

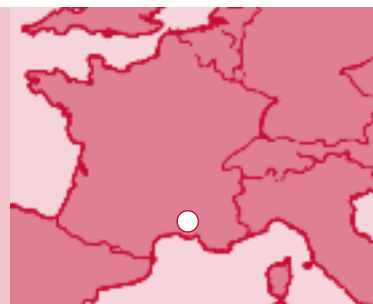
Holiday: Landscapes of the Luberon

Rating:  level

Holiday type: Independent Walking

Provence

- Easy walking through timeless Luberon landscape: lavender, cypress woods, cherry orchards, olive groves
- Dazzling ochre cliffs; stunningly beautiful perched villages; wonderful views of Mt Ventoux and the Dentelles de Montmirail
- Wonderful regional cuisine and fine local wines
- Hotels full of Provençal character – most with pools



Southern France

This easy walking holiday is based in the glorious Luberon National Park, taking in the lush countryside of the Sorgue river. It's a land which has been an inspiration for generations of poets, painters and writers from Petrarch in the 14C to contemporary abstract artist Victor Vasarely, and best-selling author Peter Mayle.

You'll be intoxicated by the rich colours of the landscape, all intensified by the wonderful limpid light. Seventeen shades of ochre were once quarried at Roussillon, from violet through purple to vivid reds, oranges and mellow yellows. Its delicate natural tints were used to wash the local houses.

At Fontaine-de-Vaucluse, the emerald-green Sorgue river gushes in torrents from a mysterious subterranean reservoir. Lavender makes a fragrant mauve carpet, green forests cloak the hills, and, in spring, white blossom veils the cherry orchards. And it's all against the backdrop of an azure sky.

The walks are short, with plenty of time for exploring exquisite villages, natural wonders and historic sights. Three of the four hotels have pools in the grounds and the other has a public pool just 50m away. You'll enjoy typical Provençal hospitality and cuisine at them all.

Please note that September is the hunting season in Provence. Alternative route notes using mainly roads rather than woods/forests will be provided.



World Pictures



“Nothing compares with the scent of the *garrigue*, the heady mixture of lavender, wild herbs and colourful flowers that cloak the hillsides.”



Landscapes of the Luberon: Day by day



Day 1 Arrive at St Didier

Our hotel is in its own grounds with swimming pool and tennis courts.

Day 2 Rustrel to St Saturnin-lès-Apt 11km/7mi/3hr

We give you a lift to the starting point in Rustrel, where you can begin the day with an hour-long circuit in the Provençal Colorado, once ochre quarries and now a strange landscape of fantastic shapes and vivid colours. Today's main walk is through classic Provençal countryside where you will see vineyards and cherry orchards, fig trees and olive groves, and neat plantations of scented lavender. You finish at our friendly, family-run hotel in St Saturnin - great food!

Day 3 At St Saturnin-lès-Apt

St Saturnin is one of our favourite villages. It stands on the edge of the Plateau de Vaucluse with lots of mediaeval and 18C buildings and a pool open from July to September. Views over the entire Luberon are superb. Visit Apt, which is famous for its crystallised fruits and traditional pottery. It has a museum of the Luberon, plenty of shops and cafés and a colourful Saturday and Tuesday markets.

Day 4 St Saturnin-lès-Apt/Roussillon 16km/10mi/4.5hr

The walk today heads south and up through cherry orchards, vineyards and pine forests - a magnificent panorama across the Apt plain and the Luberon. After Gargas, you continue through pine forest along blood-red ochre-coloured tracks, then descend in to Roussillon. Our modern hotel is bright and airy with landscaped gardens and nice pool. Dinner is taken in a restaurant close by.

Day 5 At Roussillon

Roussillon, officially one of the most beautiful villages in France, is famous for its streaked ochre cliffs. Visit too the superb perched village of Bonnieux whose vast shady cedar forest was planted in 1861 by woodsmen who brought seeds back from the Moroccan Atlas. Or just relax by the pool!

Day 6 Roussillon to Joucas 11km/7mi/3hr

Today's walk takes you through the most incredibly beautiful ochre coloured countryside, as you stroll through cherry orchards, vineyards and fields ablaze with lavender. After lunch, walking with the striking "eagle's nest" village of Gordes ahead (lots of time to explore tomorrow), you finally turn off north to Joucas - where you'll find a warm welcome at our family-run hotel.

Day 7 At Joucas

This is a great opportunity to explore the picturesque village of Gordes, which clothes the hilltop with wonderfully photogenic houses, terraces and gardens. The village is dominated by its Renaissance château and the streets are crammed with cafés, restaurants and shops.

Day 8 Joucas/Senanque to St Didier 18km/11mi/5.5hr

After breakfast we give you a lift to the C12 cistercian abbey at Sénanque where today's walk begins. Up first through pine and oak forest, then out across the plateau de Vaucluse. Stunning views of Mt Ventoux and the jagged peaks of the Dentelles de Montmirail. Then it's down through cherry orchards back to St Didier for a final swim.

Day 9 Leave St Didier

For people wanting to have bikes available for all 'rest-days' these can be pre-booked for you (£60 per adult and £40 per child per stay) and will be waiting at each hotel for you.

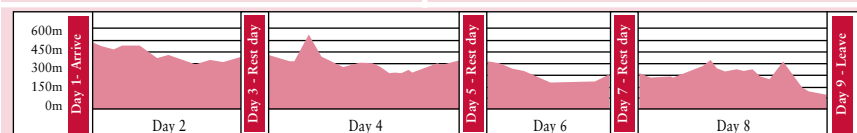


For departure dates, prices and travel options, please visit our website at:
www.headwater.com

Walking Details

Relatively easy walking, mostly along marked paths (the occasional short rocky section) and quiet country lanes. There are a couple of short ascents so walking boots are highly recommended.

Average daytime temperature (°C):						Average monthly rainfall (mm):								
	19	21	27	28	25	22		42	46	24	11	34	60	75
	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct



NB: The village Fête takes place in Joucas during the last few days of August. Great atmosphere but if you prefer things quiet, perhaps choose a different week.