

CJN\_SE001\_Viking Lyon &amp; Provence 26 27



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**Rhône River****Lyon & Provence: >>Avignon to Lyon****8 Days | 7 Guided Tours | 1 Countries****LYON & PROVENCE MAP****Itinerary****Day 1 Avignon, France**

Embark your ship and settle into your stateroom. Avignon's narrow streets are lined with churches and remarkable medieval buildings. This "City of Popes" was the papal seat for 70 years during the 14th century after the sitting pope abandoned Rome and fled here. The massive church-fortress Palais des Papes, or Palace of the Popes, was the center of the Christian world during that controversial period. It remains a work of Gothic splendor. Another of Avignon's notable structures reaches into the Rhône, the ruins of the Pont d'Avignon. The 12th-century bridge, immortalized in folk song and dance, once spanned the river.

\* Ground transfers are included with Viking Air purchase.

### **Day 2 Arles, France**

In the last days of the Roman Empire, Arles was the capital of Roman Gaul and boasts many Gallo-Roman ruins including Les Arènes; this ancient amphitheater seats 20,000 and is still used today for bullfights and plays. The town has an energetic feel, attracting farmers from the countryside to the frequent and famous Provençal market. It also enjoys a rich artistic heritage; the Mediterranean sunlight here inspired legendary Impressionist Vincent van Gogh to paint a number of works. Many of Arles's sights are immortalized in his paintings.

### **Day 3 Avignon, France**

When the Catholic Church acquired Avignon during the 1300s, it quickly transformed the quiet riverside village into a major religious and cultural center. Evidence of the makeover is everywhere. In addition to the enormous palace, the church constructed a wall around Avignon and provided mansion-like residences to its cardinals. Avignon Cathedral was dwarfed by its neighbor, the Palace of the Popes. Centuries after the papacy returned to Rome, the Vatican called for a gilded statue of Mary to be placed atop the cathedral; her golden gaze still welcomes visitors today.

### **Day 4 Viviers, France**

The sleepy town of Viviers was founded during the 5th century. This former Roman settlement became a bishop's seat, and conflicts during ensuing centuries required the town to be fortified. With the Renaissance came a more stable period of wealth that allowed many new houses to be built, including a fine example of the era that still stands, the Maison des Chevaliers. Some buildings date back to the Middle Ages, and time seems to stand still along the cobblestone streets of its Old Town, dominated by the 12th-century St. Vincent Cathedral with its beautiful windows.

### **Day 5 Tournon, France**

Tournon lies secluded between the river and the vineyard-blanketed granite slopes that nurture fine vintages. An ancient castle, built snugly into a rock, overlooks the riverside setting. A settlement has perched on this hill since Celtic times, but the stunning views from its overlook have never changed. The name of its neighboring wine-producing region, Tain-l'Hermitage, comes from the hermit who planted vines here after returning from the Crusades. Today, his vines are awash in sunshine and produce a port-like wine and some stellar whites.

### **Scenic Sailing: Rhône River**

The lure of fine cuisine, charming villages and breathtaking vistas is never-ending along the Rhône River. Journey along this graceful waterway, meandering past vine-clad banks, and incredibly preserved echoes of medieval times and the days of the Roman Empire. The several locks through which the ship passes have helped to tame its waters, once unnavigable because of rapids, shallows and whirlpools. Today, a voyage along this stretch is a pleasant, gentle experience, surrounded by the hills and soaring mountains of the Rhône Valley.

### **Vienne, France**

Situated in France's Côtes du Rhône region, Vienne is the gateway to Lyon's countryside. It is one of the oldest towns in France, with a history that can be traced through its architecture. Among its Roman remains and artifacts, the Roman Temple of Augustus & Livia dates back to the 1st century AD. Its Roman amphitheater, nestled in the hills of Mont Pipet, is one of the best preserved in the nation. Vienne also boasts remarkably preserved medieval buildings and market ruins. Other landmarks include the Abbey of Saint Pierre and the Church of Saint-André-le-Bas.

### **Day 6 Lyon, France**

Lyon straddles the Rhône and Saône Rivers. After Paris, it is considered the country's most significant cultural center. Amid a cityscape of red-roofed buildings, tree-lined boulevards and riverside promenades, the cobblestone streets of Old Lyon host a rich collection of Renaissance architecture and intimate traboules, unique passageways through buildings that connect adjacent streets, all of it overlooked by the grand basilica atop Fourvière Hill. The city also boasts a wealth of outstanding museums, cultural treasures and excellent Lyonnaise eateries.

**Day 7 Lyon, France**

Lyon is known as the food capital of France. It is not uncommon for well-heeled Parisians to travel to Lyon for dinner. The city is surrounded by towns and villages that produce excellent fresh produce, and gastronomic outlets are plentiful here. The great chefs of Lyon enjoy celebrity status, whether they prepare classic recipes the traditional way or elevate them with their own signature touches. Their delicious meals may be paired with a glass of light, fruity Beaujolais from the north or a bold Rhône red from the south.

**Day 8 Lyon, France**

Bid farewell to your fellow guests and journey home. Or spend more time exploring, perhaps joining one of our extensions.

\* Ground transfers are included with Viking Air purchase.

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