

# Gastronomy & Culture in Provence

Aix, Uzés, Avignon, & Nice  
with visits to Les Baux de Provence, St. Maximin, & Monaco

## Day 1: Overnight flight to Europe

Travel to the Washington D.C. area today for your overnight flight to France.

## Day 2: Bienvenue en France!

Following a morning arrival into Nice airport, you'll be met by your Global Explorers tour leader who will accompany you throughout your time in Provence.

Relax as we travel aboard our comfortable private coach to Aix-en-Provence, an attractive & relaxed university town, that makes the perfect base for our first two nights. After our check-in, lunch has been included today in a scenic local restaurant.

Aix was the birthplace of artist Paul Cezanne, who immortalized the area's countryside in his paintings, & this afternoon you'll begin to see what attracted Cezanne & other artists as you're introduced to the old city on a guided tour. Amongst the sights visited will be the city's *Cathedral de Saint Sauveur*, built on the site of the Roman forum & a temple of Apollo - there are even Roman columns incorporated in the cathedral's construction. This evening, after time to relax & refresh, rendezvous with your fellow travelers for an welcome dinner.

## Day 3: Aix-en-Provence in Depth

We delve a little further into the lifestyle & traditions of Provence today, so many of which are associated with its foods & wines.

Your tour leader will be your guide as you tour the local produce market & visit a *calissons* factory. Traditionally associated with Aix & still made in Provence, *calissons* are a traditional French candy, usually almond-shaped & similar to marzipan but with a fruitier flavor.

Your final stop will be at *Riederer*, where your tour leader will treat you to coffee & a pastry! Established in 1780 by a Swiss-German family, this is one of the most celebrated & sumptuous pâtisseries in France with wonderfully creative cakes - they even have one named in honor of Aix's most famous artist son (the Cezanne - almond biscuit base, calisson cream, a coating of peaches & apricots roasted with saffron flowers).

This afternoon is free for you to discover more of Aix's many delights at your leisure: wander the backstreets of the historic district & peep into the gates & doorways of the old mansions, relax in the *Thermes d' Aix* baths & let any aches be soothed, or visit Cezanne's studio, located in his home on a hillside overlooking the city.

## Day 4: Aix to Uzés

After a morning departure from Aix we travel through the beautiful Provence countryside

to *Fontaine de Vaucluse*, a medieval village tucked away in a valley at the spot where the Sorgue River gushes up from the ground, the fifth largest such spring in the world. Nearby is the *Abbaye de Sénanque*, a lovely medieval Cistercian abbey located in a wild & picturesque valley that is alternately planted with lavender or wheat (photos of the abbey during lavender season are amongst the most iconic images of Provence).

After lunch in the village of Gordes, we continue to Uzés & the '*Truffières d'Uzès*'.

This truffle plantation is a working farm, a centre of conservation, & a museum dedicated to the truffle & 'trufficulture'. The Tournayre family, third generation trufficulturalists, offer guided tours of both the young plantations & the half-century-old oaks, followed by tasting sessions in which you'll acquire an appreciation of the unique gastronomic attributes of truffles & their palatal properties in terms of wine & food.

We arrive in Uzés in the late afternoon, with time for a guided walking tour of the village, led by an expert local guide, before we check-in to our hotel for a two-night stay.

Dinner is included this evening, as always in an authentic & friendly local restaurant.

### Day 5: Uzés at Leisure

A full day is dedicated to exploring this typical Provencal town today.

During the morning discover the delights of Uzés' regular farmers' market on a short & relaxed walking tour - stop at stalls & sample the local produce, perhaps finding a new favorite amongst the multitude of cheeses & many other delights.

The rest of the morning is free for you to explore at your own pace & to take lunch, in a local cafe or perhaps a picnic bought at the market.

After lunch meet-up again to visit the *Duché d'Uzes*, the castle of the Dukes of Uzés. The Dukes were once one of the most powerful families in France, the hereditary 'Champions of France' who would fight to defend the King's honor - twenty-one dukes were killed or wounded fulfilling their role over the centuries!

A visit will also be made to learn about the tradition of '*Boutis d'Uzès*', an old method of sewing & embroidery that is still practiced & used, especially to mark significant events throughout life.

### Day 6: Uzes to Avignon

Today we discover the Provencal countryside, a sun-drenched land of history, nature, & gastronomy, as we travel from Uzés to Avignon, making stops along the way.

Our first stop will be at the *Pont du Gard*, France's greatest Roman construction, an enormous & well-preserved aqueduct spanning the Gard river. An excellent museum brings to life the role that the aqueduct played in Roman times & how it was constructed. Later we'll visit an olive oil mill to learn how olives & their oil have been a part of the landscape & lifestyle here from ancient times until today. Of course there will also be an olive oil tasting, allowing you a chance to see just how much variety this seemingly simple product offers.

Our final stop will be at the famous hilltop village of Les Baux & its once-powerful citadel. During the Middle Ages Les Baux was a regional power, controlling over eighty villages & battling the counts of Barcelona for control of Provence. After exploring the ruins of the castle you'll be free to enjoy the narrow lanes & alleys of the village.

Our day ends in Avignon, where we check-in for a two night stay.

Dinner is included this evening in a local restaurant, & your tour leader will take you on a relaxed introductory stroll through the medieval streets & squares of Avignon.

### Day 7: Avignon, City of Popes

With a full day devoted to the 'City of the Popes', we begin with a guided walking tour. Our expert local guide will orientate us & explain the history that made Avignon an important religious center & home to a succession of French popes.

Afterwards a visit is included to the huge *Palais des Papes*, once home to these French popes who ruled in competition to their rivals in the Vatican.

Your tour leader will also take you to visit the St. Benezet Bridge, made famous in the nursery rhyme *Sur le Pont d'Avignon*.

This afternoon you'll have free time to sightsee further, to shop, or perhaps just to relax at an open-air cafe in one of Avignon's squares whilst being entertained by the popular street performers & soaking in the atmosphere of this quintessentially Provençal city.

### Day 8: Avignon to Nice: Saint Maximin & the legend of Mary Magdalene

We travel east to Nice today, traveling through the picturesque Provençal hinterland with the Mediterranean on our right as we go.

Along the way we'll make a stop in Saint Maximin, a town associated with the ancient tradition that Mary Magdalene & other disciples of Christ (including Maximinus after whom Saint Maximin was named) fled persecution in the Holy Land & traveled to Provence! During our stop we'll visit the town's imposing basilica, built on the supposed site of Mary Magdalene's tomb. We will also enjoy time for lunch in the town.

Just outside Saint Maximin we'll tour the *Domaine de Deffends*, a small family-owned & operated wine producer where we can view the vineyards, visit the cellars, learn about the local wine production, & of course sample the end product!

After arriving in Nice, the base for our final two nights, we'll take a short sightseeing tour of Nice's Old Town & its colorful *Cours Saleya* - Nice's main market square since the Middle Ages & still home to flower & produce markets. We'll also see the four-mile long *Promenade des Anglais*, with its famous pebble beach & Mediterranean on one side & the city & mountains on the other.

Dinner this evening will be in the atmospheric Old Town.

### Day 9: Monaco: Tiny Principality & Playground of the Rich

We travel by boat today as we leave France for a day trip to Monaco.

The world's second smallest nation with an area of just 0.78 square miles, Monaco has been an independent principality since 1297 & is now a tax haven, home to many international celebrities & the super rich!

In Monaco-Ville we'll enjoy a short walking tour with stops at Palace Square & the Royal Palace (in time to witness the Changing of the Guard) & the Cathedral where we will see the tomb of Princess Grace. After free time for lunch we'll ride a local bus across the country (really!) to visit the famed Casino of Monte Carlo.

You have a choice to return to Nice by boat late this afternoon, or earlier by train if you'd prefer more time to pick-up that last minute gift or stroll along the *Promenade des Anglais*.

This evening, our last in Europe, we'll rendezvous one last time to enjoy a final evening's farewell dinner.

### Day 10: Travel home

Sadly your French vacation comes to an end today, as we transfer to Nice Airport for your morning departure, arriving home in the USA later today.