



8 days from £879

May, September & October

Provence - Arles, Avignon, Nîmes & the Camargue

The base for our exploration of this enchanting and captivating part of France is the Roman city of Arles, renowned for its complete amphitheatre, medieval centre and scenes and landscapes famously portrayed in the works of van Gogh. Other highlights of the holiday include the old papal seat of Avignon, the ancient monuments of Nîmes, the Camargue port towns of Saintes-Maries-de-la-Mer and Aigues-Mortes, and the iconic symbol of the south, the Pont du Gard.

- 7 nights in Arles – 2 hb and 5 bb • Walking tour of Arles • Excursion to Nîmes, Pont du Gard and Avignon
- Boat trip in the Camargue with lunch • Visits to Saintes-Maries-de-la-Mer and Aigues-Mortes

PROGRAMME

DAY ONE: Flight to Marseille or Nîmes, transfer to your hotel in Arles (one hour from Marseille, 40 minutes from Nîmes) for seven nights hotel accommodation. Two dinners in the hotel are included during your stay, leaving five nights to sample the delights of the local restaurants. Your Tour Director will be on hand to assist.

DAYS TWO TO SEVEN: In Arles. A walking tour of the city will acquaint you with all the major sights and attractions of this splendid city - Place du Forum, Espace van Gogh, amphitheatre and theatre, the Roman baths and the Musée Réattu on the bank of the river Rhône. Arles' golden age began under Caesar when it became an important regional capital of the Roman Empire. Evidence of this is everywhere, but brazenly obvious at 'les Arènes' - the wonderfully preserved amphitheatre which is now used for bullfights. The special light in Provence has always attracted painters and Arles will be forever associated with Vincent van Gogh for his spat with Gauguin, severing his ear, but, above all, his incredible artistic output while in the city. He arrived in Arles in February 1888 and in the prolific fifteen months that followed he created more than three hundred works including some of his best known - the Arles Sunflowers series, his Chair, Bedroom. You can follow a walking trail in Arles featuring van Gogh scenes such as the Amphitheatre, Café Terrace at Night and Starry Night over the Rhone.

As well as the walking tour, there are two included excursions during your stay in Arles. The first is a tour of the Camargue by coach and boat. The Camargue is Europe's largest wetland and as well as birds, its other famous residents are the white horses and black bulls. The day starts with a short coach transfer through the Camargue to Saintes-Maries-de-la-Mer. On the way you'll hear the story of the Three Marys (Jacob, Salome and Magdalene) and their servant Sarah, patron saint of Gypsies, thousands of whom have been making the annual pilgrimage to Stes-Maries for centuries. A boat cruise on the Petit Rhone will show you aspects of the Camargue and its wildlife only accessible by river. After a lunch (included) in Stes-Maries you continue west across the Camargue to Aigues-Mortes, where the immense city walls still protect the medieval city within. After a guided tour you return to Arles. 75 miles today.

The second included excursion is a grand tour of the region to Nîmes, the Pont du Gard and Avignon - an 80-mile round trip packed with interest. Nîmes has a complete Roman amphitheatre to rival, even better, that of Arles. Both were built in 1st century AD and became residential areas post-empire until they were cleared out in the first half of the 19th century. As well as an ancient centre Nîmes has excellent modern architecture by Norman Foster. From Nîmes, you head to Avignon, stopping en route to admire the 3-tier arches of the Pont du Gard, part of the 50km Roman aqueduct built to carry water to Nîmes. In Avignon you'll have plenty of time to admire the sights of the magnificent former papal capital - Palais des Papes, Place de l'Horloge, the ramparts or maybe even dance 'sur le pont'! After your time in Avignon you return to Arles.

There is also an optional excursion into the Alpilles hills just 12 miles from Arles. The day includes a visit to the spectacular hilltop village of Les-Baux-de-Provence, the extraordinary artistic sound and light show of Carrières de Lumières in the Les Baux underground limestone quarry, the beautiful provençal town of St Remy and the clinic at Saint Paul-de-Mausole where van Gogh painted another series of masterpieces while a voluntary patient in the asylum.

DAY EIGHT: Free time until departure for the airport and your flight home.

YOUR HOTEL

BEST WESTERN ATRIUM ★★ ★, Arles (seven nights)

This is a modern hotel built around an old town house. The hotel is centrally located opposite the Tourist Office. Its 90 rooms are on 4 floors and have air-conditioning, bath or shower and wc, satellite tv, hairdryer. Rooms have internal atrium view or a view of the town. Wifi is complimentary throughout the hotel. There is an airy restaurant with a glass roof and a bar. (www.hotelatrium.com)

A WALKING HOLIDAY is also available from this hotel. Please ask for a copy of our Walking Holidays brochure or visit preferredts.com.