night in Gordes.

Walking time about 4h15, 13km, +450m/-200m

Day 3 - Loop to Sénanque Abbey

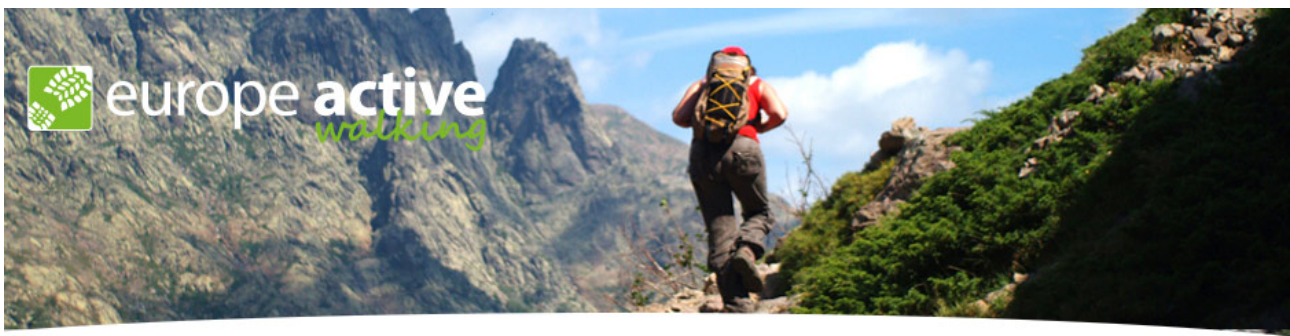
Today's circular walk takes you through thyme-laden fields dotted with old stone huts, and down into the Sénanque valley. Soon Sénanque Abbey will appear: built in 1148, and still in use, the abbey is one of the best conserved Romanesque buildings in France, and certainly one of its most magnificent. You will have time to explore the abbey before returning to Gordes via a cobbled path.

Dinner on your own and night in Gordes.

Loop Walk : Walking time about 3h15, 10km, +250m/-250m

Day 4 - Goult - Bonnieux

Short morning transfer to the village of Goult. Crossing the Calavon valley you pass the ruins of ancient stone farmhouses before reaching the town of Lacoste. Crowned by the ruins of the castle of the Marquis de Sade, Lacoste offers a stunning ensemble of old village gates and cobbled streets, not to mention the haunting allure of the castle and its Marquis... A great place to have picnic, or a lunch in the very nice restaurant "Café de France". You continue to Bonnieux, another gem of the Luberon, immortalized in Peter Mayle's A Year in Provence. Visit its beautiful town squares and the old cobbled steps leading



to its 12th century church.

Dinner on your own and night in Bonnieux.

Walking time about 3h30, 11km, +320m/-250m

Day 5 - Loop around Bonnieux

Climbing to the highest reaches of the Luberon mountains you reach its cedar forest, its dark green canopy providing the perfect shade and shelter for a picnic lunch, and awe-inspiring views extending from the Alps all the way to the Mediterranean Sea.. if you are lucky !

Dinner on your own and night in Bonnieux.

Walking time about 4h, 14km, +400m/-400m

Day 6 - Bonnieux - Buoux

The first half of the walk is leisurely, along back country roads. Look back from time to time before the village of Bonnieux disappears from view. On the plateaus you walk through truffle oak plantations and by exquisite stone villas. After the Col du Pointu pass you've reached the Grand Luberon. A quaint path through the oak forests leads to the Château de Buoux, then up to the 12th century Chapelle de Ste. Marie. Passing the tiny village of Buoux you walk alongside imposing cliffs (not too close through...), before taking a magical cobbled mule track descending in hairpin turns to the base of the Aiguebrun Valley, where you'll find the charming and surprising Auberge des Seguins.

Dinner included and night in Buoux.

Walking time about 4h, 14km, +250m/-150m

Day 7 - Loop around Buoux

Following the Aiguebrun valley – encased between limestone walls – the vegetation is lush. Climbing out of the valley, you pass open fields and ancient terrace walls, on your way to the hidden village of Sivergues. Only a handful of homes set around a single cobbled street, Sivergues counts a population of only 40 souls. Above the village a spring is handy to fill your water bottles, shared by the local golden retriever. You continue ascending through the Mediterranean brush, including winter savoury and wild lavender, and before long you reach the very crest of the Luberon, a rounded summit laden with a carpet of thyme. From here the views can extend all the way to the Alps and to the Mediterranean Sea. Descending back to the Auberge you can take a detour to visit the 3000 year-old Buoux Fort, whose ruins include a mish-mash Celto-Ligurian, Roman, and Medieval architecture built atop one another, the whole lot sitting above a rocky crag with sheer cliffs and awe-inspiring views.

Picnic, dinner included and night in Buoux.

Walking time about 4.5 hours +500m / -500m

Day 8 - Buoux - Isle sur la Sorgue

Transfer after breakfast – to be advised – to Isle sur la Sorgue. End of the trip.

Additional information

TARIFFS



Price from 864 euros per person.

OPTIONS

Single supplement : 516 euros per person.

INCLUDED

- 7 nights double occupancy with private facilities, in *** hotels or guesthouses
- 7 breakfasts, 1 picnic, 2 dinners
- 6 self guided walks
- Day 2: taxi transfer from Isle sur la Sorgue to the start of the walk in Fontaine de Vaucluse
- Day 4: taxi transfer from Gordes to the start of the walk in Goult
- Day 8: taxi transfer from Buoux to Isle sur la Sorgue
- Luggage transfers days 2 to 8
- Our Road Book (English) with detailed walking itineraries, and integrated maps.
- A full travel kit (raodbook, vouchers...) at the first hotel for the clients

NOT INCLUDED

- Transportation to/from Isle sur la Sorgue on Day1 , and on Day 8
- Lunches & dinners not in the itinerary
- Drinks
- Entrance fees into museums
- Insurance
- Items of personal nature.

LEVEL OF DIFFICULTY

Level 2: Moderate - You enjoy regular exercise (whether walking, cycling, aerobics, etc.).

You are keen to set off on all-day walks and can handle walking uphill (slowly) for up to two hours at a time. Walks are generally under 5 hours, on various types of terrain -- though nothing technically difficult -- with up to 600m/2000ft of climbing per day.

CARRYING

Luggage transfers days 2 to 8

ACCOMMODATION

7 nights double occupancy with private facilities, in *** hotels or guesthouses with breakfast

SIZE OF GROUP

2 people minimum

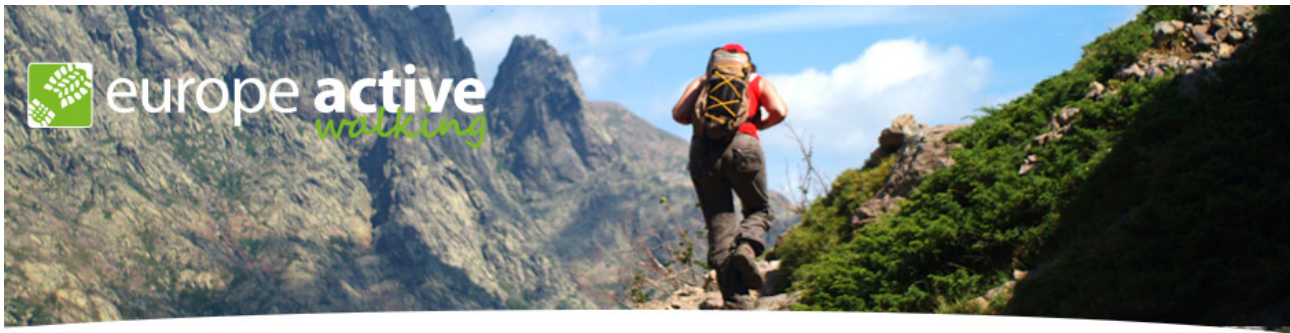
DEPARTURES

A trip starts any day of the week from March 1st to June 30th and from September 1st to November 15th .
Not available in July & August, because of path restrictions (fire risk)

DEPARTURE

At the 1st hotel in Isle sur la Sorgue, on day 1.

Check In after 5pm



DISPERSION

In Isle sur la Sorgue on day 8