

Coliseums in Provence

## **VINEYARDS TO VISIT**

Wines Of Provence - Guide to Rosé [6 Vineyards to Visit **During Your Stay** 

## VAN GOGH WAS HERE

Provence is Full of Activities For The Whole Family

## LIQUID GOLD

Let Us Take You On The Trail of Olive Oil In Provence

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## ON THE TRAIL OF LIQUID GOLD

The phrase "olive oil tasting" doesn't quite describe the experience if you're tasting oil in Provence, France. It's not just a dainty sip or swipe on a piece of bread. You hold a cup in your hand, swirl the oil around, take in the aroma. Then, when you're ready, you bring a good amount into your mouth, breathe in, and swallow. Delicious! But you're not finished yet...



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Location, location, location

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# ANCIENT RUINS IN PROVENCE

Here are just some of the ancient sites that are a must-see when taking a vacation in Provence.

The Provence region of Southern France is steeped in rich culture and history that is apparent from the moment you arrive. Even the 17th century townhouses are built from pieces of Ancient Roman ruins!

Provence undoubtedly boasts some of the best preserved ruins in all of Europe. From temples, to theaters and coliseums, even palaces and castles, visitors from all over the world can experience the wonders of the Ancient Roman Empire, medieval France, and 17th century structures that are still standing today.

#### #1 Pont du Gard

Easily considered one of Europe's most beautiful Ancient Roman sites, Pont du Gard aqueduct has been a UNESCO World Heritage Site for the last 20 years!

Between May and August you can see the astounding structure lit up under magnificent starry Mediterranean skies reminiscent of the famous Vincent Van Gogh painting. If you're planning a day trip to the ruin, be sure to kayak or canoe down the Gardon River where the aqueduct is located to get the most breath-taking photos!

When you're done, be sure to visit the nearby museum for amazing insights into the Ancient Roman world. After your excursion, a picnic with the kids, or an intimate lunch for two may be in order.

#### #2 Nimes

For those who truly want to be transported to another time, this is the place to go. In fact, Pont du Gard was the aqueduct that transported water to this ancient city, which is named after the Celtic god of the spring.

The site was founded by the intended successor to Julius Caeser, Marcus Agrippa, who commissioned a well-preserved first century BCE Corinthian temple, which you can, and most definitely should visit. The town also features the amphitheatre "Les Arenas", an ancient coliseum where you can watch astounding bull fights, and participate in local events. Also be sure to visit the so-called "Temple of Diana."

Nîmes is associated with much historical family drama, about which an entire film has been dedicated: Nemausus: the Birth of Nîmes. Of course you can catch a showing of the film in Maison Carrée in the area.

#### #3 Glanum

For the most stunning views in all of Provence, and maybe even in all of France, you'll want to visit Glanum, located in the heart of the gorgeous Alpilles mountains in Saint-Rémy-de-Provence.

The city of St Rémy was expanded due in large part to contact with the Ancient Greeks, and is a shining example of Roman urban development and architecture. In fact, services such as Provence Paradise offer tourists

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and vacationers a chance to rent out town houses in the area that are built from the recycled materials of these ancient Roman homes.

A curious sun-dial installed upside-down in one of their walls and the underground, double channeled aqueduct, built with small red bricks and which runs across the entire length of the property at a depth of about 5 meters provide for amazing photo ops in these authentic vacation rentals (which come with all modern amenities).



Remaining columns from the twin temples in Glanum

From Provence Paradise it's just a quick stroll, or even horseback ride, to the world's most well preserved ancient Mausoleum of Julii, and one of the first Triumphal Arches ever built by the Romans.

#### #4 Arles

Another UNESCO World Heritage Site, Arles was once a strategic position between Italy and Spain.

Julius Caeser himself founded the Roman colony that made this city what it is today, and famously, back in 2008, a bust of him was found at the bottom of the Rhône River and believed to be the only portrait bust of him made during his lifetime.

Arles is also known for its amphitheater (Arènes d'Arles) and the theater (Théâtre Antique), remains of a circus, baths (Thermae of Constantine), and necropolis (the Alyscamps).

#### #5 Vaison la Romain

This city once became the wealthiest city in Roman Provence, and certainly has some of the most "Roman" feels to it. There are two main sites to see here: La Villase and Puymin.

La Villase is an ancient, paved street which is raised and colonnaded, and flanked by luxurious houses, baths, gardens, and shops.

At Puymin you can see the heavily restored remains of the ancient Roman theater. Be sure to visit the Museum of Vaisonla-Romain while there for a glimpse at the splendid "Peacock Mosaic".

#### **#6 Orange**

Not the fruit, and not the tv show. In the center of the Rhône Valley, the Théâtre Antique d'Orange is certainly an interesting, and must-see ancient site of France, and is also a UNESCO World Heritage Site. The Roman Theater of Orange was a great center for entertainment in Roman times and still draws large audiences to musical events even today.

The Art and History Museum of Orange, just opposite the ancient theater, exhibits a delightful and impressive work of Roman art: a recently restored centaur mosaic. Reliefs that decorated the stage wall of the theater are also on display in the rooms of the ground floor.



Statue Of Hadrien located in Vaison la Romaine



The Pont du Gard located in the Gard at 30 to 45 minutes from St. Remy

#### THE BEST OF PROVENCE:

What fascinates many of us is the clever building skills of the Romans. Much evidence of their work is visible and "visitable."

Travelers to Provence find Roman monuments, statuary, ramparts, aqueducts, ships, theatres, underground passages, ... in city centres, in museums, on street corners, at the bottom of the mighty Rhone river, in deep forests and in farmers' fields, and even in the gardens and old walls of local villas.

Carved stone from Roman times was often "recycled" to build medieval structures, which were in turn "re-re-cycled" to be used in 17th century buildings, many of which are still standing today, especially in towns like Saint Rémy de Provence.

So, we are lucky in Provence. The first construction dates from an earlier Greek settlement (circa 800 B.C.) and the Roman construction was literally done on top of

the Greek settlements, taking advantage

of the "infrastructure" originally built by the Hellenic peoples. At one position of excavation of the Roman Forum, you can look down through the layers of a well shaft and see through 3,000 years of history.

Arles, Nîmes and Vaison la Romaine are fascinating places of constant discovery:
Antique theatres which are still in open-air use; coliseums almost as large as that of Rome and built about the same time; thermal baths with underground passages; cloisters built by the first Christian missionaries in the region, ramparts and towers in ruins, Roman burial sites from pagan and Christian times...

But travelers the world over are agreed. Better than visiting any museum and taking the usual tourist trips, the best way to experience ancient history in Provence is to immerse yourself in that world.

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# **OUR FAVORITE GO-TO RESTAURANTS**

We are often asked for a short list of restaurants serving good food at a good value. We are happy to share some of our top choices.

#### **OUTSIDE SAINT RÉMY**

#### Le Garde Manger

In St. Etienne du Grès. Their "mystery/ adventure" menu is a great deal at about €uros 28. Vine-covered terrace, discreet dining for couples and small groups. Well worth electing a "designated driver" to get you to/from.

#### Un Bouchon En Provence

In Eyragues. The menu is published as a newspaper, with a wide variety of traditional French dishes and a nice garden patio for families with children.

#### Le Mas De Capoun

In Mollégès. Luncheon and evening dining in an old stone barn. There is a special menu with or without wine at a (very!) reasonable price. Hard to get a reservation there; but somehow we manage... most of the time.

#### **INSIDE SAINT RÉMY**

#### L'aile ou La Cuisse

Our favorite! Daily set menu at €uros 30 and gourmet menus at €uros 37 and €uros 47, great desserts and a wonderful patio in an old convent from the early Middle Ages. Important: Remember to select your desserts as you walk in the door. Jean-Pierre will set those dessert specialties aside for you while you enjoy your main meal.

#### La Cuisine Des Anges

Tucked in a courtyard on one of the side streets, it is very well thought of. Good food/ good value.

#### Le Marylin

A great place for outdoor dining (on a sidewalk terrace), to watch the parades/horses/street dancing/cattle/people go by. New owners, very friendly atmosphere, good value for the money. €uros 28 complete meal with several choices for each course. Family dining, especially when there is something going on in town.

#### **Les Savers De Provence**:

On the ring road around Saint-Rémy, this restaurant serves several variations of bouillabaisse, including shrimp and lobster, and other seafood specialties. Open year-round.

#### Da Peppe:

Charming Italian restaurant in the heart of Saint-Rémy. Its fusion of French and Italian specialties makes this restaurant a particularly popular address with families and small groups. Make sure to ask for the pasta flamed in the parmesan wheel.

#### Gus

A quaint seafood bistro with a good variety of dishes, sure to please everyone (fish, seafood, meet, salads, even burgers.) indoor-outdoor dining and very friendly staff.



# **WINES OF PROVENCE -GUIDE TO ROSÉ**

6 Vineyards To Visit



Wondering what types of wine are found in the Provence region? The answer: Rosé. In fact, a whopping 87% of all wines made in the region are vin rosé, and the blushing pink wine finds itself exempt from the drinking cutbacks that other wines have suffered in the country. Actually, rosé sales are higher than ever in France, and consumption has increased by 12%.

Popular for any time of day, and increasingly used as an apéritif, or before-meal drink, rosé is perfect chilled or even with ice to cool off on those warm Provencal days.

#### **Fun Fact:**

The first wine made in history, as early as 7000 BC, was rosé. Red wines came around 2500 BC and whites even later. The reason?

The wine is made using crushed red grapes and allowing the skins only minimal contact with the juice. Rosé is the simplest wine to make, and is so incredibly versatile, that the flavor options are nearly limitless.



Wine cellar

There's even a scientific research center, the Centre du Rosé located in Vidauban, Provence, that is wholly dedicated to vin rosé. At the center you can even participate in tastings and train to become a Provence wine savant in no time.

### So which are the best vineyards to visit?

1) Domaine de Trevallon, 7 km west of St. Remy, is making some of the most original and striking wines in Provence. Because his slopes are north-facing, Eloi Durrbach planted Cabernet Sauvignon and Syrah, instead of the predominant and traditional Mourvedre, which makes a wine that exudes the terroir of Provence and the special

- soil found in Les Baux (as in "bauxite", i.e. aluminum).
- 2) Brusset Cairanne and Brusset Hauts de Montmirail, 4) Domaine Tempier's nestled upon the slopes of the Ventoux, produce some of the best wines in the region. (Great olive oil can also be found in the district.) They have a place in Cairanne as well as in Gigondas. Go to Gigondas for the views and local flavor. There are some other great wineries there too, like Domaine de Pallieres and Domaine Raspail-Ay.
- 3) Mas de Gourgonnier, near Les Baux. It's family owned and has been organically farmed for over three decades. They utilize a mix of traditional varieties along with some Cabernet Sauvignon for their red wines and Sauvignon Blanc for

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- the white. Their olive oil is a blend of four traditional local varieties.
- Bandol Rouge La Migoua, La Tourtine, Cabassaou, and also the Ros are legendary wines which are the product of the genial Lucien Peyraud who passed away a decade ago, but under whose guidance this old family estate, owned since 1834, became the birthplace of a modern Provencal renaissance.

This estate continues to be the summit of French Mourvedre viticulture; it's the classic and defining grape from Provence. Located near the town of Castellet, the local color is also attractive vet sophisticated with F1 and motorcycle races taking place here. It was also

the location for the Marcel Pagnol film, The Baker's Wife.

5) Domaine de Rimauresa is in the Cote d'Azur in the beautiful town of Pignans and makes a delicious and unique white wine from around 85% Rolle, with a little Ugni Blanc. The red wines are also outstanding and the estate was one of the top places after phylloxera beginning in the late 1880s. The winery is modern in technique but the vineyard is old and traditionally farmed. It was acquired in the late 1980s by a Scottish family and is located near Toulon.

6) Chateau Vignelaure near Rians is making excellent wines...and so is Richaume in Puyloubier (Cotes de Provence), created by a celloplaying history professor and

now run by his son.

Also, while not open to visitors. Château Miraval. owned by Angelina Jolie and Brad Pitt, makes a phenomenal rosé. The wine made it on 2013's top 100 wines in the world list, and was the only rosé to get a spot on it, so be sure to grab yourself a bottle while in Provence!

Whatever your preferences are, be sure to experience the delightful wines of Provence one way or another. From wine trails, to vineyard tours, to training, and wine tastings, rosé can be experienced year round thanks to the mild climate and it pairs well with the local, Mediterranean flavors.

In the spring, summer and fall, you can catch some

amazing wine and food festivals as well, such as the Vendages Etoilees Festival in Cassis where chefs and vineyards offer demos and tastings of the wines of Cassis, which has the oldest registered AOC (designation of origin) in France.

Rosé from Provence, in general, is crisp, dry and refreshing, and not as sweet as American varieties. The wine is highly versatile and pairs well with a variety of sweets and foods and is embraced the world over as a casual wine that anyone can enjoy.

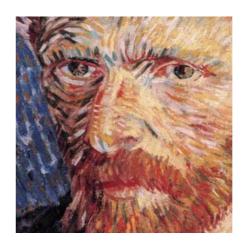


Rose wine from the Chateau Vignelaure



## **SOME ACTIVITIES**

Provence is full of activities for the whole family. Discover new landscapes, cook exotic recipes, or simply sip a drink next to the pool while enjoying the sunset.... You can do everything or absolutely nothing at all:-)



#### ON THE VAN GOGH TRAIL

Van Gogh painted 350 works in Arles and Saint-Remy de Provence. Take a guided Tour of Van GOGH's painting "spots," with a visit to the Asylum + gardens.



#### **REGIONAL WINE TOUR**

You drink... our wine-expert drives... 5 different itineraries specially designed to meet your needs for learning about local wine.



#### **BIKES**

Road, cross-country, tandem, racing... The folks at "Telecycle Bikes" have new equipment in tip-top condition. They deliver and fix along our country roads.



#### HORSEBACK RIDING

Horses of all sizes and temperaments to accommodate the whole family. Trail rides throughout the Van Gogh landscapes.



#### CANOE / KAYAK

Kilometres of adventure and relaxation for the whole family on the swift and clean rivers that criss-cross our region.

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#### **COOKING CLASS / CHEF**

Shop at the market and engage an accomplished personal chef to prepare a full lunch or dinner for you in the comfort of your own home kitchen.

# WHAT A TYPICAL WEEK CAN LOOK LIKE

If you are staying with us for longer than a week, we have plenty more suggestions for you.

**Saturday:** Exploration of the Old Town Centre of Saint Rémy de Provence.

**Sunday:** Isle-sur-la-Sorgue market, with Fontaine de Vaucluse for lunch, then a ride through the Luberon.

**Monday:** Cassis, the Calanques + Beach, with a "walk-around" in Aix-en-Provence on the way home.

**Tuesday:** Avignon, the Popes' Palace + a stroll through Villeneuve-lez-Avignon.

**Wednesday:** Saint Remy Market day, bistro lunch with traditional music, visit up to Les Baux de Provence.

**Thursday:** Guided Tour of Van GOGH's painting "spots," with a visit to the Asylum + gardens.

**Friday:** Wine Tour to Cairanne, lunch in Séguret, then Gigondas, Vacqueras, Baume de Venise.

**Saturday:** Arles Market, bistro lunch, then a visit to the special Roman History Exhibit.

















Les calanques of Cassis

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# ON THE TRAIL OF LIQUID GOLD

The phrase "olive oil tasting" doesn't quite describe the experience if you're tasting oil in Provence, France.

It's not just a dainty sip or swipe on a piece of bread. You hold a cup in your hand, swirl the oil around, take in the aroma. Then, when you're ready, you bring a good amount into your mouth, breathe in, and swallow. Delicious! But you're not finished yet... Wait for the first, second, even the third after-taste. And there's a whole vocabulary that goes along with this ritual. Grassy. Herbacious. Peppery. Hints of artichoke, apple, or almond. And so on.

If this sounds like the description of a wine tasting to you, it's no coincidence. There is as much connoisseurship associated with tasting serious olive oils as there is with tasting serious wines. And in Provence, France, they're very serious about both.

What we think of as the "Mediterranean Diet" would not exist without olive oil. The Greeks planted olive trees in Provence and elsewhere around the Mediterranean when they settled here around 600 BC. Even then, the precious oil was a part of these settlers' meals, and you can see evidence of this in the ancient amphorae, or large containers for oil, that are on display in many of the archaeological museums of Provence.

The warm, mild climate in Provence, along with the chalky lime soil, provide the perfect growing conditions for these hearty trees, and their deep roots help to slow erosion along the windswept coastline and hills. At one

time, Provençal olive trees covered almost 300,000 acres of land, twice as much as today. But much as the infamous phylloxera epidemic wiped out most of the old-growth wine grape vines in the late 19th century, in 1956 a sudden dramatic plunge in temperature destroyed a million olive trees, and another five million trees had to be pruned to their stumps. This catastrophe pushed many olive oil producers out of the business, and decades later, the small industry is still recovering.

In the south of France, the production of olive oil has more than doubled since the 1990's, and there is no doubt that the future is looking very bright indeed for this beloved undertaking. Joining the older, established cultivators is a younger generation of Provencal oil producers new to the industry. They tend to be small-scale local growers, interested in reviving this ancient tradition.

Today, just seven countries are responsible for 90% of the world's olive oil, and France, at barely 1%, is not one of them. In comparison to countries like Spain, Italy, and Greece, France produces a relatively small amount. But the French know that bigger does not mean better! The strict controls on quality, varietals, and yield mean that the oil produced here, mostly from small artisanal operations in designated regions, is of the very highest quality. Whereas industrial

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Picture of AOC recognized olive oil

olive oils from other countries can be found at relatively low prices in supermarkets, precious artisanal olive oil from in the European Union to Provence can command four times as much - and is widely acknowledged to be well worth the price. These days, people who care about food the world over increasingly recognize the dramatic difference that a finer oil will add to their dishes.

In 2007, olive oils from Provence were recognized by the Institut National de L'origine et de Qualité (INAO) as France's only AOC (Appellation d'Origine Contrôlée) region. Oils with this certificate are guaranteed to be produced in Provence and to be of the very highest quality.

Provence also boasts

five AOP (Appellation d'Origine Protégée) olive oil designations, a system used designate regional sourcing and production excellence. The five areas are the Vallée des Baux de Provence, Aix en Provence, Haute Provence, Provence, and Nice. It's no wonder that the region is so proud of their olive oil!

When you see an "AOC" or "AOP" label on a bottle of provençal olive oil, you can be certain of its provenance. And like wine labels, you'll often see the name of the chateau or domaine where it was grown and bottled. But unlike wine, olive oil doesn't improve with age. It's best kept tightly sealed in a cool dry place. away from heat and light.

Even under these conditions, good olive oil should not be kept more than two years. But if you're cooking in the style of Provence, a bottle probably won't last more than a month or so!

Don't be surprised if you've never tasted any Provencal olive oil before. Since production is so small and demand is so great, most can't be found beyond the local area. All the more reason to dive in when you're here, and to bring some home as souvenirs and gifts, if you can persuade yourself to part with any!

In Provence, the "Olivades" (Olive Oil Season) takes place between late November and late January.

(On the Feast of Saint Catherine, the olives are ready to press.") And so it is that if you are in Provence any time from St. Catherine's Day on November 25th through the end of January, you will be able to see -- and sometimes even join in - harvesting the olives and pressing the oil.



Picture of olives before picking

The traditional way to harvest olives is by hitting the tree branches with long sticks. The olives fall onto nets that are spread on the ground under the trees. There are also some growers who still pick their olives by hand! Once they're harvested, it's crucial to press them as soon as possible. In fact, to qualify for the AOC label, they must be pressed within three days.

Olive oil is also used for cosmetics, soaps, oil-lamp fuel and pharmaceuticals. Ancient Roman and Greek doctors used it in their medicines, and to this day, it's known as a remedy for a host of health complaints!

Ready to explore the world of Provencal olive oil? The mild, sunny weather makes winter the perfect season to take a tour of Provencal olive culture. Here are the most noteworthy provencal towns for those on the trail of the region's "liquid gold."

#### **Baux-de-Provence**

Les Baux-de-Provence is a very picturesque village between Arles and St Remy-de-Provence, and one of the official "Most Beautiful Villages" of France. It's very crowded here in summer, so visiting off-season (or, as we like to think of it, "high olive season") is

perfect. It's also the epicenter of some of the very best olive oil Provence has to offer.

In Les Baux, the olive oil is made from a blend of different olives, and each producer has their own very well-protected secret blends. Official Vallée des Baux AOP olive oils must be composed of four local varieties of olives -- Aglandau, Grossane, Salonenque and Verdale -- and are subjected to a local jury of tasters each year.

#### St. Remy

Within the quaint village of St. Remy, where Van Gogh lived and painted, is an oil mill called the Moulin du Calanquet. Sister and brother Anne and Gilles Brun, the owners, offer a video that shows the oil-making process, historical and modern, as well as a tasting area within their current production facility. They're guite welcoming to visitors, and offer their own oils, tapenades, and jams for sale.

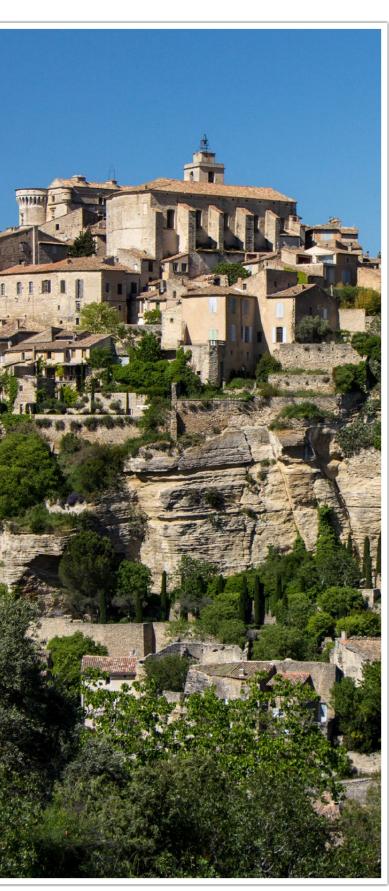
#### Callas Village

The Moulin de Callas is a small mill located northeast of Draguignan in the Var department. It's been run by the Bérenguier family since 1928. The original mill, dating from 1746, is now the owner's home, with a shop attached. They offer their own olive oil as well as complimentary tastings, and they still have the ancient millstone and oil-making equipment on display there.



Olive oil tasting at the Moulin de Callas

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Picture of the city of Gordes in Provence

#### Gordes

Aglandau olives are planted extensively in the Luberon area, and they tend to produce smoother and subtler oils here in Provence than those grown in Italy and Spain. Andre, the owner of the "Clos des Jeannons" in the village of Gordes in Luberon, loves to share his passion for olives and olive oil. He offers tours of his olive fields and then demonstrates his oil-making process. At the end, he offers an oil tasting, and if you're lucky, a picnic with wine in his fields.

#### Maussane

Not far from St. Remy, in the small village of Maussane, the Moulin Jean Marie Cornille is an olive oil co-op that produces Vallée des Baux de Provence AOC olive oil. They offer a short film about olive oil production, as well as samples of various oils. They have a shop where you can purchase oil and other local products.

#### Château Romanin

Near Saint Rémy de Provence, on the Route de Cavaillon, the wine-growing estate Château Romanin also produces beautiful examples of fruité vert and fruité noir oils. They practice biodynamic farming techniques, and offer their olive oils for sale on the estate.

There are plenty of other olive oil producers throughout Provence; this is just a sample of some of our favorites. Once you've picked some olives, pressed some olives, and tasted your fill of these special oils, why not treat yourself to an olive facial or an oliveoil massage? There are many spas in the south of France where you can pamper yourself with the fruit of the olive tree!

Invite your friends to join you for the weekend. There are many ways to get to this hidden gem. You can land in Paris, Marseille, or Nice, and take the TGV to Avignon ■

## **GETTING HERE**

You've been to Paris, London, Rome and Athens... why not Provence? We are 2.5 hours away from Paris by high-speed rail!

#### From The Avignon TGV Station and **Points North**

Arriving from Paris or anywhere north of us, you will step out of the train at the TGV station on the city-side of the rail station, on the upper level, arrivals on Track 3. If you look out into the distance, you will see the Popes' Palace. Please go down the stairs, ramp or elevator and walk down the hill to where all of the rental car agencies are located.

**NOTA:** If you have mistakenly reserved a train which arrives at the Avignon Central Station, there is no need to look for anything other than the first taxi cab you can find! You need to ask the driver to take you to Avignon TGV 'Voitures de Location/ +33 (0) 6 07 82 66 63. Rental Cars.'

#### From Marseille or Nice airports and **Points South**

You must come north on the major A7 highway, in the direction of Lyon. There is a toll booth at Lançon, where you take a ticket. At the Cavaillon/St. Rémy de Provence exit, you must pay in €uros. This you can do with your credit card. No problem.

Remember, if even in spite of such excellent directions, you get lost, we can come to find you. It is as simple as going to the parking lot in front of the big church in Saint Rémy and calling us at:



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