

RUSTIC TRAILS HOLIDAYS

Wildlife and Flowers

Highlights

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

- 5 days guided walking of between 4-6 hours per day. There will be some uphill sections but the pace is easy.
- Orchids, gentians, narcissi and many other wild flowers in a spectacular setting.
- Eagles, vultures, chamois and other 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

Our location in the Drome valley lies at the apex of three climatic zones: Alpine, Mediterranean and Continental Europe. The implications for the flora and fauna are immediately apparent as you explore the area.

To the north lies the Vercors National Park, France's largest nature reserve, a vast mountainous area a mile above sea level, cut by deep limestone gorges among meadows and moorlands, forests, peaks and ridges. Almost no-one lives here, its just the walkers who experience the stunning alpine flowers in spring, the dazzling gentians, wild tulips and narcissi, and many orchids. (Spring comes late in the Vercors; down in the valley you could be sipping rosé and cooling off in the pool while the flowers are giving their best) There are ibex, chamois and mouflon; it's a wild, isolated place - even wolves live here. And after you've looked around for a while, look upwards. There are golden eagles, vultures and other birds of prey patrolling the skies. Many alpine bird species can be found here if you know where to look, from Alpine Accentors to Wallcreepers.

As well as spending time in the National Park, we explore some excellent locations in the valley and to the south, noting the climatic effects of the Mediterranean, and through the week should see a huge range of wildlife and flowers.

Our guide has extensive knowledge of the flora and fauna of the area, and should be able to answer any questions you have. The pace is deliberately quite slow to allow time to identify and enjoy what we see, and to savour the marvellous views and take photographs.

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:

La Vallee de la Roanne, with the lovely perched village of St Benoit-en-Diois. La Roanne has superb rock pools and is also an excellent area for wild flowers, we will see an enormous variety along the river bank. We could see a Black Woodpecker here, plus Golden Eagles, Short Toed Eagles, and vultures.

La Vallee de la Gervanne, highlights of this area includes the restored village of Cobonne and the market town of Beaufort as well as stunning views. This is the home of Ophrys Drumana, an orchid unique to the region discovered in 1973.

Le Col du Rousset, in the Vercors National Park, is a ski resort in winter. In spring we don't need to walk far to find a great variety of wild flowers, including wild tulips, pheasant's eye narcissi, dark vanilla orchids, gentians and much more. Another highlight here is the griffon vultures soaring overhead on calm days, and the views of the Vercors and la Glandasse.

Le Col de la Bataille, also in the Vercors National Park offers incredible views to the north and south, as well as easy walking, and is renowned for gentians and elder flowered orchids.

Les Trois Becs, the highest perched syncline in Europe; there are several different access points all offering different views and wonderful walking and not as taxing as it looks from the terrace! A great place to spot chamois, red deer and marmots.

La Foret de Saou, rich with wildlife and distinctly mediterranean flora, wild lavender, juniper and thyme. Expect to see red squirrels, red deer, woodpeckers.

Le Combau, a beautiful alpine location : golden eagles, chamois, a huge variety of wild flowers including many orchids, soldanella, gentians etc, and views over towards the French Alps. On the way, we stop at a little known location to see a large colony of Lady's Slipper orchids.

Bezaudon, a lovely area fifteen kilometres south over the col. Very easy walking with lovely views south towards Provence and Mont Ventoux. Over twenty different orchid species can be found here in spring.

Day 5:

Rest day. A non walking day to relax or visit one of the nearby market towns of Die or Crest. Alternatively, we have some prepared routes that you can do on your own if you would rather walk. The Drome river is 50 metres from the house; you can see a family of beavers there at dusk, plus kingfishers, dippers and nightjars. There are plenty of other birds: Green and Great Spotted Woodpecker, European Nuthatch, Treecreeper, Redstart, Wryneck etc, in the grounds of La Maison Rose and nearby.

Evening meal in local restaurant

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.

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