



Christmas Traditions in Provence

Duration : 8 days

Best time : December

Number of People (mini /max) : 15 - 40

Christmas in Provence is the magic of Christmas with the very special scent of Provence.

The feast is prepared from the beginning of December, on Saint Barbara's Day, when wheat grains or lentils have sprouted in saucers and glasses. They symbolise renewal, the hope of a new spring to come and the rebirth of nature.

The Christmas tree and the crib with santons are in place.

A tradition established in the 19th century in Provence.



Day 1 : Arrival

Arrival at the end of the day.

Dinner and Installation in your accommodation.

Accommodation in a 3* or 4* hotel of your choice.

Day 2 : Arlésiennes Traditions and Avignon



Breakfast at your hotel and departure for Arles.

Arles is known for the richness of its ancient Roman monuments and Roman heritage; its monuments were listed as UNESCO World Heritage Sites in 1981, including the Roman Amphitheatre (the arenas), the Ancient Theatre and the Cryptoportics. The Roman Baths of Constantine, the remains of the Roman circus, the Saint-Trophime cloister, the Saint-Trophime portal and the Alyscamps, which are the starting point of the Chemin d'Arles, one of the three routes leading to Santiago de Compostela. In addition to this remarkable architecture, Arles also maintains beautiful buildings from the 16th, 17th and 18th centuries. Since 1986, the city has been classified as a "City of Art and History".

A guided tour of the city and the old cathedral of Saint Trophime. Located on Place de la République in Arles, it is one of the most interesting examples of Romanesque art. Inside, you can admire the international exhibition of santon makers.

Drive to Avignon.

Free lunch.



Capital of Christianity in the Middle Ages, the city has retained the imprint of this grandiose destiny: the Popes' Palace, the Saint Bénezet Bridge, known throughout the world as the "pont d'Avignon", known thanks to the song, ramparts, an exceptional monumental complex listed as a UNESCO World Heritage Site. Dozens of churches and chapels, vestiges of a rich historical past, gives the city a unique atmosphere.

Guided tour of the city. Free time at the Christmas market.

At the end of the day, drive to your hotel for dinner and accommodation.

History of the Santons

The history of people is nourished by stories that tradition embellishes. The Santons of Provence bear witness to the traditions of the people of Provence. From one nursery to another, the subjects are marked by the details of their "progenitor" who ensures the offspring according to their creative mood. Thus, the old trades remain in the Santon tradition, which has also been nourished by the colourful verve of the Pastoral Care.



Day 3 : The Truffle from the ground to the plate



Breakfast.

Arrival around 9:30am in Richerenches at the Farm: (Information on the day's program, snacks...etc.).

10am: truffle market.



Discover the truffle market, the most important, as more than 1 ton is traded every Saturday from 15 November to 15 March.

La tuber melanosporum and La brumale, explanation on how to differentiate between the two different kinds of winter truffles.

Meet with the truffle growers who come to sell their harvest and the traders who wait, run the Mistral and weigh truffles in the trunks of their cars.

12:30pm - Return to the Farm.

Workshop and truffle brunch at the Maison d'hôte in the main room, with a corner chimney fire.

Learn how to recognize Tuber Melanosporum - a winter truffle sold in Richerenches. Learn how to store it and how to cook it simply and quickly.

Cooking workshop: prepare and taste. Potato salad with truffles, toast with truffle butter, truffle "*brandade*" (a Provençal dish consisting of salt cod mixed into puree with olive oil and milk), then ravioli with truffle sauce, truffle pâté, truffle brie, wine, dessert and coffee.

3:00 pm: Truffle Growers.... Stroll in the truffle fields.

5pm : Wine tasting. A combination of truffles and wine.

Departure at the end of the day.

Arrival at your hotel, dinner and accommodation.

Day 4 : Aubagne and the Biennale of santons



Breakfast. Then departure for Aubagne.

Visit of Marcel Pagnol's little world. This stroll through the author's universe is accompanied by a sound commentary presenting various scenes from his films: "La Femme du Boulanger", "Le Château de ma Mère", "La Gloire de mon Père" ...)



During a guided tour, discover all the stages of manufacturing a santon: molding, baking, decoration, sewing, assembly, dressing and finishing. A unique visit, where the santons come to life at the hands of the artists who create them.

Then you can admire the work of the santon maker with different pieces and themes in the museum composed of more than 300 santons.

Free lunch.

The great santon market opens its doors to you. Every year, on a weekend, about fifty santon craftsmen take to the streets of Aubagne. The carefully selected santon makers make this market a reference in France. Santons with generous, earthenware shapes coexist with more traditional figurines. This provides a whole palette of colours to discover and gaze upon.

At the end of your day return to your hotel for dinner and accommodation.

The Provençal crèche

In France, the ban on the public presentation of religious scenes during the Revolution encouraged the development of domestic nativity scenes and the trade in small characters, including shepherds with pink cheeks and in 18th century costumes. Then, as time went by, the nativity scenes were inspired by local life. In a simple style, the craftsmen evoked characters typical of the region, village or the deceased of the family. From the 19th century onwards, the Provençal crib became the most popular. It ended up representing all the trades of the time in local costume from 1820 to 1850. These little santons recall the original simplicity of the Bethlehem cave. The name of the santons comes from the Provençal "santoun" which means "little saint".

The characters were, at that time, shaped with dried bread crumbs, then painted in oil and varnish. Since the beginning of the 19th century, santon makers have passed on their art from father to son in accordance with tradition.

Day 5 : Gastronomy and fragrances



Breakfast.

Drive to Coustellet for a visit to the Lavender Museum. Since 1991, it has been welcoming people to the heart of the Luberon Regional Natural Park. This place is entirely dedicated to fine lavender, and helps you understand the importance of this culture, its history, its virtues, its qualities, its future.

Georges Lincélé, founder of the Lavender Museum, wanted to restore the value of fine lavender, the symbol of Provence. A true extension of the lavender farm, the museum presents itself as a traditional Luberon farmhouse, with every detail taken care of.

Continue by stopping off at a confectioner's. This small family business produces and sells all kinds of candied fruit, drained for making cakes, or frozen to offer and what about chocolate sweets... Divine!

Lunch.



Visit of the small village of Roussillon. Located in the heart of Europe's largest ochre deposits, Roussillon claims its mineral uniqueness with an astonishing palette of flamboyant colours. As you walk along its alleys and stairs, contemplating its facades, often simple and naturally beautiful, you will admire the result of more than a thousand years of know-how.

Visit and tasting at a Nougatier's house.

These "Paysans Nougatiers" produce nougat that's ingredients are produced on site. The almonds from their farm and the "lavender honey" from their 200 beehives located between Mont Ventoux and Luberon. Also enjoy the "Nougalletes". Visit the manufacturing workshop. See a slideshow on the Silvain House and on manufacturing. In 2016, the company was awarded the "Living Heritage Company" label for its craftsmanship and excellence.

Return to your host for dinner and accommodation.

Day 6 : Aix en Provence and Cézanne



Breakfast and departure for Aix-en-Provence.

Free time in this beautiful city.

Possibility to stroll around the Christmas market, to go to the Granet Museum...

A city of water and art, Aix-en-Provence is the perfect embodiment of this Provençal way of life that is so highly praised throughout the world. It is the city of the painter Cézanne, whose Aix-en-Provence countryside inspired the beauty of Aix-en-Provence. A city of art is discovered while strolling around. During your walks around the famous Cours Mirabeau, shaded by its trees, you will admire a number of private mansions and monuments - Town Hall, a former office of an archbishop, Saint-Sauveur Cathedral and Pavillon de Vendôme. The squares decorated with fountains are also enchanting places to discover during your walks.

Free lunch.

In the afternoon, departure for a cellar. Tasting and explanation of the vinification.

Initiation to oenology.

Return to your hotel for dinner.

Day 7 : Marseille



Breakfast then departure for Marseille.

A guided tour of the Mucem. A floating museum, suspended between sky and water, floating at the entrance to the Old Port of Marseille, the famous museum opens its doors to you and invites you to discover the culture of the Mediterranean – guided tour.

Push its doors open and immerse yourself in the great history of the Mediterranean basin. More than a museum, Mucem is a true cultural city and is a new way of considering the Mediterranean as a space of openness and sharing, of envisaging a common history, of perceiving the dialogue of civilizations, of explaining its stakes, of giving depth to contemporary phenomena, and of shaping a new public space. MUCEM tickets are valid for one entry to all exhibition spaces at J4 and Fort St Jean.

Free lunch.

Afternoon free. Possibility to visit the basket area.

Guided tour and tasting of one of the oldest bakeries in Marseille. For more than 200 years, the secret of the Shuttle's recipe has been jealously guarded and the three different families who have owned it, since its creation in 1781, have passed on the exclusivity and know-how. The Saint Victor shuttle is a delicacy in the shape of a boat that invites you to share a delicious journey.

Return to your hotel.

Day 8 : Departure

Breakfast.

End of our services.