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HOUSE & AREA GUIDE • CHUSCLAN, GARD

Villa César

« Havre de paix et vues imprenables »

EVERYTHING, HOW IT WORKS WHERE TO EAT WHAT TO SEE EDITION AUGUST 2026

WELCOME

Make yourself at home. This guide covers how everything in the house works, and where to go once you have settled in.

Anything unclear, or anything not working — call. We would much rather hear from you on day one than read about it after you leave.

START HERE

What you need in the first five minutes

WI-FI NETWORK

Invité_Rajabally

Password **chusclan**

YOUR HOST — GIULIANO RAJABALLY

+33 6 82 83 13 97

bestgiu@hotmail.com

EMERGENCIES IN FRANCE

112

All emergencies, English spoken • 15 ambulance • 18 fire
• 17 police

Nearest hospital: Bagnols-sur-Cèze, 10 minutes

ARRIVAL • DEPARTURE

15:00 → 11:00

SECOND CONTACT — JEAN-CHRISTOPHE DUCLOS

+33 6 26 90 80 07

If Giuliano is unreachable

NEAREST PHARMACY — PHARMACIE LABEILLE

+33 4 66 90 18 17

Chemin des Rogations, Chusclan — 3 minutes
Mon-Fri 9:00–12:30 & 15:00–19:00 • Sat 9:00–12:00 •
closed Sun

Outside pharmacy hours, the duty rota for the area is posted on the pharmacy door — the quickest way to find it. The national on-call line is 3237 (€0.35/min, 24h). For anything urgent, call 112 first.

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01 – ARRIVING & LEAVING

The first hour and the last

Two simple routines, so that nothing is rushed at either end of your stay.

Arrival

The house is ready from **15:00**. Someone will meet you to hand over the keys and walk you round. If you expect to arrive at a different time, let us know in advance so we can welcome you properly rather than leave you waiting at the gate.

At the handover we will ask for a mobile number. It is used for one thing only: so the pool technician can reach you to agree a convenient day during the week.

Your keys

Main entrance	One key
Garden entrance	One key
Summer kitchen / pool house	One key
Garage shutter door	Black remote — top button opens and closes

Departure

Check-out is **11:00** at the latest, and the inspection takes place at that time. The house is left clean by guests — with the exception of sheets and towels, which we deal with. If you would rather not clean, we can take care of it for **€120**; just tell us during your stay.

BEFORE YOU CLOSE THE DOOR

- ☐ Used bath towels, pool towels and sheets left at the foot of each bed.
- ☐ House cleaned — or the €120 cleaning option agreed with us.
- ☐ Bins emptied, bags placed in the bins in the garage.
- ☐ Empty bottles taken to the glass recycling point in the village (see page for *Bins & recycling*).
- ☐ Barbecue gas lever turned back to green.
- ☐ Bicycles locked under their cover, keys and remote handed back.

02 – INSIDE THE HOUSE

Lights, shutters, and staying cool

The house is designed to stay cool in August without air conditioning. It works — as long as the shutters are used the way the house was built to be used.

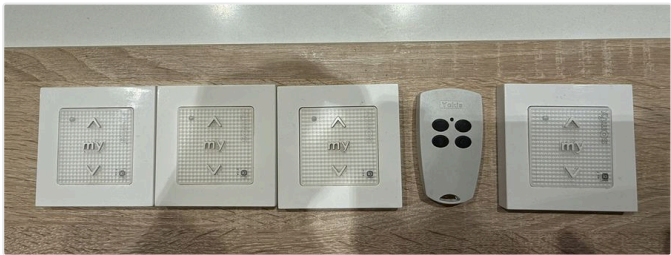
Where the light switches are

Lighting runs on Philips Hue switches rather than conventional wall switches. There are four, and they are easiest to remember by the artwork next to them.

THESE LIGHTS	THIS SWITCH
Living room & dining table	Hue switch at the entrance door
Garden & summer terrace	Hue switch by the living-room sliding door, beside the blue painting
Patio	Inside the house on the kitchen side, beside the red painting
Summer kitchen	Hue switch inside the room, by the pool equipment-room door

The five remote controls

They live together on the kitchen counter. From left to right:



Left to right on the kitchen counter — three living-room shutters, the small pool-light remote, then the whole-house remote.

REMOTE	WHAT IT DOES
1st, 2nd, 3rd	The three living-room shutters, individually. The middle one is faulty — it opens and closes on the my button rather than the arrows.
Small remote (between the 3rd and the 5th)	2 — pool light on / off 1 — the three garden lights by the bonsai olive tree, if they fail to come on

5th	All shutters in the house at once — except the small bathroom shutter in the middle bedroom.
In each bedroom	Its own shutter remote, kept in the room.

Keeping the house cool

The house has underfloor cooling everywhere except the utility room. **Please do not adjust the thermostats** — they are set for the season, and changing them tends to make the house warmer, not cooler. Instead, do what the house does best: control the sun.

- Keep the utility-room door closed.
- From **14:00**, close the living-room shutter on the sofa side — the one on your left as you face the view. The other two can stay open.
- Keep the sliding doors shut during the day. An open slider undoes an afternoon of cooling in minutes.
- In the two south-facing bedrooms, close both the shutters and the sliding glass doors during the day.

A small favour

- **The living-room sofas mark easily.** Please don't sit on them in wet swimwear.
- **The leather armchairs in the living and dining rooms** — same request, and please empty your back pockets of keys before sitting down. They scratch the hide.

Fire extinguishers

Two, both easy to reach: one behind the utility-room door, one on the shelf in the middle bedroom.

03 – OUTSIDE

Garden, pool & summer kitchen

Most of the day happens out here. Almost none of it needs anything from you — with three exceptions: the parasol, the barbecue gas, and the cushions at bedtime.

The patio

- Table and six chairs.
- Table football.
- Two spare gas cylinders for the barbecue, in case the connected one runs out.
- Light switch is inside the house, kitchen side, beside the red painting.

- The three lights near the bonsai olive tree occasionally refuse to come on. Press 1 on the small pool-light remote on the kitchen counter and they will wake up.
- **Outdoor lounge cushions** are stored in the summer kitchen. Please bring them in each evening before bed — dew and the night watering will soak them.
- Automatic watering starts every night at **23:30**.

The garden

- Garden and summer-terrace lights: the Hue switch by the living-room sliding door, beside the blue painting.

The pool

There is nothing for you to do. Please don't touch anything in the pool equipment room, and never switch off the pump.

- A pool professional comes by once during the week. He will call the number you give us at check-in to agree a day that suits you — many guests prefer a time when they are out.
- He has his own key for the garden. He is a trusted regular, and has been looking after this pool for years.
- **Wasps.** If there are too many around the water, two products are clearly marked in the summer kitchen: a spray for the surfaces around the pool, and a liquid to pour into the pool itself, ideally between **12:00** and **14:00**.

The pool alarm

The red unit floating in the pool is an immersion alarm. It is **switched off** by default. Its control box is inside the house, behind the living-room sofa.



INSIDE THE HOUSE



Control box, behind the living-room sofa.

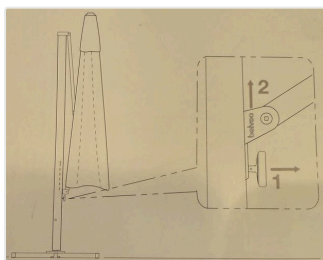
- 01 To switch on:** at the control box, press the equals sign, then ON.
- 02 To switch off:** press OFF, then press and hold the power button.

IF CHILDREN ARE STAYING

An alarm is not supervision. Turn it on, and still keep the garden door closed and an adult watching. It buys you seconds, not safety.

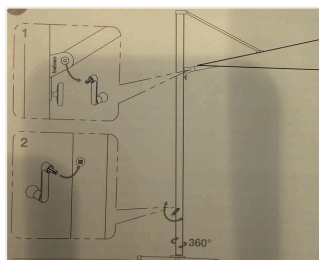
The parasol

STEP 1



To open — use the crank handle on the pole.

STEP 2



To rotate 360° — release the lever at the base, turn, then lock again.

WIND

Close the parasol whenever you leave the garden for more than a moment, and always overnight. The mistral arrives without warning here and will break it.

Summer kitchen & pool house

- Light: the Hue switch inside the room, by the pool equipment-room door.
- All outdoor lounge cushions live here. The cupboard also holds spare cushions and two pool floats.
- The fridge dispenses chilled water and ice cubes. In the freezer section you'll find an ice bucket and a wine bucket.
- A second bin is here, alongside the one in the house kitchen.

The barbecue

It stands outside, to the right of the summer kitchen. Utensils are in the **house** kitchen, in the middle drawer just below the toaster and kettle. Two spare cylinders wait in the patio, but please use the gas already connected first.

NEVER IN STRONG WIND

The garrigue around Chusclan is tinder-dry in August. If the mistral is up, cook inside.

Turning the gas on

- 01** Open the access panel beneath the burner controls to reach the cylinder.
- 02** On the regulator head, both levers sit on **green** — that is the closed position. Turn the **left** lever to **red** to open the gas.
- 03** Press the green button on the right with your hand to release the air, keeping the head pressed firmly into the cylinder. Skip this and the burner will not light.
- 04** Set the burner controls to the heat you want, then press the black ignition button several times.
- 05 After cooking,** turn the left lever back to green.

CLOSED — BOTH LEVERS GREEN



OPEN — LEFT LEVER RED



Laundry, bins, bikes

The small logistics of a week in a house that isn't yours.

Kitchen & laundry

Dishwasher tablets	In the drawer under the kitchen sink
Washer-dryer	Utility room
Bath & pool towels	In each bedroom
Barbecue utensils	House kitchen, middle drawer below the toaster and kettle

Bins & recycling

- **Kitchen bin** — beside the dishwasher. Bin bags are in the drawer just above it.
- **Second bin** — in the summer kitchen / pool house.
- **At the end of your stay**, put the tied bags in the bins in the garage.
- **Glass** goes to the recycling point in the village, in the car park beside the little Chusclan shop *Le Panier Gourmand*, the playground and the tennis club. You pass it on the way to and from the house.

The garage

- Reachable from the utility room, or through the garage door itself.
- From outside, the black remote in your key set opens it. From inside, use the wall-mounted control box.
- A second opening leads to the garden. It can only be opened from inside the garage, using the control box next to it.
- **Two bicycles** under a cover, with one helmet, two locks (code 1531) and a pump in one of the baskets.
- **A ping-pong table.**

WORTH KNOWING

The lanes through the vineyards below Gicon are quiet, flat and beautiful in the two hours before sunset — the best ride from the door. The climb to Gicon itself is better on foot.

Where to shop

One shop in the village for what you forgot; everything else is ten minutes away in Bagnols-sur-Cèze.

In Chusclan

Le Panier Gourmand — Chemin de la Combe de Carmignan, next to the playground car park, the tennis club and the glass recycling bins. Bread, basics, fresh local produce, and enough to save a trip into town. It also serves as the village newsagent.

Tuesday to Saturday	7:30–12:30 and 17:00–19:30
Sunday	7:30–12:30
Closed	Monday
Telephone	06 60 53 62 86 / 06 69 39 90 69

BREAD AND CROISSANTS

They must be **ordered the day before, without fail**. Drop in or ring during the day for the following morning — turn up unannounced and there will be nothing left for you.



The shop, five minutes from the house.



Opening hours, on the front of the building.

In Bagnols-sur-Cèze – 10 MINUTES

SUPERMARKETS

Lidl	1863 route d'Avignon, 30200
Intermarché	1 rue du 8 Mai 1945, 30200
Carrefour Market	1–5 route de Nîmes, 30200

BUTCHER & BAKERIES

Maison Miaille — butcher	Les Jardins de l'Ancyse, 3 rue Jean Nougier, 30200
Au Levain Naturel — artisan baker	Zone de l'Euze, 732 route d'Avignon, 30200
Marie Blachère — baker	45 avenue de la Mayre, 30200

WINE, CLOSER TO HOME

Maison Sinnae, the Chusclan cooperative opposite the campsite, is where the village's wine is actually made. **The tasting is very much worth doing in its own right** — not a token pour but a proper walk through both appellations, Chusclan and Laudun, and the quickest way to understand what you will be drinking all week. No appointment needed, there is a shop, and it is a two-minute drive. Start here on your first day.

06 — TABLE

Where to eat

Ordered roughly by distance, nearest first. Every one of these is small. **Book** — always, and a few days ahead in August.

La 16 Guinguette CHUSCLAN · 5 MIN

132 chemin de Bagnols, 30200 Chusclan · +33 6 03 37 95 79

Tuesday to Sunday, 12:00–13:30 and 19:30–21:30 · Saturday evenings only · closed Monday

Open-air tables on the bank of the Cèze, easy and unhurried — a seasonal pop-up that runs through the summer only. This is the local rhythm, not a destination restaurant, and that is exactly the point.

Pair it with a wander through the old centre of Chusclan, and a tasting at Maison Sinnae opposite the campsite — you can't miss it.

L'Angevis CHUSCLAN · 5 MIN

335 chemin de Cantemerle, 30200 Chusclan · +33 4 66 90 03 15

Lunch Monday to Friday, 11:30–14:00 · closed Saturday and Sunday

Up on the hillside above the village, at the end of a lane through the vines. The terrace looks down over the rooftops of Chusclan and out across the plain towards Marcoule and the Rhône — on a clear evening it is the finest view you can eat in front of anywhere near the house. A family has run it since 1994: he cooks, she runs the room, and both plainly enjoy it.

Semi-gastronomic Provençal cooking from fresh local produce, on a deliberately short menu — two starters, two mains, three desserts — which is usually the sign of a kitchen that means it. The wine list is built around growers from the surrounding villages. There is a pool and a few rooms as well, useful if friends join you and the house is full.

Book — the room seats about fifty and it fills. **Evening service is occasional and varies through the season**, so ring before planning dinner rather than turning up.

C'la Vie **ORSAN** • 10 MIN

12 avenue du Jasset, 30200 Orsan • +33 4 66 39 29 15

Tuesday to Friday, 12:00–13:30 and 19:30–21:00 • closed Saturday, Sunday and Monday

Gastronomic cooking at everyday prices, and our own favourite of this list. Chef-owner Richard Durand has held a **Bib Gourmand** in the Michelin Guide since 2021 — the distinction reserved for serious kitchens that keep their prices modest, which describes this place exactly. The daily menu runs at around €28.

Son and grandson of bakers, born just up the road in Bagnols-sur-Cèze, he cooked in England, the United States, Germany and Australia before coming home, and the food carries all of it: market produce from local growers, treated with unexpected pairings and real precision. The menu changes constantly, so trust the plat du jour. Eat inside in the spare, modern dining room, or outside on the terrace in the shade of a hundred-year-old plane tree. The wine list is a proper celebration of the Rhône valley and the Languedoc.

Book several days ahead — the room is small and its reputation now travels well beyond the village. **Pair it with** the climb up to the Camp de César afterwards, for the panorama over the valley.

Bistro de Montcaud **SABRAN** • 15 MIN

Moncaut, 30200 Sabran • +33 4 66 89 18 00
Bistro daily, 12:00–14:30 and 19:00–22:00 •
Le Cèdre, Wednesday to Saturday, dinner only

A beautiful setting in the grounds of the Château de Montcaud, on the terrace or inside. The bistro is the relaxed option; the château also holds a one-Michelin-star restaurant if you want the full evening.

Come at lunch so you can walk the château gardens afterwards.

Cèze Grand Rue **LA ROQUE-SUR-CÈZE** • 20 MIN

10 Grand Rue, 30200 La Roque-sur-Cèze • +33 4 66 82 08 42

Thursday to Monday, 12:00–14:30 and 19:00–21:30 • closed Tuesday and Wednesday

An intimate room in one of the prettiest villages in the Gard, everything made in-house by the chef. The terrace under the big plane tree is the seat to ask for.

Pair in the car park at the bottom of the village — it is car-free above.
Pair it with the Cascades du Sautadet, a few minutes' walk away.

Le Mas du Bélier **LA ROQUE-SUR-CÈZE** • 20 MIN

Route de Saint-Laurent, 30200 La Roque-sur-Cèze • +33 4 66 82 21 39

Wednesday to Saturday, 12:00–13:30 and 19:00–21:00 • Sunday lunch only • closed Monday and Tuesday

On the bank of the Cèze, a short walk from the waterfalls. Guests come back for the dry-aged beef.

Le Verger des Papes

CHÂTEAUNEUF-DU-PAPE • 30 MIN

Château des Papes, rue du Château, 84230
Châteauneuf-du-Pape • +33 4 90 83 50 40

Tuesday to Saturday, 10:30–23:00 • closed
Sunday and Monday

Provençal cooking on a shaded terrace built into the hillside below the ruined papal castle, with the whole Rhône valley laid out in front of you.

Pair it with the walk down the steps into the village and a tasting in one or two of the cellars. Next door, the ice-cream shop **Le Jardin de Paval** serves an aperitif with the same view.

La Terrasse **SAINT-MARTIN-D'ARDÈCHE** • 35 MIN

Quai des Pescadous, 07700 Saint-Martin-d'Ardèche • +33 4 75 53 45 49

Every day except Wednesday, 10:00–22:00

Straightforward and good, right on the Ardèche, with the river traffic of canoes going past.

Pair it with Aiguèze, five minutes away — a perched village on the cliff edge, with a rampart walk looking straight down into the gorge.

Les Terrasses **PONT DU GARD · 40 MIN**

Avenue du Pont du Gard, 30210 Remoulins · +33 4 66 63 91 37

Daily, 12:00–14:30 and 19:30–21:00 · also 15:30–17:30 at weekends

Inside the Pont du Gard site itself, with the aqueduct in view from the terrace. The setting is remarkable; it is also, inevitably, busy.

Book an early or late sitting and see the monument at the quiet end of the day.

Maison Bronzini

VILLENEUVE-LÈS-AVIGNON · 40 MIN

74 rue de la République, 30400 Villeneuve-lès-Avignon · +33 4 90 25 45 59

Daily, 08:00 through to 00:30

Restaurant on one side, tapas on the other — the garden side is the more relaxed and the more characterful. There is a shop, and they press their own olive oil.

Pair it with a stroll along the main street, the Chartreuse de Villeneuve and Fort Saint-André.

Le Carré du Palais **AVIGNON · 45 MIN**

1 place du Palais, 84000 Avignon · +33 4 65 00 01 01

Daily, 12:00–22:00 · no break in the afternoon

Excellent food, and a terrace that faces the Palais des Papes straight on. Ask for it when you book — it is the whole reason to come.

Pair it with the Palais, its gardens and the museum inside, then the Pont Saint-Bénézet.

Bibendum **AVIGNON · 45 MIN**

83 rue Joseph Vernet, 84000 Avignon · +33 4 90 91 78 39

Daily, 12:00–14:00 and 18:00–01:00

Dinner in the former inner courtyard of a cloister. The room does most of the work, and the kitchen holds up its end.

What to see

Roman aqueducts, Ice Age paintings, a papal palace, and a fortress behind the house — all within an hour. Times below are driving times from the villa.

On foot, from the door

ON FOOT · FREE · ALL YEAR · ALLOW 2–3 H

Château de Gicon *Chusclan*

The ruined 13th-century fortress on the rocky spur directly behind the house — you can walk to it from the garden gate. The marked trail climbs through vines and holm oak, passing the old chapel of Sainte-Madeleine, built in the 13th century by the Carthusians of Valbonne. From the belvedere at the top the view opens 360°: the Rhône directly below, Mont Ventoux to the east, the Alpilles to the south, and the Alps on a clear morning.

It is an old oppidum site, fortified because four provinces met here. Louis IX is said to have stopped at Gicon in 1248 on his way to the crusade at Tunis. In 1973 the Chusclan winegrowers bought the whole thing; they still work the twelve hectares of the old seigneurial vineyard and bottle a *Château de Gicon* cuvée from it.

Go early or after 18:00. There is no shade on the last stretch and no water anywhere on the walk — fill up before you leave. Good shoes; the path is stony.

Also here: marked mountain-bike trails, a picnic area, and an escape game in the ruins, *Les Secrets du Château*.

5 MIN · FREE

Chusclan village

Small, unhurried, and yours for a week. Chusclan is one of the historic named crus of the Côtes du Rhône Villages appellation and has been known for its rosé since long before rosé was fashionable. The cooperative, **Maison Sinnae**, sits opposite the campsite and pours both the Chusclan and Laudun wines — **a tasting there is genuinely worth your time**, and the obvious first stop of the week.

Within half an hour

15 MIN · FREE · ALL YEAR · LAUDUN-L'ARDOISE

Camp de César *the flat hill you see from the terrace*

An eighteen-hectare ancient town on the Lacau plateau, 264 m up, dominating the Rhône corridor — one of the most important archaeological sites in southern Roman Gaul. It was lived in for more than a thousand years, from the Iron Age in the 5th century BC through the Roman high empire and on into the Middle Ages.

You walk it like an open book: the earliest ramparts, a postern and tower, the Roman main gate, the foundations of the forum and the basilica, the craft quarter, the necropolises, and two later places of worship — a Romanesque oratory and the chapel of Saint-Jean. The path up runs through pine and oak, and the belvederes look out over the whole Gard rhodanien.

The local legend: at midnight on 24 June, Saint John's Eve, a chasm is said to open on the plateau and the *Cabro d'Or* — the golden goat, emblem of the sun at the solstice — leaps out of it.

20 MIN · FREE ENTRY · PARKING ~€5 IN SUMMER

La Roque-sur-Cèze & the Cascades du Sautadet

A car-free village of pale stone on a rock spur, crowned by a 12th-century castle and reached by a medieval bridge — one of the *Plus Beaux Villages de France*. Below it, the Cèze has cut a limestone shelf nearly 500 m wide into a staircase of falls dropping up to 15 m, riddled with channels, rapids and giant's kettles, some of them more than 10 m deep.

Loop walk of about 3 km, easy, roughly 1½ hours. Leave the car in the car park at the bottom of the village. In July and August, arrive before 10:00 or the site is saturated.

SAUTADET — READ THIS BEFORE YOU GO

Swimming in the falls is strictly forbidden, by municipal order, from the Pont Charles Martel down to the canyon. The kettles hide siphons and whirlpools that are invisible from the surface, and dozens of people have drowned here since the 1960s. The rock is slippery even when dry. Stay behind the marked studs, and hold small children by the hand — explain the rule before you arrive, not at the water's edge. There is a legal and genuinely safe pebble beach about 100 m downstream of the falls.

25 MIN · FREE

Goudargues

Known as the little Venice of the Gard: a spring-fed canal runs the length of the main street between two rows of enormous plane trees, with cafés set out along the water and a 12th-century abbey church behind. It is a place for a long lunch and very little ambition. The Cèze nearby has easy swimming spots.

Caves & the Ardèche

35 MIN · MÉJANNES-LE-CLAP · ~€15.50 ADULT · ~€11.50 CHILD 6–14

Grotte de la Salamandre

Opened to the public only in 2013, and staged like a piece of theatre — a single vast chamber of "crystal giants" lit and scored across twelve tableaux. The guided tour lasts about an hour. Open daily

10:00–19:00 in July and August.

Four other ways in: the panoramic belvedere alone (~€11, wheelchair accessible); the *Grand Rappel*, a 50 m abseil down the natural shaft to arrive through the ceiling (~€47.50, ages 12+); a two-hour caving trip through the hidden galleries (~€47.50, ages 10+); or a 20-minute flight in an *aéroplume* airship inside the cave (~€85.50). All bookable online, and worth doing.

45 MIN · ORGNAC-L'AVEN · ~€16.50 ADULT · ~€11 CHILD 6–17

Aven d'Ornac *Grand Site de France*

Cathedral-scale underground rooms with ceilings up to 55 m, forests of giant palm-tree stalagmites, translucent fistules and ochre drapery, shaped over a hundred million years and discovered in 1935. The one-hour guided tour is compulsory and must be booked; a lift brings you back up so there is no climb.

The ticket also includes the **Cité de la Préhistoire** next door, a genuinely good modern museum covering 350,000 years of human occupation of the region, with hands-on workshops — fire-making, flint, spear-throwing — during the school holidays.

It is 12 °C inside, all year. Take a jumper, however hot the car park is.

50 MIN · VALLON-PONT-D'ARC · ~€18 ADULT · ~€9 AGE 10–17
· FREE UNDER 10

Grotte Chauvet 2 *Ardèche*

The largest replica of a decorated cave in the world, reproducing the paintings of the Chauvet cave — horses, lions, rhinoceroses, drawn 36,000 years ago, discovered in 1994, and now UNESCO-listed. The original will never be open to the public; this is as close as anyone gets, and it is astonishing rather than merely educational.

Entry covers a one-hour guided tour, the Galerie de l'Aurignacien, and the exhibitions, set in a 15-hectare wooded park with a restaurant. Open

08:30–20:30 daily in July and August.

Book online. It is the most visited site in the Ardèche and slots sell out in August. Arrive 30 minutes before your tour. No photography inside.

Keep your ticket: Chauvet 2, the Aven d'Ornac and the Pont du Gard each give €1 per person off the other two within 7 days.

25–50 MIN · CÈZE & ARDÈCHE · HALF OR FULL DAY

Canoeing

The classic run is the 24 km descent of the Ardèche gorges from Vallon-Pont-d'Arc to Saint-Martin-d'Ardèche, passing under the natural arch of the **Pont d'Arc** in the first kilometre — a full day, with rapids gentle enough for confident beginners. Shorter 8–12 km stretches are available on the same river, and the Cèze offers calmer, quieter paddling much closer to the house.

Book the day before in August, take the earliest departure you can, and bring more water and sunscreen than you think. Everything gets wet: dry bags are worth the few euros.

35 MIN · FREE · ALL YEAR

Aiguèze

Another of the *Plus Beaux Villages de France*, balanced on a cliff at the mouth of the Ardèche gorges. Cobbled lanes, a saracen tower, vaulted passages, and a short rampart walk that ends looking vertically down at the river a hundred metres below. It takes forty-five minutes to see and is worth the drive for that alone — best combined with lunch at Saint-Martin-d'Ardèche just underneath.

Roman & papal

40 MIN · REMOULINS · SITE FREE ON FOOT · PARKING €9 / CAR

Pont du Gard

The highest Roman aqueduct bridge still standing: three tiers of arches carrying water 48 m above the Gardon, built in the 1st century to supply Nîmes, and UNESCO-listed. What surprises most people is not the scale but the state of it.

Walking onto the site is free; you pay for parking, and that single €9 ticket per car also covers the museum, the film, the children's space and the *Mémoires de Garrigue* trail through the scrub. Guided tours climb the 80 steps to the third tier and walk the water channel itself (~€15). Open until **20:00** in July and August.

The river is the best part. The banks are a swimming spot and you can rent a canoe to paddle under the arches.

After dark: the monument is floodlit at dusk from 15 May to 20 September, with a 20-minute sound-and-light show at **22:30** from 4 July to 30 August. Go early in the morning or stay for the evening — midday in August is hot, exposed and crowded.

45 MIN · AVIGNON · ~€12 PALACE · ~€14.50 WITH THE BRIDGE
· FREE UNDER 8

Palais des Papes & Pont d'Avignon

The largest Gothic palace in the world, and for most of the 14th century the seat of the papacy: nine popes ruled Christendom from these rooms. Fifteen thousand square metres of it — the equivalent of four Gothic cathedrals. Twenty-odd spaces are open, including the *Chambre du Cerf*, Clement VI's private room, painted with hunting and fishing scenes rather than saints, and the frescoes of Matteo Giovannetti in the Saint-Jean chapel. Finish on the terraces, which look over the courtyard, the city and the Rhône.

Then the **Pont Saint-Bénézet** — the bridge of the song — with four of its original twenty-two arches left, abandoned to the river's floods in the 17th century.

Allow 1½ to 2 hours for the palace, more if you take the HistoPad tablet and read everything. Book online in summer to skip a 30–45 minute queue.

In July the Festival d'Avignon takes over the city — thrilling, and completely full. Decide which of those two experiences you came for.

Villeneuve-lès-Avignon

The quiet side of the river, where the cardinals built their houses. The **Chartreuse du Val de Bénédiction** is one of the largest Carthusian monasteries in France — cloisters, cells and gardens, and almost no crowds. **Fort Saint-André**, up the hill, has the finest view there is back across the Rhône to Avignon and the Palais.

Théâtre antique d'Orange

The best-preserved Roman theatre in the western world, and the only one anywhere that still has its complete stage wall — 103 m long, 37 m high, which Louis XIV called the finest wall in his kingdom. Built under Augustus, it seated 9,000 and still does: the audio-guided visit is good, but if there is a concert or an opera on while you are here, go. The acoustics are the point.

Family animations run 4 July–13 August. The **Arc de Triomphe** at the north edge of town, carved with the establishment of the Pax Romana, is part of the same UNESCO listing and takes ten minutes.

IF YOU ONLY DO THREE THINGS

Walk up to **Gicon** at seven in the morning. Spend a whole day on the **Ardèche** — Chauvet 2, then lunch at Saint-Martin, then Aiguèze at golden hour. And see the **Pont du Gard** in the evening, when the crowds have gone and the stone turns orange.

08 — WINE

The wine road

You are living inside the appellation. Five village crus, six estates worth the drive, and the nearest cellar five minutes from the door.

The appellations around you

The Rhône wine routes

You are living inside the appellation. Within half an hour: **Chusclan** and **Laudun**, both named Côtes du Rhône Villages, at Maison Sinnæ five minutes away; **Tavel**, the only appellation in France that makes nothing but rosé, and a serious one; **Lirac** next door, red, white and rosé and consistently underrated; and across the river **Châteauneuf-du-Pape**, with its ruined papal castle above the village and its famous galets — the smooth stones that hold the day's heat and release it into the vines at night.

Cellars close for lunch, generally 12:00–14:00, and many close on Sunday. Two estates in a morning is a good pace; four is a wasted afternoon.

Maison Rivier

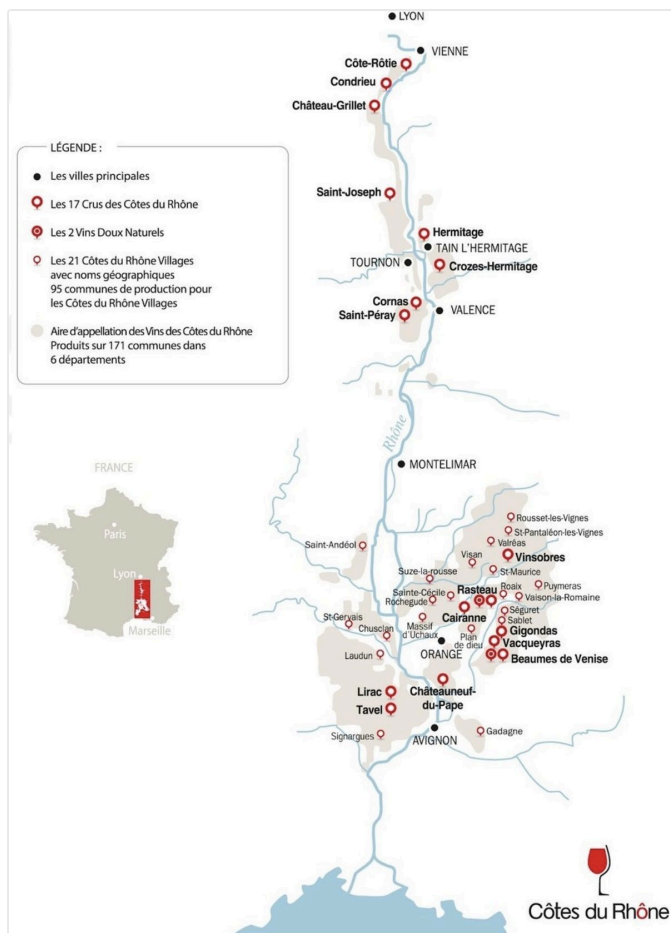
Le Sablas, 896 chemin de Force Mâle, 30200 Chusclan

+33 4 66 33 71 49

Six generations of the Rivier family have grown grapes and olives at Chusclan for more than a century. Claude has run the farm since 1981; his son Mathieu came back to it in 2016, and together they founded Maison Rivier to bottle under their own name at last. Vines and around a thousand olive trees across five communes, certified High Environmental Value at the top level.

They will walk you through their teaching vineyard first, so that you see the soil before you taste what it does with it — then pour the range, wines and their own olive oil together. The Chusclan cuvées, Augustin and Joseph, are the ones to ask for. Louis XIV drank the wines of this village at court, for what his sommeliers called their generosity and their finesse.

The closest by far — you could take the bicycles. Worth a call before you set off, and closed Sunday.



The Côte du Rhône, north to south. Chusclan sits on the right bank, between Saint-Gervais and Laudun — you can find it just north-west of Orange.

Six estates we send our guests to

Five of them are within twenty minutes of the house, and all six welcome visitors without ceremony. Call ahead where we've said so — these are working farms, and in August everyone is in the vines.

15 MIN · SAINT-GERVAIS · MON-FRI · 9:00–11:00 · 14:00–18:00

Domaine Sainte-Anne

Les Cellettes, 30200 Saint-Gervais
+33 4 66 82 77 41

A former priory of the Carthusians of Valbonne, bought in 1965 by Guy and Anne Steinmaier — a family of Burgundian winegrowers whose line runs back to 1727. Thirty-five hectares on a plateau at 200 m, facing south-west towards the Cévennes, on sandstone and limestone raked by the mistral. The cellars beneath the house were built in the 1660s. Alain runs the estate today; his wife looks after visitors.

It is the most decorated name on this list: fifteen *coups de cœur* in the Guide Hachette, more than almost any other grower in the Rhône valley. They were the first here to plant syrah, mourvèdre and viognier successfully — the viognier from cuttings taken at Georges Vernay in Condrieu and at Château-Grillet, and it holds its own against the northern Rhône. The Saint-Gervais cuvée is half mourvèdre, unusual this far south, and that is what gives it a structure most of its neighbours never reach.

These wines need time. They are closed and tannic when young and open out beautifully after five to ten years — buy for the cellar rather than for tonight.

Telephone before you go. Mornings are short, 9:00 to 11:00 only, Saturday is by appointment, and visitors report the posted hours are not always reliable. Little English is spoken.

20 MIN · SABRAN · MON-SAT · 9:00–12:00 · 14:00–18:00

Domaine La Réméjeanne

La Réméjeanne, Cadignac, 30200 Sabran
+33 4 66 89 44 51

The serious one. The Klein family — Alsace, then Tunisia, then Morocco — bought five hectares on the Réméjeanne hillside in 1960. It is now thirty-five hectares of slopes facing Mont Ventoux, ringed entirely by woodland with no neighbouring vineyard, planted on sandy limestone that gives the wines their freshness. Olive trees and fig trees grow among the vines. Certified organic since 2010, hand-harvested, native yeasts, very little intervention.

Every cuvée takes the name of a shrub that grows on the estate. *Les Chèvrefeuilles*, honeysuckle, is the supple one to drink this week. *Les Arbousiers*, strawberry tree, is denser and will keep five to seven years. *Les Genévriers*, juniper, is the Villages — structured, tannic, built for a cellar. Olivier Klein and Juliette Le Bris are the third generation, and they speak English.

Do this one and Rochemond together. They sit barely a kilometre apart at Cadignac, and one morning covers both comfortably.

20 MIN · SABRAN · MON-FRI ONLY · 8:30–17:00

Domaine de Rochemond

1637 route de Cadignac, 30200 Sabran
+33 4 66 79 04 42

Five generations of the Philip family. Éric took the reins in 1995 and his son Sylvain joined him in 2010; between Rochemond and their second estate, the Grand Bécassier, they farm around 130 hectares scattered over the stony limestone and old clay-and-sand terraces around Sabran — one of the largest communes in the whole Côtes du Rhône.

Each variety is vinified separately and everything is a blend, chasing balance rather than power:

Grenache, Syrah, Mourvèdre, Carignan and Cinsault for the reds, Clairette, Bourboulenc and Viognier for the whites. The Guide Hachette picks them up year after year, and the prices have never caught up with the reputation. Sylvain usually does the welcome himself, at length.

Weekdays only — the cellar is closed Saturday and Sunday.

15 MIN · VÉNÉJAN · JULY–AUG · MON–SAT · 10:00–12:30 · 14:00–18:30

Domaine de Bellefeuille

1138 chemin de Font Nouvelle, quartier
Prignan, 30200 Vénéjan
+33 4 66 79 27 33

Founded in 1974 just below Vénéjan — a *petite cité de caractère* with a restored windmill on the hill above — and given a second life in 2020, when Pierre Burrel and Jean-Philippe Manzoni took it over. A hundred and forty-two hectares now, across three appellations, including Côtes du Rhône Villages Chusclan from the *galets roulés* parcels out towards Saint-Étienne-des-Sorts.

The barrel cellar is built of stone from the Vers quarry, which regulates its own humidity — tasting and a look round it cost nothing, and the full tour of the cellars can be booked in advance. There is a fine-grocery counter as well, so you can leave with dinner and not only the wine. Ask for the Viognier and the Helly cuvée; Véronique and Élodie run the tasting room and are generous with their time and their local advice.

Open Mondays in summer, unlike most of the others — useful when everything else is shut.

35 MIN · CHÂTEAUNEUF-DU-PAPE · DAILY · 9:00–19:00

Château Mont-Redon

Chemin de Maucoil, 84230 Châteauneuf-du-Pape
+33 4 90 83 72 75

The grand one, and worth crossing the river for. Vines have grown at Mont-Redon since antiquity — the Romans called the round hill below it *Montem Rotundum* — but the modern estate starts in 1923, when Henri Plantin bought two and a half hectares of scrubland and then, alongside Baron Le Roy, helped invent the Châteauneuf-du-Pape appellation itself. His descendants, now the fourth generation, cleared the plateau and built it into a hundred hectares in a single block.

It stands on the highest terrace of the appellation, looking across to Mont Ventoux, the Dentelles de Montmirail and the ruined papal castle. All three of Châteauneuf's classic soils are here — the rolled pebbles of the plateau, the compacted sands, the urgonian limestone — and the red is blended from thirteen grape varieties. They make Lirac and Côtes du Rhône too, at a fraction of the price.

Free entry and free tasting, no appointment, seven days a week. The 2½-hour VIP visit through the three levels of the cellar is around €65 and must be booked — cancellations inside 48 hours are charged.

TASTING SENSIBLY

The French limit is 0.5 g/l of blood alcohol, and 0.2 for anyone who has held a licence for less than three years — lower than the UK. Agree who is driving before the first cellar rather than after it. Every estate here will hand you a spittoon without blinking, and none of them will think less of you for using it.

Have a wonderful stay.

If anything in the house isn't working, or anything in this guide turns out to be wrong, tell us while you are still here. It is the only way it gets better for the next people.

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Villa César, Chusclan (Gard) · House & Area Guide, English edition, August 2026.
Opening hours and prices for the sites listed in section 07 were correct in mid-2026 and are given as a guide only — please confirm directly before you set out, and book online wherever booking is possible.