University of Illinois
Alumni Association

Duration
8 days

Activity Level
Moderate

Journey Type
Land
Solo-Friendly

Pleasures of Provence

September 14-22, 2027

Starting from $5,545/pp

Aix-en-Provence beckons for this seven-night sojourn to Provence, France! Unpack once and enjoy first-class accommodations as you venture from Aix on enriching excursions. Visit medieval Avignon, Roman Arles, old Marseille, picturesque Provençal villages and the wine-making town of Châteauneuf-du-Pape. Each day unveils authentic French experiences — marvel at Roman ruins and monuments, meander along fabled cobblestone streets and visit the Aix studio of visionary artist Paul Cézanne. Plus, participate in unique cultural rituals such as truffle hunting, wine tastings and the fun local pastime of pétanque!

Day-by-Day Itinerary

Pleasures of Provence ~ France

Air Program: 9 days/ 8 nights (includes 1 air night)

Land Program: 8 days/ 7 nights

Breakfasts: 7 | Lunches: 3 | Receptions: 2 | Dinners: 3

B | L | D denotes included breakfasts, lunches and dinners.

This itinerary is subject to change due to operational conditions.

A special note about air: If you have purchased only the Land Program, please book flights that arrive on Day 2, the first day of the Land Program. The date is listed at the top of your Reservation Confirmation.

Activity Level ratings indicate each excursion's physical expectations. To make the best personal choice, please evaluate each excursion's rating and your ability to meet the tour's physical demands. Excursions on this program require: walking on cobblestones, unpaved paths or uneven surfaces; and getting on/off motor coaches and boats.

Mild: Walk under 1 mile on mainly flat terrain; navigate under 50 stairs; stand under 1 hour

Moderate: Walk 1-3 miles on flat/uneven terrain; navigate 50-100 stairs; stand 1-2 hours

Active: Walk 2+ miles on flat/uneven terrain, including up and down inclines; navigate 100+ stairs; stand 3+ hours

Depending on the excursion, more leisurely alternatives may be available.

Day 1 | Depart gateway city

AHI FlexAir passengers depart for Marseille, France. Please check your luggage from your gateway city to your arrival city. Your claim checks should have the following airport code: MRS.

Day 2 | Marseille | Aix-en-Provence, France

Aquabella Hôtel & Spa

D

Arrive at Marseille Provence Airport. Proceed through immigration to the baggage claim area and retrieve your luggage. After completing customs, AHI FlexAir passengers traveling on flights that qualify for the group arrival transfer and Land Program passengers who have purchased seats on the group transfer should exit the baggage claim area and proceed to the designated meeting spot, where an AHI Travel representative will meet you. The meeting location will be provided with your final documents.

Transfer to the first-class Aquabella Hôtel & Spa. Please note that if you arrive before check-in time, your room may not be immediately available.

This afternoon, take a brief orientation stroll around your hotel with your Travel Director to become acquainted with the area and your home for the week.

Welcome Reception & Dinner: Meet and mingle with your fellow travelers at a Welcome Reception and Dinner at the hotel this evening.

Day 3 | Aix-en-Provence | Cassis and its Calanques

Aquabella Hôtel & Spa

B | L

An American-style breakfast buffet will be served in the hotel each morning.

By the end of the second century B.C., the Romans had conquered this region, creating the first province outside of Italy. They called it Provincia Romana, from which the name Provence is derived. The historic capital of Provence is one of the most wonderfully preserved of all French cities. Affectionally known as Aix (pronounced “ex”), it was founded by the Romans in 122 B.C. Its thermal springs, narrow streets, colorful markets and beautiful landscapes have lured artists, writers and visitors for ages.

Aix-en-Provence. This morning, set out on foot with a guide to discover this quintessentially Provençal town. The main avenue, Cours Mirabeau, is considered one of the most beautiful in Europe. Stroll along the tree-lined, picture-perfect pedestrian lanes as you pass lovely fountains, cafés and bookshops. If you sit at only one French café outside of Paris, it should be here, where the light is sublime and the sidewalks are alive with activity. During your walk, pass by the Cathédrale Saint-Saveur d’Aix-en-Provence and the Place de l’Hôtel de Ville, the Town Hall square. Along the way, see some of the places painter Paul Cézanne frequented. (Moderate)

Cassis & its Calanques. After your walking tour, take a panoramic drive to Cassis, a sun-drenched Provençal fishing village on the Mediterranean coast, where you’ll savor lunch, including fresh seafood if desired, in a local restaurant. Then, take an awe-inspiring cruise that winds its way through Cassis’ famous calanques —unique geologic formations of deep, narrow inlets cut from towering white stone cliffs where tall needle rocks rise from brilliant blue-green waters. (Moderate)

Transfer from the town center back to the motor coach on a delightful train ride and return to the hotel. This evening, seek out one of the many wonderful cafés or restaurants in Aix for dinner at your leisure. Your Travel Director can assist you with recommendations.

Day 4 | Avignon

Aquabella Hôtel & Spa

B | L

Avignon & the Palais des Papes. This morning, take a panoramic drive to Avignon, the historic, walled UNESCO World Heritage city nestled on the banks of the Rhône River. The name of the city dates to the 4th century B.C. and has two meanings: “City of strong wind,” because of the mistral, or more likely, “Lord of the river.” On a guided tour, visit Le Palais des Papes, also known as the Palace of the Popes, the Pope’s Palace and the Papal Palace. It comprises two distinct buildings—the austere Old Palace, built by the severe Pope Benedict XII, and the ornate New Palace, built by the lighthearted Pope Clement VI—and is an outstanding example of Gothic architecture. The papal residence was a seat of Western Christianity during the 14th century, from 1309 to 1417. (Active)

Châteauneuf-du-Pape : Next, continue through the pastoral countryside to discover Châteauneuf-du-Pape, a historic wine region located between the towns of Orange and Avignon in the southern Rhône Valley. It is famous for its powerful, full-bodied red wine, largely made from the classic southern region Rhône grape trio of Grenache, Syrah and Mourvèdre. Arrive in the wine-making town and delight in a special tour, tasting and lunch at a winery. (Mild)

Pont du Gard. Continue to the Pont du Gard, an ancient technical masterpiece and a UNESCO World Heritage site. It was constructed by the Romans in 19 B.C. as part of a 30-mile canal to supply water to the town of Nîmes. This enormous three-tiered aqueduct rises as much as 160 feet above the valley and was used through the 9th century. The first level carried a road, and its third, a conduit; all three levels were built without mortar! Contemplate the enormity of this undertaking, more than 2,000 years ago, and how it has withstood the test of time. (Moderate)

Return to the hotel and savor the flavors of Provençal cuisine during dinner on your own in Aix.

Day 5 | Arles | Les Baux | St. Remy

Aquabella Hôtel & Spa

B | D

Arles. This morning, take a panoramic drive to Arles, which is filled with extraordinary Romanesque monuments and Roman ruins that are collectively a UNESCO World Heritage site. On a guided walk through Arles, visit the ancient, well-preserved Amphitheatre of Les Arènes. Even after centuries of baking in the Provençal sun, the amphitheater, built in the first century A.D., is a testament to the Romans' engineering prowess and architectural skills. Constructed using sandstone and limestone, the amphitheater follows the typical Roman

elliptical shape, with an oval arena surrounded by concentric seating rings. It could accommodate around 20,000 spectators in its heyday when public spectacles such as gladiator contests and chariot races were hosted here as a crucial part of the social and cultural life of Roman Arles. Today, it is still used to stage bullfights, concerts and theater productions, providing a unique setting for contemporary events against the backdrop of the enduring architectural prowess of ancient Rome. During your stroll, you'll also pass the Romanesque masterpiece Cathédrale Saint-Trophime and other notable sites. (Moderate)

Free Time: Take a break for lunch on your own and some time at leisure in Arles before rejoining your group. Perhaps you'll try some of Provence's renowned culinary creations, such as bouillabaisse , salade Niçoise or ratatouille .

Les Baux & Saint Remy. After lunch, travel by motor coach to Les Baux-en-Provence, situated on a rocky outcrop in the Alpilles mountains with stunning panoramic views of the surrounding countryside. Take a guided walking tour of Les Baux, named "One of the Most Beautiful Villages in France," along its winding, cobblestone streets and charming squares, taking a moment to appreciate traditional Provençal architectural elements, such as wooden shutters and wrought-iron details. You'll also see the ruins of the medieval fortress, Château des Baux, which dominates the village and once played a significant role in the region's history. Pass by quaint chapels, artisan shops, restaurants and galleries that add to its cultural vibrancy.

Continue on a short drive to Saint Remy-de-Provence, admiring the panoramic views of the olive groves, vineyards, perfumed valleys and rocky hills in the Baux valley that inspired Vincent Van Gogh to produce nearly 150 paintings, including "The Starry Night" and "Irises," while staying in the Saint-Paul-de-Mausole psychiatric hospital from 1889 to 1890. Set in the heart of the Aphilles Regional Natural Park, the historic village of Saint Remy was built on one of the oldest archeological sites in Europe; remnants of the ancient civilization, including an arch and a mausoleum, are still visible today. Take a guided walking tour of Saint Remy's narrow, winding streets and cobblestone alleys as you pass by The Place Favier, a central square surrounded by cafes and shops, and the historic Collégiale Saint Martin, Saint-Martin Collegiate Church. (Moderate)

Back in Aix, enjoy a festive group dinner together in town this evening.

Day 6 | Marseille

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B

Marseille. Founded around 600 B.C. by Greek settlers from Phocaea, Marseille, the oldest city in France, remains a dazzling metropolis on the Mediterranean, especially after its turn as the European Capital of Culture in 2013. Due to its history as a major port, the city has a diverse population made up of Mediterranean, African and Middle Eastern cultures. Its Vieux-Port is a bustling harbor in the historic heart of Marseille. Discover the city through a guided coach walking and tour. See the iconic Palais Longchamp, built to commemorate the arrival of water from the Durance River to Marseille. Inaugurated in 1869, it symbolizes the importance of water supply to the city. In fact, one of the most striking features of Palais Longchamp is the cascading waterfalls that flow down the monumental staircase. Admire the architectural masterpiece of the palace, noting the sculptural elements adorning it, including allegorical figures representing rivers, agriculture and abundance. Drive along the harbor then up to Notre Dame de la Garde, a basilica situated on a hill overlooking the city, and take in the magnificent view. Return to the harbor and stroll through Le Panier, the oldest district of Marseille known for its narrow streets, pastel-colored houses, and street art and murals that add to its artistic, bohemian atmosphere. (Moderate)

Free Time: Enjoy lunch on your own in Le Panier and the afternoon at leisure in Marseille. You might choose to visit the Museum of Civilizations of Europe and the Mediterranean (MuCEM).

Enrichment: Splendors of Aix-en-Provence & the South of France . Join an engaging lecture on the region's history, culture and splendors, including an overview of the painters who called Provence home and the works that made this region famous.

This evening, find another wonderful café or restaurant in Aix for dinner at leisure.

Day 7 | Luberon

Aquabella Hôtel & Spa

B | L

Les Pastras Provence. This morning, venture again into the Provençal countryside to the Luberon Massif region, composed of three mountain ranges. Your first stop will be Les Pastras, an organic farm run by a Franco-American couple who moved from Chicago to the south of France in 2003 to take over the family vineyard. The farm produces a bounty of grapes, olives, apricots, cherries, plums, apples, pears, pomegranates, figs, almonds, hazelnuts and black winter truffles. After a brief welcome by the owners, take a guided tour of the truffle plantation and olive tree grove. Learn how the olives are harvested and processed into olive oil, how the truffles are cultivated, and how the truffle dogs are trained. Then, go on a hunt for France's elusive "black gold" with professional hunters who share stories of the world's most secretive business. Conclude the tour by sampling fresh truffle hors d'oeuvres, Champagne and a tasting of Les Pastras' organic olive and truffle oil. (Moderate)

Relax in this idyllic, picturesque setting as you indulge in a cold Provençal buffet lunch.

The Game of Pétanque. After lunch, spend some time mastering Provence's most popular pastime, the game of pétanque , also known as boules. You'll learn to shoot, score and even cheat while playing the game in a public square, just as the French do. And since no game of pétanque is complete without a drink in hand, the rosé and pastis will be flowing! (Moderate)

Lourmarin. Continue your idyllic day in the Provençal countryside with a panoramic tour of Lourmarin, one of France's most beautiful villages. Situated at the foot of the Luberon Massif, it is dotted with vineyards, olive groves and almond trees. Nobel Prize-winning author Albert Camus and British expatriate Peter Mayle, author of "A Year in Provence," lived here and are buried in the local cemetery. (Moderate)

Return to the hotel and relax after a full day over dinner on your own this evening.

Day 8 | Aix-en-Provence

Aquabella Hôtel & Spa

B | D

Cézanne Studio Tour. This morning, find your own muse as you walk in the footsteps of Paul Cézanne during a tour of Atelier de Cézanne. The visionary artist was born here and returned late in life to paint the surrounding Provençal landscape from 1902 until his death in 1906. Feel the painter's presence as you contemplate the birthplace of dozens of works now preserved in the world's greatest museums. View his painting tools and equipment, furniture and actual models of still-life paintings. Surrounding the landscape here, the Sainte-Victoire mountain became a favorite motif for Cézanne; he painted 44 oils and 43 watercolors that bear witness to his attachment to the mountains. Gain an appreciation for how Aix inspired him and for the "Father of Modern Art's" revolutionary ideas that earned Cézanne a lasting legacy in modern art and Post-Impressionism. (Moderate)

Free Time. Set out on your own for lunch and the remainder of the day at leisure in Aix, seeking out additional highlights of this magical place. Perhaps visit one of many notable art museums, such as the Granet Museum, holding works by the likes of Monet, Degas, Renoir, Van Gogh and Picasso. Stroll through an open-air market and gather what you need for a picnic in the park. Stop into a confectionery to taste calissons , Aix's specialty candy composed of crystallized melon and almonds, coated with royal icing. Visit the 17th-century Aix residence and "pleasure house," the Vendôme Pavilion, and stop by the restored Hôtel de Caumont Art Center, which offers a tearoom, lounge bar and pretty bookshop. Or go fountain hunting through the narrow side streets in this city known as the "City of a Thousand Fountains!"

Farewell Reception & Dinner. Bid au revoir to your fellow adventurers during tonight's Farewell Reception and Dinner at the hotel.

Day 9 | Depart for gateway city

B

After breakfast, check out of the hotel and transfer to the airport in Marseille.

AHI FlexAir passengers traveling on flights that qualify for a group transfer and Land Program passengers who have purchased seats on the group transfer depart for Marseille Provence Airport for your return flights home. Your Travel Director will provide the details.

Note: Itinerary may change due to local conditions.

What's Included

Program Overview

- Small group: Sized just right at 28 guests.
- 7 nights in Aix-en-Provence at the first-class Aquabella Hôtel & Spa
- AHI Connects: Local immersion.
- AHI Sustainability Promise: We strive to make a positive, purposeful impact in the communities we visit.
- Complimentary travel mementos.

Meal Program

- 7 breakfasts, 3 lunches and 3 dinners.
- Welcome and Farewell Receptions and Dinners to mingle with fellow travelers.
- Tea or coffee with all meals, plus wine with dinner.
- Opportunities to sample authentic cuisine and local flavors.

On-site Features

- Enrichment by expert speakers enhances your insight into the region.
- Engaging excursions showcase the local culture, heritage and history.
- Free time to pursue your individual interests.
- Tipping of guides and drivers.
- A personal VOX headset to hear your English-speaking guide clearly.

FlexAir Travel Program

Need assistance booking your travel arrangements? Our experts are here to help. Our air program offers the following benefits.

Trip Transportation

- Assistance in the event of schedule changes or delays
- Arrival and departure transfers on group dates

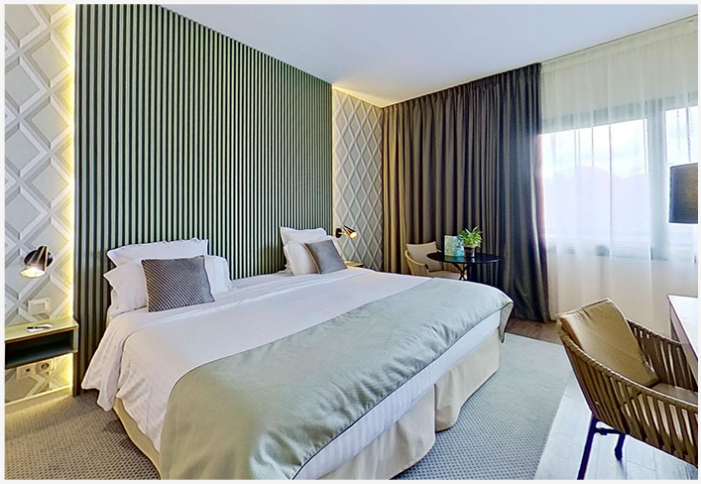
Price Guarantee

- Price guarantee to protect you from fuel surcharge increases after ticket purchase

Travel and Hotel Accommodations

Aquabella

Aquabella Hotel & Spa is a serene Provençal retreat nestled amid a beautiful Mediterranean garden in the heart of Aix-en-Provence. Its fully renovated rooms feature a refined style and contemporary comfort, while thoughtful service ensures a relaxing stay. Unwind in the Sensory Spa or heated outdoor pool, savor Mediterranean cuisine with southern French flair at L'Orangerie and enjoy cocktails in the inviting lounge bar. Wi-Fi is complimentary.



Tripadvisor

Pricing

$250 Full Payment Discount expires April 17, 2027
$250 Special Savings expires January 25, 2027

Trip Price (USD)

Base Price	**$5,545**
Special Savings (Expires January 25, 2027)	**-$250**
Full Payment Discount *	**-$250**
Special Price	**$5,045**
You Pay	**$5,045 per person**

Package rates are per person based on Double occupancy from Land Only. Prices include all service charges; port charges when applicable; U.S. government taxes and fees. The minimum deposit is $1000.00 per person. To view Program Terms and conditions please click here. Some airlines may impose additional charges if you choose to check any baggage. Please contact your airline or refer to its website for detailed information regarding your airline's checked baggage policies.

*Full Payment Discounts are only available at the time of booking with initial payment 150+ days prior to departure. This offer only applies to full payment at the time of reservation. Details on how to qualify for this savings will be included when your reservation request is confirmed.

FRANCE
PROVENCE
Avignon
Châteauneuf-du-Pape
Lourmarin
Cadenet
Saint-Rémy-de-Provence
Arles
Les Baux-de-Provence
Aix-en-Provence
Marseille
Cassis
Mediterranean Sea