

# AIX-EN-PROVENCE TRAVEL GUIDE – LOGISTICS AND ITINERARY

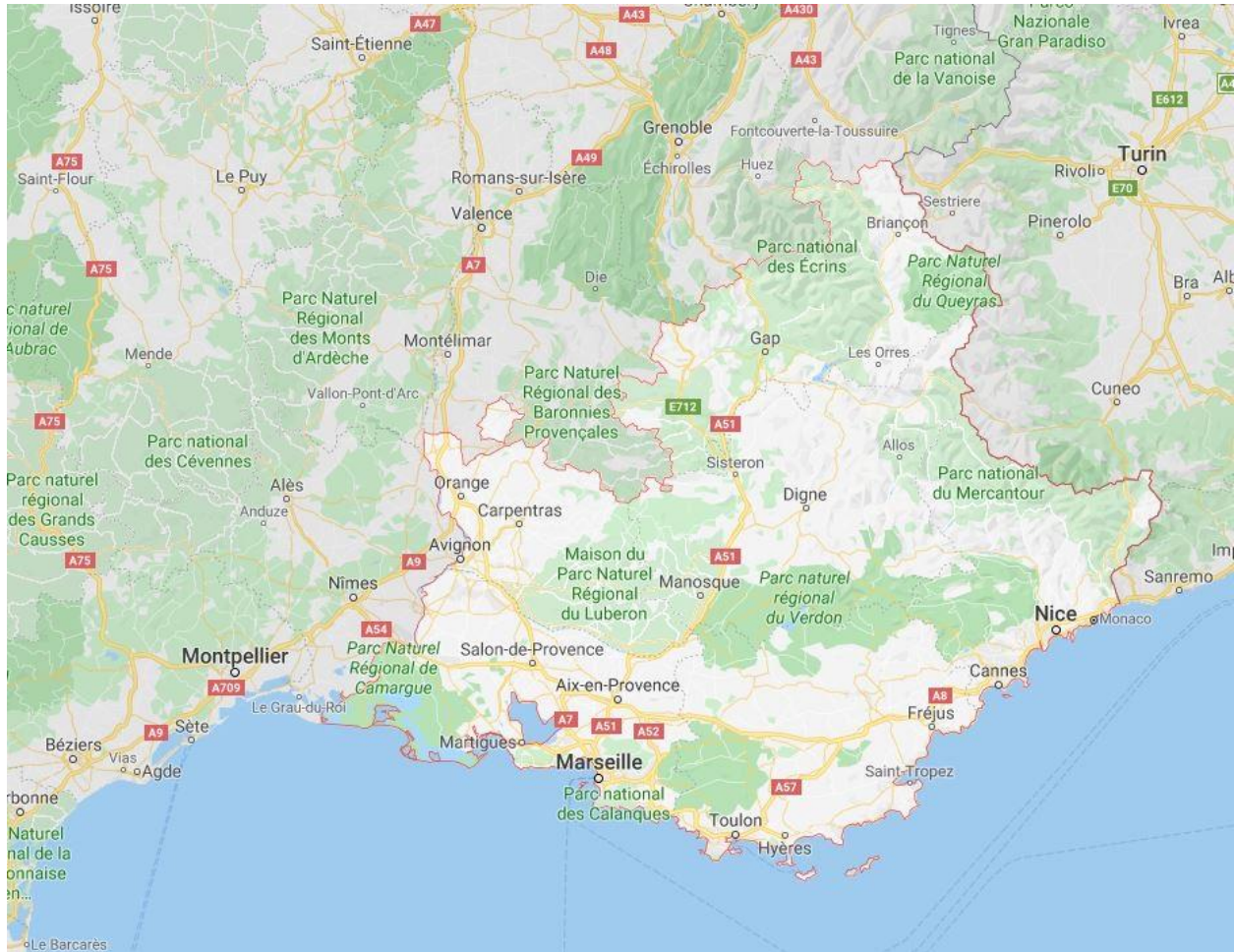


I was very lucky to join a new team at work in May of this year that happened to have a team building session scheduled in June.... in Aix-en-Provence!! On top of that, my boss is French. On top of that, she's a really great human who planned a team building food tour for us. The key to my heart is through good food, as most of you know, so not only does my boss have my full and total devotion but I also fell in love with Aix-en-Provence. I knew some people that had studied abroad here and had fallen in love with it, and they are probably much more equipped to write this post than I am. But I did find a lot of great little food spots in the city that made me want to come back here and rent a place for a week and just cook and eat all week from the local markets and shops. So I thought I would share this with you!

Most likely you are an American who wants to plan a big France trip including Paris, Provence, a little wine country, maybe a little **French Riviera**. So this will only be a small guide to your much larger trip, but it should be helpful nonetheless! Whether passing through Aix-en-Provence or stationing yourself here, make sure to check out some of these spots and let me know what you think!

## SHOULD I PLAN A TRIP TO PROVENCE?

Provence is actually a pretty large region. The entire region in France according to Google is called "Provence-Alpes-Côte d'Azur". There is a lot of draw to this area – the most notable being just how stinking cute and Frenchy it is. I imagine people usually combine it with a trip to Paris for a big French vacation, but it would also be easy to combine it with Cinque Terre ([my guide here](#)) and some other little Northwest Italian areas. So it makes a ton of sense to come to Provence on your European vacation. The little that I have seen of it is adorable and I can see myself going back when a good flight deal hits!



When we are talking about Aix-en-Provence specifically, it is probably not as cute and quaint as the neighboring small towns. It has more chains on the high street, a little bit more America sprinkled in, but the breadth of shopping and markets that you can find here definitely makes it a worthwhile stop. I absolutely loved being here for my 3 night work trip and wish I could have stayed longer – and definitely added on some side trips to the cute neighboring towns!

## WHEN SHOULD I VISIT PROVENCE?

I think this area would be charming year round, but if you are coming here to see the lavender fields – those are supposed to be at their peak from mid-June to August. This is, unfortunately, also going to be the most crowded, hottest, and most expensive time of year to visit. So that is up to you if you want to see the lavender and pay a little more and feel a little more touristy versus coming during the shoulder or off seasons. Personally, I am not entirely obsessed with the lavender fields so would probably come back sometime in the spring or the fall. Butttt I have also already been to the French Riviera. If you are trying to combine with the French Riviera, first read all my logistics for that [here](#), but also you will want to come for that season which stretches from May to September to save you a click (we went the last weekend in September and loved it).

If you are staying in Provence and deciding what day you should visit Aix-en-Provence, choose Tuesday, Thursday, or Saturday so that you can see the big market! More information in my “What is there to do?” section below.

## HOW DO I GET TO AIX-EN-PROVENCE?

There is actually not an airport in Aix-en-Provence, so you fly to Marseille and have a 40ish minute journey to Aix-en-Provence. There are four options (that I know of) to get to Aix-en-Provence – rent a car, get a taxi, get an Uber, or get a bus.

Renting a car would definitely be the best option if you are planning on exploring more of the Provence region. I don't think you can really see Provence without one. My favorite carriers are **Enterprise** and **National** because of the lack of hidden fees and the service, but I have used more budget ones before and have been fine because I read the fine print. I always use **Kayak** to start my search for rental cars. You should not need an International Driver's Permit in France, just your driver's license. Also check before you go if your travel credit card includes rental car insurance (most of them do) to avoid buying it at the counter and double covering yourself! Also, the roads in Aix-en-Provence are tiny and very European so if you are staying in an AirBnB, you may not have parking. Make sure you have parking before renting a car! If you don't, maybe you can rent after your stay or check short-term parking options. Our hotel had parking, but it was also a business meeting-type hotel.

Taxis charge a flat fee of 50€ in the day and 60€ at night and will take you around 30 minutes to get from the airport to Aix-en-Provence. You can ask before you get in if they take credit card or get out cash from the ATM at the airport before. I just pulled up the Uber app and it does look like they operate in Marseille and cost about 50€.

Buses are, always, going to be the cheapest option if you can put up with a little bit of confusion and maybe a little bit of waiting. The airport shuttle bus runs every 30 minutes from just outside Terminal 1 from platform 1 between halls 1 and 3-4. It will cost you 8.30€ and will take 30 minutes.

So in conclusion, if you are exploring Provence, rent a car, if you like to save money any way you can and perhaps are traveling solo, take the bus, and if you just want comfort, take a taxi or uber.

#### **Search flights on Google Flights**

## **IS THERE A LANGUAGE BARRIER IN PROVENCE?**

Actually, yes! I feel like I always say no here. This is an interesting fact that I read before I went – because of the international school that draws so many students studying abroad, usually to practice their French, most people do not have the need to speak English super well! So it is definitely best to brush up on your French before you go – as always a few words will get you further, especially with the French.

## **WHERE SHOULD I STAY IN PROVENCE?**

I feel like small French towns are just built for AirBnBs, no? I'm normally a hotel girl, but I am looking at the hotels on Tripadvisor now and none of them are screaming at me, "I am the perfect mix of authentic and well-priced". I would not really recommend my hotel as it was more of a business conference-type hotel. As far as location though, I would definitely stay somewhere walkable. I used the "0.5 miles to Cours Mirabeau" filter on Tripadvisor for reference.

This is assuming you are even staying in Aix-en-Provence. You may be staying somewhere else in Provence and just visiting for a shopping / food day (which honestly, I think is the way to go)!

#### **Look at AirBnBs**

#### **Look at hotels on Tripadvisor**

## **HOW DO I GET AROUND PROVENCE?**

By foot! If you are staying in Aix-en-Provence / visiting Aix-en-Provence from elsewhere in Provence, you will be able to walk the whole town! Which is so nice! As I mentioned in the arrival section, the streets are super narrow and cars are actually not allowed on them (except for a few special ones), so you have to walk!

If you are driving to visit for the day, just search “Parking” on Google Maps and it will pop up with public parking lots outside the town. This is true for pretty much any small European town. When you approach the town, you will see big blue square signs with a “P” on it that point you to the public parking spots.

## HOW MANY DAYS SHOULD I SPEND IN PROVENCE?

I feel like if we are talking Provence, you could probably spend upwards of a week here and still have so much more to explore. In order to explore Aix-en-Provence, if you just want to get a taste of it, you are probably just spending a half day to two days here. If you spend a half day, you are going to walk around the town quickly, pop into a few shops, eat a meal, and be off. If you stay a day and a night, maybe you can hit up the market during the day, explore and shop, and get two good meals in. When staying for longer, that’s when you can really enjoy the French life of lazily exploring markets, shopping, gathering groceries, cooking in your AirBnB / just eating a meat and cheese plate that you gathered from the market with a nice bottle of Provence rose, eating out, etc.

## WHAT IS THERE TO DO IN AIX-EN-PROVENCE?

Basically, shopping and eating. Well that is all I did here (plus working, ugh). Shopping, eating, and seeing pretty things are obviously what I live for, so this is my mini guide on where to do those things.

### CLOTHES SHOPS

I thoroughly walked this city trying to find cute clothes every night after work (more like ran, trying to get everywhere before they closed), so here are my picks for what I passed / went into that were adorable.

**Parfums De La Bastide Boutique** – I have the biggest regret from not purchasing perfume from this place!! I basically came here and fell in love with the shops, the brand, the saleswoman, the price point – but left to think about it some more. I sprinted back an hour later to buy some and they had closed already! Then the next day I was supposed to go on a break from work, but that break didn’t happen – ugh!! So you should definitely come in here and have the saleswoman whisk you away with her descriptions of all the all-natural scents used in these perfumes. And buy one!

**Sezane** – This brand has definitely caught on in America, but it’s always more fun to buy it in France. This shop is adorable. Pick something up and feel tres chic.

**La Boutique Bastide** – it is unclear to me if this is associated with the perfume place... but it is a haven for natural beauty lovers. Think beautiful packaging and luxury, all-natural products.

**Maje area** – A friend that studied abroad here told me to search for Maje on the map and that’s where all the best shopping is. So go there for some Parisian / French name-brand designers. This is a contemporary name-brand designer haven and a great place to look for a sale – also go to Sandro! Love that brand!

**Wood** – this was a random shop that I stumbled upon. They had really low-cost but in-style dresses and skirts in fun prints.

### FOOD SHOPS

I’m basically going to give you all the places that our food tour guide took us, because they were all amazing. This is not really a guide on where to eat as we kind of had corporate dinners, boo. But here are all your go to fine foods / specialty shops to make you feel like Julia Child picking up your ingredients for entertaining all your French friends! Or just your mom who you’re traveling with!

**Patisserie Bechard** – the oldest bakery in all of Aix-en-Provence, and the baked goods are so delicious! Aix-en-Provence is known especially for a little cookie-type pastry called calissons that is made with almonds – it is the perfect little souvenir to bring home to little ones or you know, yourself. Anything in this shop is good, but they are mainly known for their cakes if you want to buy a whole cake for later.

**Weibel** – the rival to Bechard is Weibel. It is the more modern, more instagrammable, more boujee rival for sure. I enjoyed the ambience of Weibel a lot. The store is gorgeous as are the pastries. Our guide

bought us some raspberry macarons filled with fresh raspberries that were soooo beautiful and delicious  
– highly recommend!



**Brulerie Richelme** – Just across the square is the coffee shop of your dreams. If you are really into coffee, you have to come here. The smell of their freshly roasted beans is truly incredible as are their coffees. For sure buy a bag or two (for not that much money!) as a souvenir or gifts for back home.

**Maison D'Amore** – Just next door is this charcuterie shop specializing in charcuterie from Corsica – a tiny French island. The owner is very friendly and will explain the different salamis / cured meat products to you with no judgment. For sure pick up some thinly sliced salami for your AirBnB party.



**Jacquemes** – THE fine food products store in Aix-en-Provence. It is so old and so cool and full of so many great products. Here you can pick up artisan Dijon mustard, pate, wine, and so much more. Pop in here for what feels like a library of fine foods.

**Fromagerie Savelli** – The French cheese shop! This place is so cool – a no nonsense cheese shop. The cases are filled to the brim with local cheeses. I'm sure the lady behind the counter will help you pick out the perfect cheese board for your picnic.



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NE PAS  
HER  
OMAGES

CROTIN  
SAINT  
LEIT CAU DE CHÈVRE  
5,80€ pièce  
(soit 54,00€ le kg)

POISSON DE  
DIEULEVIT  
LEIT CAU DE CHÈVRE  
3,90€ pièce  
(soit 39,00€ le kg)

CROTIN  
SAINT FELICIEN  
LEIT CAU DE CHÈVRE  
5,80€ pièce  
(soit 54,00€ le kg)

TOURNE  
LEIT CAU DE CHÈVRE  
5,80€ pièce  
(soit 54,00€ le kg)

TOME A L'ONGPANG  
LEIT CAU DE CHÈVRE  
4,80€ pièce  
(soit 48,00€ le kg)

SAINT MARCELLIN  
LEIT CAU DE VACHE  
3,30€ pièce  
(soit 33,00€ le kg)

SAINT FELICIEN  
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5,80€ pièce  
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Fromage  
Fermier



**Cave du Felibrige** – Finally, the wine shop of your dreams. Tucked away in a neighborhood on a non-descript street is the coolest wine shop I've ever been to. The guys that own this place are so nice and helpful and will help you find the perfect bottle of wine. They only stock what they think is the best and do not care about price at all. They reject something like 90% of wines that are offered to them to sell, and most of the bottles are in that below \$20 range. A great place to pick up some rose to take home with you or any French wine. Gosh, I miss this place.

## PRETTY THINGS

Well, that was a lot of shopping and food. But I'm sure you also want to explore – something I didn't get much time to do. The streets that house the various shops that I mentioned above are all very picturesque and you'll happen upon a lot of super cute places. Two places I wished I got to explore more, on our guide's suggestions, is the neighborhood south of Patisserie Bechard and the cathedral.



The Old Town is made up of pretty much everything I mentioned above. Another note about the Old Town is that the square right outside a lot of the above food shops (Place Richelme) has a daily food market. I could never make it since I was in my conference, but I really wish I could! Every Tuesday, Thursday, and Saturday the town has a “big market” with food, local products, and more! Wish I could have done this so bad. It looks like it is centered on Place de Verdun and Place des Precheurs. There is also a flower market on the same days outside of the Place de l'Hotel de Ville. These spots are all within 5 minutes of each other, so you don't need to choose just one! And of course the cathedral is in the Old Town and cathedrals are always worth a visit.





The neighborhood I am referring to that I wish I had gotten to see is called Mazarin. If you look at Google Maps, it is odd because it has a grid design on the streets unlike the romantic twirls of the Old Town. It was designed in the 17th century to be a neighborhood to draw wealthy residents to the town, and it is still made up of mega mansions. Apparently walking around in the morning is supposed to be really beautiful and a great time to snap some photos without all the tourists.

Another thing that most people like to do in Aix-en-Provence is **visit the studio** of the famous French artist, Cézanne. If you are an art lover, this is supposed to be very cool! It is a little bit outside the Old Town, but I would consider it walking distance. From the website, it looks like you need to book your reservation ahead of time as they only allow 25 people in at a time. Tickets are 6.50€ with audio guides for 3€, but it looks like guided tours are only 9.50€ so I would definitely book that!

## MY PERFECT ITINERARY FOR PROVENCE

To be honest, I would probably not stay in Aix-en-Provence if you were coming to Provence. One of my favorite travel bloggers just came to Provence in 2019 and has lots of really great recommendations for the cute towns to visit along with where to stay in those towns. I would definitely check out **her blog post**, stay in one of those places, but visit Aix-en-Provence on a Tuesday, Thursday, or Sunday for the market and to hit up the shops I mentioned above!

If I were to plan out the perfect itinerary for you to visit France, assuming you want to see Provence and maybe the French Riviera too, I would definitely spend at least 3 nights in either location. The perfect way to do it would be to have a week or two and do a driving tour from and through Provence to the French Riviera. You can start in the countryside and end on the beach and be totally blissed out by the beauty of this part of France the whole time.

If you want something unique to do on your trip, visiting the **Verdon Gorges** is high on my to do list. The same blogger I just mentioned also went on her trip and has this entire blog post to her experience.