

RUSTIC TRAILS HOLIDAYS

Drome Explorer Plus, 25 September 2010

Highlights

Based at La Maison Rose in the village of Saillans, the highlights of this walking holiday include:

- Five days guided walking of between 5-6 hours per day, excluding breaks, 13 - 20 km
- Spectacular views; mediterranean and alpine scenery.
- Huge variety of wildlife.
- We leave one day and evening free for you to explore further or relax.
- Luxurious accommodation with private swimming pool.
- Delicious home cooked cuisine, and a broad selection of superb local wines.

Summary

This holiday is more challenging than our other walking weeks, with our day walks being longer with more climbs, but the rewards are enormous. We get further off the beaten track and hope to see more wildlife and great views as a result. Previous walking experience is required, the level of difficulty is moderate to moderately difficult.

Itinerary

Day 1:

Arrive at La Maison Rose in time for drinks and dinner on the terrace.

Days 2, 3, 4, 6 and 7:

There are many superb walks in the area. Our guide will choose the best area in which to walk each day. It is not possible to be precise about the exact itinerary, but some of the areas we are likely to visit include:

Les Trois Becs, the tallest most beautiful perched syncline in Europe. We leave La Maison Rose on foot and follow the GR9 south. We climb steadily for three and a half hours (with breaks) across mixed terrain of vineyards, exposed limestone, and deciduous and evergreen woodland. We reach the Pas de la Motte at 1200m altitude and stop for a picnic lunch. The views from here are simply breathtaking, and remain so for the next three hours as we walk around the circumference of the syncline reaching an altitude of 1589m. The opportunities to see chamois, mouflon and other wildlife are excellent. We descend the eastern path towards the Col de la Chaudiere at 1000m, where the minibus takes us back to Saillans for a drink and a swim before dinner.

Tete de la Dame, we drive by minibus into the Vercors National Park for a high level walk. Our starting point is the Col de la Bataille at 1313m. From here we take the marked path towards the Tete de la Dame, following the edge of the plateau for several kilometres and enjoy excellent uninterrupted views south of the Drome valley and the surrounding countryside a kilometre below. As we head east we get great views of the Vercors massif and the Alps beyond. We continue our loop but then take the path down from the massif to the village of les Boutons 500m below. It's a steep, beautiful descent bathed in sunshine, and we should see many more wild flowers along the way. We stop for a drink in the bar before taking the minibus back to Saillans.

Glandasse, this is probably the most challenging walk we offer, it's a 20 km circuit with a 1500m altitude gain and descent along the way, with arguably the finest views of the southern Alps as your reward. It's a wonderful walk, starting at the old cistercian monastery at the foot of the Vercors. It's a steady and quite gentle climb at first through woodland and open pasture, eventually becoming steeper as the terrain becomes more rugged as we near the first vantage point. From here, Le Compteur à Moutons, we tackle the long and quite steep ascent to the summit - Le Pié Ferré at 2041 metres. It's well worth the effort, and is probably the best lunch spot in the whole of the region, with Mont Blanc and Mont Ventoux visible on a clear day.

Du Pison aux Econdus, 13km, 5 hours walking, 650m altitude gain.

This fairly strenuous walk offers some of the most rewarding views across the Vercors National Park and the Drome valley. Our starting point is where the road runs out in the valley of the Meyrosse, just north of the town of Die, at 1000m altitude. We soon find the 'maison forestiere' from where we climb steadily through steep mixed forest to about 1400m. From here we climb more gently towards the Tete du Pison, and the edge of the Vercors plateau. We can expect to see abundant wildlife such as golden eagles, griffon vultures and more. We head north along the edge of the plateau, admiring the stunning views, and choose a good spot for a picnic lunch. We continue our circuit, with plenty more excellent views and wildlife opportunities, and eventually begin our gentle descent at the Pas des Econdus, reaching the minibus for the journey back.

Col de Rousset, we take the minibus and drive eastwards along the valley towards Die, then head north, driving up to the Col de Rousset at 1250m. From there we can either take the ski lift or walk the remaining distance up to the plateau.

A large population of griffon vultures have colonised this area, and we should see them above and below us from our vantage point looking southwards from the edge of the massif. We head north and west as we explore the area, finally dropping down into Marignac en Diois for our short ride by minibus back to base.

Day 8:

Saturday: We say our goodbyes; transfers to Valence TGV and Lyon airport.

Practical information

Minimum group size is 4, maximum 10. Minimum age: 18 years. We provide one guide per group who will guide all the walks in the area. The guide will not be provided for anyone walking on a route other than with the group.

What to bring

In addition to your usual clothes, you will need the following:-

- Lightweight walking boots with good ankle support
- Waterproof / windproof jacket
- Sun hat and sun cream
- Water bottle
- Day rucksack (for your belongings and picnic lunch)
- Walking poles if you like to use them.

As well as a camera and binoculars, we suggest you bring a blank CD so that you can take a copy of digital photographs taken by the guide and any other members of the group.

Joining the trip - transfers

Included in the cost of your holiday is an airport transfer to and from Lyon St Exupery or to and from Valence TGV. If you are taking this option you will be given further details with your joining instructions. Alternatively you may prefer to make your own arrangements, in this case please arrive at your accommodation from 4pm onwards on your arrival day.

Passports

All nationalities require a full passport that must be valid for 6 months beyond the intended length of stay. It is your responsibility to have the correct personal documents.

Insurance

It is a requirement of our terms and conditions that you have taken out appropriate travel insurance in respect of your holiday.

Extra expenses and spending money

Allow about 30 euros for the evening meal on the rest day, plus money for drinks etc in bars and cafés. There is a cashpoint in the village.

Transport

A mini-bus is normally used as your support vehicle throughout the week, and all transport costs for the normal programme of guided walks are included. Transport is not usually provided on the rest day.

Accommodation

La Maison Rose has three double and two twin bedded rooms with en-suite facilities. You will have full use of the large sitting room, dining room, terraces, swimming pool and garden. The house is a short walk from the centre of the village and two minutes from the river Drome.

Meals:

Breakfast will be provided each morning on the terrace. It is self-service and comprises cereal, yoghurt, fruit, eggs, croissants, bread, jam, marmalade and honey, tea and coffee.

Lunch: five picnic lunches are provided consisting of filled baguettes of your choice, salad, fruit, cakes, snack bars and soft drinks.

Afternoon tea; tea, coffee and biscuits is served on your return from the day's walking.

Dinner; six home cooked dinners of four courses, including unlimited wine, mineral water, tea or coffee.

We do not offer a choice of meals but if you have a food allergy or are vegetarian please discuss your requirements with us.

Facilities:

A washing machine is available, and a fridge/freezer for any food items. A PC is at your disposal for viewing and copying photographs.

The library contains a broad selection of books; there are also maps and guidebooks to borrow.

The swimming pool is open from 8 am each day.

Most UK terrestrial channels can be viewed on the satellite television in the lounge.

Drinks with meals are free and unlimited; a minibar and wine list is available for drinks at other times, for which a nominal charge is made.

It may be possible to order an english newspaper; please ask for details.

Rustic Trails Holidays

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