

A Week in Provence

Tour Style: European walking holidays

Destination: France

Trip code: MZ

2 & 3



HOLIDAY OVERVIEW

The southeast corner of France that inspired Van Gogh, Matisse, and Cezanne is as photogenic as it gets; think vineyards, lavender fields, windmills, medieval villages, historic cities, and glorious countryside. Highlights include walking in the lower Verdon Gorge, savouring freshly-baked bread, olives, cheese, meats, and locally-grown wine, and exploring the streets of Moustiers-Sainte-Marie - officially listed as one of the "most beautiful villages of France".

WHAT'S INCLUDED

- Return flights from London Heathrow, including baggage and transfers
- A choice of 2 guided walks per day with local leaders (on walking days)
- HF Holidays Tour Manager
- 7 nights' accommodation in Gréoux-les-Bains
- 7 breakfasts and 7 dinners
- All sightseeing and entrance fees (as per itinerary)
- All in-destination transport

HOLIDAY HIGHLIGHTS

- Exploring the stunning Provence landscape on foot
- Discovering the thermal spring in Gréoux-les-Bains
- Visiting the beautiful village of Moustiers-Sainte-Marie
- Walking in the spectacular Verdon Gorge
- Spending time in Manosque or Aix-en-Provence on your free day
- Trekking through the majestic Luberon Valley

TRIP SUITABILITY

This is a level 2 and level 3 graded Activity, Easier walks: 4 to 8 miles (6½ to 13km) on good paths, which are sometimes rocky underfoot. Up to 1,400 feet (420m) of ascent in a day. Harder walks: 6 to 10 miles (9½ to 16km) on good paths, with some steeper, rougher routes. Up to 2,500 feet (750m) of ascent in a day.



ITINERARY

Day 1: Arrival Day

Welcome to Hotel Villa Borghese. Unpack and settle in.

Day 2: Introducing Gréoux: Between River And Plateau

Today both walks start and finish at the hotel.

Option 1 - Up To The Valansole Plateau And Discovering Greoux

Distance: 7 miles (11km)

Total ascent: 1,000 feet (300m)

In summary: We will climb up to the vast plateau of Valensole behind the town to take in the wide sweeping horizon towards Manosque and the mountains. Using an old livestock droving route, passing lavender and olive plantations, we travel across the plateau. Meeting the old road from Manosque we start our descent to arrive eventually beneath the ancient walls of Gréoux castle. We have time to explore before a final short descent into the heart of the old town, where you can choose to explore its narrow streets and linger over a drink or continue back to the hotel and a swim perhaps.

Highlight: Spectacular views down to Manosque from the Valensole plateau.

Option 2 - Crossing The Verdon To The Hamlet Of Les Maurras

Distance: 8½ miles (13½km)

Total ascent: 1,700 feet (510m)

In summary: The harder walk takes us in the opposite direction to the easier group, starting by crossing the Verdon River on Gréoux's ancient bridge. We follow the river bank for a short time before climbing steeply up on wooded tracks. Views open up as we travel towards the remote hamlet of Les Maurras, an area known for its truffles. Continuing to climb we pass over the subterranean route of the old Verdon irrigation canal which we will see later in the week. Arriving at the highest point of the day we are greeted by a view of Gréoux's castle in the distance, before descending and climbing again to pass the remote chapel of Notre Dame des Oeufs, enjoying views over the lower Verdon valley. Our final descent leads us back over the river and into town.

Highlight: Visit the Notre Dame des Oeufs and discover it's local custom.

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.

Option 1 - Forcalquier To The Abbey Of Salagon At Mane

Distance: 4 miles (6½km)

Total ascent: 600 feet (180m)

In summary: The easier group will have time to explore this historic town and its market, perhaps climbing to the Citadel to see the carillon and observe the magnificent view before setting off. Our tracks are stony in places but never too steep as we cross the wooded limestone plateau on our journey to Mane. We will pass interesting stone bories, old shepherds' shelters, and it may be possible to visit the ancient Abbey of Salagon and its ethno-botanical gardens.

Highlight: A local interest guide will accompany the group today to explain more about the local area.

Option 2 - Discovering The Sculpted Landscape From Forcalquier To Mane

Distance: 8 miles (13km)

Total ascent: 1,300 feet (390m)

In summary: After a brief look around the market we make a steady climb out of Forcalquier to the plateau of Les Mourres to see the strangely shaped limestone rocks created by water and wind erosion over the centuries. On descending we will pass dry stone bories (huts) and old shepherds' shelters before passing the abbey to arrive at Mane for welcome refreshments.

Highlight: The limestone rocks at Les Mourres.

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.

Option 1 - Easier Walk At Céreste

Distance: 7.5 miles (12km)

Total ascent: 920 feet (280m)

This varied hike in the Luberon starts in the village of Céreste. After a steady climb, we reach a scenic ridge with beautiful views over the Calavon Valley on one side and the Luberon on the other. Our walk leads us to the old citadel of Montjustin, which we will visit. On the return, we'll cross Roman and medieval bridges and discover rich flora and ancient ruins. The picturesque village of Céreste, with its delightful pavement cafés, will be the start and finish of our route.

Option 2 - Harder Walk At Céreste

Distance: 9.5 miles (15km)

Total ascent: 1,050 feet (320m)

Today's more challenging walk follows the same route as option 1 before parting ways by crossing a valley and climbing to the other side. Here we'll find the remains of the medieval Carluc Priory. Believed to have been built in the 11th century and surrounded by an even older necropolis, this ruined chapel once served as a welcome resting spot for Christian pilgrims making arduous journeys between Italy and Spain. We'll finish our journey by returning to Céreste.

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. Your leaders will be able to direct you to the timetable and the right bus stop.

Regusse: Take a taxi to this charming village and see its two fine 16th century windmills, a symbol of the region.

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.

Option 1 - Lac Saint Croix To Moustiers Saint Marie

Distance: 6 miles (9½km)

Total ascent: 750 feet (230m)

In summary: We will be dropped off near to Lac Ste Croix and the first part of the walk follows the lake shore

to Pont de Galetas where the river emerges from the upper Verdon Gorge. After leaving the lake we follow the line of a stream called La Maire through woods to Le Petit Lac where there are good views of the craggy cliffs of the upper plateau. From here we climb through scenic fields to enter the village of Moustiers-Ste-Marie, famed for its ceramics and pilgrims' church with a golden star hung high above in the cleft in the crags.

Highlight: Time to explore the streets of Moustiers-Ste-Marie.

Option 2 - Above Moustiers Saint Marie.

Distance: 7 miles (11km)

Total ascent: 1,640ft (500m)

In summary: This walk takes us steeply up to the craggy ridge of L'Oubes with great views over the Lac St Croix and the start of the Upper Verdon Gorge. After crossing the summit and descending to a dry riverbed the terrain becomes more open before the final spectacular descent to Moustiers St Marie on a twisting ancient road.

Highlight: Walk up to the chapel of Notre Dame de Beauvoir perched high on its rock for magnificent views.

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.

Option 1 - Quinson: The Chapel Of Saint Maxime And The Verdon Gorge.

Distance: 6½ miles (10.5km)

Total ascent: 900ft (270m)

In summary: We climb up a rough zigzag path to the plateau of Male Sauque to follow fairly level tracks until we descend to the chapel of St Maxime. This is an ideal lunch spot and there is time to admire the view down to the gorge. We descend to a shady woodland path that leads us to the Verdon gorge and old canal. Passing through a short tunnel, we walk on top of the retaining wall of the old canal and eventually follow a suspended wooden walkway (with handrail) that is just a few feet above the river. It is then a short walk to the village of Quinson which has an interesting museum dedicated to prehistoric man's settlement in this region.

Highlight: The breathtaking Verdon gorge.

Option 2 - Verdon Gorge From Quinson To The Chapel Of St Maxime

Distance: 6 miles (9½km)

Total ascent: 900 feet (270m)

In summary: The harder walk starts in the gorge on a rocky, but fairly level, path with occasional steps cut into the rock. There are metal handrails and staircases in places and a timber walkway suspended above the river, before the path follows the top of the retaining wall of an old Napoleonic canal. After passing through a short tunnel we initially ascend through woodland before a final short steep ascent to the ridge and chapel of St Maxime. We return descending a steep, but stepped, route down the side of a gorge, to arrive back at river level, then follow the original route back to the Verdon Bridge and well earned refreshments. There is a short level river walk back to the village of Quinson where our transport awaits.

Highlight: Discover one of Europe's most beautiful river canyons.

Day 8: Departure Day

We hope to see you again soon.

ACCOMMODATION

Villa Borghese - 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.

Rooms

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)

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

About Your Stay

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.

Food & Drink

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.

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.

TRAVEL DETAILS

Address

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

Tel: [0033 492 780 091](tel:0033492780091)

USEFUL HOLIDAY INFORMATION

Joining Instructions (With Flights)

Book your holiday 'with flights' and you can choose to depart from a range of UK airports* to your destination. For latest flight times and prices please call us on 0203-974-8865 or email reservations@hfholidays.co.uk

If you choose to book your flights with us, we automatically include return transfers between the destination airport and hotel.

Joining Instructions (Without Flights)

Alternatively, tailor your journey to suit you by booking your holiday 'without flights' and you'll have the freedom to book your own flights from your local airport.

Shared group transfer

You can still purchase a seat on our group airport transfer, but you must arrive in destination prior to the main group. It is your responsibility to book flights which allow enough time to meet our shared transfer.

Please note, all flight times are subject to change. If your arrival and/or departure time changes and no longer fits our 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 accommodation or we can book a private taxi transfer (at your expense). HF Holidays cannot be held responsible for your onward travel if you are unable to meet the transfer coach.

Private taxi transfer

Depending on your destination, we may be able to arrange a private taxi transfer for you. Please call us up to 5 weeks in advance to enquire about availability and costs for this option on 0203-974-8865.

*Subject to availability

Essential Information

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)
- 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

Safety On Your 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.

Useful Information

The local language is French.

The water is considered safe to drink, but if you prefer, bottled mineral water can be purchased from the hotel or local supermarkets.

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

Travel Insurance

Travel insurance is a condition of booking. Therefore, if you have not already arranged insurance, it is imperative that you do so, and advise us of the insurance company and policy number.

We work with Campbell Irvine to provide you with competitive single and annual multi-trip insurance. Please see our website for more information and details of how to contact them for a quote:

<https://www.hfholidays.co.uk/about-us/booking-information/insurance>.

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

Local Currency

The local currency is the Euro (€)

Electricity

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

ATM Availability

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

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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