

C102-CO Luberon



Land of lights and contrasts, the Luberon is synonymous with colours and scents. The ochre of the Colorado de Rustrel contrasts with the blue of the sky and the green trees below. The Calavon valley, irrigated and cultivated by man, is nothing less than a huge orchard surrounded by mountains: the Vaucluse Mountains and the Alps of the Haute Provence to the north, the Petit and the Grand Luberon to the south. Covered by rocks or forests, or cut in by deep gorges, these mountains shelter several old villages, which overlook the valley bear witness to the rich history of the area. Outstanding sites, abbeys, castles, old and picturesque villages, this will be your daily menu, seasoned with a touch of ochre, a lavender scent and, above all, overflowing with sun. Enjoy your hike!



Itinerary

Day 1 - Arrival at FONTAINE DE VAUCLUSE (early afternoon, if you can). This small town is well-known for its spring and for the mysterious hole from where the Sorgue River gushes out. Petraque, poet and humanist (1304-1374) lived here for many years. You must visit the Saint Veran Romanesque Church and the remains of the castle of the Cavillon Bishops, situated above the valley. Take time also to stroll to the Sorgue spring, located at the bottom of a vertical cliff that stretches 230 meters high! This geyser, one of the largest around the world, has a variable rate of flow that can reach more than 100 m³ per second in times of high water! *Lodging and breakfast in a 3-star hotel with pool*

Day 2 - FONTAINE DE VAUCLUSE - GORDES (16 Km – 5 hour walk). You will leave Fontaine-de-Vaucluse and walk through the first hills of the Monts du Vaucluse where the landscape alternates between olive trees, vineyards, oak and pine forests. You will climb up through the Vallon de la Font d'Oule and pass through the forests to reach la Basse Pouraque, an isolated farm in the middle of the woods. You will continue walking through the forest to reach the Vallon de la Senancole, where nestles the Cistercian abbey of Senanque. Austerity and aestheticism are the main features of this abbey, which has resisted tumultuous times but has preserved most of the original 12th century Romanesque buildings. You will then climb through a small valley to arrive at Gordes. *Dinner, lodging and breakfast in a 3-star hotel with pool*



Day 3 - ROUSSILLON - GORDES (23 km – 7 hour walk or 16 km – 4 hour walk). *Transfer by taxi to Roussillon.* Built on a rocky spur, this typical Provençal village is surrounded by ochre quarries and cliffs. Take pleasure in a stroll through the narrow streets that circle around the belfry and the church, and discover the beautiful ochre cliffs called La Chaussée des Géants. You will leave the village, crossing through the plains covered with vineyards and fruit trees, the old village of Joucas, perched high on a hill, looming in the distance. You will reach the Les Grailles hamlet at the opening of the wild Veroncle Gorges. You might choose to walk up them to discover the ruined watermills, some of which are recently restored, and continue on past Murs and its château, and then across the 300-meter cliffs of Barres before returning to Gordes. Otherwise, you can simply go back to Gordes and wander through the narrow streets of this lovely medieval village. *Lodging and breakfast in the same hotel*



Day 4 - RUSTREL - VIENS (15 km – 4 hour walk). *Transfer by taxi to the village of Rustrel. After visiting this pleasant village, head to the Colorado de Rustrel, large quarries where ochre was once extracted. The working of these quarries and natural erosion have carved numerous peaks, sheer cliffs, narrow corridors, and large pillars of earth, ranging in color from bright yellow to blood red. This ochre massif is accessible by a number of well-marked paths. You will continue your trek, passing above the village of Gignac to arrive in Viens. Viens is an old fortified village with beautiful 12th century houses near the Sarrazine Gate and the château. The Romanesque church lies just beyond the village. Transfer by taxi to Cereste - Dinner, lodging and breakfast in a charming guesthouse*

Day 5 - VIENS - CERESTE (23 km – 7 hour walk). *Back to Viens village by taxi. You will start out to*

the St Ferreol chapel. You pass through the Cavalon valley and through the wild and impressive Oppedette Gorges up to the village of Oppedette, a small, isolated and timeless village. The path runs along the edge of the Vaucluse Plateau and leads you through other isolated villages to the château of Ferrage and the ruins of the Carluç Priory, a former abbey built in the 12th century. You will then reach the old town of Cereste, erected on the Via Domitia – a Roman path from Italy to Spain. Dinner, lodging and breakfast in the same guesthouse

Day 6 - VAUGINES–GRAND LUBERON mountains and LE MOURRE NEGRE (21 km – altitude gain: 780 meters – 7 hour walk). *Transfer by taxi to Vaugines. After discovering the typical village of Vaugines, you will climb along the Vallon de Vaumière towards the crests of Le Grand Lubéron where you will join a wooded walkway. The incline is long, but not very demanding. You will reach Le Mourre Nègre. At 1125 meters, it is the culminating point of Luberon. Even if you find yourself a little out of breath, you will appreciate your efforts when you gaze upon the astounding view that unfolds before you. From here, it is literally "all down hill", and you will enjoy the easy walk down through the Vallon de La Fayette, past the Tuillière farm and the l'Ermitage chapel, before reaching Cucuron a typical Provencal village. Transfer by taxi to Lourmarin, a beautiful Provencal village. Lodging and breakfast in a 4-star hotel with pool*

Day 7 - BONNIEUX – APT (22 km –alt. gain: 550 meters). *Transfer by taxi to Bonnieux. Bonnieux is a small, beautifully terraced village sitting quietly beneath Saint Martin's Church. From this church spreads a lovely view of the Cavalon Valley and neighbouring villages. You will take your hike through the priory of Saint Symphorien, passing by the church with its bell tower that stands 25 meters into the sky, and past the Buoux Fort, built on a rock spur above the Aigue Brun Valley. You will arrive in the village of Buoux and pass by the small, stone-covered Sainte Marie Chapel in the middle of the town's cemetery. You will follow this trail as it takes you by the Renaissance château of Buoux and through small orchards all the way to Apt, laid in the Cavalon Valley and known for its crystallized fruit and preserves. Lodging and breakfast in a charming guest house, a former 17th C. monastery*



Day 8 - APT. *Tour ends after breakfast. We recommend you to take time to visit Apt. It is a charming Provencal village with much to offer. Visit Sainte Anne's Cathedral, the small squares and fountains, the medieval gate Porte de Saigon, and the beautiful narrow streets of the old city.*

Season

From mid-April to end of October. **Careful some footpaths can be closed due to high risks of fire in July and August. So we recommend not walking in this area in summer.**

What's included ?

- ✓ 7 nights' accommodation in 3 or 4 star hotels or charming guest houses
- ✓ 7 breakfasts – 3 gourmet dinners
- ✓ hotel to hotel luggage transfer along the trail.
- ✓ Taxi transfers
- ✓ A set of maps (1/25 000 scale) with the route marked on and detailed route notes describing the trail.
- ✓ A daily itinerary together with information about facilities and places of interest along the trail.
- ✓ Emergency assistance.

Visa fees - transportation fees to and from the walk area - Insurance (strongly recommended on all trips) - Transfers except those mentioned above – Drinks - Additional meals – Entrance fees - Spending of personal nature e.g. laundry, souvenirs, phone calls,... are not included

Getting there and away

By plane: Nearest airports are Avignon and International Marseille airport. Links between Paris-Orly, Exeter, South-ampton, Leeds, Edinburgh and Avignon

By train : The nearest station to Fontaine de Vaucluse is the Avignon TGV station. Scheduled buses between Avignon and Fontaine de Vaucluse or transfer by taxi. On return, scheduled buses between Apt and Avignon

By road : access to Avignon along the A7 motorway, then take the N100 road to Isle sur Sorgues and Fontaine de Vaucluse.

Where to park : We don't recommend you leaving your car in Fontaine de Vaucluse (free unguarded car park). We urge you to park it in the pay 24 hours guarded car park, closed to the Avignon centre railway station and take scheduled bus to Fontaine de Vaucluse

Walk difficulty

Grade 3 - walks of between 5 and 8 hours a day with ascents up to 700 m. Some hiking experience is advisable.

