

Multi-day hiking tour of the Vaucluse, in the heart of Provence

The department of Vaucluse in the Provence-Alpes-Côte d'Azur region has a beautiful nature, a pleasant temperature many months a year and, together with 3000 km of marked hiking trails, can rightly be called a paradise for hiking enthusiasts. More or less through the heart of the department runs from east to west the Luberon ridge. A spur of the Alps. Together with the *southern edge of the Plateau de Vaucluse*, it forms *le Parc Naturel Régional du Luberon*.

With these types of texts you are a walking area par excellence.

TGV to Avignon

To get there we opted for a train return Rotterdam-Avignon. With a (mandatory) change in Paris (from Paris Nord to Gare de Lyon, 15 minutes by metro). The total travel time between the two cities ranges from 7.5 hours to 11.5 hours. From Avignon TGV station by bus to Cereste, 80 km to the east, where we started our tour (journey time by bus: about 2 hours).

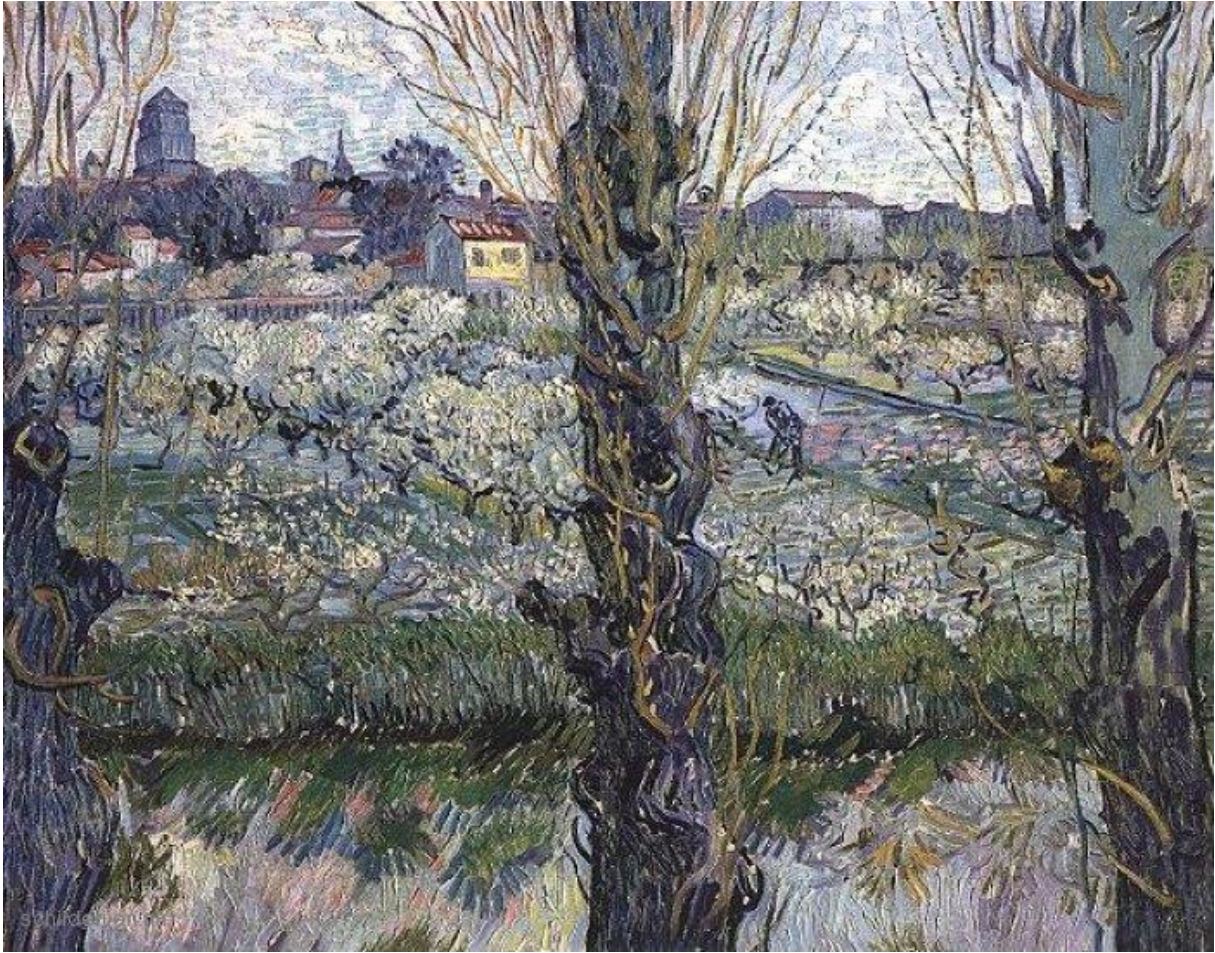


picturesque

The hiking area

That this area in Provence is loved by the tourist does not surprise. Sights abound.

Wherever you are: you often have a view of Mont Ventoux (1909 m). The Vaucluse has a large collection of picturesque villages, some built in a unique way against a hill. Formerly impregnable fortresses. Or from mid-June to August you can walk along the fantastic colored lavender fields, whether or not near the Abbey of Notre-Dame de Sénanque near Gordes. Or how about a day hike through Le Colorado Provençal, where the presence of ochre in the ground presents the hiker with a fascinating color palette. Is it crimson? Yellow? Orange? Blood-red? Sometimes blue. And sometimes green... I can well imagine with the landscapes of the Vaucluse that in 1883 van Gogh imagined the dark and gloomy area behind Emmen (Drenthe) and a few years later, via Paris, in Arles vestigde. Van *Landschap met turfhoop* naar de kleurenexplosies van *De bloeiende boomgaard met zicht op Arles!*



Van Gogh flowering orchards, view of Arles

The multi-day hike

A relaxing first stage from Cereste to Viens through a hilly area with a constant view of the Luberon mountains in the south. Viens is such a typical Provençal medieval village with the narrow streets, a castle, belfry, church and beautiful houses. Memories of those difficult conjugations of the verb *venir* also resurface: *je viens, tu viens, il vient, nous venons, vous venez and ils viennent*. While *viens* in French also means "ordinary". But this aside. You could have skipped these last texts as well. On the Viens - Saint-Saturnin-lès-Apt stage, you will start the sensational walk halfway through the geological shapes and brilliant colors of the *Colorado Provençal massif*. Very special. According to the Vaucluse-Provence Tourist Office, "*you can meet Clint Eastwood and other cowboys at any time*" but that seems to me to be an insult to this fantastic show rather than a recommendation...



Colorado Provençale

Saint-Saturnin-lès-Apt is, once again, a medieval village with the necessary architectural gems. After which we moved on to Gordes, via Roussillon. Roussillon is considered one of the most beautiful villages in France. A yellow, red and orange colored village with a number of old ochre mines to be visited. Gordes is located on top of a hill (up to 635 m) and meets all the clichés of a village in Provence.



Gordes

The walk goes through ochre-colored forests, hilly, from surprise to surprise, where the color combination of the bright blue sky, the dark green pine trees and orange shapes in and on the earth will stay with you. I guess. The last stage to Fontaine de Vaucluse goes along the Abbaye Notre-Dame de Sénanque. Founded in 1148 and known for a turbulent and bloody history. Currently a contemplative community of praying Cistercian monks. The pictures of the abbey with the blooming lavender in the monastery gardens are world famous. A community of a completely different order is *les Bories et Spa*: a "well-being stay" in which the floor is mainly determined by the wallet and the luxury offered. This way you walk from one extreme to the other.



the Abbaye Notre-Dame de Sénanque

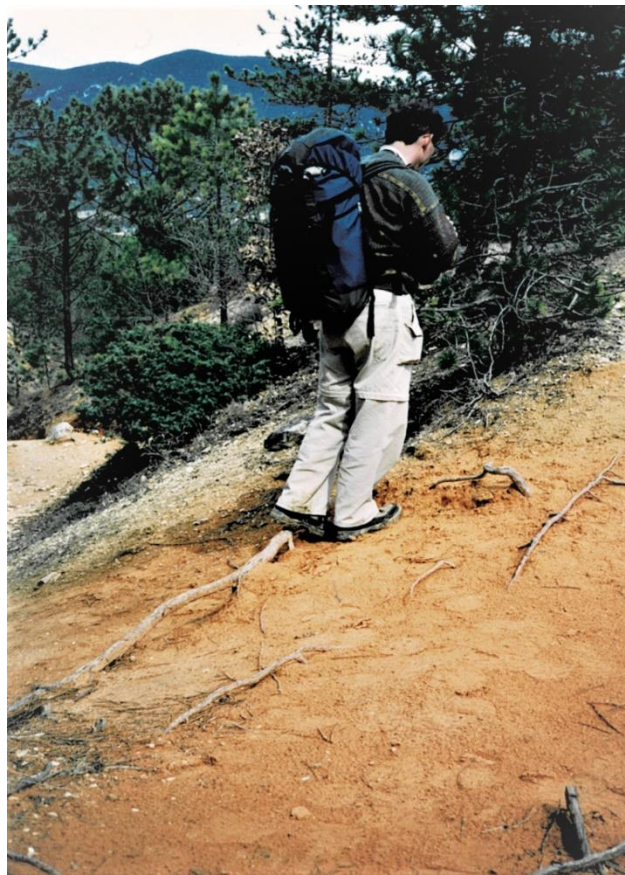
Fontaine de Vaucluse is located on the river La Sorgue. Southeast of the town, the underground river "surfaces" again, a so-called source of resurgence. Make sure you arrange your route in such a way that you arrive at this source from Gordes and you can continue your way along the river to the town. It can be busy, but it has to be. The beauty of this part of the walking route compensates a lot. The next day the bus back to Avignon. Another 30 kilometers. And you're around again.

General route tips

- Good maps of the hiking area are the IGN numbers 3242OT and 3142OT.
- The possibilities for free camping are great. In all parks, you leave no or as few traces as possible. Self-evident!
- You probably already know our warning for the gîtes: that's how they're open, that's how they're closed. Check your reservation.
- If you have the opportunity: extend your walking tour with another day of Avignon. The (half) bridge - *Sur le pont d'Avignon, on y danse, on y danse - is of course a must-see* , but there are quite a few other sights in the city. Such as the Palais des Papes, the Place d'Horloge or the Musée du Petit Palais. And if you do the route in July, you have the chance to experience something of the world-famous festival d'Avignon.
- Gastronomic highlight? Buy a baquette at the bakery, a few tasty (goat?-) cheeses at the local épicerie, the backpack in the back instead of on the back (and postpone the wine for a while).



Gastronomie



Colorado Provencale



Musée du Petit Palais. Botticelli. Madonna and child.