



## About the book

*South of France with Kids* is a handy, selective guide to help your family plan your holiday in advance and make the most of your time while you're abroad. Dreaming of days in the sun? Browse through the book for vacation inspiration. Its small size makes it perfect for referrals on the road too. All of the guide's listings include postcodes to help you track them down with satnav, although do remember that a French *code postal* can be quite general, more similar to a US zip code than a street-specific postcode in the UK.

*South of France with Kids* covers the Mediterranean coastline from Menton, on the Italian border, to the Camargue, west of Marseille. Inland, this region sweeps north, encompassing the Luberon, the Provençal (Southern) Alps and the Parc du Mercantour. It takes in major cities from Montpellier to Nice, as well as the islands scattered off these shores

We couldn't list all of the South of France's family-friendly activities, restaurants and places to stay. We've chosen our favourites, but if we've missed yours, drop us a line so we can check it out for the next edition.

Below you will find some background information to help you get the most out of the book and out of your holiday.

### Bienvenue!

In most places in France – and in all places in this guide – your family will be welcomed with open arms. In restaurants, kids have their own menu, and in many bigger or more casual establishments, an outdoor play area. Hotels usually offer large or interconnected family rooms, and almost always allow one child under 12 years old per double room to stay free of charge. Trains, buses, boat trips and sights have reduced fares for under 18s, and are frequently free for tots and kids of primary school age.

### Blue Flag awards

Blue Flag eco-awards are given out to beaches all over the world on a yearly basis. Check [blueflag.org](http://blueflag.org) before you travel for an up-to-date annual list.

### Tourist boards

The official, multi-lingual website of the Comité Régional de Tourisme Provence-Alpes-Côte d'Azur (Regional Tourist Board for Provence, the Alps and the Côte d'Azur) is [decouverte-paca.fr](http://decouverte-paca.fr). For the Comité Départemental du Tourisme des Bouches-du-Rhône (Departmental Tourist Board for the Bouches-du-Rhône – Provence, Marseille and the Camargue) it's [visitprovence.com](http://visitprovence.com). Details for local Tourist Offices are given in Grown-ups Stuff (page 172) or within each specific chapter.

## Symbol key

### Beaches

-  Blue Flag award
-  Café/pub/restaurant
-  Beach shop
-  Deckchairs for hire
-  Beach huts for hire
-  Water sports for hire
-  Amusement arcade
-  Lifeguards (summer)
-  Dogs allowed year round
-  Toilets nearby
-  Car park nearby
-  Warning!

### Campsites

-  Tents
-  Caravans
-  Shop
-  Playground
-  Picnic area
-  Disabled facilities
-  Dogs welcome
-  Walk to beach
-  Electric hook-up
-  Family bathroom
-  Baby-care area
-  Bikes for hire
-  Café or takeaway van
-  Campfires allowed

It is up to parents to assess whether the ideas and suggestions in *South of France with Kids* are suitable or appropriate for their children. While the author and publisher have made every effort to ensure accuracy of information on activities, accommodation and food, they cannot be held responsible for any loss, injury or illness resulting from advice or information given in this book.



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## Don't miss The Ochre Quarries

The terrain that surrounds Roussillon and Rustrel is slashed with stripes of deep orange, crimson and gold. The earth here is thick with ochre, a natural iron-based pigment mixed with sand that is used to tint paints, dye textiles and colour cosmetics. Mining for ochre was this region's main source of income at the start of the 20th century, and there were once more than 100 quarries and 25 ochre factories here. By the 1940s, the deep quarries threatened to burrow underneath the towns. Foundations of homes and public buildings were in serious danger of collapsing, and mining quickly ground to a halt.

Today, you can explore the former quarries along the **Sentier des Ogres de Roussillon** (Ochre Footpath, entrance signposted a 5-min walk from the town centre, 84220 Roussillon; daily Jul-Aug 0900-1930, Jun 0900-1830, May and Sep 0930-1830, Apr 0930-1730, Mar 0930-1700, Oct 0930-1630, 1st 2 weeks Nov 1000-1630, mid Nov-Dec and last 2 weeks Feb 1100-1530, €2.50 adult, under 10s free, short walk 35 mins, long walk 50 mins). The track loops through oak forest, dusty ochre valleys and coloured cliffs. If your family would rather explore the surrounding terrain by bike instead, visit **Vélo Loisir en Luberon** ([veloloisirluberon.com](http://veloloisirluberon.com), page 131) to download a free map of the challenging **Les Ogres en Vélo** cycle route.

Just outside Roussillon's village centre, the **Ancienne Usine Mathieu** (RD104, 84220 Roussillon, T04 90 05 66 69, [okhra.com](http://okhra.com), Jul-Aug daily 0900-1900, mid-Feb to Jun and Sep to mid-Nov 0900-1300 and 1400-1800, Nov to mid-Feb Wed-Sun 0900-1300 and 1400-1800, €6 adult, €6.80 adult joint ticket Usine Mathieu and Sentier des Ogres, under 10s free) is a former ochre factory that's been transformed into a cooperative learning centre. See how this region's ochre pigments were washed,

processed and transformed from earthen clay into paints and dyes. There's also a neat **Jardin des Teinturiers** (Dyers' Garden), where plants traditionally used for dyeing, such as camomile and goldenrod, are cultivated. Guided tours last around 50 minutes.

Near the town of Rustrel, the 30-ha **Colorado Provençal** region was given its Wild West nickname during the 1950s, for its similar appearance to the US state's crimson cliffs. Signposted **hiking trails**, including one along the naturally ethereal Cheminées de Féés (Fairy Chimneys), depart from the public car park south east of the town of Rustrel. For more walking routes through the Colorado Provençal, pick up a detailed booklet (€4.60) from the Mairie de Rustrel (Town Hall, Le Château, 84400 Rustrel, T04 90 04 91 09) or at any Tourist Office in the region.

To take in an aerial view of the brilliant red topography, **Montgolfière Vol-Terre** (Hameau des Goubauds, 84490 St-Saturnin-les-Apt, T06 03 54 10 92, [montgolfiere-provence-luberon.com](http://montgolfiere-provence-luberon.com)) organizes dawn balloon rides over Roussillon and the surrounding countryside. Flight time is an hour to an hour and a half. **Montgolfière en Luberon** (Joucas, 84220 Gordes, T04 90 05 76 77, [montgolfiere-provence-ballooning.com](http://montgolfiere-provence-ballooning.com), mid-Mar to mid-Oct, minimum height 1.25 m) offers two types of flights (Vol touristique 40 mins, €175/person, Grand vol 80 mins, €245/person) taking in a similar area. If your family plans to visit a few of these ochre hotspots, you may want to look into acquiring a **Couleur Pass Luberon** (€5, valid for 1-4 persons, available from Tourist Offices throughout the Luberon). This pass gives discounts of up to 50% on 16 activities throughout the region, including the Ancienne Usine Mathieu and Montgolfière Vol-Terre (details for both above).



## GR Trails

Grande Randonnée (GR) walking routes connect most of France's historic towns, including Rustrel and Roussillon. These ancient paths have criss-crossed the country for centuries and are now well-marked long distance hiking paths. They often meander over ancient bridges, mule tracks and mountain passes. The GR97 rolls through Roussillon and Rustrel on its loop around the Luberon, while the GR6 heads through Rustrel en route from the Atlantic coast to the Alps, by way of the Pont du Gard. Look out for the hiking signs and the red and white waymarks as you pass through Provence.

Let's go to...

# Avignon

**B**uilt under Pope Benedict XII and Pope Clement VI during the city's 70-year stint as the Catholic papal headquarters, the Gothic **Palais des Papes** is Avignon's main attraction. For any child – or indeed grown-up – with fairy-tale fantasies,

the enormous palace, with secret chambers, is a delight to explore.

But impressive as the palace is, Avignon can offer its more energetic visitors so much more. Check out the nearby **Pont St-Bénézet** from below, kayaking your way along the Rhône River. Spend an afternoon in **Rocher**

**des Doms**, Avignon's hilltop park with dazzling views. Or hop aboard the free shuttle boat that ferries families (and bikes) across the river to the quiet island of Ile de la Barthelasse.

## Get your bearings

Although Avignon's centre is walled and easy to navigate on foot, note that the enclosed town is relatively large. Ditch the car at **Parking de l'Île Piot** (over the bridge Pont Edouard Daladier) then hop aboard the free shuttle bus to the city centre (every 10-20 mins). Avignon has two train stations: the **Gare Avignon TGV** is a 10-minute bus ride (t.c.a. fr, €1.20 adult, under 6s free, 10-min journey, departures every 20 mins) from downtown, while the **Gare Avignon Centre** is just

outside Porte de la République. Dip through this gate into the city and along cours Jean Jaurès to visit the central **Tourist Office** (41 cours Jean Jaurès, T04 32 74 32 74, ot-avignon.fr, Jul daily 0900-1900, Apr-Jun and Aug-Oct Mon-Sat 0900-1800, Sun 0945-1700, Nov-Mar Mon-Fri 0900-1800, Sat 0900-1700, Sun 1000-1200). Continue northwards to **place de l'Horloge** (home to an antique carousel, daily mid-Jun to Aug 1100-2330, Sep to mid-Jun 1330-1900) and the **Palais des Papes**.

For an effortless overview of the city, Avignon's **Petit Train** (with multilingual commentary including English, petittrainavignon.fr, Jul-Aug daily 1000-2000, mid-Mar to Jun and Sep-Oct daily 1000-1900, Nov to mid-Mar Wed and Sat 1400-1800, €7 adult, €4 child (4-9), under 4s free) makes a 40-minute loop around much of the Old Town, departing from place du Palais des Papes every half hour.

### Fun & free

Teetering between place du Palais des Papes and the Rhône, **Jardin du Rocher des Doms** (daily Jun-Aug 0730-2100, Apr-May and Sep 0730-2000, Mar 0730-1900, Oct 0730-1830, Nov and Feb 0730-1800, Dec-Jan 0730-1730) is a lovely spot to while away an hour or two. Trim gardens surround a pond packed with koi carp, ducks and geese. Amble past the park's vineyard to take in the views over Pont St-Bénézet, Ile de la Barthelasse and Villeneuve-lez-Avignon, then explore a portion of the city ramparts (access on to Pont-St-Bénézet open daily Aug 0900-2000, Jul and Sep 0900-1900, Mar-May and Oct 0900-1800, Nov-Feb 0900-1700).

Looking to prolong the peace? Little ones can pedal the

miniature tricycles drawn by toy horses (daily during summer, year-round Wed and Sat-Sun, ages 1-8, €2.50/10 mins, €6/30 mins), while older kids will love the chunky four-wheelers (ages 6-12, same times and prices). Parents can park themselves at the pond-side café, **Buvette** (open daylight hours), for a glass of local wine (€2).

Float over to Ile de la Barthelasse for a peek at Avignon's medieval outline from afar. A free **shuttle boat** (daily Jul-Aug 1100-2100, Apr-Jun and Sep 1000-1230 and 1400-1830, Oct-Dec and mid-Feb to Mar Wed 1400-1730, Sat-Sun and holidays 1000-1200 and 1400-1730) runs every 10 minutes or so between Avignon's quai de la Ligne and the island. The latter's riverfront promenade makes a

great place for a picnic, while skateboarders and bladers can roll over to the free **skate park** just near the Parking de L'Ile Piot.

### Action stations

Explore Avignon from the seat of a **Vélopop** (velopop.fr) bicycle. A bike-sharing scheme suitable for teens or adults (one size only with adjustable seat), Vélopop passes can be purchased by the day (€1) or week (€3). Use of any of the city's 200 bikes is free for up to 30 minutes at a time, then €1 per additional half hour. Tool around town, or pick up a cycling map for **Ile de la Barthelasse** from the Tourist Office.

Too hot to pedal? Spend the day swimming, splashing and lounging in the hammocks at **Piscine Palmeraie** (135 allée Antoine Pinay, Ile de la

