



ROAD TRIPS THE JOY OF TRAVEL TRAVEL NOTES

December 31, 2020

## Hotel hopping in Provence—a 10-day itinerary of vineyards and hilltop villages

Packed with wine, winding coastline and some of the prettiest villages you'll ever set eyes on, we've picked Provence as the perfect place for a week-long road trip. [Pack your bags](#) and follow our day-by-day guide to spending ten days driving through les plus beaux villages and lavender-filled fields. Anchor your trip with some seriously, stylish stays, and you can thank us later.



## Days 1 and 2: Marseille and Aix en Provence

Fly into Marseille or hop on the Eurostar—it's around six hours from London St Pancras to Avignon, with a quick change in Lille, or slightly longer if you route through Paris. Hire a car to head straight out of the city or spend a night at [Les Bords de Mer](#) and do a day trip walking along the Massif des Calanques—this stretch of 2-km coastline Marseille to Cassis is filled with narrow gorges, inlets and beautiful little bays.



Drive on to your first stop of Aix en Provence for a pretty and peaceful city break. Stroll down the elegant tree-lined Le Cours Mirabeau boulevard, then head to the [Atelier Cézanne](#), where post-expressionist painter Paul Cézanne created many of his works. Don't miss the open-air Grand Marché—it's on three days a week.



### **The hotel: Villa Saint Ange**

Book into Villa Saint Ange for two nights. Spread across two stone houses in the heart of the city just 10 minutes' stroll from the boulevard, this majestic maison with 33 rooms boasts 18<sup>th</sup>-century inspired interiors, with carefully curated art and antiques. You may be in the city, but the 28-metre pool and elegant gardens are as tranquil as they come. From £315 per night.



### **Days 3 to 4: Les Alpilles and the Carmargue**

Head west to the craggy limestone peaks of Les Alpilles—an area of pretty national park. It's an extremely scenic road trip. Spend today hopping from one hilltop village to the next—you'll find many are part of the official collection, Les Plus Beaux Villages de France. To qualify for membership, each village requires at least two national heritage sites. Stop off at Arles or Avignon, or enjoy the outdoor light show projections of Carrières d Lumières.

If nature is more your thing, don't miss the Carmargue—it's western Europe's largest river delta, covered in lagoons, lakes and marshes. You can cycle, hike or horse ride, and this is where wild white horses and picture-perfect flamingos roam free. Book dinner in Saint Remy de Provence—it's worth it.

### **The hotel: Le Domaine de la Rose**

A 17<sup>th</sup> century set of converted farm buildings, with spacious gardens and scents of lavender in the air, this beautiful bolthole also boasts a tennis court, swimming pool and sweeping drive. Don't be intimidated by its grandeur, this is a down to earth bed and breakfast but in a serene setting. Its mix of classic and contemporary interiors are striking and stylish. From £90 per night



#### **Days 5 to 7: Gordes and surrounds**

Drive north east to the village of Gordes—one of France's most picturesque—on the crest of a rocky outcrop. Use this as your base and make your way over to Menerbes to the south or Roussillon, the red village. Stop into the city of L'Isle sur la Sorgue—it's *the* place to meander around antique shops and weekend markets. It's also known as the Venice of Provence—it's here that the Sorgue river splits into five rivulets, so book a restaurant overlooking the water.

#### **The hotel: Le Bastide de Gordes**





### **Days 8 to 10: the Rhone winelands**

From here, head to the heart of the southern Rhone winelands—not far from Châteauneuf-du-Pape, so stock up and spend the day amongst the vineyards, ready for the journey home. You're spoilt for choice here, with villages like Gigondas, Vacqueyras and Seguret to spend time in, or drive east to the Pays de Sault—an elevated lavender-growing region, which of course smells divine come summer.



**The hotel: Hotel Crillon le Brave**



This luxurious southern belle sits atop a 17<sup>th</sup> century hamlet, surrounded by rolling hills and the type of sigh-inducing countryside you'd expect from this heavenly part of l'Hexagone. The hotel's resident chef sources ingredients from local markets, turning them into tasting menus that will please even the pickiest of gourmands. From £380 per night



Feeling inspired? Why not go all out and make the right first impression on check in—shop our sets of luggage and coordinating travel bags.