

Walking and wine tasting in the Ardèche – five days to experience the best of the Ardèche countryside and Rhone valley wines, staying in our charming Château 12th-17th September 2011

This holiday combines spectacular hill walking in the Ardèche with sensational northern Rhône wine tasting, whilst based at Château Chavagnac, a delightful four star Chambre 'd'hôtes near Tournon-sur-Rhône. Your holiday includes six nights stay and five days of guided walking in the wonderful Ardèche 'Vallée du Doux' countryside, with your hosts, Aubyn and Diana Howard. Aubyn will lead the walks, which take between three and five hours each day (with an option to return to base after lunch), Diana will look after you when you are staying at Château Chavagnac.

Aubyn has walked all 750 kilometres of the marked tracks (as well as many un-marked) of the 'Vallée du Doux' over the last three years, and has carefully selected a five day itinerary of varied walks that will introduce you to the charms and beauty of this much undiscovered region. This is aimed at adventurous and reasonably fit walkers, with walks varying between 10 and 20kms, 250m to 750m of climb, taking three to six hours (plus a break for lunch!).

The 'Vallée du Doux' walking country is a beautiful mix of hillside forests, mixed woodlands, secluded river valleys, farm tracks and pretty villages. Less remote and mountainous but more varied than the Auvergne to the east, less touristic than the Ardèche gorges of the south, but with the added bonus of being close to Rhone wine country and some excellent restaurants.

The walks will take you from the vine covered slopes of the Rhone (about 200m) through the rolling hills of the Doux valley (taking in villages such as Saint Felicien, Desaignes, Pailhares, Lalouvesc) to the high plateau (1200m) between Saint Agreve and Saint Bonnet-Le-Froid. We'll also include a few very local walks starting out from Château Chavagnac. Once back home from your walk, we have a swimming pool, gardens and grounds to help you to relax. Please visit our web site and picture gallery for views of the walks and example routes.

After a relaxing swim, bath or massage, we will then gather for wine tasting on the terrace or visit local caves each evening. Local wine appellations include: Cote Rotie, Hermitage, Crozes-Hermitage, Saint Joseph, Cornas and Condrieu. Wine makers we can visit include: Chapoutier, Cheze, Gonon, Farge and Domaine du Colombier.

Costs

The all inclusive fee for two (6 nights, 5 days) is **€1200** (Single room occupancy is €750). This covers:

- Bed and breakfast for two, based upon an en-suite room with double bed, for six nights
- Wine tasting at local caves on two evenings and one afternoon and on the terrace for two evenings
- Wine tasting seminar at Château Chavagnac by Marie-Josée Faure
- Three nights of table d'hôtes at Château Chavagnac, two nights out at excellent local restaurants*
- Picnic lunches on three days, two days stopping off in village restaurants

Optional extras: healing treatments in the afternoons: shiatsu, full body massage, reiki or kinesiology

The cost excludes your individual travel cost to and back from Château Chavagnac.

* Some wine is included with dinner, in addition to which you may want to purchase your own wine at the table.

Travel options from the UK include

Train (Eurostar London to Paris, then TGV Paris to Valence, where we can pick you up)

Flights (various options, e.g. EasyJet to Lyon, BA to Lyon, Ryanair to Grenoble, etc),

Next steps

The group is restricted to 12 places, so please make your reservation early. Please send an email to Diana at chateauchavagnac@wanadoo.fr to make a provisional reservation, to let us know of your interest, or to ask any questions you may have. A €200 non-refundable (but transferable) deposit is needed to reserve your place.

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Picture gallery: <http://gallery.me.com/aubynhoward2#100163&bgcolor=black&view=grid>