A Week in Provence - Rail Travel from London



Trip style:	Destination:	Walking Grade	Carbon Footprint:
Guided Walking Holidays	France	4 & 6	189kg CO2

HOLIDAY OVERVIEW

Spend time in sweet-scented Provence with our rail-only trip to the south of France. Hop across the English Channel via Eurostar from London St Pancras before switching to France's premier high-speed rail service for a scenic journey to the sunny corner of the country that's been mused about by many an artistic great. Relax in a comfortable seat and watch the French countryside fly by as you think about the highlights ahead; incredible hiking terrain, chocolate-box towns and villages, and wonderful local markets stocked with the very best bread, olives, cheese, meats, and wine.

WHAT YOU'LL LOVE

- Discovering unspoilt Provence, famed for its food and wine
- Discovering the thermal baths in Gréoux-les-Bains
- Visiting charming hilltop villages including Moustiers-Sainte-Marie
- Exploring delightful Quinson and the Verdon Gorge
- Reliving the golden age of rail travel
- Trekking through the majestic Luberon Valley

WHAT'S INCLUDED

- Return rail travel from London to Aix-en-Provence and transfers
- Fully escorted travel with an HF Holidays Tour Manager
- A choice of 2 guided walks per day with local leaders (on walking days)
- 7 nights' accommodation in Gréoux-les-Bains
- 7 breakfasts and 7 dinners
- All sightseeing and entrance fees (as per itinerary)
- All in-destination transport

ITINERARY - ITINERARY

Day 1 Arrival Day

Meet your HF Holidays Tour Manager at London St. Pancras and board the Eurostar to Lille. At Lille, change to the TGV train for your onward journey to Aix-En-Provence. A short coach transfer of about an hour will take you to your hotel.

Day 2 Introducing Gréoux: between river and plateau

Today both walks start and finish at the hotel.

Day 3 Forcalquier and the Abbey of Salagon at Mane

Today both groups take the coach to the bustling hill town of Forcalquier and its thriving atmospheric weekly market.

Day 4 Céreste and the Luberon

Today both groups will travel by coach to the village of Céreste for walks in the majestic Luberon valley.

Day 5 Free Day

Each week there is a free day when no guided walks are offered. This is an ideal opportunity to relax around the hotel, walk independently or visit local places of interest. Some options for your free day may include:

Gréoux-les-Bains: Explore the town of Gréoux-les-Bains and learn about the therapeutic qualities of its natural spring - discovered by the Romans. Walk up to the Castle of the Templars before stopping for lunch at one of the town's many restaurants.

Manosque or Aix-en-Provence: There are bus connections to Manosque and Aix en Provence. Aix-en-Provence the bohemian, chic university town with museums and sights painted by Cezanne.

Riez: Take a bus to Riez and discover this wonderfully preserved Provençal village with it's traditional Wednesday market, old buildings, restaurants and Roman remains.

Hotel facilities: Enjoy the facilities of the Hotel Villa Borghese; swim in its heated pool, enjoy a relaxing lunch on the terrace or play a game of table tennis or boules.

Day 6 The ridges above Moustiers Saint Marie

Our walks today take different routes to finish in the medieval streets of Moustiers St Marie.

Day 7 Quinson and the Gorge of the Verdon

A pleasant drive brings both groups to the lower Verdon Gorge. Both groups will have the opportunity to walk in the gorge and see the remains of the old Verdon canal, built to channel water to the city of Aix en Provence. The paths in the gorge are narrow in places but have handrails; there are also occasional metal staircases with handrails.

Day 8 Departure Day

Depart for your relaxing rail journey back to London St. Pancras via Lille and the Eurostar

DAILY WALK OPTIONS



Gentle walking grade 4

The most active Gentle grade, with longer walks, some ascent, and possible steps, stiles, or off-path uneven ground. Typically, 6-7 miles (10-12km) with around 1,000ft (300m) of ascent.



Moderate walking grade 6

Longer full day walks with more ascent and varied terrain. Good fitness and agility are needed. Typically, 9-10 miles (15-16km) with around 1,500ft (460m) of ascent.

ACCOMMODATION

Villa Borghese 4-star - Provence

The 4-star Villa Borghese has a fine tradition of service and is a member of The Originals, Human Hotels & Resorts. The owners of Villa Borghese will be very happy to welcome you to their hotel which is in a lovely, quiet and comfortable setting surrounded by gardens and woodland. Gréoux-les-Bains is close to the Verdon Gorges, the Luberon and the lavender fields in Provence. The hotel has an outdoor pool, tennis courts, fitness centre and spa.

Your evenings

The friendly atmosphere of our holidays continues into the evening.

Enjoy a glass of wine or local beer before hearing about the next day's activities. Your evening meal is the main focus of the evening. After dinner relax on the terrace or in the bar, with a drink and chat with your fellow guests or try your hand in a friendly game of boules.

FOOD & DRINK

Dining at Villa Borghese

Holidays at Gréoux-les-Bains are half-board with a 3-course served dinner.

The hotel prides itself on serving locally sourced produce from within 20km of the town.

ROOMS

Your room at Villa Borghese

Villa Borghese has 65 en-suite bedrooms, most of which have a balcony or terrace.

Facilities in the bedrooms include:

- Telephone
- TV
- Hairdryer
- Safe deposit box
- Air conditioning
- Shaving point
- Mini-bar (extra charge)
- Tea and coffee making facilities

The hotel is surrounded by a small wood and offers pleasant views from the bedrooms.

ABOUT YOUR STAY

Facilities at Villa Borghese

There is a small outdoor heated (from around mid April to mid October, weather dependant) swimming pool next to the sun terrace.

Villa Borghese has a tennis court, table tennis, and a spa offering a range of treatments (extra charge).

Relax at the cosy bar with an open fireplace.

The hotel offers its guests free Wi-Fi.

TRAVEL DETAILS

Address

Hotel Villa Borghese
Avenue des Thermes
04800 Gréoux-les-Bains
Provence

Tel: 0033 492 780 091

LOCAL AREA

Immerse yourself in the landscape of Matisse, Cézanne and Van Gogh, in this quiet corner of Provence. Rolling fields, blue skies, gorgeous villages and excellent food and wine epitomise everyone's image of Provence, and we hope that this holiday will deliver that, and a little bit more. As well as sitting in the Route de la Lavande, an area steeped in the culture of lavender production, Greoux-les-Bains straddles the exquisite Luberon region, and also the mighty Verdon Gorge. The Grand Canyon of France with 800m sheer cliffs sums up this area's unspoilt countryside. On Mondays the traditional Provençal market at the hill-top village of Forqualquier has run for centuries. Moustiere Ste Marie, deemed officially one of the prettiest villages in France, is a lovely place to drink a beer in one of the many pavement cafés.

Greoux-les-Bains, a former spa town, is off the main Provençal tourist track, and is a bustling town full of local commerce. It has an impressive hill-top castle, reached by walking up pretty pedestrianised roads, and a smattering of tourist shops in the old town. There are good cafés in the pleasant central plaza in the old town. The hotel is 15 minutes walk from the old town.

Colourful port of Marseilles – There is a public bus service which takes you to Marseilles. To get around the city and see the major sights use the Le Grand Tour open-topped, double decker bus which runs each day from 10am until 4pm and costs around €16 for the day. The bus travels between all the main sights and museums taking in Vieux Port, the Corniche and Basilique Notre Dame de la Garde. You can hop on and off throughout the day and the tour includes a 5 language audio guide. The best place to pick up the tour bus is Vieux Port – buy tickets either on the bus or from the tourist office.

Aix-en-Provence

Visit the bohemian, chic university town of Aix-en-Provence**,** home of Cezanne, visited by Van Gogh and the author Emile Zola. The town is packed with bars, cafés, and affordable restaurants. The city itself is rich in culture and has elegant plane tree-lined boulevards and chic boutiques. There is a public bus service but times vary throughout the year; the journey takes about an hour.

Villa Borghese

Spend the day around the hotel and take advantage of the heated pool and loungers provided by the hotel, or more adventurously book a session at the Hotel Spa!

The Verdon Gorge

in French: *Gorges du Verdon* or *Grand Canyon du Verdon*) – is a river canyon that is often considered to be one of Europe's most beautiful. It is about 25 kilometres long and up to 700 metres deep. It was formed by the Verdon River, which is named after its startling turquoise-green colour, one of the canyon's most distinguishing characteristics. The most impressive part lies between the towns of Castellane and Moustiers-Sainte-Marie, where the river has cut a ravine up to 700 metres down through the limestone mass.

Greoux

Explore the old centre of Greoux and walk up to the Chateau des Templiers, which sometimes has concerts and art exhibitions.

SAFETY ON YOUR HOLIDAY

Safety information for Provence Guided Walking Holiday

We are committed to running our Guided Walking holidays in a safe manner and your co-operation with this is much appreciated. No outdoor activity can be 100% risk free; however, if you take sensible precautions and adhere to your leaders' instructions, your holiday will be both safe and enjoyable. On the first evening of your holiday (dependent on arrival time, the leaders will give a short talk about safety on the walks – we would ask everyone to attend.

Walking as a group: Our leaders always consider the safety of the group as a whole and will show more caution over potential risks (such as bad or exceptionally hot weather than an individual or couple might make on a private outing. Walks may be modified or cancelled following the leaders' assessment of the day-to-day situation. Your leaders will refuse to accept any guest whose clothing, equipment, behaviour or walking ability is considered unsuitable, and where it could affect the safety and enjoyment of other guests on the proposed walk. It is your responsibility to follow the leader's guidelines, for the benefit and safety of the group as a whole. If you leave the group, then your leader will no longer have responsibility for you. For safety reasons, we stipulate a minimum party size of two guests in addition to the leader.

First aid: In line with current practice, each leader carries a group first aid kit but is not able to supply any 'medication', including aspirin, paracetamol, antihistamines and antiseptic cream.

Hydration: In warm weather it is very important to keep hydrated. You will need to carry water with you on walks, more during hot weather or on more demanding walks. One good way of hydrating is to use a hydration pack which allows drinking without constant stopping. This can then be filled up from water sources as required.

Even with an GHIC card, medicines and outpatient treatment normally have to be paid for at the time and the costs reclaimed afterwards – details are available at dh.gov.uk/travellers. Therefore insurance is extremely important, as is access to emergency money, preferably a credit card.

VACCINATIONS & HEALTH

Vaccinations & health information

Before booking, you should check with your doctor to see whether any health precautions are needed for your trip. Health advice and requirements can change, so we recommend doing this in good time before travel.

As a general rule, travellers should ensure they are up to date with routine UK vaccinations and boosters, including, for example, MMR and diphtheria, tetanus and polio. Some countries may require you to have specific vaccinations such as Malaria, Rabies and Yellow Fever. Please check with your GP if you are unsure.

Please note that the use or possession of some common prescription or over-the-counter medicines is restricted or banned in certain countries. If you will be carrying medication, you should check with the relevant embassy or consulate before travelling. As an extra precaution, we recommend keeping medication in its original packaging, carrying a copy of your prescription, and, where possible, asking your pharmacist to provide the medication name in the language of the country you are visiting.

For further country-specific health advice, visit www.fitfortravel.nhs.uk or www.traveldoctor.co.uk. If you are travelling from outside the UK, please consult your own doctor and check local entry requirements.

PASSPORTS & VISAS

Passport & Visa information

This information is for those travelling with a full 'British Citizen' passport; for all other nationalities or passport holders, please check with your local consulate for advice.

Passport Requirements

This information applies to travellers holding a full British Citizen passport. Entry requirements vary by destination and can change at short notice. For most EU and worldwide destinations, passports must be valid for the entire duration of your stay. Some countries also require a minimum period of validity remaining on your passport (often up to 6 months beyond your return date), even if you are not staying that long.
We strongly recommend ensuring your passport has at least six months' validity remaining at the time of travel to avoid any issues.

If you hold a different type of British passport or a passport issued by another country, you must check the requirements with the relevant embassy, consulate, or official government website.

Visa Requirements

Visa rules depend on your nationality, destination, length of stay, and purpose of travel, and they can change frequently. It is your responsibility to check whether you require a visa before travelling.
British passport holders should check the latest entry, passport validity and visa requirements for their destination on the UK government's Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office (FCDO) website:
https://www.gov.uk/foreign-travel-advice

ESSENTIAL INFORMATION

Packing list

It's best to be prepared for all weather conditions. To make it easier, here is a list of items you should consider packing.

Essentials

- Walking boots
- Waterproof jacket
- Waterproof trousers
- Insulated jacket/top
- Walking clothing
- Walking socks (plus spares)
- Sunhat
- Gloves/mitts and warm hat
- Water bottle (minimum 2 litre capacity)
- Headtorch
- High-factor sunscreen (minimum SPF 30)
- Swimcap (compulsory in Itialian resorts)
- Sunglasses with a dark lens
- Rucksack (15-30 litres)
- Mobile phone
- Personal first aid kit (containing your medication, blister plasters, etc.)
- Passport
- Visa (if applicable)
- Copy of your travel insurance policy
- UK Global Health Insurance Card (**formerly known as EHIC**)

Recommended

- Collapsible walking poles
- Swimwear and travel towel
- Snacks
- Dry bags

- Rubbish bags
- Insect repellent

Optional extras

- Camera
- Sit mat
- Flask for hot drinks
- Durable lunch box
- Gaiters
- GPS device (excluding Bhutan, Georgia and India)

JOINING INSTRUCTIONS (WITH RAIL)

Joining instructions for Provence

Book your holiday 'with rail' and travel on Eurostar and TGV with the group.

If you choose this option we automatically include return transfers between Aix-en-Provence station and the hotel. The coach transfer takes approx 1 hour.

Notes for rail travellers

Rail travel will be from St Pancras International Station, London to Aix-en-Provence, Provence via Lille.

Your group meeting point at St Pancras will be the Sir John Betjeman statue on the upper level of the station 2 hours before departure time. Here you will join the rest of your group and meet your HF Tour Manager who will guide you throughout your journey. You will then make your way to the ticket gate as a group.

A suitcase with wheels is strongly recommended as you will be responsible for carrying and lifting your luggage on all parts of the journey. All luggage will be scanned at the departure gate and needs to be clearly labelled. You will need to be responsible for your luggage and belongings at all stages of your journey so it's advisable to have it within eyesight when travelling on the trains and be extra vigilant when moving through busy railway stations.

Please refer to the website below for the latest information on luggage requirements for your journey and trip information: https://www.eurostar.com/uk-en

JOINING INSTRUCTIONS (WITHOUT RAIL)

Without flights

Alternatively, tailor your journey to suit you by booking your holiday 'without rail' allowing you the freedom to book your own travel.

If you choose this option, transfers are not included in the price.

You can still purchase a seat on our shared group transfer but it is your responsibility to arrive at the railway station prior to the main group. All train times are subject to change and if your arrival and / or departure time changes and no longer fits our shared group transfer, we will be unable to delay departure for you. Should this occur we will refund you the cost of the transfer and you can either make your own way to the hotel or we can book a private taxi transfer for you (at your expense). HF Holidays cannot be held responsible for your onward travel if you are unable to meet the transfer coach.

If you have made your own travel arrangements and have booked a place on the HF Holidays shared group transfer to the hotel, please meet your Tour Manager and fellow travellers at Aix-en-Provence TGV station by ground floor café, next to platform 4.

USEFUL INFORMATION

Travel Insurance

Travel insurance is a condition of booking. Therefore, if you have not already arranged insurance, it is imperative that you do so before you travel.

For more information about healthcare and its costs, please visit: https://www.nhs.uk/using-the-nhs/healthcare-abroad/

Drinking Water

Drinking Water

Standards for drinking water vary widely around the world. In many destinations, tap water may not be safe to drink, brush your teeth with, or use for making ice. Where advised, you should drink only bottled or treated water and ensure that bottle seals are intact before use. If bottled water is unavailable, water should be boiled or filtered.

Staying well hydrated is particularly important in hot climates and during active holidays. Carry water with you and drink regularly.

If you are unsure about local water safety, check official country-specific health advice before travel, or ask your accommodation or local guides for guidance once you arrive.

Telephone Code for Provence

If the international number you wish to call starts with a 0, you must drop the starting digit when dialling the number.
To dial a UK number 0044
To dial a French number 0033

Language Information for Provence

The local language is French.

LOCAL CURRENCY

The local currency is the Euro (€)

ELECTRICITY

Electricity information for Provence

220 Volt AC with round two pin plugs; you will need an adaptor for any appliances brought from the UK.

ATM AVAILABILITY

ATM availability for Provence

There are several ATM machines in Gréoux-les-Bains where you can obtain money.

TRIPNOTE VALIDITY

TRIP NOTE VALIDITY These Trip Notes are valid based on the date printed at the bottom of the page. They will occasionally be updated post booking and pre-departure. We will send you the latest trip notes prior to departure through a link in your pre departure documents or we can send you a copy in the post if preferred. In booking this trip you should be confident in your ability to participate in all activities described in these Trip Notes. If you have any doubt about your suitability you should call HF Holidays and ask to speak to one of the team about this itinerary. The information in these Trip Notes is given in good faith. Where differences exist between the Trip Notes and our current brochure, the Trip Notes supersede the brochure. All holidays can be subject to unexpected changes; so please be prepared to be flexible where necessary. At times, it may not be possible to follow the itinerary as planned due to weather conditions, political, physical or other factors. In these circumstances we will make the best possible alternative arrangements to maintain the integrity of the original itinerary.

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