

Hill-top villages of the Petit Luberon



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OPPÈDE, MÉNERBES & LACOSTE ENJOY A DAY IN THE HILLTOP VILLAGES OF THE PETIT LUBERON

From the location of your villa, drive to the starting point of this trip.

The GPS co-ordinates lead you to a parking lot in the middle of Coustellet--a very central starting point for this day tour

GPS: 43° 52' 34.26" N 5° 24' 02.47" E

Exit the parking lot and drive on the D2 (route de Robion) in a south-westerly direction towards **Robion**. Take a left on the D29. (there is a small red sign 3.5 ton)

There are a number of road-signs with directions to **Oppède**, **Ménerbes** as well as **Musée du Tire-Bouchon** (which is not a town, but a place).

After leaving Maubec, turn right on to the D176, which will lead you into the hill-top village of **Oppède-le-Vieux**.

Following is an excerpt from Wikipedia:

It is in fact two villages: Oppède-le-Vieux ("the old" in French), built against the Petit Luberon and dating back to the 12th century, and Oppède-les-Poulivets ("nice view" in French). The old village, built on a rocky hill, has narrow streets. In winter, the Petit Luberon starts casting its shadow early in the afternoon. Houses beyond the medieval ramparts are dark, humid and tricky to maintain.

By the beginning of the 20th century, Oppède-le-Vieux was a ghost village and a new community was officially established in the valley, with larger streets, cosier houses and farmers closer to their fields.

Following the armistice of June 1940, architect Bernard Zehrfuss founded a commune of artists in the old town, a project that attracted French sculptor François Stahly and the writer and artist Consuelo de Saint Exupéry. The commune proved short-lived. It was the basis for Saint Exupéry's fictionalized account, published in 1946, called "Kingdom of the Rocks".

Once you have explored what is left of the old village, take the D178 back to the bottom of the valley and turn on to the D3 by going to the right.

Ménerbes will soon appear, but before that, check on your right to find the **Domaine Citadelle**, a winery which also houses the **Musée du Tire-Bouchon**, the museum of cork-screws.

Ménerbes, up ahead and on top of a hill, is another of the famous Provençal hill-top towns. Park the car and wander through the town's many streets, alleys and mews.

In the middle of the 16th century, Ménerbes was the sight of a three year siege in a battle between Huguenot forces and a catholic army. Ménerbes is also the village where Peter Mayle settled first in Provence.

Looking east from the top of the village, you will be able to see the **Lacoste** and it's château. To get there, leave Ménerbes the way you came, at the foot of the hill continue on the D3 going east (right turn) and when you come to the turn left on to the D109, do so.

Following the D109 and after about 3 miles, there is a sign pointing to the right to the **Abbeye St. Hilaire**. You might want to pay the Abbeye a visit.

Continuing on the D109 you'll reach Lacoste, another hill-top village, this one with a twist. Lacoste, actually the Château de Lacoste, was the summer residence of the **Marquis de Sade**. Had he lived today, he might have written the pre-quel to Fifty Shades of Grey. Lacoste also features outlet shops of a famous Parisian fashion house.