

## France

# Self-Guided Hiking Tour

### Tour descriptions

Day 1	
Arrive La Brigue	
Day 2	12 km
Loop Hike	
Day 3	15 km
To Sospel	
Day 4	10 km
To Sainte Agnes	
Day 5	14 km
To Menton	
Day 6	11 km
To Villefranche	
Day 7	5 or 10 km
Loop hike to Eze village	
Day 8	
End of tour	

### Active Journeys



## From the Alps to the Riviera

Behind the French Riviera's glamour hides timeless villages, nestled in lush valleys and nesting atop rocky crags. The ancient trails wind through forests and follow majestic olive groves. One of the real joys of this holiday is to experience the transition from mountain to coastal landscapes, beginning in the medieval village of La Brigue. Then hike through mixed woodland, gorges and valleys, and dramatic, rugged peaks. Inland, discover the pretty villages perched to wooded hillsides linked by delightful walking trails that offer wonderful views along the hiking trail.

The trails lead you to Menton, a popular resort since the late 19th century and inspiration to many artists, who were drawn by the clarity of the light. On the Italian border near this colourful seaside town, the southernmost Alps plunge dramatically into the sparkling Mediterranean Sea, this whole region is an intriguing blend of French and Italian cultures.

Indeed, much of this region remained part of Italy long after the surrounding area was ceded to France – you are just as likely to hear Italian spoken as French, and the local cuisine is a wonderful mix of Provençal and Italian influences.

Then onto Villefranche-sur-Mer, one of the most charming, authentic French and Niçoise fishing village on the French Riviera, in the heart of the Cote d'Azur. With Monaco on one side and Nice on the other, it is hard to believe that it can retain its charm and authenticity of a little village, where the trips ends.

### Fast Facts

- Lovely accommodations, always with private facilities ( 2 and 3\* properties)
- 7 breakfasts 1 packed lunch & 1 dinner
- Luggage transport
- Internal transfer on Day 3
- Route notes and maps

This trip is suitable from March to November. Times to avoid would be during the Grand Prix Monaco, and the film festival in July.

Extra nights can be easily added, before or during the tour.

### Tour Details:

**Dates:** Daily March to mid-November

**Cost:** \$1925

**Single Supplement:** On request

**Length:** 8 days/ 7 nights

**Grade:** Moderate

**Starts:** La Brigue

**Ends:** Villefranche sur Mer

## ITINERARY

### Day 1 La Brigue

You arrive on your own by train, to the timeless village of La Brigue, nestled in the mountains near the Italian border, with its beautiful architecture and its centuries-old homes with colourful façades. The village traded its Italian flag for a French one in 1947, and much of this valley is bathed in a Franco-Italian fusion of language, food, and culture.

### Day 2 Walking Loop 12km +/-550m / -550m

You climb from the town of La Brigue, up the valley laden with wild lavender and thyme. Passing the ruins of stone dwellings, you reach the Boselia pass and begin a breathtaking and panoramic descent along the slope towards Tende, close to the Italian border. Take a well-deserved break in town, at a local café or restaurant. You can choose to walk back or take the train, the train line links both villages.

### Day 3 To Sospel 15 km +600m/-550m

Short morning transfer from La Brigue to Breil to start your walk. You leave Breil sur Roya by foot, giving you a wonderful panoramic view of the valley. There are two choices in paths above the village and we've chosen the one less travelled, following abandoned stone terraces, now dotted with olive trees. You reach the stunning ghost town of Piène Haute, more Italian than French, perched above the valley. Your path then takes you to Italy –to the colourful town of Olivetta, before returning to France and to the town of Sospel, a genuine and medieval mountain town with an old stone toll bridge crossing the Brévera river.

### Day 4 To Sainte Agnes 10 km +/-550m

A short taxi transfer takes you to the start of the walk. After a gradual climb through a scenic beech forest, you reach the summit, the sea the Mediterranean appears in all its majesty before you. Hike to the perched village of Sainte Agnès, listed among the most beautiful villages in France, and set at 800m in altitude. It is the highest coastline village in Europe. Dinner incl.

### Day 5 To Menton & the Mediterranean 14 km +250m / -950m

Once again you leave Sainte Agnès by foot, and walking along a deep and scenic valley you reach the lost villages of Monti and Castellar with its quaint streets & restaurants. Follow the trail to the heart of the town of Menton. It is considered to be the prettiest town on the French Riviera with its colourful streets winding around in never-ending labyrinths and wonderful architecture.

### Day 6 To Villefranche via St. Jean Cap Ferrat 11km

After breakfast you take the train with your luggage from Menton to Villefranche, it's a short 30 minute scenic train ride. You leave your luggage at your hotel and start your first walk around the famous St Jean Cap Ferrat, it's a beautiful 3 hour coastal walk. You can also add a detour and walk around the Eastern arm of the peninsula, adding one hour.

### Day 7 Eze village and return 8 km eachway +400m/-400m

After breakfast you take a 5 mins short train ride from Villefranche to Eze, a medieval village perched like an eagle's nest on a narrow rocky peak overlooking the Mediterranean sea. The ancient fortified village is still crowned with the ruins of its 12th-century fortified castle (torn down in 1706), sitting on a narrow rocky peak. The castle grounds host the well-known Jardin Exotique, and from the top (429 m) you'll have an good view of the coast. Take the train back to your hotel or walk back.

**Day 8** –End of trip in Villefranche sur Mer after breakfast!



## What to Expect

### What will the weather be like?

The daytime temperature will be warm and sunny in the spring and fall. You can expect high 70's maybe even 80's (high 20's C), and cooler evenings. Sunscreen is a must during the day, as is a sweater for the cooler nights. Traditionally it does not rain, but it is recommended to bring some rain gear in case.

### How many hours of walking a day?

Be prepared to walk between 4-6 hours daily, rarely on flat terrain. The French countryside is all hills. You are either going up or down almost all the time; however, these are shorter rolling ascents and descents.

### How fit do I need to be?

The fitter the better, and some hiking experience is recommended but not required. Settling into these locations are not always connected by public transport, so planning is required to allow you the option of taking a day off, not walking, or only doing half the route if you want. Check with hotel desk manager for options en route.

### What are the hotels like?

We use charming inns, 3\* accommodations, with twin-bedded rooms, all with private facilities in the standard itinerary. Only one property in Ste. Agnes, it is essentially a clean and very simple hotel, but with great food and offering an authentic mountain experience.

### Who will help?

Our route manager is always on hand to help out in emergencies or difficulties, and is available by cell phone.



## Fast Facts

- 3 day extension to St Tropez available
- Market days: La Brigue SUN, Breil sur Roya TUE & THU, Sospel THU, Menton DAILY
- Cultural mix of Italian & French influence
- Highlight is Sainte Agnes, voted as one of France's most beautiful villages.

### Not Included

- Transfer to first hotel and from last hotel
- Day 6 : train from Menton to Villefranche
- Day 7: train from Villefranche to Eze

## Getting There

There are frequent international flights to France, closest airport is Nice or Marseille. From there you can take the TGV to Nice and Menton, then a local train to La Brigue.

On the return there are and trains from Villefranche back to main destinations in France.



## How to book your holiday

- Contact our office to make sure there is space available. One of our travel planners will walk you through the entire booking process.
- Download the reservation form from our website and send in completed form by fax or email. Once this is done, your space is confirmed and a pre-departure packet will be sent immediately.
- Deposit is required immediately, and final payment is due 60 days prior to departure. Terms & conditions are outlined on the back of our Reservation Form.
- Plan your air travel as soon as possible.
- We encourage you to purchase travel insurance, either through us or directly a travel insurance provider.
- Ensure that you are in proper health for the trip chosen. Contact us for more information on vaccinations, inoculations, and fitness requirements.