

Pauwels Travel Bureau Ltd.
15 Egerton Street Brantford, Ont. N3T 4P6
Tel: 519-753-2695/800-380-3974 - Fax: 519-753-6376
tours@pauwelstravel.com – www.pauwelstravel.com



*'The Estaque Peninsula with red roofs,' by Paul Cézanne.jpg
(this and all other illustrations free of copyright c/o Wikimedia Commons)*

PROVENCE: BETWEEN MEDITERRANEAN AND MOUNTAINS

15 days, from Tuesday, October 10, to Friday, October 24, 2022

A thorough exploration of France's sunny southern region! Occasionally following ancient Roman roads and crossing Roman bridges, we travel from French Riviera to the Provencal interior high in the Alps, then explore natural and historical attractions such as the spectacular Gorges du Verdon, France's Grand Canyon, the legendary Ventoux Mountain, and the medieval ghost town of Les Baux while descending back towards the Mediterranean, with visits to picturesque towns big and small, featuring Roman monuments and memories of great painters such as Cézanne and Van Gogh, including Aix-en-Provence, Arles, Nîmes, Avignon, Orange, and the regional metropolis, Marseille. Comfortable 3-star/superior tourist-class hotels, excellent local cuisine, and history talks by your tour escort, historian Jacques R. Pauwels, PhD, author of books such as 'Beneath the Dust of Time: A History of the Names of People and Places'.

Tour price, based on double occupancy: \$XXX from Toronto
"Land only" (from Nice Airport to Marseille Airport): \$XXXX - Single room supplement: \$XXX

PROPOSED ITINERARY:

Day 1 - Tuesday, October 10: Late evening departure from Toronto to Nice via Paris, Amsterdam or Frankfurt.

Day 2 - Wednesday, October 11: Arrival in Nice and transfer to the highly rated 3-star/superior tourist class [Hotel Casa Bella](#) in the centre of Mouans Sartoux, a community nestled in the hills between the world-famous jet-set resort of Cannes and the town of Grasse, the perfume capital of France, in the hinterland. Check in, and free time to settle in. Dinner in a typical restaurant.

Day 3 – Thursday, October 12: After breakfast, exploration of [Grasse](#), with a guided tour of one of the numerous local perfume manufacturies. On to [Cannes](#) for a sightseeing tour, by little tourist train, of the old town and the waterfront boulevard, La Croisette, backdrop of the city’s annual movie festival. After lunch we head for nearby Antibes, founded by the ancient Greeks, where we view the monument commemorating Napoleon’s return from exile on the island of Elba and visit the local museum focused on the work of Picasso, who lived for many years in this area; the [Picasso Museum](#) occupies the site of the Greek acropolis, which became a Roman and then a medieval fortress belonging to the Grimaldis, a famous Genoese family whose descendants still rule Monaco. Return to our hotel in late afternoon and free evening.



Cannes: Hotels along La Croisette and the beach



The Trophy of the Alps at La Turbie

Day 4 – Friday, October 13: Full-day excursion along the French Riviera, a.k.a. the Côte d’Azur. The most beautiful and interesting stretch, between Nice, the “queen city” of this playground, to the Italian border, involves three spectacular scenic routes known as [Corniches](#). We start out along the Lower Corniche, a stunning drive along the coast all the way to Menton, the last town before the border. En route we will pay a visit to the Principality of Monaco, with the old town and the Prince’s Palace as well as the Monte Carlo district with its famous Casino. Return via a stretch of the Grande Corniche, the high mountain road. In the village of La Turbie, an impressive monument, known as the “[Trophy of the Alps](#),” was erected by the Romans to celebrate their conquest of this southern part of Gaul, as France was known then, turning it into a *province* of their empire, hence the name Provence. It was here that a major Roman road entered Gaul, an extension of the famous Via Aurelia, but known locally as the [Via Julia Augusta](#). Descending to the level of the Middle Corniche, we enjoy spectacular views of the Mediterranean coast as we head for Nice for a panoramic tour of this magnificent city, including its old town as well as the world-famous waterfront boulevard, the Promenade des Anglais. Return to our hotel in the early evening.

Day 5 - Saturday, October 14: Departure after breakfast. A short westward drive takes us to the small coastal community of [Fréjus](#), which was a town of great importance in Roman times. Strategically located on the Via Julia Augusta and developed into a major seaport and naval base by the likes of Caesar and Augustus, the town boasts plenty of monuments and archaeological remains that bear witness to this glorious past, including a theatre, an amphitheatre, baths, harbour installations, and ancient churches, because this was also one of the early centres of Christianity in Gaul. Our sightseeing here will of course also include a visit to the very interesting [archaeological museum](#). After lunch in nearby [Saint Tropez](#), a seaside playground of the jetset ever since Brigitte Bardot was first seen there, sunbathing on the beach, we drive north and enter the highlands of Provence. Our destination is one of the prettiest villages of France, medieval [Moustiers-Sainte-Marie](#), nestled at the foot of a gap in a steep rocky mountainside, unquestionably. Dinner and overnight in a 3-star property, the [Colombier](#) or similar.



The port of Saint-Tropez, by Maximilien Luce (1893)

Moustiers Sainte-Marie >



Day 6 - Sunday, October 15: A full day to experience the absolutely breathtaking scenery of the [Gorges du Verdon](#), the “Grand Canyon” of France and Europe’s biggest canyon, carved out of the rocky Provençal highlands by the Verdon River, with cliffs that rise as high as 700m! We will leisurely tour the northern as well as the southern rim, pausing regularly for photo opportunities, and for coffee breaks and lunch in quaint towns and villages such as Castellane and Aiguines, where the Verdon River widens into a big blue lake, the Lac de Sainte-Croix. Return to Moustiers in late afternoon, and rest of the day at leisure.



< The Gorges du Verdon

Day 7 - Monday, October 16: Full-day escapade into the Alps! We head northward towards the high Alps until at Ubaye-Serre-Ponçon we reach the Via Domitia, the second Roman road entering Gaul from Italy, but this time via an Alpine mountain pass rather than along the coast. From here we follow this ancient road to Sisteron, a town whose Citadel, perched high on a steep rock, served for many centuries as the gateway to the Provence. The road now runs through the Durance River Valley and is a section of

the famous “Route Napoléon,” followed in 1814 by Napoleon, but in the opposite direction, to Paris – and eventually Waterloo! -- after his previously mentioned return from exile in Elba – your guide will tell you the tragic story! En route back towards Moustiers, we will probably view some Roman milestones and monuments, such as the columns of a temple in the town of Riez. Arrival back at our hotel in late afternoon.

Day 8 - Tuesday, October 17: Departure from Moustiers after breakfast. We motor through the scenic countryside of the Provençal interior to the village of Vauvenargues, situated in a green valley at the foot of a

giant of a mountain, associated with important historical facts as well as fanciful legends and a major source of inspiration for the great post-impressionist painter Paul Cézanne, the Montagne Sainte-Victoire. Another famous artist, Picasso lived in a [chateau](#) in this village and is buried here. On to the charming historical capital of Provence, which was once an independent kingdom: Aix-en-Provence. Upon arrival, leisurely walking tour of the medieval city centre, with as highlights the Cathedral and the magnificent plane tree-lined boulevard known as the Cours Mirabeau. After a break for lunch, visit to Cézanne's workshop before we drive south to the beautiful Mediterranean seaside resort of [La Ciotat](#), the comfortable 3-star [Hotel Plage Saint-Jean](#), located at a stone's throw from the beach. How about a swim in the hotel's indoor pool before our group dinner this evening?



< *Montagne Sainte-Victoire on a painting by Cézanne*

Day 9 - Wednesday, October 18: Day at leisure to explore La Ciotat, shop, go for a walk along the beach, swim (in the pool if not the sea, a bit cool at this time of the year!), watch the locals play the popular Provençal game of pétanque, which was invented here, or just enjoy some dolce far niente. If the weather permits, it will be possible to take an optional boat tour to explore the deep, fjord-like rocky and steep inlets of the coast known as the [Calanques](#). You can also visit [Parc du Mugel](#), the fine municipal park and botanical garden, tucked between the sea and a big rock and officially rated as one of the "Remarkable Gardens of France" by the French Ministry of Culture; it features all sorts of tropical

and subtropical plants as well as [varieties typical for Provence](#), native or not, such as mimosa, bougainvillia, bamboo, liege oak trees, lavender and other aromatic plants, members of the families of Mediterranean plants known as maquis and garrigue. No group dinner this evening.

Day 10 - Thursday, October 19: Full-day excursion to Marseille, one of the greatest seaports of the Mediterranean, founded by the Greeks and arguably the oldest city of France. Our local visit will focus on the old town, with the site of the original Greek settlement, and the colourful harbour, and include a visit to the [MUCEM](#), the Museum of European and Mediterranean Civilisations. Returning to La Ciotat, we will briefly visit another picturesque coastal resort, Cassis.

Marseille's Old Port and the Church of Notre Dame de la Garde >



Day 11 - Friday, October 20: Leaving La Ciotat, we bypass Marseille and motor along the shores of the lagoon known as the Etang de Berre to the village of Saint-Chamas, where we pause to admire the [Pont Flavien](#), claimed to be the most impressive Roman bridge outside of Italy. On through the Crau landscape, a kind of stoney desert, to [Les Baux](#), an amazing medieval ghost town perched high on a hill in the curious Alpilles Mountains. Our next stop is the quintessentially Provençal town of [Saint-Rémy](#), boasting twin Roman monuments known as Les Antiques as well as memories of Van Gogh, who spent time here in an asylum. Late afternoon arrival at our hotel in the pretty little town of

[Villeneuve](#), situated just across the mighty Rhone River from Avignon, where the charming and very Provençal [Hotel L'Atelier](#) will be our home for the next four nights. Dinner in a typical restaurant.

Day 12 - Saturday, October 21: After breakfast we drive a short distance to visit the [Pont du Gard](#), an amazing Roman aqueduct, a UNESCO World Heritage Site, situated in the middle of a wonderful Provençal landscape. On to the beautiful city of Nîmes, where a tour by little tourist train will enable us to admire some very well-preserved Roman monuments, including a temple known as the Maison Carrée, as well as an amphitheatre (or arena) where bullfights are now occasionally performed. Continue to [Arles](#), located on the banks of the Rhone River, an ancient and charming Provençal town featured in many paintings by Van Gogh, who lived here for some time. Our local walking tour there will include all the monuments that earned this town the title of UNESCO World Heritage Site: the Roman amphitheatre; the fine Romanesque Saint-Trophime Church; and the quaint Place du Forum, where the café featured in Van Gogh's 'Café Terrace at Night' is just perfect for a coffee break! On the way back to our hotel, we visit Le [Mas des Tourelles](#), a winery where we will learn how wine was made by the Romans and taste wine still made the same way!



The amazing Pont du Gard

Day 13 - Sunday, October 22: Full-day excursion to some more wonderful Provençal places: the town of [Orange](#), featuring a fabulous [Roman theatre and triumphal arch](#), a twin UNESCO World Heritage Site; [Vaison-la-Romaine](#), famous for its Roman bridge; the big mountain of Provence, [Mont Ventoux](#), with an altitude of nearly 2,000m; and the romantic village of Fontaine-Vaucluse, where a big, beautiful, and rather mysterious spring marks the source of the River Sorgue.



The road across the top of Mont Ventoux >

Day 14 - Monday, October 23: After breakfast we cross the Rhone and visit [Avignon](#), one of the most famous cities in Provence, whose impressive medieval walls bear witness to its glorious past, especially in the Middle Ages, when the Popes resided here for nearly a full century! We start with a panoramic tour by little tourist train, then visit the mighty Papal Palace and, of course, the remains of the monumental St. Bénézet Bridge, celebrated by the song "[Sur le Pont d'Avignon](#)." Unsurprisingly, Avignon too was designated a World Heritage Site by UNESCO. The afternoon is at leisure, and this evening we will enjoy our Au Revoir-dinner in a restaurant in Villeneuve.



Panoramic view of Avignon and its famous bridge

Day 15 – Tuesday, October 24: After breakfast, transfer to Marseille Airport in time for the return flight to Toronto.

Tour price, based on double occupancy: \$XXXX from Toronto
“Land only” (from/to Barcelona Airport): \$XXXXX - Single room supplement: \$XXX

Included in the tour price are:

- Flight Toronto to Nice and back from Marseille, including one checked suitcase as well as taxes and fees.
- Accommodation based on double occupancy in superior tourist-class (3-star) hotels; the single room supplement is \$XXX;
- Breakfast daily and a total of *six* dinners of full lunches;
- Overland transportation by private coach;
- All sightseeing and visits as outlined in the itinerary, including admission to museums and monuments mentioned.
- Airport lounge pass for use upon departure from Toronto.

Not included are:

- All items of a personal nature.
- Beverages with dinners, and meals other than those outlined above.
- A gratuity for the coach driver, 30 Euros or dollar equivalent, to be paid locally.
- Travel Insurance, available upon request.

