

Provence – Independent 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.

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On our Hidden Provence cycle tour, after a first relaxing evening and peaceful sleep, ride north into a more hidden 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 an opportunity to splash in the cooling blue waters of the Verdon, to stay in and explore perching villages and, take in many fantastic and memorable hilltop vistas. From Provence's northern reaches, 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 Tour Pack
- 7 Nights Accommodation
- 7 Continental Breakfasts
- Carefully Selected Routes
- Telephone Support

Tour Map

Introduction

An overall adventurous cycling grade, this tour also has some much easier cycling days within it; 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 hills along the way (and one that will require just a little more effort) but all give access to some fantastic locations. 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 check in to a lovely nearby hotel for a relaxing evening before the start of your cycling tour.

Day 2 Les Arcs to Tourtour – 28 km

On your first cycling day, ride north into a more hidden

Provence of small vineyards and olive groves. The route climbs gently through the length of the ride to ensure your easiest passage into the heart of the landscape. Tourtour is among the most beautiful villages of France, surrounded by grassland and meadows, its quiet streets and trickling fountains combine with vernacular architecture to produce a quintessential Provencale tableau.



Day 3 Tourtour to Verdon Valley – 29 km

A gently undulating ride with the wonderful bonus that it is balance towards much more coasting downhill than pedalling up. Today takes you to the very northern edge of Provence and the Valley of the Verdon; cool bright blue waters below you and rocky slopes around you. The clear blue Verdon is a playground for water-sports enthusiasts and, its slopes and crags a huge draw for climbers; enjoy the opportunity to just roll through the landscape soaking its treasures up.



Day 4 Verdon Valley to Cotignac – 38 km

Travel just a little further down the Verdon valley and you will get a glimpse of some of its more gorge-like character.

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. You will follow picturesque tracks through the Pelenq forest, through to the beautiful perching village of Fox Amphoux; then on to the charming 'troglodyte' town of Cotignac.



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 cafes 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 penultimate riding day is a little more undulating passage through the landscape via Carces and Cabasse. Carces could be thought of as a town of walls and water; there are prominent murals painted around the town all by the same artist. 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 Flassans-sur-Issole to Les Arcs – 37 km

Your final riding day of the tour completes a wonderful and varied circuit of a Hidden Provence, in just under a hundred miles. Travel a winding route, undulating through valleys, via L'Abbaye du Thoronet (once a Cistercian Abbey, now museum), Lorgues and Taradeau. We hope you finish your tour feeling, like we do, that Provence is so much more than just the glamour of the Riviera (but you can still enjoy that too).



Day 8 Depart Les Arcs

After your last night of the tour, leave 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. Your Travel Pack will include information on convenient locations for gathering picnic supplies for lunch and, hostelrys where you can have it all provided on a plate. On this tour, we leave the evening meal venues with you; there are options to eat in at your accommodation and, on most evenings, you will be in a small town where there is plenty of choice from traditional Provencale, to Italian influence or the bounties of the adjacent sea.



Sleep

Most of your accommodation will be in small and specially selected hotels; welcoming staff, lovely comfortable rooms and the promise of a great night's sleep. Chambres d'Hotes are

often included in the mix on this tour, particularly for couples and smaller groups.



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. This tour takes you through that landscape with easy options to try before you buy.



Hidden Provence (Independent) Recommended Tour Dates

We normally recommend that customers undertake this tour in May, June, July, September or October but you could choose almost any time during our cycling season but, some cyclists may find August in Provence a little warm – just contact us to check on availability.

Hidden Provence Independent Tour from £730.00/person

Fellow Velo Independent Tour recommended dates have been chosen on the basis of factors such as;

- Climate and Weather Norms
- Convenient Holiday Dates
- Maximising Landscape Beauty
- Local Facility Holiday Seasons
- Local Traffic Patterns

We can offer our Fellow Velo Independent Tours between Easter and October, with the flexibility to meet your needs. Just let us know which date you would like to start your tour on and, we will do all that we can to deliver the holiday package you are looking for.

Our standard prices for this tour 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.

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 14 night trip; we call it our Hilltops and Harbours Tour.

Families

- We think Hidden Provence is a great choice for adventurous families looking for a quiet rural change of pace, with moderate length cycling days on quiet lanes and tracks.

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 or 01788 568371 or, email us at jane@fellowvelo.com