

HEARTCYCLE BICYCLE TOURING CLUB

RELAXED IN PROVENCE

- Dates:** Orientation meeting Thursday May 14, 2020. Riding Friday, May 15 – Saturday, May 23. Departure Sunday, May 24. Lodging included Saturday, May 23.
- Leaders:** Polly Page, Rich Crocker
- Miles:** 271 miles with 11,560 feet
- Rating:** Intermediate
- Riders:** 20 including 2 leaders
- Price:** \$2,675 (Double Occupancy). Single supplement + \$555 (Total \$3,230), subject to tour leader approval. \$800 is due at registration. Balance is due Jan 15, 2020.
- Cancellation:** \$100 fee prior to January 15. Thereafter, standard cancellation policy applies. Travel insurance is recommended.

OVERVIEW

Relaxed in Provence was designed for relaxed intermediate riding with time to pause and enjoy Provence's countryside and small towns.

The tour includes 9 days of riding, 10 nights of lodging, 10 breakfasts, 2 group dinners and 1 picnic lunch. We overnight in Avignon (first and last nights), Uzes (3 nights), St. Remy de Provence (3 nights), and Fontaine de Vaucluse (2 nights) in 3 and 4 star hotels located in the town centers and convenient to shopping and dining. The average daily distance is 30 miles with an average daily elevation gain of 1285 feet. Daily rides range from 25 to 45 miles and from 522' to 1686' in elevation gain. The tour name includes the word RELAXED. It does not include the word EASY. There will be hills. Remember, older interesting, historic town sites were often chosen for their defensive positions which means they were often built UP on the top of the hill.

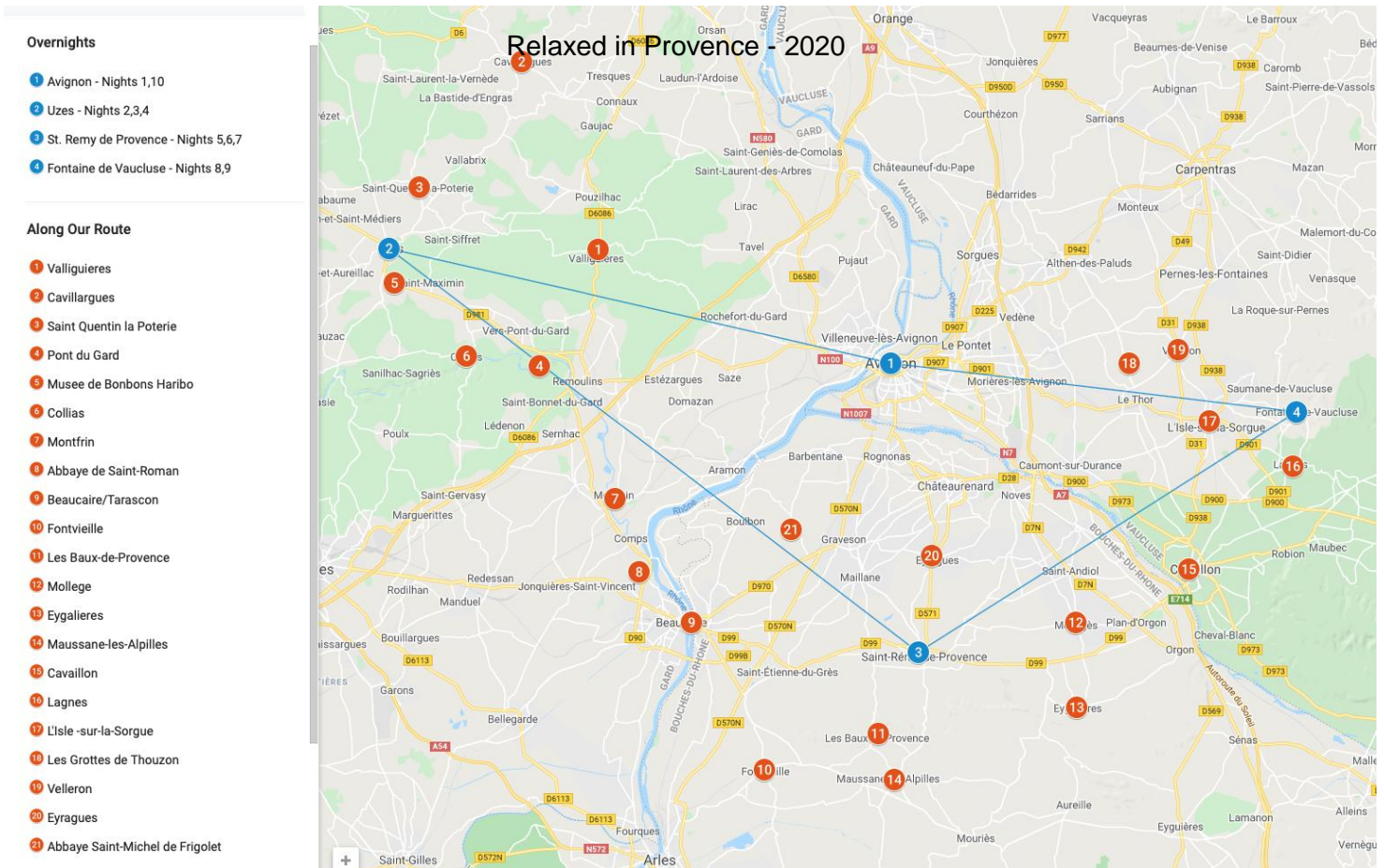
We anticipate that some folks may leave immediately after breakfast each morning and others may enjoy relaxing and having that second cup of coffee before pulling on the bike shorts. Some will desire a leisurely restaurant lunch over a glass of wine while others will be delighted with a quick bite of bread and cheese from the local *Carrefour* in the shade of a plane tree. In essence, we expect everyone to ride at their own pace.

You will have daily cue sheets and maps for the rides as well as .gpx files for Garmins and smart phones. Riding through the countryside on minor roads and through ancient towns can involve MANY twists and turns and we strongly recommend using a Garmin or smart phone rather than having to stop frequently and put on your reading glasses to check the paper cue sheet. If you bring a Garmin, remember that you will need to obtain a European map card for it before leaving the US. All riders need to be comfortable with using paper cue sheets and/or following a Ride With GPS route on your Garmin or smart phone. We will not be riding all together in a group.

There will be no daily SAG support along the route. However, small towns and possibilities for a *cafe au lait* or lunch are plentiful. Support service is available for mechanical problems or if an injury or illness prevents you from cycling. Luggage will be picked up from the lobby of the hotel around 9 AM and transported to our next hotel for us.

Hybrid Bikes (Scott SUB Sport 20) are included in the price of the tour. A Road Bike (Scott ADDICT 20), or an E-Bike (Scott EA-SUB Tour 10) is available for an additional 185 euros.

We start and finish in Avignon, France. Avignon can be reached from the states by flying into Paris, Charles de Gaulle (CDG airport) and then either taking the 3.5 hour TGV (high speed train) from the CDG airport to Avignon Centre, or by flying on from Paris to Marseille (Aéroport de Marseille Provence), then taking a free 10 minute shuttle bus to the Vitrolles Airport train station and a 60 to 90 minute Regional train (PACA, cost 13,70 euros, about \$15) to Avignon Centre. From the train station, it is an easy, uncomplicated, one turn, 5 minute walk to the hotel.



ITINERARY

Day 1. Thursday, May 14. Overnight in Avignon.

Arrive at the hotel in Avignon by 3 PM to check in, be fitted with your bike, and attend the 5:30 PM meeting. There are several restaurants close by or dine in the hotel dining room tonight.

Day 2. Friday, May 15. Avignon to Uzes. 32 miles /1557' vertical.

Depart west from Avignon crossing the River Rhone, passing through small towns on good pavement with little traffic, and through beautiful forests on our way to Uzes where we will enjoy a group meal at La Restaurant Parenthese at our hotel.

Day 3. Saturday, May 16, St. Quentin Loop ride from Uzes. 26 miles /1620' vertical.

Head north into the forested countryside through the villages of Vallabrix, Cavillargues, and Saint Quentin la Poterie (home to 23 pottery workshops and a designated "City and Crafts" *commune*) or you can chose to stay in town and enjoy Uzes' Market Day and see the sites. Overnight in Uzes.

Day 4. Sunday, May 17. Pont du Gard Loop ride from Uzes. 23 miles / 1078' vertical.

Today we go south and east on small roads and bike paths to visit Pont du Gard, a UNESCO World Heritage Site - an intact Roman aqueduct and bridge standing 165 feet above the River Gardon! Enjoy a baguette sandwich brought along from the local *boulangerie* or treat yourself to lunch at the Restaurant Terrasse overlooking the river. Stop at the modern Visitor's Center for the museum and film, if you choose, or make your way directly to Haribo's Bon Bon Musee (CANDY!) via paths through the vineyards and forests before arriving back to overnight in Uzes.

Day 5. Monday, May 18. Uzes to St Remy de Provence . 41 miles /1686' vertical.

Tuck a sandwich or other picnic fare into your bag today before riding south from Uzes to Collias and Ledenon on pleasantly curvy country roads. In Montfrin we join up with the newly paved Rail Trail for a few miles to avoid possible traffic. Before passing through Beaucaire and Tarascon we take a 4 mile detour to our lunch spot with the option of a 0.5 mile walk to visit the Troglodyte Ruins of Abbaye de Saint Romain. Then continue east through farmland to overnight in St. Remy de Provence.

Day 6. Tuesday, May 19. Les Baux Loop ride from St Remy. 25 miles /1430' vertical.

We do a counterclockwise lollipop loop riding west and then south through Fontvielle ending *UP* on top of the rocky outcrop of Les Baux de Provence - a 2000 year old town made out of stone.(Highly Recommended - 3 star rating from Michelin's Green Guide). There are plenty of restaurants and shops and incredible views. An excellent audioguide explains the ruins of a village and a chateau from the Middle Ages on the same site. Then, almost as soon as you get your helmet and sunglasses adjusted and mount your bike to head home to St Remy, you come around a corner and there is the Carrieres de Lumieres. Inside, within the walls of a bauxite quarry, in the dark, you can experience an extraordinary multimedia show of light, images and music. Overnight in St. Remy.

Day 7. Wednesday, May 20. Eygalieres Loop ride from St Remy. 27 miles /1620' vertical

You may want to delay riding or sightseeing for an hour or so today so that you can experience St. Remy's touted Market Day.

Today's ride starts out flat as you head east to Molleges. The route then becomes beautiful, hilly, and forested when you turn south to Eygalieres and Maussane Les Alpilles. before returning to St Remy passing by a Van Gogh site and Glanum along the way.

To experience a complete non-riding day, follow the Van Gogh Walking Tour route to visit the Cloitre Saint Paul de Mausole, the mental asylum where Van Gogh spent a year and produced many of the 150 paintings he created during his time in St Remy. Nearby (a 5 minute walk) is the Site Archaeologique de Glanum, the ruins of an ancient Gallic city where you can do a self guided tour with a brochure in English. If you are eager for more about Van Gogh, the Estrine Musee in St. Remy, has an excellent English audio guide of their Van Gogh section along with a film and slide show.

Day 8. Thursday, May 21. St Remy to Fontaine de Vaucluse. 25 miles /522' vertical
East from St. Remy to cross the River Durance on a dedicated bike bridge at Cavaillon. From Cavaillon it's 11 more miles and minimal climbing to Fontaine de Vaucluse, lunch and our hotel, OR opt for 20 additional miles and considerable climbing (1167') to visit the Village des Bories, an open-air museum of 20 or so dry stone huts before reaching tonight's hotel. Leave time today or tomorrow for the 30 minute walk from our hotel along the River Sorgue to its source, the real 'Fountain of the Vaucluse' where the water of an underground river bubbles up at least 315 meters into a cave and then emerges as the River Sorgue. Overnight in Fontaine de Vaucluse.

Day 9. Friday, May 22. Les Grottes de Thouzon Loop ride from Fontaine de Vaucluse. 27 miles /717'.
Begin the clockwise loop heading south, skirting below the village of Lagnes before turning north to L'Isle sur la Sorgue (pretty with canals and waterwheels and worthy of a stop for lunch or coffee and a walk around). Continue northwest to Les Grottes de Thouzon (underground caves) and Velleron where we turn southeast and head home to Fontaine de Vaucluse.

Day 10 Saturday, May 23. Fontaine de Vaucluse to Avignon. 45 miles /1330' vertical
Depart west from Fontaine de Vaucluse through peaceful farmland to recross the River Durance. Enjoy the beautiful scenery and quiet roads to Eyragues and beyond before climbing a bit to the Abbaye Saint Michel de Frigolet for lunch. After two crossings of the River Rhone we'll be back in Avignon where we turn in our rental bikes and enjoy a last group dinner.

Day 11. Sunday, May 24. Depart after breakfast.
Consider visiting the Roman Theatre Antique, in Orange today or the Palais des Papes in Avignon, both UNESCO Heritage Sites.

INCLUDED

10 nights of lodging in 3 and 4 star hotels
10 breakfasts, 2 group dinners and 1 picnic lunch
Scott SUB Sport 20 Hybrid Bike
Technical and Emergency Support
Paper cue sheets and .gpx files for Garmins and smart phones
Entrance fee to Abbaye de Saint-Romain

NOT INCLUDED

9 lunches and 8 dinners
Other entrance fees for sites mentioned in the itinerary:
Pont du Gard museum and film, Cloitre Saint Paul de Mausole, Site Archaeologique de Glanum, Musee Estrine, Les Baux de Provence, Carrieres de Lumieres, La Village des Bories, Les Grottes de Thouzon.

For further information contact:

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