



The Beating Heart of
PROVENCE

The enduring charm of the southern département of Vaucluse will have you coming back time and again, writes **Jennifer Ladonne** »

The Vaucluse is brimming with pretty villages, such as Aurel, overlooking its exquisite rocky outcrops and fields of lavender

IMAGE © SHUTTERSTOCK

The Vacluse encompasses all that travellers have come to love about this enchanting land. The moment the train doors open in Avignon to the breezy, balmy, luminous Provençal air you know you've landed in a gentler world. From Avignon, a mere three hours on the TGV from Paris, travellers can grab a car from one of the half-dozen rental companies fronting the station and choose from an embarrassment of riches less than 90 minutes away: Arles, 45 minutes due south; Aix-en-Provence, an hour southeast; Marseille, 30 minutes south of Aix; and the lazy pastel fishing villages lining the Mediterranean coastline east of Marseille.

Avignon is also the gateway to the Vacluse, a land of vivid contrasts and, to my mind, the beating heart of Provence. Stretching from the Rhône Valley in the west and the Luberon *massif* in the east, all the way north to the vertiginous Hautes-Alpes – a natural boundary between the Vacluse and the wilder Drôme Provençal – this beautiful, bountiful land is a patchwork of orchards, olive groves and rolling vineyards interspersed with ragged mountains and impossibly picturesque villages perched on hilltops.

In spring – a glorious time to be here – almond, cherry and apricot blossoms flutter like snow in the Mistral gusts, and in early summer, fields are ablaze with electric blue lavender, dazzling sunflowers and scarlet poppies. In autumn, as the vineyards turn a mellow gold, the sun remains warm enough to lounge on café terraces in village squares well into November.

Village hopping is simple as the distances are short and the towns tiny enough to stroll in an hour or two. Taken in clusters, you can easily see a dozen in a long



Clockwise from this image: The world-famous Pont d'Avignon; inset, fresh strawberries at the market; Notre-Dame d'Aubune in Beaumes-de-Venise; L'Isle-sur-la-Sorgue is the perfect spot for lovers of antiques; Ménerbes is a Plus Beau Village de France; the wine estates of Châteauneuf-du-Pape and Gigondas



weekend, or perhaps follow the market days, which are staggered between villages.

Wine lovers will discover one of the most up-and-coming wine regions in France. Between the well-known southern Côtes du Rhône *cru* appellations of Gigondas, Beaumes-de-Venise, Vacqueyras and Châteauneuf-du-Pape, smaller vineyards in the Côtes du Luberon and Ventoux are making thrilling wines – many natural – that are ripe for discovery. More and more vineyards are welcoming visitors and the wine routes are well marked.

For foodies, the Vacluse Route des Saveurs indicates where to find the delicacies of the region, from fragrant Carpentras strawberries, Venasque cherries and Caromb black figs, to nougat, honey, cheeses and saffron. Markets in the bigger towns and villages – Apt and Carpentras on Saturday mornings and Vaison-La-Romaine on Tuesday mornings – offer a huge variety, but you'll find smaller producers in the tiniest of villages.

A web of footpaths takes walkers through forests, around vineyards and farmland, up wooded mountains and down herb-strewn *garrigue* all ending with a well-earned *repas*. Great dining is everywhere. Look for the Bib Gourmand designation (with *prix-fixe* menus €32 and under, listed by town on the Michelin site) or follow the Michelin stars for a blow-out meal.

Those who want the whole deluxe wine, food and lodging experience in one luxurious package can park



“THIS BEAUTIFUL, BOUNTIFUL LAND IS A PATCHWORK OF ORCHARDS, OLIVE GROVES AND ROLLING VINEYARDS”

the car at a wine estate hotel and leave the rest to them. Although prices can be steep, they're a fraction of what you'd pay in Paris and with everything at your fingertips: walking and cycling paths, wine tasting and cooking classes, gourmet dining, spa treatments and beautiful rooms and views.

IT TAKES A VILLAGE

Culminating at a height of 1,125m, the Luberon Massif's dramatic landscapes of sheer rock walls and canyons, forests, flower-strewn fields, and scrubby *garrigue* are beloved of hikers, climbers and birders (its cliffs shelter at least six endangered bird species, including several raptors and the tiny Ortolan bunting, a culinary delicacy hunted to near extinction by epicures). The rugged *massif* also harbours two strings of impossibly picturesque hilltop towns on its north and south sides, all within a few miles of each other.

On the north side of the range, start with the minuscule, once-abandoned hilltop town of Oppède-le-Vieux, whose gardens, 12th-century church and castle ruins were restored after the Second World War. A mile away, Plus Beau Village Ménerbes, where photographer Dora Maar spent the last decades of her life after her disastrous love affair with Picasso, exudes elegance. In summer, visitors can enjoy the views from her town house. Atop the village, at the Maison de la Truffe et >>

IMAGES © SHUTTERSTOCK

Be sure to allow at least a couple of days in Avignon, seat of the Popes in the 14th century

"TUCKED INSIDE AVIGNON'S BEAUTIFULLY PRESERVED RAMPARTS, THE OLD TOWN IS A DELIGHT TO ROAM AND DISCOVER"



FRANCE TODAY



From top to bottom: Wander around the intimate local market in pretty Saint-Saturnin-lès-Apt; marvel at the medieval beauty of Ménerbes; Lacoste hosts a popular summer theatre festival and is also home to the Marquis de Sade's family château

du Vin du Luberon, you can sample and buy the local delicacies and vintages while taking in panoramic views from the summit garden.

Lacoste, still lorded over by the ruins of the Marquis de Sade's family château, hosts a popular summer theatre festival founded by designer Pierre Cardin. A five-minute drive away, beautiful Bonnieux's well-preserved ramparts, 12th-century towers and hilltop church afford lovely views. But for bird's-eye vistas over practically the entire Luberon and beyond, head to the Forêt des Cèdres, a few minutes' drive above the village.

The park's 750 acres of 150-year-old Atlas cedars provide miles of footpaths and shade for a refreshing walk or picnic. For gastronomic dining, two-Michelin star chef Édouard Loubet's eponymous restaurant, a major stop on the foodie circuit, offers a dream setting overlooking the Luberon *massif*.

With fewer than 100 residents, adorable Buoux is best known for the poetic remains of its 13th-century fort, while Saignon's two well-preserved medieval churches, château ruins and pretty shaded squares make it the perfect stop for a quick lunch or coffee break, while taking in the views over Apt.

Considered the modern capital of the Luberon, bustling Apt is actually one of the most ancient towns in the Vaucluse, founded by the Romans in 45 BC. Apt's lively Saturday morning market is among the best in Provence. Go early for a parking spot around the town's



IMAGES © SHUTTERSTOCK

"SAIGNON'S TWO MEDIEVAL CHURCHES, CHÂTEAU RUINS AND SHADED SQUARES MAKE IT THE PERFECT STOP FOR A QUICK LUNCH BREAK"

medieval walls and follow the winding streets lined with stalls showcasing local specialities, such as Apt candied fruit, a delicacy once reserved for the Avignon popes, which is made from the region's abundant stone fruits.

Apt is also known for its distilleries for lavender and other essential oils of herbs and flowers. The town is also famous for its marbled *faïence*, a beautiful ceramic ware made from the richly coloured local clays, crafted here since the 18th century.

If a more intimate farmer's market is to your taste, Saint-Saturnin-lès-Apt's Tuesday morning affair gathers a number of local farmers, and the picturesque town has plenty to see, including two 17th-century windmills and panoramic views from the ancient château ruins.

EAT, STAY, LOVE

A scenic 20-minute walk from quaint Saint-Saturnin, the hotel and wine estate Domaine des Andéols' languid sprawl of manicured lawns, vineyards and olive groves reigned over by elegant cypresses couldn't be more of a contrast. If so inclined, guests can toss their car keys in a chic *armoire* for the duration of their stay in an art-filled vacation home or sleek modern suite since everything they need – swimming, walking, cycling, top-notch dining, and most of all, privacy – can be found on the premises. The organic produce for the indoor-outdoor bistro – headed by Maurice Alexis, chef to two recent French presidents – is sourced from the domaine's extensive gardens and vineyards. Meanwhile, the sophisticated gastronomic dining room is presided over by rising star Julien Bontus. >>

AD PAGE



Clockwise from this image: The Luberon; the Roman amphitheatre at Orange; Avignon; outdoor dining in L'Isle-sur-la-Sorgue; the Sorgue river; ruins at Buoux; inset, gastronomic delights at Auberge La Fenière in Lourmarin

centres to explore, including the world-class Collection Lambert (and its fabulous terrace restaurant) and the Musée Calvet, housed in the magnificent Hôtel de Villeneuve-Martignan.

Avignon is also a centre for excellent food, wine and lodging, with two of the Vaucluse's best hotels, elegant La Mirande, a mansion hotel two steps from the Palais des Papes, and the exquisite four-room La Divine Comédie, set in an acre of lush gardens, Avignon's largest private garden.

In July, the Festival d'Avignon and the Festival Off draw theatre buffs from around the world for their diverse programmes of 1,000 performances per day. Oenophiles can enjoy wine classes at l'École des Vins d'Inter-Rhône, which can be tailored specifically for you, with teachers from L'Université du Vin in Suze-la-Rousse. And over at the Marché des Halles, which is open every day but Monday, you can find all of the bounty of Provence in a single eye-popping market.

Smart phones are great but don't forego the local tourist office, where you can find helpful, English-speaking staff and brochures in English in even the smallest towns. When in Avignon, avail yourself of the excellent tourist centre, just a three-minute walk from the Collection Lambert. Wine enthusiasts will get the best up-to-date information on visiting vineyards, tastings and events at Inter Rhône, housed in an 18th-century mansion in one of the loveliest sections of the old city. Now that's well worth raising a glass to. **FT** >>

"FONTENILLE TICKS ALL THE BOXES... ANCIENT CEDARS, A RAMBLING LAWN, ROSE GARDENS, A GURGLING FOUNTAIN"

Another self-sufficient country idyll, La Bastide de Marie has earned a fiercely loyal clientele for its picturesque setting among 57 acres of working vineyards, its elegant Provençal farmhouse décor (original Picassos included) and a table so exceptional that the local gastronomes depend on it. If you can tear yourself away, it's a great base from which to explore the villages in the area and it's within easy walking or cycling distance of Ménerbes.

The Domaine de Fontenille, near Lauris, is also an ideal base for exploring the chain of villages along the southern side of the Luberon: Lauris, Lourmarin, Cadenet, Ansouis and Cucuron. Fontenille ticks all the boxes of the quintessential Provençal country estate: ancient cedars and plane trees towering over wide outdoor terraces, a rambling lawn, rose gardens, a gurgling fountain and a picturesque grotto, all among acres of vineyards. Its stylish décor is the work of two Parisian art dealers with a love of contemporary photography. Award-winning wines and Michelin-starred dining cap a sophisticated all-around experience that includes a lovely lawn-side pool and spa treatments on demand. Wine lovers can tour the winery and sample the vintages in a streamlined tasting room.

At Auberge La Fenière, near Lourmarin, a more modest country atmosphere prevails – except in the dining room, where Michelin-starred chef Nadia Sammut raises non-dairy, non-gluten gastronomy to an art. You

wouldn't know it from her exquisite dishes, but those for whom it matters can eat without a care in the world. Although Sammut is highly sought-after around the world to teach about sustainable agriculture and non-gluten and non-dairy cuisine, you will never eat a meal at La Fenière that's not cooked by the chef herself.

Antiques still take front and centre in L'Isle-sur-la-Sorgue, but aside from its 350 antique stores, 'the Venice of Provence' offers consistently excellent art exhibitions at the Campredon Arts Centre and the Fondation Villa Datris.

Since 1808, the Sorgue River has aided Brun de Vian-Tiran's production of some of the finest woollens in France. At the chic new Filaventure (adventures in thread) visitors are taken through the fascinating process of making the company's *luxe* products in cashmere, alpaca, mohair and more, while the boutique stocks its gorgeous bedding, throws and scarves. Afterwards, head over to Pâtisserie Jouvaud for a head-spinning array of fine pastries, chocolates and speciality sweets, including preserved local apricots and strawberries. If a glass of local wine is more to your taste, 17 Place aux Vins is delightful indoors and out.

ANCIENT HISTORY

From the L'Isle-sur-la-Sorgue, don't overlook the cluster of tiny villages, perched and otherwise, within a five-mile radius. Charming Venasque has an outstanding church



and baptistery dating to Roman times; Saint-Didier has a lively Monday morning market and artisanal nougat, a local specialty; and Pernes-Les-Fontaines, which boasts no fewer than 40 fountains. If you're looking for a luxury hotel in the area, the ambiance and hospitality at the boutique five-room Château la Roque, in La Roque-sur-Perne is hard to beat.

Ancient sites to visit in the Vaucluse extend as far back as Palaeolithic times. Among them are L'Abri du Pont de la Combette in Bonnieux, where traces of Neanderthal occupation have been found dating back 60,000 years, and Baume des Peyrards in Buoux, which started as a hunting stop before becoming a permanent habitat in the Middle Paleolithic period.

But the area is best known for its extraordinary Roman ruins. The UNESCO-listed Théâtre Antique d'Orange, one of the world's best preserved Roman theatres in the ancient Roman town of Orange, is a must. Depending on when you go, you may be lucky enough to catch a reenactment. The sprawling town of Vaison-la-Romaine spans 2,000 years of history, with remains of its Gallo-Roman town walls, baths, elegant homes and theatre, and the beautiful Roman bridge leading to the old town.

Beginning or ending your journey in Avignon is a must; whether you stay for a long weekend – which we recommend – or just a day, there's much to explore here. Tucked inside Avignon's beautifully preserved ramparts, the old town is a delight to roam and discover. Besides the Palais des Papes, home of the French popes for most of the 14th century, Avignon is an arts capital par excellence, with a dozen superb museums and arts



IMAGES © SHUTTERSTOCK

12 VILLAGES TO VISIT IN VAUCLUSE

Bustling markets, medieval squares and spectacular views await you in this most beautiful corner of France

For more places to visit go to www.luberoncoeurdeprovence.com



APT

This old Roman town's Sunday market is one of the biggest and most authentic, its stalls lining the winding cobbled streets. Colourful Apt *faïence* ceramics, once reserved for the Avignon popes, is sought-after worldwide, and the city is home to the region's major lavender distilleries.



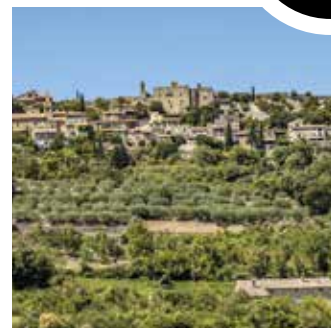
BONNIEUX

One of the loveliest of the Luberon hilltop villages, its well-preserved ramparts, 12th-century towers and hilltop church afford stunning views. But for the best vistas – and the freshest air – the Forêt des Cèdres' 750 acres of 150-year-old Atlas cedars is a splendid place for a walk.



BRANTES

An eagles' nest of a village perched high in the mountains between the beautiful Drôme and the Vaucluse, Brantes (population: 86) has breathtaking views of the Toulourenc Valley. At Christmas, artisans open their ateliers to sell hand-crafted Santon nativity figures.



CRESTET

The winding streets of this untouched, impossibly picturesque village near the Vaucluse border can be explored in an hour. Relax at a local café perched at the village summit for stellar views or continue over a rocky road to the elegant Chêne Bleu wine estate to sample their award-winning wines.



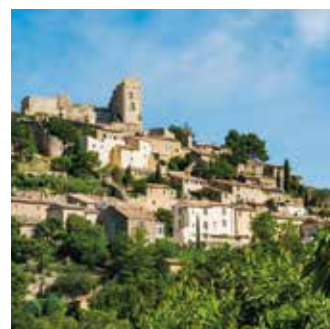
GIGONDAS

At this Côtes-du-Rhône wine village surrounded by vineyards, follow the cobbled walkway through the delightful town past a spring (with drinkable water), a cultural centre and gardens up to 11th-century Sainte Catherine's church and the ancient château ruins with views for miles.



GORDES

This postcard-perfect perched village is home to the Bastide de Gordes, the Vaucluse's only Palace hotel, set into the cliffside, while Michelin-star restaurants Les Bories and Hostellerie le Phébus draw the foodie crowd. Abbaye Notre-Dame de Sénanque and Musée de la Lavande are nearby.



LACOSTE

A scenic terraced village and the historic family seat of the Marquis de Sade. In the 90s, designer Pierre Cardin bought up dozens of houses and founded a now-famous arts and theatre festival held every July. Home of the respected Lacoste School of the Arts, global art experts flock here.



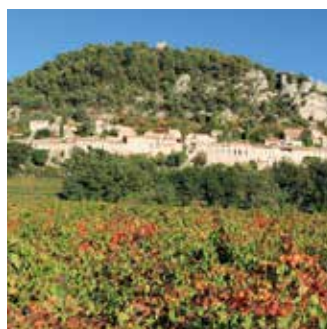
LE BARROUX

This charming hilltop village is a joy to explore on foot, with its Romanesque church and ancient town houses on the Rue Saint-Denis. Topping the village, an 11th-century château hosts cultural events and affords stunning views of Mont Ventoux and the ragged Dentelles de Montmirail.



MÉNERBES

This elegant Plus Beau Village de France was beloved of artists such as Nicolas de Staël and Dora Maar, who spent the last decades of her life here (her home can be visited in summer). At the Maison de la Truffe et du Vin du Luberon you can sample and stock up on the local delicacies.



SÉGURET

This picturesque Plus Beau Village at the foot of the Dentelles de Montmirail is surrounded by forests and vineyards. Pass through its 14th-century fortifications at one of three *portes* to see the Fountain of Mascaron, and the 10th-century Church of Saint-Denis.



VENASQUE

This superb one-street town clinging to a rocky ledge has more than its share of beauty and history: an 11th-century baptistery with Roman vestiges, Notre-Dame de Vie church, which dates to the 6th century, and three Saracen towers. In March, it is awash in cherry blossoms.



VAISON-LA-ROMAINE

Bisected by the Ouvèze River with its soaring Roman bridge, Vaison's medieval old town rises to a peak crowned by a ruined castle. Crammed with Roman remains, it is easily traversed by foot, and visitors will enjoy this artsy town's leafy squares, art galleries and Tuesday market. >>

IMAGES © SHUTTERSTOCK, MAARJAARA, WIKIMEDIA COMMONS

AD PAGE

WHAT TO SEE AND DO IN VAUCLUSE

From arts to architecture and food to music, there is something for everyone in this stunning département

For more travel inspiration visit www.francetoday.com/travel-in-france

APT

La Maison du Fruit Confit

See how this deeply-Provençal delicacy, a favourite of the Avignon popes, has been made for 600 years, with tours and, of course, tastings. www.lesfleurons-apt.com/gb

Faïence d'Apt

A UNESCO-listed *patrimoine vivant* (living heritage), this beautiful marbled ceramic ware, made from the colourful clays found near Roussillon and around Apt, dates back to the early 18th century. Listed artisans working in the area today include: Christine Jouval-Marcel (www.metiersdart-paca.fr); Pascale Mestre (www.pascale-mestre.com); and Yvonne Rigo (faïences-rigo.e-monsite.com). Visit their websites for details on when you can visit their studios and see them at work.



Potter about the ateliers of artistes who make Faïence d'Apt ceramics

AVIGNON

Inter Rhône

If you want to tour the top vineyards and taste the finest wines of the region, Inter Rhône is the place to go in the Vaucluse. At their elegant Avignon offices you can find everything from maps to detailed listings and events programmes. Their professional wine school can tailor classes specifically for you or you can choose from a programme of dozens of sessions, including tastings, with teachers from France's top wine school, the Université du Vin in Suzer-la-Rousse. www.vins-rhone.com

La Mirande cooking school

Hotel La Mirande, just a stone's throw from the Palais des Papes in Avignon, claims "you cannot come closer to the life of a French nobleman in the age of Enlightenment". While you're enjoying a spot of time-travelling, why not indulge in the hotel's fun and informative cooking classes, taught by the top chefs of Provence in the hotel's fabulous 19th-century kitchen?



Musée de la Lavande in Le Castellet offers a chance to indulge the senses

Classes end with a meal accompanied with wines specially chosen by the hotel sommelier.

www.la-mirande.fr/en

Avignon Office de Tourisme

Stop in for all the up-to-date information on what's happening in Avignon and the Vaucluse, as well as guides to the Route des Sauvages, Route du Vin and much more. 41 Cours Jean Jaurès avignon-tourisme.com/en

Les Halles d'Avignon

Stock up on an eye-popping array of food, wine and everything Provençal, from olives, cheeses and bread to pastries, local fruits and vegetables. Or slurp down an oyster and enjoy a drink at one of the bars. And on Saturday mornings, local chefs showcase their skills using local produce from Les Halles. www.avignon-leshalles.com



Filaventure takes you on a journey through all things luxuriously woollen

LE CASTELLET

A 10-minute drive from Gordes, the **Musée de la Lavande** is the best museum for discovering how lavender essential oil has been made

for centuries. While you're there, be sure to stock up on their excellent lavender-based skin-care products for women, men and kids at the boutique. The museum hosts a wonderful series of classes and even tours of their farms and the region.

www.museedelalavande.com/fr



Explore the world of contemporary sculpture at the Fondation Villa Datris

Les Agnès Lavender and Aromatic Plant Distillery

For five generations a top distiller in Provence, Les Agnès will allow you to discover the authentic, age-old distillation process for lavender and other plants and learn about all of their uses, from perfume to medicine.

L'ISLE-SUR-LA-SORGUE

Brun de Vian-Tiran Filaventure

Based here since 1808, when the Napoleonic Wars saw the wool trade booming, these days, visitors can follow the process for making the company's *de luxe* products in cashmere, yak, merino and more. The boutique stocks the mill's gorgeous bedding, throws and scarves – some at discount prices – usually found only in Paris' upmarket shops. www.brundeviantiran.com

Fondation Villa Datris

Expect wonderfully imaginative art shows at this contemporary sculpture foundation in the centre of town with lovely gardens on the Sorgue River.

fondationvilladatris.fr

SUMMER FESTIVALS

AVIGNON

Avignon Festival and Festival Off

One of Europe's largest and most respected theatre festivals, with 1,000 performances per day, draws theatre and performance lovers from around the world. With music, performance art, and stand-up and much more. Festival Off is the avant-garde edition. festival-avignon.com/fr

Fête de la Vigne et du Vin

Not to be missed, this is Provence's most-anticipated and best-loved wine event, held in front of the beautiful Palais des Papes. Visitors can indulge in free or minimally-priced tastings of top vintages presented by the winemakers from all around the Vaucluse and Rhône Valley. (Keep an eye on the website for 2021 dates). www.lafetedelavigneetduvin.com



Sample the local wines at the Fête de la Vigne et du Vin

Avignon Jazz Festival

What could be more atmospheric than listening to the jazz greats in the stunning floodlit settings of Avignon's old city? Its 30th edition is in 2021. www.tremplinjazzavignon.fr

LACOSTE

Festival de Lacoste

For more than 10 years this outdoor festival has featured world-class theatre, opera and dance for two weeks at the end of July in the surrounds of the château and the ancient quarry. www.festivaldelacoste.com >>

WHERE TO STAY AND EAT IN VAUCLUSE

Our selection of the best accommodation and dining in the département

For more hotels and restaurants in Vaucluse visit provençeguide.com

TO STAY & EAT

Avignon

La Mirande

This historic mansion hotel is a world unto itself, its supremely elegant rooms done up in period style, a charming tearoom and bar and a private garden terrace. Chef Florent Pietravalle, who earned a Michelin star in 2019, offers a sought-after chef's table and a cooking school for adults and kids.

www.la-mirande.fr/en/gallery.html

La Divine Comédie

Set within an acre of gorgeous grounds, and filled with art and antiques this superb 18th-century



La Divine Comédie oozes 18th-century glamour in beautiful grounds

mansion's five elegant guest rooms could not be more beautiful or more hospitable.

www.la-divine-comedie.com/

Ménerbes

La Bastide de Marie

In a postcard-worthy setting among rolling vineyards, its Provençal farmhouse décor and exceptional dining are second to none. It's a great base for exploring the many picturesque local villages, as well as being within easy walking or cycling distance of Ménerbes.

www.labastidedemarie.com/en

Loumarin

L'Auberge Fenièrre

This restaurant a mile from Loumarin in tiny Cucuron is a standout in all of Provence. Michelin-star chef Nadia Sammut is among the very first to create non-gluten gastronomy, with local wines to match, in a quintessential Provençal setting. It's a treat to dine then stay the night at their well-priced inn where you're treated like one of the family.

www.aubergelafenièrre.com

Châteauneuf-du-Pape

Coucou Grands Cépages

You won't find anything quite like



La Fenièrre, home to Michelin-starred gluten-free cuisine

these totally secluded contemporary eco-bungalows set on – or in – a beautiful turquoise lake 10 minutes from Châteauneuf-du-Pape. Each bungalow has a hot tub, (one with a sauna), terraces and total privacy. Meals are delivered by golf cart to your door at the hour requested.

www.cabanesdesgrandscepages.com

Gargas

Coquillade Village

With a history dating back to the 11th century, this hamlet amidst 42 hectares of vineyards, forest and lavender fields, overlooks the Luberon national park. With an award-winning spa,



Stunning Coquillade Village boasts an award-winning spa and a reputed winery

Coquillade Village boasts 63 rooms and suites, three restaurants and bars and is home to the critically acclaimed Aureto winery.

www.coquillade.fr

Bonnieux

Restaurant Edouard Loubet

Botanist, sportsman, wine aficionado and two-Michelin star chef Édouard Loubet creates a Provençal cuisine of originality and finesse in a dream setting overlooking the Luberon massif. At the adjoining stunner of a hotel, the Domaine de Capelongue, expect

astounding views and contemporary elegance, plus a pool and spa.

capelongue.com/?lang=en

La Roque-sur-Perne

Château la Roque

A romantic ambiance with hospitality to match at this perfectly located, lovingly restored five-room château on beautiful grounds with panoramic views of Provence. Gourmet meals can be prepared at your request.

fr.chateaularoque.com

WHERE TO EAT

L'Isle-sur-la-Sorgue

17 Place aux Vins

If a glass of local wine is one of your favourite things, this is the perfect spot for sampling some, alongside a few nibbles, either in the restaurant or on the spacious outdoor terrace.

www.17placeauxvins.fr

Maison Jouvaud

Maison Jouvaud is an institution on the "island" for its head-spinning array of stupendously delicious pastries, handmade chocolates and traditional sweets, especially the renowned local apricots, strawberries and other fruits candied whole.

www.patisserie-jouvaud.com



Teatime's a treat at Pâtisserie Jouvaud

Gigondas

L'Oustellet

If you treat yourself to one blow-out meal in Vaucluse, make it this one. Sit in the handsome dining room, the favourite of local winemakers, or out under plane trees in the lovely village square. Tip: If the all-truffle menu is available, go for it.

www.loustalet-gigondas.com

Ansouis

La Closerie

At this Michelin-star restaurant set in an old post office, you'll dine like a king on dishes concocted with the finest local ingredients while enjoying stellar views over the Luberon. At €54, the seasonal chef's menu is a bargain.

gaultmillau.com/restaurant/la-closerie-restaurant

VAUCLUSE ESSENTIALS

GETTING THERE

BY AIR

Vaucluse is within an easy 70km drive of Marseille Airport, which has connections with several UK cities, as well as Montreal, Canada (Air France).

www.marseille-airport.com

BY TRAIN

The TGV from Paris to Avignon takes 3.5 hours. www.sncf.com.

TOURIST INFORMATION

www.provençeguide.com

www.oti-delasorgue.co.uk

www.luberoncotesud.com



www.luberoncoeurdeprovence.com