

C104-ECO Sacred mountains in Provence

No walks in these mountains from mid-June to mid-September
due to maximum fire risks




During this tour, you will discover two mountains of Provence: the Montagne Sainte Victoire and the Massif de la Sainte Baume. These limestone mountains originated with the folding of the Alps. They are very similar in height, with the same asymmetrical slopes topped by a rocky white ridge that contrasts with the blue of the sky and the surrounding ochre-colored land. You will be delighted by these arid landscapes and what they offer : Provençal villages bursting with sun; mountain peaks speckled with hermitages, crosses and chapels which have remained pilgrimage destinations for more than a thousand years; and the Grotto of Sainte Baume, the refuge of Sainte Mary-Madeleine, where popes and kings have journeyed

to pray. You will be surprised by the Sainte Baume forest, alive with scents which are more northern than Mediterranean, and by the Valley of Saint Pons, an island of greenery and coolness that brings relief in this dry area. You will enjoy your return to Cassis along a natural balcony above the Mediterranean Sea.

Itinerary

Day 1 - Arrival at AIX EN PROVENCE, ancient capital of Provence. You won't be able to resist strolling through this magical city with its numerous fountains, its shady squares and its private majestic mansions. Don't try ! Take the day to discover! *Lodging and breakfast in a 2-star hotel, located in the city center*

Day 2 - AIX – VAUVENARGUES (20 km) You will leave the city to the North-East, walking through fields and forests to the tour de César (old watchtower) and continue to a hill named La Tête du Marquis, above Vauvenargues, beautiful Provençal village dominating by a chateau where Picasso is buried.

Half-board accommodation in a one-star hotel with en-suite facilities

Day 3 - VAUVENARGUES - TRET (26 km – ascent : 700 meters) You will climb the village of Vauvenargues to reach the bottom of the Sainte Victoire Mountain that you will ascent by taking the Imoucha path, traversing the Pas du Moine (the Moine pass) and the Costes Chaudes crests. Keep to the same path and let it lead you along the crests to



the Priory and the Croix de Provence, the Baou de Vespre and the Mouches Peak that rises 1125 meters! You will then descend into Puylobier, a small village of narrow streets and tall houses. Then, you will walk through the plain to reach Trets, a charming medieval village - *Lodging and breakfast in a two-star hotel at Trets*

Day 4 - TRET - PLAN D'AUPS SAINTE BAUME (22 km). You will leave Trets, its well-preserved fortified walls, its narrow streets and the vaulted



passages surrounding Sainte Marie's church, and you will cross the Regagnas mountains at the Saint Jean du Puy Hermitage. You will walk down to Sainte Zacharie and cross through the Sainte Baume Forest to arrive at Plan d'Aups - *Half-board accommodation in a small family-run hotel*

Day 5 - PLAN D'AUPS STE BAUME - GEMENOS (22 km – ascent : 500 meters). From the Plan d'Aups, you will walk to the Dominican convent of Hostellerie de la Sainte Baume and climb up the Sainte Baume, a brilliantly white limestone wall located 1000 meters above sea-level which casts into shadow a great forest of oaks and beech trees. Be sure to visit the Sainte Marie Madeleine Grotto and the Saint Pilon Chapel before continuing along the Sainte Baume Crest to the Bertagne Peak. Then, from the Aigle Pass, you will walk down the Vallon de l'Aigle to Saint Pons Park, an area of lush green vegetation, and continue on to reach Gemenos - *Half-board accommodation in a small family-run hotel*

Day 6 - GEMENOS - CASSIS (25 km). You will leave Gemenos by the Mont Cruvelier and will reach the Ange Pass. Traversing the Font Blanche forest, you will pass through Le Moutounier before walking down to the Ouillier and the Belle Fille passes. From here, you will climb the Couronne de Charlemagne, a hill that looks like a crown over the Cassis vineyards, and pass around the Bau de la Saoupe, the last summit facing the ocean. You will finally walk down to Cassis centre where is located your hotel - *Lodging and breakfast in a family-run hotel.*

Day 7 - CALANQUE OF CASSIS (5-hour round walk). From the port you walk to Calanque de Port Miou and after calanque du Pin. Then you will leave the shore to ascent and go through Cadeiron plateau to reach Portalet d'En Vau (something like a pass) before plunging down into le vallon d'En Vau (narrow valley) to reach the next calanque, the calanque d'En Vau, one of the most beautiful along the coast. After swimming you walk up the vallons d'En Vau and de la Gardiole to reach an isolated forest house in the middle of this rocky massif. You will keep on your way through it to come back to the bottom of the calanque de Port Miou and return to Cassis. *Lodging and breakfast in the same family-run hotel*

Day 8 : CASSIS. Tour ends after breakfast.

Season

From beginning of March to middle of November except in summer time when these mountains are closed due to maximum risks of fire

What's included?

- ✓ 3 nights with accommodation in 1-star or family-run hotels on half-board basis
- ✓ 4 nights with accommodation in 1 or 2-star or family-run hotels on lodging and breakfast basis
- ✓ Hotel to hotel luggage transfer along the trail.
- ✓ A set of maps (1/25 000 scale) and detailed route notes describing the trail.
- ✓ A daily itinerary together with information about facilities and places of interest along the trail.
- ✓ Phone emergency assistance with English-speaking support (24/24 7/7 days)

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

Getting there and away

By plane: arrival at Marseille international airport- shuttle to Aix en Provence centre.

By train: TGV trains to Aix en Provence TGV rail station and shuttle to the town centre. From Cassis train, bus or taxi to the St Charles station in Marseille where you catch TGV

By car: Aix en Provence is located on the A8 and A51 motorways

Where to park: Supervised pay car parks in Aix. From Cassis, train, taxi or scheduled bus to Marseille and train to Aix to get back your car.

Walk difficulty

Grade 3 – walks of between 5 and 8 hours a day with ascents up to 700 m. Some hiking experience is advisable. A reasonable level of fitness and some stamina are required for these walks. You may cover long distances in remote countryside and the terrain will be rough under foot. In mountainous areas you will encounter some sustained ascents and descents.