

*The Verdon gorges... between villages with tiled roofs perched atop rocky peaks, desert plateaux and immense cliffs. The route follows Europe's largest canyon, taking in the mythical sentier des pêcheurs, sentier Blanc Martel, Point sublime and the Chiran observatory.
In the evening, stop off in the typical Verdon villages of La Palud sur Verdon and Rougon!*

PROGRAMME

Day 1 : Moustiers-Sainte-Marie

Classified as one of the Most Beautiful Villages in France, the church, ramparts, chapels, aqueduct, fountains, water and stone combinations and pastel shades of tiles and tufa create a homogenous, lively architectural ensemble.

The gentle way of life that emanates from this area naturally encourages people to respect and value it, to discover and protect it. The work of the land, carried on for centuries, is the link between the village's history and its future.

A short 2-hour loop to discover the cliffs and exceptional heritage of this village along a comfortable mule track.

Transfer with your vehicle to La Palud sur Verdon in the late afternoon, and check into your accommodation for 2 nights.

HIKING TIME: 2 hours

ASCENT : + 300 m

DESCENT : - 300 m

ACCOMMODATION : in a gîte or hotel at La Palud (night + breakfast)

Day 2 : The Bastidon path

Leaving from La Palud. After crossing the Mainmorte ravine, the path corbels above the Verdon canyon.

The Bastidon trail remains halfway up the gorge, allowing you to explore it almost "from the inside", on the cliffside.

Here you are at the heart of the rock and its natural vegetation. From the Mayreste lookout, you can see part of the gorge and assess the distance between the road and the river.

HIKING TIME: 6 hours

ASCENT : + 800 m

DESCENT : - 800 m

ACCOMMODATION : in a gîte or hotel at La Palud (night + breakfast)

Day 3 : The path of sinners

This wild path will take us to the edge of the gorges, and we'll be taking advantage of the day to go for a swim in these turquoise gorges.

After a rapid descent into the gorges, we'll walk directly alongside the waters of the Verdon for 1.5 km...

HIKING TIME: 4 hours

ASCENT : + 450 m

DESCENT : - 450 m

ACCOMMODATION : in a gîte or hotel at La Palud (night + breakfast)

Day 4 : Rougon - Sentier Blanc Martel - La Maline

This is a linear day: you leave from the Chalet CAF de la Maline and arrive at the Point Sublime, below Rougon.

Departure and return will be from La Palud itself, by regular shuttle bus ("Navette Blanc-Martel" organised by the Parc du Verdon, extra charge), the times will be given to you in your route book.

From la Maline, a beautiful descent under the oak trees, where you will quickly reach the bottom of the Canyon where you follow the Verdon as far as the Brèche Imbert.

This emblematic section of the Blanc Martel trail takes you up a series of metal staircases (reminiscent of climbing the Eiffel Tower). The sheer drop may seem impressive, but the staircase is well secured.

The route continues towards the impressive Beaume aux chiens, where the proximity of the water makes for a refreshing picnic break. Still overlooking the torrent, dominated by the famous Barres de l'Escales (world-renowned by famous climbers), you will reach the unfinished hydroelectric scheme in this part of the Verdon: it consists of several hundred metres of tunnel, where a torch is essential.

At the end of the Baou tunnel, enjoy a final view of this Grand Canyon from the surprising Samson Corridor and make your way back up to the Point Sublime.

Return to La Palud by scheduled shuttle bus.

HIKING TIME: 7 hours

ASCENT : + 950 m

DESCENT : - 1050 m

ACCOMMODATION : in a gîte or hotel at La Palud (night + breakfast)

Day 5 : Les Chauvets - Refuge - Observatoire du Chiran

An easier day, in the hinterland to discover an exceptional panorama of this plateau and its canyon.

After approaching by car via the tiny D17, the walk starts from the hamlet of Chauvet, nestling at the foot of Mourre Charnier.

From this first part of the route, which takes in the colours of Haute Provence, we'll be climbing one of the last highest peaks before the Mediterranean: the Chiran (1905m), which faces its twin, the Mourre Charnier (1930m).

It's a tough climb to reach this summit, where we'll be richly rewarded by the magical view it affords of the entire Verdon massif. The clarity of the sky at the top of the Chiran led the CNRS to set up an observatory there, which is still in operation but is now run by an association (you can spend the night at the observatory hut, on request when you register and subject to availability).

Return down the same route.

HIKING TIME: 5 hours

ASCENT : + 650 m

DESCENT : - 650 m

ACCOMMODATION : in a gîte or hotel at La Palud (night + breakfast)

Day 6 : The Rancoumas viewpoint

The start of this final day's hike is below Rougon, at the end of the Blanc Martel trail, where you will cross the Verdon at the characteristic "Pont du Tusset".

The majority of this itinerary, which is sometimes wild, takes place in a beautiful oak forest where it is not unusual to come across chamois (yes!) early in the morning at the start and end of the season.

From the viewpoint at Rancoumas, the view plunges to the bottom of the canyon (Martel path), opposite which is the vertical cliff face used by experienced climbers who abseil down before climbing back up again in a highly technical climb. If you're lucky, you may see climbers and vultures circling at the same time. These animals are curious, inspecting people climbing in their domain. This spectacle is best enjoyed at midday, during a final picnic break with a panoramic view of this exceptional canyon. Return to the Tusset bridge.

HIKING TIME: 4 hours

ASCENT : + 520 m

DESCENT : - 520 m

FICHE PRATIQUE

ACCUEIL

Afternoon on day 1 in Moustiers-Sainte-Marie.

How to get there:

By car:

- From Aix-Marseille take the A51 motorway to the Manosque exit.
- From Lyon (334km, 4h30): A 48 to Grenoble (100 km, 1 h) then RN 75 to Sisteron then A51 motorway to Manosque exit.

DISPERSION

Early afternoon in Rougon.

NIVEAU

Medium level: 2 shoes, but 2 stages are at 3-shoe level: the Bastidon trail and the Blanc Martel trail. These 2 not-to-be-missed itineraries are emblematic of the Verdon and require an early start in good weather.

Altitude of accommodation: 1000m

Length of stages: 4 to 6 hours per day

Average climb: 600 m per day

Maximum ascent: 1100 m.

Maximum crossing altitude: 1930m

Type of terrain: easy, medium-mountain trails and varied terrain. Passage through tunnels and secure metal staircases. Little exposure to vertigo but a few passages through rocks with cables on the Bastidon path (video of passages: Gorges du Verdon: randonnée sur le sentier du Bastidon - YouTube).

HEBERGEMENT

Depending on the package chosen, small gîte or village hotel accommodation is available:

Traditional gîte accommodation: shared rooms for 2 to 12 people, bed linen and towels are not provided, bathroom facilities are on the landing.

Gîte le Murabeille in Rougon or gîte l'Arc en Ciel in La Palud.

Comfort hotel-style accommodation: double room or 2-bedded room of your choice, bed linen and towels are provided, bathroom facilities are private.

Hôtel le Panoramic à la Palud: 3-star hotel with large wooded grounds, heated swimming pool and breathtaking views of the Grand Canyon.

This hotel is 800 m from the village of la Palud (6 restaurants (€ to €€€); grocery, bakery, small producers.

Meals: Only breakfasts taken in your accommodation are included in your stay. You can choose to dine in one of La Palud's many restaurants:

Auberge des Crêtes: 04 92 75 88 64

Joe le Snacky : 06 32 36 40 07

Crêperie le Tilleul: 04 92 73 08 71

Le Styx: 04 92 77 38 88

TRANSFERTS INTERNES

Internal transfers are carried out with your own vehicle. There are approximately 30 km to be covered with your vehicle during this stay.

The regular shuttle bus on day 4 costs €8.50 one way between La Maline and Rougon (timetable and booking on Navette Blanc-Martel).

PORTAGE DES BAGAGES

Luggage transport is not required for this trip.

GROUPE

For 2 people or more.

ENCADREMENT

No guidebook on this trip.

Before your departure, we will provide you with a road book specially designed for this tour, containing precise instructions that will allow you to explore and hike in complete freedom.

To fully enjoy and appreciate your hiking trip, you must be able to ensure your autonomy in the field with the documents provided.

MATERIEL FOURNI

EQUIPEMENT INDIVIDUEL A PREVOIR

Weather conditions vary greatly depending on the season. It can be very hot in summer, so you'll need to adapt your equipment accordingly.

Clothing :

- 1 sun hat or cap
- 1 scarf
- 1 hat and/or headband
- T-shirts (1 for 2 or 3 days' walking). Avoid cotton, which takes a long time to dry; prefer short-sleeved t-shirts (breathable material) in Capilene (Patagonia), Dryflo (Lowe Alpine), Light Effect (Odlo) etc...
- 1 undershirt (notes as above) or long-sleeved shirt
- 1 fleece jacket
- 1 pair of shorts
- 1 pair of trekking trousers
- 1 pair of comfortable evening trousers
- 1 light, simple Gore-tex jacket.
- 1 rain cape
- 1 pair of waterproof overtrousers (optional)
- 1 swimming costume
- Underwear
- Walking socks (1 pair for 2 to 3 days' walking). Avoid tennis socks (cotton), which take a long time to dry and carry a high risk of blisters; prefer Coolmax socks, for example.
- 1 pair of hiking boots with good ankle support (Vibram-type soles)

- 1 pair of sandals or casual shoes for the evening.

The list of clothing should be adapted according to the season chosen.

Equipment :

- 1 pair of high quality sunglasses
- 1 pair of telescopic poles (optional): make ascents and descents easier and are very useful for walking on uneven or slippery terrain.
- 1 water bottle (minimum 2 litres)
- 1 headlamp (for tunnel passages)
- 1 survival blanket (optional)
- 1 pocket knife (to be packed in checked baggage)
- 1 small pouch (preferably waterproof) for your money
- Toiletries: preferably biodegradable products (there is CAO biodegradable liquid soap).
- 1 towel: there are some that dry quickly: Packtowl (available in 4 sizes).
- Earplugs (optional)
- Toilet paper for the day
- Sun cream + lip stick.
- Sheet (for the gîte version)
- Approx. 300ml airtight tin, cutlery
- Swimming costume for D6

Personal pharmacy :

- Your usual medicines
- Vitamin C or polyvitamin
- Pain medication: paracetamol preferred
- Elastic adhesive tape (Elastoplast type, 6 cm wide)
- Sets of adhesive dressings + disinfectant pads
- Double skin (SOS Ampoules by Spenco, available in sports shops, chemists, drugstores, etc.)
- Mosquito repellent. (optional)

LE PRIX COMPREND

- Travel documents,
- Overnight accommodation + breakfast,
- Organisation and booking fees,
- Tourist taxes.

LE PRIX NE COMPREND PAS

- Insurance cover,
- Return transport to the starting point,
- The Blanc Martel shuttle bus,
- Drinks and personal expenses,
- Dinners and lunches.

