Provence – Hidden Provence

- ‘Back on a bike after many years away – your encouragement and simple cycling tips really boosted my confidence. Thank you so much. ‘

  Moriah, Steyning,

- ‘We just loved Le Lavandou and the easy cycling along the coast towards St Tropez was such a surprise.’

  Janet and Ron, Cheshire,

- ‘What a fantastic ride to Paris. It’s hard to put into words the euphoria I felt when we were cycling down the Champs-Élysées.’

  Ian, West Sussex,

- ‘You were just wonderful guides on our first ever trip to Provence . . . we will definitely be back – in fact we’ve just booked!’

  The Crane Family, Warwickshire,

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Highlights:

Fantastic Panoramas
Scented Landscape
Ancient Dwellings
Quiet Woodlands
Sleepy Villages
Majestic Lakes

Summary

Tucked behind the glamour of parts of the French Riviera, is a Provence that looks to its land rather than out to sea, no more so in the northern reaches of the region where the lower mountains of the Alps seem not much more than a

very hefty stone’s throw away.

On our Hidden Provence cycle tour, after a first relaxing evening and peaceful sleep, we will transport you to a slightly wilder and remote Provence. More sparsely populated than the coastal areas, the north of the region contains some dramatic landscape; deep gorges, wooded slopes and an intricate network of valleys connecting smaller and sleepier towns, villages and hamlets. It has an ancient history where people lived not just on the land but sometimes in it.

You will have opportunities to splash about in the cooling blue waters of the Verdon before you start your riding from a hilltop with fantastic vistas in all directions. From here back to the starting point of your tour, great cycling down quiet lanes and along hidden tracks is the very best way to discover and unlock the heartland of Provence at its and your natural pace.

Let a Hidden Provence put a smile on your face every day from dawn until dusk.

Tour in Brief:

- Fellow Velo Welcome Briefing
- 6 Nights Accommodation
- 6 Continental Breakfasts
- 4 Lunches on Fully Guided
- Luggage Transfers
- Cycling Guide on Fully Guided
- Carefully Selected Routes
- High Quality Bikes
- Support Vehicle

Tour Map

Introduction

A mainly easy grade ride charting a wonderful course through a more remote and sometimes hidden part of Provence. Relatively short riding days allow ample time to explore the landscape, its flora and fauna, and the small towns and villages along your route. There are some gentle hills along the way (and one that will require just a little more effort) but all give access to some fantastic locations – we even help you start the riding from a wonderful vantage point high above the Verdon and, that means more downhill riding for you. In case you seek more varied discovery, you will have time to explore some special locations on foot or in the water and, we have also planned for a non-cycling day too (though a great additional self-guided ride could always be taken instead).

Day 1 Arrive at Les Arcs sur Argens

Arrive in Les Arcs and be transferred to a lovely nearby hotel for a relaxing evening before the start of your cycling tour.

Day 2 Lac de Sainte-Croix and the Verdon Valley – 24 km

On your first cycling day, we will meet you at your hotel and take you inland to the northern limit of a more hidden Provence. At Lac de Sainte-Croix you will have some time to explore as well as take a dip in its brilliant blue water, before a picnic that will help you prepare for your ride. Starting in the saddle from a vantage point with fantastic views over the landscape of rolling hills, your first ride is an easy but exhilarating one.

Day 3 Verdon Valley to Moissac Bellevue – 20 km

Travel just a little further down the Verdon valley and you will get a glimpse of some of its more gorge-like character and, perhaps be tempted to set the bike aside for an hour or so to take a short paddle down river and back. Coming out of the valley and finding a path across the undulating hills of northern Provence inevitably means a little climb but, we have found you a secretive stage of the tour where few cycle wheels may roll. It has a short sharper stretch but, even if you get off to push briefly, you will be rewarded with both beauty and solitude in the landscape. Moissac is a small but beautiful village perched on the higher ground with wonderful views over upper Provence.

Day 4 Moissac Bellevue to Cotignac – 22 km

From another great vantage point overlooking the Provencale landscape, you can be sure that today's ride will be mostly level or downhill so, look forward to soaking it up. You will follow quiet picturesque tracks through the Pelenq forest, through to the beautiful perching village of Fox Amphoux; a great lunchtime stop just a tiny spur from the overall route. More wooded slopes will bring you through the Cassole Vallon to the charming 'troglodyte' town of Cotignac. A two night stay here will give you time for more of the Provencale atmosphere to wash over you or, some more intimate exploration of this quiet part of Provence.

Day 5 Cotignac

Some time of your own to choose between exploring the beauty and secrets of Cotignac or a self-guided cycle ride out to the tranquillity of Sillans-la-Cascade and its 42 metre high waterfall – you might even fit in both options. Cotignac is famous for its protective cliff barrier which is flanked by a pair of medieval towers, the cliffs riddled with caves and holes have been a source of refuge and shelter for millennia. There are of course more creature comforts nowadays and, the cafés and restaurants of this peaceful town make for a more comfortable refuge for the cycling explorer of today.

Day 6 Cotignac to Flassans-sur-Issole – 24 km

Leaving your Cotignac ‘cave’ behind, your final riding day is a little more undulating passage through the landscape via Carcès and Cabasse to your last night’s stop. Carcès could be thought of as a town of walls and water; there are prominent murals painted around the town all by the same artist and, in addition to the nearby lake which your ride will follow, there is a ‘Circuits des Fontaines et Lavoirs’ which makes for an unusual tour of the town. Cabasse sits by the green wooded slopes of the Issole valley and has a beautiful heart to the village, particularly around the main square, and it makes for another great spot to explore on your journey.

Day 7 Depart Flassans-sur-Issole

After your last night of the tour, we will collect you from your hotel and return you to Les Arcs sur Argens for your onward journey or homeward bound return.

Eat Sleep Drink

Eat

From your arrival before the cycling starts, to the day of your departure, breakfast is included at each of your accommodation venues on the tour. That means that even if you take it in a leisurely fashion, you will have enough fuel onboard to start each ride or, head out on one of the optional exploring days of the tour. If you are on the Fully Guided Tour, lunches are included on each of the cycling days, either gathered up near the beginning of the ride or planned at a local hostelry (and, there will be one day when you will just come upon a picnic laid out for you around a corner on the journey). On your exploring days we will give you suggestions on where lunch can easily be tracked down, whatever your plan for the day. On this tour, we leave the evening meal venues with you; the more secluded nature of this tour means that your primary option is more likely to be to eat at your accommodation but, there will be some other choices in wider villages

Sleep

For groups on our Fully Guided Tour most of the accommodation will be in small and specially selected hotels; welcoming staff, lovely comfortable rooms and the promise of a great night’s sleep. Chambre d’hôtes can be included in the mix on this tour, particularly for couples and smaller groups on the Self-guided option. Peace and tranquillity is what we are offering and, perhaps just the song of the cicada to remind you that you are laying your head down in a less familiar place.

Drink

Maintaining both your energy and hydration levels while cycling is very

important. On all but one cycling day of this tour, it is easy to keep yourself supplied with water and soft drinks. We will provide all the information you need to track down supplies and, will make sure that on the one ride where they are a little more sparse, that we set you off with plenty of water onboard. As we are in the south of France, it will be of no surprise that, when it comes to more profitable liquid refreshments from the land, wine is at the fore. Provence is renowned for its Rosé but it also produces some high quality red wine too. There is also a great tradition of co-operative wine producing by smaller producers often centred around small towns and villages.

Hidden Provence Recommended Tour Months

We normally recommend that customers undertake this tour in any of the following months in our cycling season; May, June, July, August, September or October – August in Provence can be a little warm for some cyclists but, we can help you plan your days and routes to make best use of the cooler hours, shady lunchtime rests and, we often provide additional support to ensure you can still enjoy your cycling experience – just contact us to check on availability.

Hidden Provence Fully Guided – Tours from £1025.00/person

Hidden Provence Self-guided – Tours from £885.00/person

Our standard prices for this tour, whether Fully Guided or Self-guided, are best achieved when we have as much advance booking time as possible (we would still try to match the price even on last minute bookings but, accommodation is normally the largest component in a tour price and, the one which can vary the most).

The tour price is based on 2 people sharing rooms but, we can also quote for single room occupancy if that is what a customer wants (there is nearly always a supplement to be paid with such a booking but we would advise on the details before you committed to your holiday).

Most holiday accommodation in France is charged on a room basis rather than a per person price and, there is often very limited or no discount on the price for children. However, for any booking where a group is happy to share family or multi-bed rooms, we may even be able to quote a lower price per person for the tour (if you advise us that you would be happy with such an accommodation arrangement).

We do not add margins to the accommodation we book for our tours so, if we can book accommodation at a lower price, we will pass these savings on to our customers.

More Information

Travel to and from your Tour

- This Tour starts and finishes in Les Arcs sur Argens, which is easily accessible by train, plane and automobile. Because there are so many options

we do not book this part of your trip for you, however we can guide you through the multitude of options.
For anyone joining by car we can provide a location to leave your car for the duration of your Tour. Eurostar and TGV trains offer excellent services from the UK to Les Arcs and can be seen on:
www.raileurope.com
www.voyages-sncf.com
Travelling by train can be a fascinating way to travel and competes very favourably time wise with travelling by plane.
Both budget and scheduled airlines fly into Nice and we can supply information for onward travel to Les Arcs by train.

If you are bringing your own bike

- For those of you bringing your own bicycle, again we can help you with this, however it is worth considering at this point the cost of putting your bike on a plane or train against using one of our special Fellow Velo bikes.

Fancy a longer holiday

- For anyone who wants to extend their holiday with us, we can book additional hotels for you at the start or end of your Tour, just call us on 07811 285021.
- If you would like a longer holiday you can combine our Hidden Provence Tour with the Bed by the Med Tour for a 15 night trip. We call it our Hilltop to Harbours Tour. The linking of these 2 Tours would raise the cycling grade level to adventurous, however we can help you over some of the hills with a lift on the Fellow Velo Bus or, if you wish to avoid these hills altogether we can offer you a transfer to 2 extra linking nights by the coast. Please call to discuss further the options.

Families, and/or non cycling companions

- We think Hidden Provence is a great choice for families looking for a quiet rural change of pace, with easy length cycling days on quiet lanes and tracks. Call us to discuss the different cycle options (tag along, child bike etc) available to children.
- If you have a partner, spouse or friend who doesn't share your love of cycling but would love to be with you then, don't despair. On any of our Fully Guided Tours, a non-cycling companion can get a lift with the support vehicle from location to location. Our Hidden Provence tour landscape has plenty going for it to entertain and surprise the non-cyclist too.

Travel Pack

- Your personally tailored travel pack will be with you approx 3 weeks prior to your Tour start date. There will be oodles of information for you in this pack.

Any queries at all before you book

- We don't want to bombard you with masses of text to read, so anything at all that needs clarification please call us on 07811 285021, 01788 568371 or email us at jane@fellowvelo.com