



Sapphire Mirrors of the French Riviera

*Self guided tour
Luggage transport
by your own personal
donkey*





Family holidays in Provence, Mercantour national park

High mountain altitudes ranging from 1200 - 3000m

Type of holidays : Self guided walking tour, luggage transport by donkey.

Duration : 6 days 5 nights. Can be adapted on a shorter or longer version on request.

Season : from the 1st of June to 25 September.

Level : Family friendly with children aged 5 and above, adults looking for a friendly travelling companion!

Prices for 2023 : Adult option gîte : 680€
extra option private room : 70€/adult.
Children aged from 5 to 12 years old : 580€
extra option private room : 70€/child.

Path conditions : Very well signposted and marked with easily distinguishable yellow rectangles. They do, however, remain mountain paths.

Accommodation : Family rooms in auberge , gites, mountain refuge. This includes full board. You only need to bring sheet sleeping bags and sleeping bags. There are showers in each lodging, please bring your own towel.



Trek departure : from the farm of Villeplane. Every day according to availability from 01/06/2023 to 25/09/2023.

Trek arrival : Estenc, 50km / one hour by car from Villeplane, where we will pick you up at the end of your journey to drive you back to Villeplane (included in the price).

Family friendly Trek : The easy options throughout this trek enables you to enjoy a week of relaxed walking where the children can be involved. The itinerary has been planned for families with children aged 5 and up. The walking time per day varies between 3 - 6 hours, and the ascent levels between 300 m - 800 m.

Level : easy, trails clearly marked.

Climate : due to the proximity of the Mediterranean Sea, the weather is warm and sunny, ideal for summer hiking.



Wolf are you there?

This journey is full of variety. Through the foot-hills and the fragrance of Provence and up to the alpine panoramas of the Mercantour National Park. From the oak to the larch, from the wheat fields to the gentian lawns, from a man-made landscape to a sweeping scenery of wilderness.

The last two days are a grandiose conclusion to the trip with a good general idea of high mountain conditions and Europe's largest glacial lake. Marmots, chamois and golden eagles will be there to meet you! A wolf may observe you from afar, too fearful to draw near.

Your Donkey :

A donkey is docile and easy to lead, but is not a mountain bike! Each one has different reactions according to their personality : cuddly, curious, gourmand, drama queen, endearing... He knows how to get your child to keep going!

It is important for you to know that all our donkeys work 2 months in the year, and for the rest of the time they are on holiday! Roaming free in 400 hectares, where we pamper them from autumn to summer.



Day by day programme

Day 1 : around Villeplane

Welcome at 8.30 at the farm of Villeplane. Our local guide will assess the various possibilities together, taking into consideration the weather forecast, your physical abilities and of course will show you how to handle your donkey.

Option 1 : Tour around the 'collet de la cime'

We offer a lovely, relaxing half-day hike, far from everything. The top of the Collet peak offers a 360 degree vista of all the peaks of the valley.
Accumulated Ascent : 300 m - Accumulated Descent : 300 m
Distance : 6 km - Continuous walking time : 2.5 hrs

Option 2 : The red gorges of Daluis

Your trek begins in the Redlands. A stroll around the balcony over a relief unique which is in Europe, and spectacular gorges truffled with copper mines!
Accumulated Ascent : 525 m - Accumulated Descent : 525 m
Distance: 10,5 km - Continuous walking time : 4h30

Night at the ecolodge of Villeplane.



Day 2 : Villeplane / Saint Martin d'Entraunes

By Villetalle Basse : This fairly long hike borrows an ancestral path connecting villages between them. It will impregnate you with the wilderness charm of our mountains and their 2500 meter sommets cutting through the blue of the sky punctuated by small hamlets perched with their walls made of dry stones, shaded forests and amusing halts in the pools of refreshing torrents.

Accumulated Ascent : 680 m - Accumulated Descent : 880 m

Distance : 14,5 km - Continuous walking time : 6 hrs

Night at gite de Pelens or at hotel des Etrangers depending on availabilities. Shared bathroom at hotel des Etrangers.



Day 3 : Saint Martin d'Entraunes/Entraunes

Option 1 : By the Ubac

This itinerary is entirely shaded along wide forest paths and crosses several beautiful streams suitable for bathing. Through ancient countryside, we spare a thought for the generations of mountain dwellers who have shaped the landscape to the best of their advantage. This itinerary offer refreshing aquatic fun in the stream of Chastelonnette.

Accumulated Ascent : 870 m - Accumulated Descent : 660 m

Distance : 10 km - Continuous walking time : 5hrs30

Option 2 : By the postman trail and Serre d'Au

The ascent of the valley continues with the beautiful hike of the postman's path. This path with an evocative name, recalls the time (not so long ago) when the public service had the only material to provide its agents with a good pair of shoes to ensure the distribution of mail...

Accumulated Ascent : 970 m - Accumulated Descent : 750 m

Distance : 12,5 km - Continuous walking time : 6hrs30

Night at Villa Noë or auberge Roche Grande depending on availabilities.
Shared bathrooms at auberge Roche Grande.



Day 4 : Entraunes/Estenc

By the waterfalls

Walking up through the village, you will follow a pretty path along the bed of the impressive Var river, between towering cliffs, and across the footbridges over the torrent of Garréton, Aiglière and the Var, with their impressive vertical falls!

Accumulated Ascent : 530 m - Accumulated Descent : 0 m

Walking time : 3 h - Distance: 7 km

Night at refuge de la Cantonnière or gite Ferran depending on availabilities. Shared bathrooms at refuge de la Cantonnière.

Extra cost of 25€ per person at gite Ferran.



Day 5 : Estenc/Col de la Cayolle

Option 1 : By the woods of the Garrets

An ascent which progresses in altitude up a beautiful path through a centennial larch tree forest to the timberline (edge of inhospitable climate), where you emerge to find high mountain pastures and the charming mountain range of Sanguinière with its wild scenery, typical of the contrast and diverse southern Alps.

Accumulated Ascent : 590 m - Accumulated Descent : 0 m

Distance : 7 km - Continuous walking time : 3.5 hrs

Option 2 : Col de la Boucharde (2539m) - Without donkey

If you are looking for an adventure for your last two days, you have the option here of leaving your donkey at the 'refuge de la Cantonnière' and setting off hands free!

A mineral valley, where chamois and marmots soak up the sun! Crossing over the Garret torrent, you will head for the core of the Mercantour national park. A charming journey through the woods, following the torrent, will bring you to the 'Cabanes de Sanguinière', shortly after which the woods will be replaced by a high mountain pasture.

Accumulated Ascent : 990 m - Accumulated Descent : 440 m

Distance : 13 km - Continuous walking time : 6 hrs

Night at refuge de la Cayolle. Rooms and bathrooms shared.



Day 6 : Col de la Cayolle/Estenc

Option 1 : The breathtaking tour of the lakes

Your weeks trek rounds off in a climax with an enchanted tour around the glacial lakes of Allos, Garrets and la petite Cayolle. You will lose yourself on this journey through nature, where the blue sky is reflected in the clear waters of the lakes and the endemic flora strewn with alpine pastures : Alonie bluebell, wooly Berardie, Koch gentians, acaulescent catchflies, vanilla orchids, pansies ..

Accumulated Ascent : 410 m - Accumulated Descent : 970 m

Distance : 13 km - Continuous walking time : 5.5 hrs

Option 2 : The Mont Pelat, highest summit - without donkey

If you are a keen mountain-goer, you will not be able to leave the region without climbing the Mont Pelat (3050m), the highest local summit. A mountaintop whose name is etymologically transparent, it's flanks of barren rockslides cut across the blue sky. The tradition is to reach the summit at the rising of the sun and, on a clear day, enjoy this majestic 360° view: To the south, Corsica; a faint shadow on the liquid horizon, to the north, the distant Mont Blanc glistening white, and to the east, the Italian and Swiss Alps.

Accumulated Ascent : 1260 m - Accumulated Descent : 1820 m

Distance : 20 km - Continuous walking time : 8 hrs

You will be picked up and driven back to Villeplane at 5pm.

Arrival to Villeplane and end of your journey at 18.30.

If you have not come by car, you have the choice at the end of your week between staying an **extra night** in Villeplane (depending on availabilities) or returning to Nice by the mountain train which leaves Entrevaux at 19:21, arriving in Nice at 20:53. Please specify your choice when booking.



How to reach us

By Plane : To *Nice* airport or train station.

Airport Bus Services : (depart from terminal 1)

For the Train station 'Gare SNCF'

By Mountain Train : from *Nice* to *Entrevaux*

From the mountain train station 'Gare des chemins de fer de Provence' (not the 'Gare SNCF') There are 2 appropriate Micheline trains a day:

Please notify us if you are arriving at *Entrevaux* by the mountain train and we will arrange your 45 mins transfer to *Villeplane* (60€ per group).

By Coach : from *Nice* to *Guillaumes*

From « *Nice Grand Arénas* », bus station in *Nice* centre. (N.B. : There is one bus a day, do not miss it!). The bus station is not at the same place .

You must check time table before to book.

Times : Leaving *Nice* at

- From Monday to Saturday : 16.30
- Sunday : 08.00 and 16.30

Duration : 2 hrs

Please notify us if you are arriving at *Guillaumes* by coach, and we will arrange your 30 mins transfer to *Villeplane* (30€ per group).

By Car :

From Nice : Less than 2 hrs drive following directions for '*Digne*' (right) up through the stunning *Gorges de Daluis*.

From Digne-les-bains : 95 km drive, heading southeast to *Barreme*, then east to *St. André les Alpes* and *Les Scafarels*. 7 km east of *Annot*, head north again up the *Gorges de Daluis*.

From Barcelonnette : Come over *Col de Cayolle* (2326 m) and down past *Entraunes*.



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