Europe / France / Provence

Provence Insider Bike Tour
A Place at the Table with Culinary Characters: Provençal Chefs, Artists, Mayors, Markets, and More
Unpack once and make your home at La Maison Papillions, a lovingly renovated family-run farmhouse.

Experience Provence as only an insider can, thanks to the personal connections of our local guide and host: visit the marché with a chef, ride with the mayor, glimpse behind the scenes at the production of olive oil and truffles, and more.

Discover the region’s natural phenomena as you hike the Gorges de l’Ardèche—the “Grand Canyon of Europe”—and marvel at 36,000-year-old cave paintings.

Take a deep dive into wines of the Côtes du Rhône at exclusive visits and playful tastings.

Cook a Provençal dinner with our friend and vegetarian chef Sammy.
**Arrival Details**

- **Airport City:** Marseille or Paris, France
- **Pick-Up Location:** Avignon, France
- **Pick-Up Time:** 11:00 am

**Departure Details**

- **Airport City:** Marseille or Paris, France
- **Drop-Off Location:** Avignon, France
- **Drop-Off Time:** 12:00 pm

**NOTE:** DuVine provides group transfers to and from the tour from the pick-up and drop-off locations stated on the itinerary. In the event your train, flight, or other travel falls outside the arrival or departure times or locations, you may be responsible for extra costs incurred in arranging a separate transfer.

**Emergency Assistance**

For urgent assistance on your way to tour or while on tour, please always contact your guides first. You may also contact the Boston office during business hours at +1 617 776 4441 or emergency@duvine.com.

**Travelers Take Note**

For the hikes on this tour, we strongly recommend bringing hiking boots or trail shoes with good traction (not running shoes or sneakers). Moisture-wicking clothing or daypacks are also recommended, but not required.
Tour By Day

**DAY 1**  
**Bienvenue à La Maison Papillons**

Your guides will meet you in Avignon for a transfer to Monteil, the town where our host and fellow guide Olivier operates La Maison Papillons. Surrounded by Provence’s verdant hills, this once-abandoned farmhouse was given a new life by Olivier and his wife Caroline. Together, they transformed the property into a rustic and intimate guesthouse of stone and rough hewn wood, with terraces, gardens, and a pool for enjoying the Provençal sun. After a bike fitting and a safety briefing, begin riding through the undulating countryside punctuated by villages dating as far back as the 12th century. We’ll reach Maison de Garniac, a family-run farm where we'll indulge in a truffle lunch and our friend Yolaine shares her passion and knowledge over truffle ice cream. After, stop at an award-winning olive mill before spinning back to La Maison Papillons. Tonight, we head to a 300-year-old stone house surrounded by forest where we connect over a family-style dinner—complete with our favorite Gigondas and Vacqueyras wines from the Côtes du Rhône.

**Meals:** Lunch / Dinner  
**Destinations:** Issirac, Malataverne, Orgnac l’Aven, Le Monteil  
**Accomplished:** 18 miles / 29 km, elevation gain: 461 meters / 1,512 feet  
**Accommodations:** La Maison Papillons

**DAY 2**  
**The Cèze Valley, Climbs, and Cooking Class**

For those who wish to start today with a bang, begin with an early climb up Mont Bouquet, the area’s answer to Mont Ventoux. At only 629 meters high, what Bouquet lacks in elevation it more than makes up for in grade—averaging 9.2% for nearly five kilometers. If you prefer, take a more leisurely route and pedal peacefully through farmlands, vineyards, lavender fields, and forests. We’ll reach Lussan, recognized as one of the most beautiful villages in France: admire its medieval ramparts, narrow lanes lined with fanciful homes, and three mills—a testament to the town’s silk-making past. Pop into the 15th-century château to catch a panoramic glimpse of the Cévennes mountains, followed by lunch at our friends Dominique and Francoise’s restaurant in Verfeuil. After, prepare for a tasting at Domaine de Gressac, an estate that has been presciently producing organic wines since 1970. Head back to Olivier’s farmhouse via the Cèze Valley, and roll up your sleeves for a vegetarian cooking class with Sammy, a local chef and cookbook author. You’ll also have the change to visit Olivier’s onsite studio, where the former book and magazine illustrator is often found painting contemporary landscapes.

**Meals:** Breakfast/ Lunch / Dinner  
**Destinations:** Méjannes-les-Clap, Lussan, Verfeuil, Goudargues, Monteil  
**Accomplished:** 36 miles / 58 km, elevation gain: 753 meters / 2,470 feet  
**Longer Option:** 53 miles / 86 km, elevation gain: 1,227 meters / 4,025 feet
TOUR ITINERARY

Accommodations: La Maison Papillons
Cliffs, Canyons, and Cave Paintings

Today’s multi-sport adventure begins with a short ride to the starting point of our hike: the famous Ardèche Gorges Nature Reserve. Known as the “Grand Canyon of Europe,” the gorge is one of the greatest natural wonders in all of France. Our three-hour hike will reveal awe-inspiring views of the towering limestone cliffs, ultimately ending on a pristine beach of the Ardèche river (where the brave among us might venture a quick dip). On the return, enjoy the shade of oak trees and look up for Bonelli’s eagles as we loop back up the gorge. After a well-earned lunch, transfer to the Chauvet-Pont-d’Arc Cave, a 36,000-year-old dwelling where frescoes and prehistoric drawings will entice your imagination. After, transfer to the hotel or ride the rest of the way back. Spend the afternoon sprawled by the pool or mastering the Provençal art of the nap. Tonight, we’re treated to a wine tasting and dinner in the nearby town of Barjac.

Meals: Breakfast/ Lunch / Dinner
Destinations: Labastide-de-Virac, Gorges de l’Ardèche, Vallon-Pont-d’Arc, Monteil
Accomplished: 8 miles / 13 km, elevation gain: 223 meters / 732 feet; 5 miles / 8 km hiking
Longer option: 16 miles/ 26 km, elevation gain: 350 meters/ 1,148 feet
Accommodations: La Maison Papillons

The Mayor, the Chef, and the Shepherd

Have you ever wondered what the duties of a village mayor in rural France might entail? Today, we meet Monsieur Benoit, the mayor of Monclus, and have the chance to ask as he joins us for a ride. Our first stop is Goudargues, a vibrant village known for its tree-lined canal. Stroll by cafés and through the weekly market where we’ll meet up with Jacob, our private chef for tonight. Join him in selecting the ripest, most aromatic ingredients for our dinner, then get back on the bike and ride to the postcard-perfect medieval village of La Roque-sur-Cèze. We’ll glimpse the Sautadet Falls, where the Cèze River tumbles over the naturally carved limestone in a spectacular series waterfalls and crevasses, and giant potholes. Lunch is a simple Provençal picnic in the setting of a 12th-century castle. For our last stop of the day, we’ll climb into the Valbonne forest to Lucie’s goat cheese farm in Issirac. After a hearty tasting, complete the loop back to La Maison Papillons and get ready to see how Jacob has transformed this afternoon’s market produce.

Meals: Breakfast/ Lunch / Dinner
Destinations: Goudargues, La Roque-sur-Cèze, Saint-Christol-de-Rodières, Issirac, Monteil
Accomplished: 35 miles / 56 km, elevation gain: 780 meters / 2,559 feet
Accommodations: La Maison Papillons
Day 5: Bon Vin, Beaulieu, et Benoît

Our last full day of riding takes us through the Ardèche and foothills of the Cévennes mountains. For your efforts in conquering the steep climbs, you’ll be rewarded with an exclusive visit to Olivier’s favorite winery, Château de la Selve. Originally a 13th-century fortress, the château became the hunting lodge of a wealthy family before its transformation into a prestigious domaine. The tasting of their organic wines is playful: sip from an opaque glass to determine if you’re drinking white or red; guess the cépage (variety) and millésime (vintage); see if you can determine whether wine is barrel- or amphora-aged. In the end, everyone wins with a wine-paired picnic on the estate grounds. Spin home through Mediterranean brushlands known as garrigues, passing through the villages of Beaulieu, Saint-Sauveur-de-Cruzières, and Barjac. Tonight, we meet a young chef who runs a restaurant on his family’s farm, serving only seasonal products from Provence. For our final dinner, it’s a truly unforgettable gastronomic experience complemented by an impressive wine list.

Meals: Breakfast/ Lunch / Dinner  
Destinations: Grospierres, Beaulieu, Barjac  
Accomplished: 35 miles / 62 km, elevation gain: 911 meters / 2,989 feet  
Shorter Option: 16 miles / 26 km, elevation gain: 472 meters / 1,548 feet  
Accommodations: La Maison Papillons

Day 6: Au Revoir!

Before the journey home, take a morning stroll or devote some extra time to savoring Olivier’s beautiful breakfast at La Maison Papillons. Your guides transfer you to the Avignon train station and bid you à bientôt!

Meals: Breakfast  
Destination: Avignon