

Places to Go, Things to See, Food to Eat, Wine to Drink . . . (updated 7/2013)

The Luberon Valley is one of the most beautiful in all of Provence. The area is stuffed with medieval villages, panoramic vistas, Roman ruins, vineyards galore, street markets, etc. Here are a few suggestions to fill your time. They are very subjective based on Harry's and Mitzi's personal experience. We strongly suggest you bring with you 1.) Michelin Map of Provence; essential for driving; and 2.) Michelin green (not red) guide for Provence, a concise encyclopedia of information about everything worth seeing in Provence. Estimated driving time is included. For places to stay and restaurants, get the Michelin Red Guide. If you can wait until you reach us, you can save money and borrow our copies of both Michelin guides.

TOWNS, VILLAGES, SIGHTS

Must See . . .

Roussillon: This small village is located about 6 miles, 15 minutes from Lacoste. It is famous for its extraordinary beautiful cliffs of red, yellow, white ochres in stunning formations. The park of ochres is open everyday, costs a few Euros to get in and walk around. The village itself, easy walking distance, is charming. Gorgeous viewpoint at the top of the village, next to the church.

Pont Julien: Located at the D900 on the way to Apt or Roussillon, about 4 miles from Lacoste, the "pont" (bridge) Julien was built in 3 BC. It is a remarkable example of Roman engineering ingenuity, and beautiful in shape and scale. You can walk across it, but if you do, you MUST lock your car and leave nothing in it.

Abbaye de Senanque: Located near Gordes, about 30 minutes from Lacoste. This 12th century Cistercian monastery is surrounded by fields of lavender (peak time is early July). Beautiful stone architecture. The monks are a singing order. You can go to a vespers service evenings (7 days a week) at 6:00 to hear them chant the service in French. Quite amazing. You can tour the abbey for about 7 euros. Lovely gift shop. Stunning views of the village of Gordes on the drive to/from the Abbaye, especially late in the day (vespers time).

Also

Bonnieux: Closest village to Lacoste, 3 miles, easily seen across the valley. Charming, classic hilltop village. Closest grocery store and pharmacy, lots of good shops. Great market Friday morning. Excellent pottery shop, run by the owner/potter Daniele, just outside (below) the village on the road (D36) to Goult. A fine vineyard, Chateau Canorgue, which offers excellent "biologique" (organic) wine is located just outside the village on the road (D149) toward Roussillon.

Menerbes: Lovely village 3 miles to the west. Park and walk to the church at the point, lovely views all around. Oppede le Vieux, is just a bit beyond (west of Menerbes); a charming cliff-hanger with an old church and fort at the top.

Isle sur la Sorgue: 20 minutes from Lacoste, this beautiful village is the antique capital of southern France, built around several pretty canals, known as the "Venice" of Provence. Stuffed with antiques and tourists. Lovely square across from the cathedral. Great flea market on Sunday mornings, but parking is horrendous.

Saignon: 20 minutes from Lacoste, a charming small village, built on top of a rock, with lovely fountain in the main square. Rises just above (west) of Apt. If driving, go through Bonnieux, follow signs across the "claperades" (D232 ridge across the Luberon).

Abbaye de St. Hillaire: A tiny version of Senanque, this 12th century chapel is only 1 ½ miles from Tuxedo Junction, on the D109 toward Menerbes. It is lovely and has panoramic views of the valley and vineyards.

And don't forget to ask about the James Dean Memorial . . . right here in Lacoste!

Further Afield : Lourmarin: Beautiful village on the other side of the Luberon. Go through Bonnieux, follow signs to Aix and Lourmarin. One of the prettiest villages, and a lovely, if sometimes torturous 40 min. drive across the Petit Luberon. Good market on Fridays.

Venasque, Vaison La Romaine, Crestet, Seguret, Sablet, Gigondas: All charming villages 30-45 minutes north of Lacoste, the last famous for its fine Cote du Rhone wines. It's worth taking a day to "circuit" these exceptional villages; Crestet and Seguret are my favorites.

St. Remy: 45-60 minutes from Lacoste, beautiful drive through plane tree "tunnels". St. Remy is Van Gogh's town. Lovely town in classic circle design. Real attractions are the Roman monuments (best preserved in Europe) and ruins of ancient town (Glanum) nearby; and, 500 yards down the road, St. Paul de Mausole, the asylum where Van Gogh checked himself in, has a gorgeous cloister and small museum.

Arles: An hour+ from Lacoste, 30 minutes beyond St. Remy, this city is stuffed with Roman relics, including a intact coliseum still used for bullfights. It's also VanGogh's town, sits right on the Rhone and has a fabulous modern (air conditioned!) museum of archeology that should not be missed. Big market on Saturday.

Pont du Gard: 60-75 minutes from Lacoste. This astonishing Roman aqueduct, made of gracefully arched massive limestone, rises 160 feet above the river Gard, takes your breath away. Combine visit with a trip to Avignon, or Uzes (seat of ancient Dukes), a bit to the north.

Avignon: 45 minutes from Lacoste. This is a big city, university town, one of only 3 remaining completely walled cities in Europe. There are some interesting small museums, especially the Musée Angladon, but the real attraction is the amazing Palais des Papes (Popes' Palace). It's worth the trouble to park and get there. You MUST get one of the "self directed" audio guides. The park above the Palais (Rocher des Doms) is a pleasant place to sit or picnic, great views. But there's not much else; one day's enough.

Aix-en-Provence: 45-60 minutes from Lacoste. Ask Mitzi for best directions. This is a classically beautiful French city that has one of the most gorgeous boulevards and fountains in Europe. Stuffed with tourists, fine shops, magnificent 18th century architecture, squares, churches. Worth going in the morning (Tues/Thurs/Sat) to catch the excellent markets. This was Cezanne's town; his beloved Mt. Ste. Victoire is visible to the east.

Cassis: Our favorite small port village on the Mediterranean, about 90 minutes drive from Lacoste. Charming small village with boardwalk, boat rides to the gorgeous "calenques" and the best place to savor fish soup.

MARKETS; all markets are in the morning, generally 8 am until 12:00 or 12:30

Bonnieux: Classic small village weekly market. Friday mornings in the village; Wednesday mornings ONLY in summer, a much smaller version in the parking lot at the cave cooperative on the D36 near the D900

Apt: Huge, regional market, special Arab section, everything under the sun. Saturday morning.

Aix: Tues/Thurs/Sat

Arles: Saturday. Arles also has a fabulous, modern (air conditioned!) museum of archaeology

Isle sur la Sorgue: Sunday; huge regional morning market and all day flea market. Big crowds, great stuff.

Smaller (no flea) market on Thursday

Goult; Thurs. summer only. Lovely village with great place to have coffee at "Café de La Poste".

Lacoste: Small market in the parking lot at the post office; Tuesday mornings

Roussillon: Thursday mornings (serious traffic)

Coustellet: The only true "peasant" market where local farmers sell their own produce, Sunday morning. Best market for fresh food and local color. Get there early! Antiques and other wares (pottery, fish, olives, cheese, etc.) are across the D900. Stop here, then go on to Isle sur Sorgue – start early!

SPORTS, ETC. Hiking: Best place to hike/ walk is the Foret de Cedres located just outside Bonnieux on the D36 to Lourmarin. You can drive there, park and walk; or you can hike up the Luberon from various trails near Lacoste e.g. where the D106 meets the D3. On clear days, you can see the Mediterranean from the top. Also, the "Fort de

Buoux" at Buoux, a 20 minute drive from Lacoste, atop the Luberon where you'll find remains of a medieval settlement and stunning views to the Alps. Biking: You can rent bicycles from a couple of shops in nearby Bonnieux. One shop, Sunbikes, has motorized bikes. Tennis: There are free tennis courts in Bonnieux and Goult.

RESTAURANTS: Lacoste environs offers many restaurants, but none right in the village. There are two cafes; one, the Café de France (on the sharp curve coming through the village), offers a stunning view of the valley and Bonnieux beyond; but the food is mediocre. Better for beer, coffee, maybe salad. For a good dinner, try something below. Reserve, preferably a day or so in advance. Prices quoted are for a "Menu" usually a set 3- course meal, with selection within courses; or order a la carte for more money. Most have outside eating for warm weather.

L'Arome: (Bonnieux) Classic small auberge on a tiny street. Good creative cooking. Can eat in or out. Specials of fish and regional fare. Menu 31/41, much cheaper than Fournil, and still very good. 04 90 75 88 62

UnPetit Coin (Bonnieux) Two doors from L'Arome on same street, this tiny bistro offers terrific cooking at very good prices 20-30E range. Not fancy, some tables are long/shared; it's fine. Reserve for sure: 09 81 64 85 81.

Café de la Gare (Bonnieux): This is a bargain café with perfectly good, not exceptional, food and a big outdoor terrace with lovely view; 20-28E It's at the old gare (train station) location just off the D36 just before the N100, nearly opposite the wine cooperative. Huge buffet at lunch; regular dinner. Reserve. 04 90 75 82 00.

Le Fournil (Bonnieux): Good cooking and charming location right in the center of Bonnieux, on a tiny square around a fountain. A bit pricey for a small village, but creative menus. 45E 04 90 75 83 62

Aux Fines Herbes (Goult – charming village; walk uphill to the windmill). Small, a few tables outside, off big parking lot, past Café La Poste. Good cooking at reasonably priced menu of 27E. Tel. 04 32 50 23 54

La Petite Ecole: (Le Chene, tiny roadstop on D900 between Apt & Lacoste). Charming old school house offers fine original cooking and bargain prices: 28-34Euros. Lovely outdoor courtyard. Reserve, as it's small 04 32 52 16 41

Café Veranda, (Menerbes): On the main street (park below in big lot on right). Good food, indoor/ outdoor seating. Pleasant space, good cooking. Lunch about 16E; Din. 32E. Tel 04 90 72 33 33. Reserve.

Le Fiacre: (On S. side of the D900 b'twn Bonnieux and Goult, signed). A family-run eatery with good Provençal cooking on lovely terrace under plane trees. Nice inside, too; 28-38E. Closed Wed. 04 90 72 26 31

Tentations: Cooking is good, but location is not; tucked behind a non-street at far end of marketplace, on the road to Gordes, hard parking. Tel. 04 90 74 35 87. The cook trained at Le Fournil, so the food is good. Menu 20-25E;

L'Auberge de Lagnes: (Lagnes, off D901 toward Isle-sur-Sorgue) One of our favorites, this small auberge offers superb, creative cooking at very reasonable prices. Delightful outdoors, and indoors is charming. Menus (3)28-38E. MUST reserve: 04 90 20 38 30

Le Vivier: (Isle sur la Sorgue). A favorite, just outside Isle s/ Sorgue, on road to Carpentras, part of a hotel. Dine on the terrace overlooking the river. Best cooking in the area. Now has a Michelin star, and the higher price to go with it; 50E. Well worth a splurge. Closed Sat. lunch, Mondays. Reserve 04 90 38 52 80.

Le Jardin du Quai: (Isle sur la Sorgue, 25 min from Lacoste). Located opposite the train station (Gare) at the west end of town. Stunning garden setting for summer nights, and lovely interior other times. Fixed menus, NO choice, for lunch (35E) and Dinner (43 – 3course). Superb cooking. Closed Tues.&Wed. MUST reserve. 04 90 20 14 98.

L'Estellan: (Between Coustellet and Gordes, on the D2; it's well signed). Good food, superb setting and outdoor terrace; 37E. Open Every day. Good choice if you go to Senanque. Make reservation for sure. 04 90 72 04 90.

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The above are suggestions of places we know. Menus are always posted outside restaurants to peruse ahead of time. Almost any café or small restaurant will offer good, freshly-cooked food. Remember, gratuity/tips are INcluded in prices – except at small cafés/bars/coffee spots where you really should add a small (10%) tip. If the bill says "prix net", the tip is in. You can always just ask. We've got lots of good guide books. If you're taking a day trip somewhere, we can consult one of them for things to see and a recommended place to get a good meal.