

PRESS PACK

VIARHÔNA, THE NEW CYCLE DESTINATION ALONG THE RHÔNE



JANUARY 2017



CONTENTS

Press Release : ViaRhône, the new cycle destination along the Rhône	3
What's new on the ViaRhône in 2017 ?	4
The ViaRhône project : a shared objective	7
ViaRhône : 24 marked stages for summer 2017	9
ViaRhône, the route of civilisations	14
ViaRhône, a pretext for wine tourism	16
ViaRhône, full immersion in the natural environment	20
Key figures	22
Selection of events alongside the river	23
Map of the ViaRhône itinerary	24
Useful contacts	25

PRESS RELEASE :

VIARHÔNA, THE NEW CYCLE DESTINATION ALONG THE RHÔNE

ViaRhôna is a 815 km green cycle path, still under construction, which will eventually link Lake Geneva with the beaches of the Mediterranean. The project offers users a great opportunity to discover, in a fun, family-friendly way, the many tourist attractions in the areas it crosses. In addition to cycling, this “soft” itinerary provides the means of developing a sustainable form of tourism, bringing together the different geographical areas along its route whilst offering a very varied range of tourism options : cultural, heritage, river, wine and gastronomic tourism. The route takes tourists along the river Rhône, via alpine mountains to the beaches of the Camargue, travelling through the iconic landscapes of southern Provence : hilltop villages, lavender fields and olive groves. By summer 2017, the ViaRhôna itinerary will have permanent or temporary signage along the whole route.

What is the ViaRhôna ?

ViaRhôna is a cycle path which has been created along the river Rhône, or in close proximity to it (65% of the route) which enables people to literally follow the river. The itinerary is open to two different types of traffic : either a safe “green way”, available only for cyclists (or non-motorised forms of transport), or a cycle route : a route that is shared with cars and therefore less suited to family use.

By the start of 2017, 621 km have been completed and whilst there may still be some sections remaining that are unfinished, making cycling the whole route only suitable for experienced cyclists, there are still several stages which are perfect for all kinds of holidays or travel. Currently the itinerary is 83% complete in the Auvergne Rhône-Alpes (ie, 464 km out of 557 km) and 77 % in the Provence-Alpes-Côte d’Azur region (ie, 88 km out of 114 km), with discussions underway for finalising the rest of the route and the works associated with it, and 47 % complete in the Languedoc-Roussillon Midi-Pyrénées region (ie, 68 km out of 146 km).

One of the issues to be sorted is the completion of the route by the end of 2020. It is also possible to use the rail network to return back to the start point or to organise a cycle trip or even just to take a short-cut.

An itinerary that explores the Rhône-Alpes’ heritage

Two thirds of the ViaRhôna run through the Auvergne Rhône-Alpes. On its own the region oversees 552 km of the route, as well as 17 local associations, and eight départements all adjacent to the river Rhône.

450 km of this cycle itinerary are already usable, representing 80% of the total route in the Rhône-Alpes, and offering a whole range of possible rides. Each stage enables users to discover the diversity of the region. From alpine landscapes to the urban river banks in the centre of Lyon, from the terraced vineyards of the Côtes du Rhône to the châteaux of Saint-Vallier or Tournon, the variety of tourist attractions is endless. This highlights how well the Viarhônga can enhance water and river-based activities alongside cultural activities and local farm or vine-produced items.

This green cycle path is a priority project, giving the region’s residents the chance to reconnect with this influential river. There already exists a Rhône culture : its “lônes”, its fauna and flora, its locks and even its famous vintages are part of a shared heritage. Along the whole length of the route, there are works of art, museums, monuments that take up the theme. Discovering the culture of the Rhône can either be done by following the river itself or by staying nearby and branching further out into the départements, making use of the green ways which start from the ViaRhônga and push deeper into new territories.

Today more than ever, the ViaRhônga is going full speed ahead with increasing numbers of new businesses setting up to provide services along the itinerary. Furthermore, the destination is proving popular with European clientele.

WHAT'S NEW ON THE VIARHÔNA IN 2017?

Two new ViaRhôna sections on the southern shores of Lake Geneva

1. ViaRhôna from Saint-Gingolph to Thonon, via Evian – 30 km

Positioned on the shores of Lake Geneva, at the border with Switzerland, Saint-Gingolph marks the start of the ViaRhôna itinerary. The thermal towns of Evian and Thonon-les-Bains nestle between lake and mountains, both lovely places to wander around and relax along the promenades on the edge of Lake Geneva. Take care between Saint-Gingolph and Evian, where the route is only suitable for experienced cyclists. We would recommend that family groups start the itinerary from Evian-les-Bains or Thonon-les-Bains.

2. ViaRhôna from Thonon to Genève – 46 km

After Thonon-les-Bains, a succession of cycle paths and minor roads take you on a discovery tour of the villages of Bas-Chablais. Don't miss the medieval village of Yvoire and also Nernier, on the edge of Lake Geneva. Venture off the route to little ports and beaches that are signposted along the way, great places for a quick swim. At Chens-sur-Léman, until the French section of the ViaRhôna is completed, we suggest that you continue along the Swiss part of the itinerary as far as Geneva.

Services which are spreading along the ViaRhôna itinerary

Mhikes : an app providing GPS guidance to the ViaRhôna between Seyssel and Belley

The company Easy Mountain has developed an app providing GPS guidance for battery-assisted bikes (VAE) on the routes around the Haut Rhône and on the ViaRhôna. In total, 10 VAE circuits have been equipped with a GPS system and all are operational since the summer 2016. Three of the circular routes are geoguided in both French and English.

<https://mhikes.com/accueil.html>

All In Lyon : a concierge and bike storage service in Lyon

A new personalised service based on a concept that is already popular in Paris : concierge services for short break rentals – meeting clients on their arrival, providing a personalised welcome, offering a range of services such as babysitting. All In Lyon offers exclusive packages that help to simplify the organisation of holiday rentals and recreational activities.

All in Lyon has also developed a service that is particularly appreciated by tourists : left luggage storage. This means that holidaymakers can enjoy a luggage-free time in the city, confident that their bags are safe, without the hassle of having to use the left-luggage place at the station. All in Lyon will also look after your bike whilst you visit the city, for example.

www.allinlyon.com

Tourism and Event transfers – Bruno Lechalier : transfer of bikes and cycle tourists from Lyon airport and elsewhere

Bruno Lechalier offers transfers for cycle tourists (and their bikes), taking up to 8 bikes using his trailer, from the airport to any chosen departure point along the ViaRhôna and/or offer a return transfer if required.

brunolechaliertte@free.fr

Allo Bagages : bag transfers between Vienne and Pont-Saint-Esprit

Allo Bagages is a new bag transfer service between Vienne and Pont Saint Esprit for cycle tourists. The company will also transport your bike, sort out rentals and will even look after your car (with secure parking at the company's premises). Allo Bagages transports bikes (including tandems, tricycles, trailers), mainly for the return of cyclists to their start point or for the return of bikes to the rental companies.

Bags and bikes can be dropped off from 8.30 am, with their delivery guaranteed before 4.30 pm.

www.materatransport.com

Monsieur Biclou : a travelling bike repair service between Tournon and Le Pouzin

Monsieur Biclou repairs and restores your bikes along the ViaRhôna. Wherever you are spending your holiday along the ViaRhôna in the Ardèche and the Drôme, Monsieur Biclou offers a mobile technical service. If you are cycling along the ViaRhôna route between Tournon/Tain l'Hermitage et Le Pouzin, this **experienced bike mechanic** will travel to you to repair your bike. A simple phone call will get access to advice or, if necessary, he will bring all his kit to repair one or several bikes... Costs will reflect the number of bikes to be repaired and how far he has to travel.

www.monsieurbiclou.com

The Compagnie des Canotiers du Rhône et Saône : boat + bike excursions in Lyon and Tournon

The company offers excursions in wooden boats, with battery-assisted bikes and an upmarket picnic for a maximum of 12 people. Themed excursions will give you the opportunity to meet men and women on board who protect and highlight the world of wine-growing, wine, history, famous people and culture (as well as chocolate and beer). The Canotiers' boat has been built from Alpine larch wood based on the design of gallo-roman barges. Solar panels positioned on the roof make the boat totally independent for its energy needs, as well as providing the facilities for recharging the batteries of the electric bikes.

In 2017 the Canotiers will offer outings with or without visits and tastings.

- Departing from Lyon on the Saône, including a cycle in the Monts d'Or on battery-assisted bikes
- Departing from Tournon-sur-Rhône, one way by boat and returning on the ViaRhôna by bike.

Several packages, from 8 € (short boat ride) to 120 € / per person (day's excursion with tasting and visit)

www.canotiersboatnbike.com

United Cruiser : a bike factory at La Roche de Glun

United Cruiser is a bike manufacturer based in La Roche de Glun just 200 m from the ViaRhôna. It is effectively the "ViaRhôna bike factory"! This company, making stylised urban bikes that can be customised by the client, offers lots of different possibilities for owning a unique bike. The bikes are high-design products, very comfortable for cycling in town or in the countryside and inspired by vintage American bikes with an additional touch of French style. An electric kit can be added to adapt all of the bikes. They can be purchased online on www.unitedcruiser.com and from a network of partner shops.

The Accueil Vélo Label in full expansion

Accueil Vélo is a national brand which offers the guarantee of a quality welcome and services to cyclists along the cycle routes in France and in particular on the ViaRhôna, in the departments of the Ardèche, the Drôme, the Hérault and the Savoie. Its special symbol makes labelled organisations along the route more easily recognisable, on each section of the site www.viarhona.com

Bike rental shops labelled Accueil Vélo

Cycletic – rental and delivery/collection of bikes - Lyon

Wheel free by Cycletic offers bike hire (all terrain bikes, mountain bikes, tandems, children's bikes, folding bikes and battery-assisted bikes) in Lyon. For your cycle trips (all terrain, mountain, tandem and battery-assisted) in the **Rhône-Alpes** region or on the *ViaRhôna* route, the company offers a bike rental service from Lyon or from any other town on the *ViaRhôna*. Cycletic will also arrange delivery and collection of your bikes

at the train station or from your accommodation. The service is available Monday to Saturday, and by appointment on a Sunday.

www.cycletic.fr/location

Vélostrada – Lyon

VéloStrada provides bike hire as well as the hire of luggage trailers, children's trailers and saddlebags. Whether buying or renting, you can test any of the hiking and cycle-touring equipment in order to make a more informed choice. Not based in Lyon ? Some of the rentals can be sent directly to your home address or to your start point.

Vélostrada also sells baggage, trailers, bike equipment and repairs all brands of bike. The owner speaks fluent English and offers high quality material that is perfect for cycle tourism.

Open from Tuesday to Saturday.

<http://velostrada.com>

Carbone Zéro – Valence

Carbone Zéro is a local bike shop that offers a high quality, professional service, including a repair shop selling spare parts and accessories. The shop sells brands that have been selected because of their high build quality and come from Holland, France and Germany. Carbone Zéro also offers electric bikes for hire, as well as bikes that can carry two or three people. The shop is located next to the train station in Valence and 500 m from the ViaRhôna. English, German and Dutch-speaking staff.

Open daily except Sunday and Monday morning.

www.carbone-zero.fr

Vélogik : daily rental options of battery-assisted bikes in Seyssel, Ruffieux, Tournon, Viviers and Bourg St Andéol

Vélogik, a company that specialises in the management of cycle fleets, offers daily rental options of battery-assisted bikes along the length of the ViaRhôna, with the deployment of a complete range of bikes (battery-assisted bikes, electric all-terrain bikes and electric mountain bikes). This fleet of bikes is already available on 4 stages of the ViaRhôna since 2016 : Seyssel, La Chautagne, Tournon, Viviers/Bourg Saint Andéol.

<http://viarhona.velogik.com/levenement3moissansmavoiture/operationviarhona/>

Enhanced international marketing

The www.viarhona.com website : German version will be online from the beginning of 2017.

Publication of the first Bikeline ViaRhôna topo-guide in German produced by the Esterbauer publishing house in September 2016. It is available from book shops in German-speaking countries and via www.amazon.de

ViaRhôna increasingly taken up by European tour operators

The specialist cycling/hiking tourism shows at which ViaRhôna have participated for a number of years give an insight into new tour operator programmes. The ViaRhôna is gradually becoming more popular with specialist cycle tour operators as a new cycle destination in France. : <http://pro.rhonealpes-tourisme.com/article/viarhona-toujours-plus-programmee>

A ViaRhôna map leaflet published in 4 languages : a French/Dutch version and an English/German version (for ease of distribution on the market place). These publications enable maps to be distributed at shows for the general public and various ViaRhôna marketing events.

THE VIARHÔNA PROJECT :

A SHARED OBJECTIVE

Devised at the end of the 1990s, it was from 2005 onwards that the Rhône-Alpes region and the CNR (Compagnie Nationale du Rhône) formalised their financial involvement and partnership to set up this project and make the ViaRhône a reality. From that point on, the ViaRhône brought together all of the territories and *départements* that run alongside the river Rhône. Driven by the three regional authorities of Auvergne Rhône-Alpes, Provence Alpes Côte d'Azur (PACA), Occitanie-Pyrénées-Méditerranée, together with the CNR, an itinerary committee was set up in 2013 with the aim of creating from it a massive tourism initiative by 2020.

The history

ViaRhône became a major collaborative project in 2004, when the Presidents of the 3 regions launched the "Great Delta Appeal", calling for ambitious, joint management of the river Rhône. This ambition has become reality with the development of a 20-year collaborative strategy

This sustainable development project brings together the issues of flood prevention, the protection and improvement of the river setting and long-term economic development. In the context of the Rhône-Alpes' section, the ViaRhône has also attracted European funding.

The Compagnie Nationale du Rhône and the Auvergne Rhône-Alpes region are committed to financing the work involved in developing the ViaRhône. In the Auvergne Rhône-Alpes, both the regional Council and the CNR have signed agreements with 17 local associations, which "own" the project and cover almost the whole route that needs to be developed..

65 % of the route is based on the stretch of river that comes under the responsibility of the CNR which means that company is a determining player within the project. The CNR's involvement reflects the franchise's terms of reference : to ensure that the site is well used, especially if it results in more local development and tourism.

Of the estimated total budget of 51.5 million euros for the part of the ViaRhône that runs through its territory, the Auvergne Rhône-Alpes regional council has subsidised the project to the tune of 13.2 million euros, of which 185,000 euros is EU money, and the CNR has subsidised the project by 11.1 million euros, with the rest of the money coming from local associations and other bodies.

A project of inter-regional scope

"ViaRhône, from Lake Geneva to the Mediterranean" is one of the beacon tourism projects of the Plan Rhône and will be a common theme of the inter-regional strategy in 2014-2020. There are three regional authorities involved in the project: Auvergne Rhône-Alpes, Provence-Alpes-Côte d'Azur and Occitanie-Pyrénées-Méditerranée. Bearing in mind the advanced state of the Rhône-Alpes' infrastructure and priorities, the two other regions have agreed that the Auvergne Rhône-Alpes region should be the main impetus behind this tourism initiative, working closely with Auvergne Rhône-Alpes Tourisme.

Since the first installations dating back to 2003, other targets have been reached. In 2013 : the launch of a tourism marketing strategy for the ViaRhône on a regional scale. In 2014 : creation of an inter-regional administration under the auspices of an itinerary committee. In 2015 : the development of a long-term destination strategy and finally, at the end of 2016 : the prospect of a 1115 km European itinerary (ViaRhône + Route du Rhône in Switzerland) making it possible to link the sources of the river Rhône with the Mediterranean sea via Lake Geneva, Western Europe's biggest natural lake.

Route du Rhône and ViaRhôna now part of the EuroVelo network

From 2012, the French communities involved in the ViaRhôna project decided they wanted to develop this concept further with Swiss partners, via the cantons of Geneva, Vau, Valais and Uri, who are already developing the tourism potential of the Route du Rhône, the Swiss equivalent of the ViaRhôna. This partnership has resulted in a joint application by the two itineraries to become part of EuroVelo, the European network of long distance cycle routes. Currently this scheme consists of 15 cycle routes, representing a distance of over 70,000 km. In order to qualify, the itineraries must cover a minimum of 1000 km and cross through at least two countries. These criteria perfectly match the Franco-Swiss project, with 815 km of the ViaRhôna and 350 km of the Route du Rhône.

Starting from Andermatt in Switzerland to Port-Saint-Louis-du-Rhône (13) or Sète (34), this itinerary is known as number 17 and provides a genuine link between northern and southern Europe over a distance of 1115 km.

The EuroVelo 17 application was confirmed in December 2015. By the summer of 2017, all the signage (either permanent or temporary) for the whole length of the EuroVelo 17/ViaRhôna will be complete (along both finished and temporary sections of the route). The last sections of the EuroVelo 17 should be completed sometime in 2020.

Le réseau national des itinéraires cyclables

ViaRhôna is registered as part of the national organisation of cycle routes

In 2020, France's network of cycle routes will cover 20,000 km.

Source : Dossier France Vélo Tourisme
Study "L'économie du vélo" -2009 –Altermodal
on
behalf of Atout France, Coordonnateur, DGCS,
MN3V

Key figures from Tourisme à Vélo en 2012 –
Ministère de l'Artisanat du Commerce et du
Tourisme
National atlas of cycle routes and green ways –
2nd edition – July 2010



VIARHÔNA : 24 MARKED STAGES FOR SUMMER 2017

Find all the information on each stage : <http://en.viarhona.com/itineraires/viarhona>

By Summer 2017, the whole of the ViaRhôna itinerary will be marked, whether on a temporary or permanent section.

1 - ViaRhôna from Saint-Gingolph to Thonon via Evian – 30 km

See previous “What’s New on the ViaRhôna in 2017” section.

2 - ViaRhôna from Thonon to Geneva Genève – 46 km

See previous “What’s New on the ViaRhôna in 2017” section

3 - Geneva – Vulbens – 33 km

This section of the ViaRhôna starts at Lake Geneva, in the impressive city of Geneva, on the border between Switzerland and France. Geneva is a city that combines tradition with modernity, one that is established firmly in reality whilst at the same time exploiting its diverse international activity. ViaRhôna wends its way through the vineyards surrounding Geneva using the minor roads and marked green ways that lead to the gateway to the Alps, through lush green countryside. The route is quite hilly and therefore more suitable for experienced users as there are several steep sections along the way.

4 - Vulbens – Seyssel – 27 km

Running between mountains and valleys, this section of the ViaRhôna boasts some fantastic viewpoints over the river Rhône and the surrounding countryside. You will come across the “défilé de l’Ecluse”, a narrow transverse valley, before reaching Seyssel which has been an important place of river navigation since ancient times. It has lots of character, with numerous river-based cultural and leisure activities. Part of the route follows main roads and requires caution, before taking to green ways along the river bank at Seyssel.

5 - Seyssel - Chanaz - Belley – 33 km

This section of the ViaRhôna follows both banks of the Rhône. The temporary cycle path, between peaks and plateaux, offers landscapes that are dotted with waterfalls and lakes. Further on there are vineyards, gastronomy and authentic little towns like Belley, Culoz or Chanaz which are characteristic of the Bugey mountains. Green ways and shared roads alternate on this demanding stage of the route.

6 - Belley – Saint Genix sur Guiers – Groslée – 39 km

This stage of the ViaRhôna progresses through the Bugey, between the majestic Rhône, the Grand Colombier mountain range and the Lavours marshland. Further to the south, from the plain of the Upper Rhône to the mountain and passing through vineyards, the Pays de Lhuis and Izieu provide a varied landscape that is bathed in light much appreciated by lovers of the great outdoors. Green ways and proper roads are the order of the day on this section, except through the tunnels of La Balme via a busy, narrow road.

7 - Groslée – La Balme les Grottes – 36 km

This section of the ViaRhôna wends through the protected natural environment along the banks of the Rhône. Hidden amongst the beautiful setting of mountains and forests to the south of Le Bugey are superb ponds, lakes or marshland. You will go through the villages of Morestel, Saint-Sorlin-en-Bugey and the more intimate La Balme-les-Grottes with its famous caves and picturesque village centre. This is essentially a temporary stage, following minor roads. An attractive green way between Sault-Brénaz and Lagnieu.

8 - La Balme-les-Grottes – Jons – 35 km

On the edge of Le Bugey, this section of the ViaRhôna deviates slightly from the course of the river to gradually reach the Balcons du Rhône, where traditional villages, châteaux and vineyards follow on one from another. At Anthon, the river flows into the Rhône, forming an amazing natural site which contrasts with the neighbouring conurbation. Next stop is Jons, a little village on the outskirts of Grand Lyon, the Jonage canal and the Grand Parc de Miribel-Jonage. A temporary section on minor roads.

9 - Jons – Lyon – 29 km

This section plays cleverly with the urbanised setting of Grand Lyon, linking the parks and water features of the built-up area, the Grand Large and Miribel-Jonage. After that, there is a fantastic urban cycle ride to enjoy along the banks of the Rhône. Where the Rhône meets the Saône, there is the new district full of innovative architecture, symbolised by the Musée des Confluences (opened December 2014). Itinerary over non-signposted green ways.

10 - Lyon – Saint-Romain-en-Gal – 34 km

After the hustle and bustle of Lyon, this section of the ViaRhôna continues on to Vernaison, Givors, then Saint-Romain-en-Gal. This area, more than any other, is at the heart of the history of river navigation. The museums in Saint-Romain-en-Gal or Vienne present the rich and long history of the river, from ancient times to the current day. **It is strongly recommended to take the train from Lyon to Givors, for beginners and family cyclists.** The temporary route is unmarked on the D 15 on the right bank of Pierre-Bénite at Vernaison and the road is extremely busy. At Vernaison, cross the Rhône, to Sérézin du Rhône, Ternay and Givors. At Givors, go along the embankment and then cross the Gier using the footbridge. 300 m after the suspension bridge, take the Chemin des Abricotiers which runs parallel to the D 388. At Loire-sur-Rhône you will find a greenway marked with ViaRhôna signs as far as Saint Romain en Gal.

11 - Saint-Romain-en-Gal – Sablons – 33 km

This striking stage of the ViaRhôna offers a wide variety of landscapes. From Vienne, the ancient capital of Roman Gaul, as far as the Ile du Beurre natural reserve which reflects the wild character of the untamed Rhône, passing through the terraced vineyards, including the prestigious Côte-Rôtie and the first orchards in the Rhône Valley. Nature lovers, history buffs and gourmets will all be delighted. A green way the whole length of the route except on entering Sablons.

12 - Sablons –Tournon – 39 km

This stage of the ViaRhôna alternates between terraced vineyards and orchards. First section in the Ardèche from Lyon, you will learn how the Rhône is managed to provide water for the agricultural land: arboriculture, market gardening and vineyards where Saint-Joseph reigns supreme. When you arrive in Tournon-sur-Rhône, follow the temporary signage if you want to continue onwards.

13 - Tournon – Valence – 23 km

Leaving the Pays du Tournonais at the southern dike in Tournon-sur-Rhône, the ViaRhôna continues as far as Glun. You will come across the unexpected branch of the river which encircles La Roche-de-Glun, and the area's biodiversity will appeal to even the most exacting of cyclists. Reaching Valence with its colourful markets, its gardens, its lively districts and its welcoming pedestrian streets, you feel you have arrived in Provence.

Favourite tributary La Vallée de l'Isère	The Vallée de l'Isère green way cycle route – national itinerary V63 – travels 42 km through the Drôme from Châteauneuf-sur-Isère to St-Nazaire-en-Royans, close to the river Isère. Its path gives views of the
---	--



heritage and natural treasures from the outskirts of Royans and the Drôme des Collines, to the Rhône confluence : diverse agricultural areas, natural sites (orchards, reed beds, quarries...), fauna (herons, carp, beavers...) and landscapes (plateaux, valleys and hills). Passing through towns and villages, you will discover the characteristic local architecture with its mixture of shingle, adobe, sandstone or brick, as well as various structures ranging from dams to bridges and viaducts. www.romans-tourisme.com/fr/patrimoine/.../la-veloroute-voie-verte

14 - Valence – Le Pouzin – 33 km

Après une halte au port de l'Épervière à Valence, ViaRhôna reprend sa route en Ardèche. Entre grottes et site archéologique, village de caractère, château, réserve naturelle, espace naturel sensible on entre au cœur de l'Ardèche.-Set off again through the Pringetarde natural reserve as far as Le Pouzin after a little jaunt into the Drôme.

Favourite tributary

La Dolce Via snakes along the Eyrieux valley from La Voulte sur Rhône



The former departmental railway along the Eyrieux valley gave way, in 2012, to the Dolce Via, a gentle track that has been developed for use by walkers, cyclists and horse riders. Over 75 km, with a mixture of roads and way-marked earth tracks, this green way allows people to explore the landscapes of the Eyrieux valley from St Laurent du Pape to St Martin de Valamas and towards the Doux valley, from Cheylard to Lamastre. It is a shady route offering fine views over the valley, with several picnic areas along the way and the chance to explore picturesque hilltop villages such as Beauchastel. Engineering masterpieces, the bridges and tunnels, old mills and factories, highlight in this place the dimension of human labour in the 19th century. www.dolce-via.com

15 - Le Pouzin – Châteauneuf-du-Rhône – Viviers - 42 km

The La Payre footbridge is brand new and now enables river crossings at Baix, regardless of the weather. You then continue south in the direction of Cruas. ViaRhôna now takes on a strong heritage flavour. There is a striking contrast between the architectural heritage of places such as the Abbatale de Cruas and industrial heritage of its cement works, linked perhaps by the latest addition of a rope bridge at Rochemaure which is built on the pillars of the Vieux Pont. The itinerary continues on the left bank, close to Montélimar, as far as Châteauneuf du Rhône.

Take the Vélodrôme to explore the valley of the river Drôme by bike

The bike track uses the little paths and local roads in the valley of the river Drôme. It links directly with the ViaRhôna via a bridge over the Drôme which is reserved for cyclists. It is a lovely route, taking you on both sides of the river up the Drôme valley. It is all on the flat as far as Loriol and Livron-sur-Drôme. The section between Livron and Allex is hilly, with a relatively steep 300m stretch to reach the magnificent old village of Le Haut-Livron.

www.ladrometourisme.com/fr/je-decouvre/velo/la-veloroute-la-velodrome.html

16 - Châteauneuf-du Rhône / Bourg-Saint-Andéol to Lapalud– 31 km

Once you leave Châteauneuf-du-Rhône, following the “ lônés”, you will reach Viviers with its medieval streets, Bourg-Saint-Andéol and its legendary bas-relief depicting the god Mithra and Pont-Saint-Esprit. This section of the ViaRhôna places great emphasis on the local heritage : chapels, cathedrals and historic sites...

The itinerary gently follows green ways and minor roads. To the south of **Pont-Saint-Esprit** the **ViaRhôna is currently under construction and the path will be completed shortly (you are advised to have a GPS and an IGN map with you in order to plan your route).**

17 – Lapalud to Avignon

You will pass through the Vaucluse to Avignon using a ViaRhôna route which is in part temporary and which will be marked from Spring 2017. From Bollène to Avignon, some of the itinerary follows what will eventually be the final route and the temporary sections are on greenways or on shared roads with light traffic but also on some sections of busy roads in the urban areas of Avignon.

18 - Avignon -Vallabrègues – Beaucaire – 7 km

Pending completion of the ViaRhôna route between Avignon and Beaucaire, a green way is currently accessible between Montfrin and Beaucaire. Following an old railway line, the green way will take you “softly” as far as Beaucaire, Ville d'Art et d'Histoire, where the Languedoc meets Provence. Beaucaire also marks the start of the Canal du Rhône to Sète, with its river port a lively feature of the town centre.

In Beaucaire, the ViaRhôna splits in two and follows the two branches of the Rhône delta : the first joins the sea at Palavas les Flots and then Sète in the Languedoc-Roussillon Midi-Pyrénées region, whilst the second branch joins the Mediterranean at Port Saint Louis du Rhône in the Provence-Alpes Côte d'Azur region.

19- Beaucaire - Saint Gilles

The temporary ViaRhôna itinerary (on shared lanes) will be accessible from June 2017.

20- Saint Gilles – Aigues Mortes – 14 km

The temporary ViaRhôna route (on shared roads) from Avignon (Vaucluse) as far as Gallician (Gard) will be accessible in June 2017. On this section, the ViaRhôna is developed between Gallician and Le-Grau-Du-Roi, giving you the chance to pass through the Camargue gardoise, a “Grand Site de France”. You will follow the old towpaths of the Canal du Rhône to Sète, crossing through marshland before you get to Aigues-Mortes, a fortified town. Do not miss the viewpoint from the Tour Carbonnière from where you will get a better understanding of this extraordinary landscape. At Gallician, there are two discovery loops (17 and 23 km) and a 7 km greenway leading to the picturesque village of Cailar and Vauvert station.

21 – Aigues Mortes – Palavas les Flots – 21 km

This stage marks the end of the trip and the Mediterranean and its beaches lies just a few turns of the pedal away. Having followed the Canal du Rhône to Sète between Aigues-Mortes and Le Grau du Roi, you are now going to ride alongside the beaches of the Mediterranean, with its seaside resorts and activities. The ViaRhôna follows the strip of sand, known as the Lido, which separates the saltwater lakes from the sea.

22 - Palavas-les-Flots to Sète

The access as far as the port of Sète, meandering between beaches and salt lagoons, is not quite finished yet.

23 - Beaucaire to Arles

The temporary ViaRhôna itinerary (shared roads) from Avignon to Arles via Fourques (Gard) will be accessible in June 2017.

24 - Arles – Port Saint Louis du Rhône – 42,5 km

Gateway to the Camargue, Arles with its impressive Roman heritage is a town that will tempt you to become immersed in all the history and art of the place. The ViaRhôna is laid out between Arles and Port-Saint-Louis-du-Rhône except for the 5 km stretch to the north of Port-Saint-Louis-du-Rhône. From the Pont Van Gogh, ViaRhôna takes the direction of the Rhône delta via a beautiful green way alongside the Canal d'Arles to Fos. Caution, there is an undeveloped and dangerous section of the itinerary between the lock at Fos and Port-Saint-Louis du Rhône. In Port Saint Louis du Rhône, a cycle track will take you down to the Plage Napoléon where you can enjoy a well-deserved swim. At Le Mas Thibert, don't miss the detour into the Marais du Vigueirat.

Circular cycle route exploring the Vaccarès area



On this 46km-long route, you will explore the shores of the largest and most famous of the saltwater lakes: the Vaccarès. Setting out from Arles, historic and cultural capital of the Camargue, the itinerary takes you down to the south, through market gardens and rice beds. It comes out on the banks of the Etang de Vaccarès from where you will discover a succession of panoramic views that go on forever, where water merges with sky.

<http://pdf.ville-arles.fr/iti-velo/topo-cyclo-decouverte-etang-vaccares.pdf>

VIARHÔNA, THE ROUTE OF CIVILISATIONS

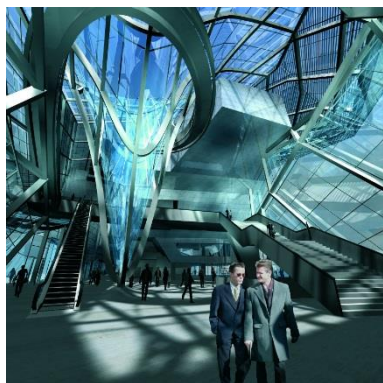
River of civilisations, trade route between northern Europe and the Mediterranean, people have lived on the banks of the Rhône since time immemorial, leaving their mark throughout the ages. The ViaRhôna's line of direction enables a journey back in time, right back to the earliest time of Prehistory and through to the present day.

From north to south, traces of history follow on from each other. Hence, the Fort l'Ecluse in the Ain, a fortified military structure dating from the 16th and 17th centuries and built on the side of a mountain, tells us the story of how the Ecluse gorge was controlled and the crucial role the Fort played in protecting the entrance to the Pays de Gex. www.cc-pays-de-gex.fr Further on, the archaeological site of Larina www.musee-larina-hieres.fr, in northern Isère, bears testimony to the presence of humans from the Bronze Age to the beginning of the Middle Ages. The Gallo-Roman civilisation has also left its mark on the course of the river. In Aoste, the Gallo-Roman Museum www.musee-archeologique-aoste.fr displays a very fine collection of objects and archaeological finds discovered in the locality and surrounding area.

Lyon, founded by the Romans as capital of the Trois Gaules and listed by UNESCO as a world heritage site from 1998, is an amazing example of that period but also of the continuous urban development over more than two millennia. Worth noting are the Musée Gadagne www.gadagne.musees.lyon.fr which houses the Musée d'Histoire de Lyon and the Musée des Marionnettes du Monde, and soon to be opened, the Musée des Confluences www.museedesconfluences.fr with its futuristic architecture, located where the rivers Rhône and Saône meet.

Favourite

The Musée des Confluences in Lyon



This 3000 m² site, with its permanent exhibition telling a narrative in four acts, is divided into four spaces which boast an exciting design concept. Embracing the spirit of discovery and of sharing knowledge, and driven by the pleasure and desire to understand, the museum tackles several themes : Beginnings, the world's narratives; Societies, the theatre of humankind; Species, the living mesh, and Eternities, visions of the hereafter.

Accumulated since the 17th century, the collections of the Musée des Confluences consist of endless curiosities, originating from both scholars and enthusiastic amateurs and subsequently enhanced by judicious additions or the fads of a particular period. There are over two million objects displayed in both the permanent and temporary exhibitions, with between four to six temporary exhibitions every year, depending on the changing cultural seasons.

www.museedesconfluences.fr

30 km to the south of Lyon, the archaeological site of Saint-Romain-en-Gal – Vienne www.musees-gallo-romains.com offers more than three hectares of the ruins of a district in the Roman city of Vienne.

Further to the south, the poignant Musée des Mariniers du Rhône in Serrières tells the story of horse-drawn towing along the river from the end of the 15th century to the first half of the 19th. Further south again, the Château Musée de **Tournon** in Ardèche offers a magnificent view of the river and the riverside vineyards of **Tain l'Hermitage**.

Valence celebrates the reopening of the Musée d'Art et d'Archéologie de Valence www.museedevalence.fr located in the old bishop's palace which has been enhanced with a modern extension.

Avignon, that "must see" historic city, boasts the largest gothic building of the Middle Ages – the Palais des Papes www.palais-des-papes.com, a UNESCO world heritage site. In **Beaucaire**, take the time to explore the troglodyte abbey of St-Roman de l'Aiguille with its panoramic views of the river Rhône and Beaucaire's fortress. On the opposite bank of the Rhône is the Provençal city of **Tarascon**, dominated by its fortress-château built by King René, a reflection of the river's historical significance. Also worth a look is the magnificent town house which is home to an historic collection of Provençal textiles made by the famous Souleiado brand, the jewel in Provence's crown which preserves the age-old skill of printing on fabric: souleiado-lemusee.com.

On the branch of the Rhône that passes through the Languedoc region, two ports of call not to be missed : **Saint-Gilles**, medieval town and a staging post on the Chemin de Saint Jacques de Compostelle, with its abbey which is a UNESCO world heritage site. Like an open air history book, Saint Gilles embodies a rich historic, cultural and natural heritage. Office de Tourisme de Saint Gilles – www.tourisme.saint-gilles.fr.

Aigues-Mortes was created by Saint Louis on the Canal du Rhône to Sète. The ramparts and narrow streets of this little medieval port town will take you on journey through time. A town that has been successively marked by the Crusades and the Templars, then by the Wars of Religion, it is now a pretty little tourist town, proud of its history, its bullfighting culture and its wild, unspoilt land.

www.ot-aiguesmortes.com

And finally at the mouth of the river Rhône, **Arles "la blanche"**, established by Julius Caesar and the most Roman of all the towns in Provence-Alpes Côte d'Azur. Its collection of Roman and Romanesque monuments is today listed by UNESCO as a world heritage site. This remarkable city seduced not only Van Gogh but Picasso and Gauguin too ! In the summer, it hosts some of the world's top photographers during the international photography meetings, whilst the Musée départemental de l'Arles antique www.arles-antique.cg13.fr/root which houses the recently-discovered Roman barge recovered from the Rhône riverbed in 2010, the best-preserved example of this type of flat-bottomed boat in the world and now classed as a "national treasure".

There is a network of museum and heritage sites which have been created over the years to highlight the amazing history of navigation on the river, showcasing collections that relate to the history of the Rhône alongside that of the human adventure : www.viarhona.com/loisirs-sur-rhone/cap-sur-le-rhone

VIARHÔNA, A PRETEXT FOR WINE TOURISM

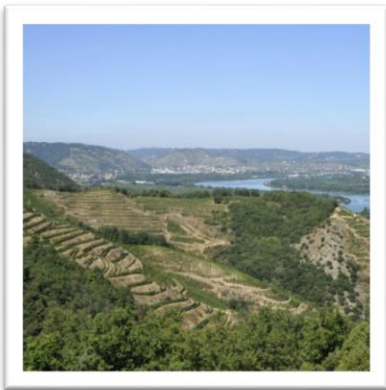
The vineyards along the length of the river Rhône are undeniably man made. The Romans undertook the colossal work of deep ploughing, planting and constructing the terraces for the vines. The vines that are planted on the right and left banks of the Rhône give a unique importance to this wine region, with its south-facing slopes, known as the famous “Côte Rôtie”, which suits its name perfectly.

Anyone taking a trip alongside the river can enjoy tasting all the various wines from Savoie and the Rhône Valley, together with the iconic local produce of the areas they pass through.

This wine tourism route starts 40 kms from Geneva, with the Savoie wine vineyards, France’s only mountain wine-producing area and the Seyssel appellation at the foot of the Alps. Further south, there are the appellations of Chautagne, Jongieux... grown above the Lac du Bourget, these are wines that should be drunk with the region’s iconic alpine lake fish, such as lavaret (pollan), féra or omble chevalier (arctic char). The Chautagne cellar in Ruffieux gives you an insight into the workings of the world of Vins de Savoie in a quirky, fun way thanks to its recently-developed visit entitled “l’Éveil des Sens”, presenting the cycle that a grape takes, from vine stock to bottle, via three projection rooms and a sensory space where you are plunged into a world of tastes and smells... Following the introductory display about the Rhône-Alpes region, the rest of the visit explores the world of grapes and wine through the seasons plus all the sounds that go with it... www.cave-de-chautagne.com. On the other side of the Rhône, the Bugey wine-growing area is more secret and, notably the Montagnieu sector, more distinctive at times because of the very steep slopes that sweep down towards the river.

Lyon, the world gastronomic capital, is a definite “must” with its numerous Michelin-starred chefs such as Paul Bocuse who is nicknamed the Pope of Gastronomy and the famous “bouchons”, little restaurants serving quenelle and other pork products... www.lyon-france.com

To the south of Lyon, the Rhône Valley’s vineyards (France’s second largest) have existed for 2000 years, planted on the terraced hillsides (and boasting top names such as Guigal, Chapoutier, Jaboulet). It is here that you will find the prestigious wines of the northern Côtes du Rhône such as Côte-Rôtie, Condrieu, Château-Grillet. Amongst this segment of legendary vintages, the “must-visit” addresses include: “Les Vins de Vienne” cellar at Chavanay : Yves Cuilleron, Pierre Gaillard and François Villard dreamt of reviving the Seyssuel wine-growing area. They have achieved it with passion and love. Here you will discover the wines of this vineyard which was famous in Roman times : Tabernum, Sotatum, Heluicum www.vinsdevienne.com/html/index.html. The Bistrot de Serine in Ampuis : a wine bar and wine merchant which is also a restaurant and offers over 400 wine labels on its list (Condrieu, Côte Rôtie, St Joseph...) www.bistrotdeserine.com/index.php/vins. The Domaine Vidal Fleury in Tupin and Semons : the oldest wine house of the Rhône Valley that is still in business. Its cellar is located right in the middle of the Côte-Rôtie vineyard www.vidal-fleury.com



Further south again, you will come across the Saint-Joseph, Hermitage, Crozes-Hermitage wines... which can be discovered at the numerous famous wine estates in the area. Worth a mention is the Ecole de Dégustation M. Chapoutier in Tain l’Hermitage which offers a range of themed workshops, from an introduction to tasting through to improving technique, all led by professional sommeliers www.chapoutier-ecole.com/fr/atelier/ . Why not marry up wine and chocolate? The Cité du Chocolat Valrhona in Tain l’Hermitage : opened at the end of 2013, with its trendy, fun space dedicated to the discovery of Valrhona chocolate, it offers multiple opportunities to enjoy a taste – definitely not to be missed! www.citeduchocolat.com/fr

In Valence, food-lovers can taste the exceptional cuisine of Anne-Sophie Pic, the only female chef to have three stars in the Michelin guide. Further down river, make the most of your visit to Montélimar, on the legendary RN 7, to stop off for a sugary treat – nougat – and visit a traditional nougat factory www.nougatsoubeyran.com/fr/musee-des-saveurs/ .

Before you leave the region to go further down south, there are other vineyards worth exploring along the river: Côtes du Vivarais and Grignan-les-Adhémar on the edge of Provence.

In Avignon, you really should make a detour to the bottling plant where you can taste famous wines such as Chateauneuf-du-Pape or Côtes du Rhône. Further south still, try the Clairette de Bellegarde or the Costières de Nîmes.

“Just imagine! 250 km from north to south, 250 villages... The vineyards of the Rhône valley provide a whole new world to explore, a changing world that winds and unwinds around a fluid axis: the Rhône, king of rivers, carrying along both pebbles and History. The Rhône is the link, the unifying factor in these lands of contrast. From Vienne to Nîmes and Avignon, as far as the limits of the Luberon, on both banks of the river, you will find a multiplicity of paths to take”. **Quote from Christophe Tassan, Flânerie dans le Vignoble de la Vallée du Rhône.**

Enjoy the flavours of local produce as you follow the Rhône and eat at more than 30 restaurants and inns dotted along the tourist trail.

Sweets and locally-grown produce along the ViaRhôna

Brioche from Saint Genix sur Guiers

This praline-filled brioche made Saint Genix sur Guiers famous and has been baked for over two centuries using a secret recipe. The origins of the cake go back to Sainte Agathe, a Sicilian martyr from the third century. When Sicily rejoined the Duchy in 1713, Savoy adopted the legend and then marked the saint's birthday, 5th February, with the baking of lots of these cakes. www.valguiers.com

Quenelles and Lyon saucisson at the Halles Paul Bocuse in Lyon

The Halles Lyon Paul Bocuse is the mecca of Lyon's gastronomic tradition. Currently home to 58 shopkeepers and artisans who all share the same passion for excellence and the very best of Lyon's traditions, here you will find quality local products on sale, from the famous Saint Marcellin cheeses from Mère Richard, to the charcuterie of Colette Sibilia, not forgetting Giraudet's quenelles and much, much more...

<http://halledelyon.free.fr>

The Rigotte de Condrieu

A little cheese, made from unpasteurised goats milk, the Rigotte de Condrieu offers its fans the subtle aroma of hazelnut and an ivory-coloured skin. Produced using the savoir-faire that has been passed down through generations, it benefits from its own AOC mark. Sold directly from local producers, it can also be bought at Vienne market or at the Les Jardins de la Côte Rôtie collective in Ampuis.

www.rigottedecondrrieu.fr/producteurs/carte-interactive.html

Fruits grown in the Rhône valley

From north to south, the Rhône valley is a land of orchards, from Savoie apples and pears which boast an IGP (controlled designation of origin) to the peaches, apricots and nectarines south of Lyon via the Pilat apple. Not forgetting the smaller fruit, such as cherries and, closer to the soil, raspberries and blueberries. You can eat them in abundance during your outings along the ViaRhôna, buying them whole from market stalls or farm shops or as locally-produced fruit juices and jams.

The Pogne de Romans

A pogne is a lovely leavened brioche, made in the form of a crown, with a golden crust and flavoured with orange-flower water. The Pogne de Romans first appeared in 1339. Still made using natural raising agents, the Pogne de Romans is one of the area's most famous products baked by artisan bakers who care about maintaining their tradition for quality.

The Boulangerie Pascalis – Musée de la Pogne, the oldest bakery in Romans/Bourg-de-Péage is open for you to come and try your hand at making a pogne brioche - www.museedelapogne.com

You can also buy the brioche as far away as Valence, at the specialist bakery in existence for the last 150 years: www.maison-nivon-valence.fr

The Suisse de Valence

At the end of the 18th century, General Bonaparte sent Pope VI into exile in Valence where he died. During the funeral procession by the Swiss Guard, a bakery came up with the idea of making a biscuit that resembled the soldiers' dress uniform. Since that time, the shop windows in the town are filled with little men made out of shortcrust pastry and orange peel, buttoned up with currants. www.maison-nivon-valence.fr

Le nougat de Montélimar



The delicious sweet makes up one of the thirteen traditional Christmas desserts, but can be sampled any time of year. Montélimar is, without doubt, the nougat capital, boasting about 15 factories of which a dozen are artisan producers – all of them open to the public. Many years ago, when nougat (or “nougó” in the langue d’Oc language) was first made, it was a walnut cake. The walnuts were gradually replaced by almonds, introduced to France by the famous botanist Olivier de Serre, and then in about 1650, egg white was added to the recipe, producing a more delicious result.

Nougaterie Arnaud Soubeyran - - www.nougatsoubeyran.com

The black truffle of the Tricastin (Drôme) and the Vaucluse

The Tricastin is France's number one truffling region. In Saint-Paul-Trois-Châteaux, the Maison de la Truffe et du Tricastin offers an insight into the mysterious world of the Black Truffle. www.truffle-and-truffe.com

The truffle, known as “rabasse” in Provençal, enjoys genuine cult status in the Vaucluse : it is used as currency during the famous mass dedicated to the truffle. The jewel in the France's gastronomic crown and considered a luxury product, the black diamond can be found mostly in the Enclave de Valréas, at the foot of Mont-Ventoux or in the Luberon. There are several festivals and specialist markets held during the season from end November to the beginning of March. www.provenceguide.com or the Maison de la Truffe et du Vin website : www.vin-truffe-luberon.com.

Les Papalines d'Avignon

A liqueur-filled chocolate speciality. In 1835, a liqueur-maker from Avignon mixed together 60 plants, some of which were picked on the slopes of Mont Ventoux and had been distilled or macerated, added some honey and created this wonderful liqueur d'Origan du Comtat. The recipe has remained the same ever since and was selected in 1960 by the Maîtres Pâtisseries du Vaucluse for their chocolate speciality. A sticker, mounted on the confectionery or cake shop wall indicates who stocks these delicious treats. www.avignon-tourisme.com

La Tarasque, the Délice de Tartarin and Bézuquettes de Tarascon

Make sure you taste these pastry and chocolate specialities with their evocative names, created by Régis Morin. Pâtisserie & Salon de Thé La Tarasque- 56, rue des Halles – 13 150 Tarascon- Tél. 04 90 91 01 17

Camargue rice

Rice has been grown in the Camargue since the Second World War and today covers between 10,000 and 20,000 hectares of farmland. Annual production is about 70,000 tons of rice for general consumption. Rice-growing involves irrigating with fresh water and draining really well in order to recover the saltiest of the land. Rice is sown during the month of May, appearing out of the water at the beginning of June and then harvested in September/October. It is at this point that the rice festival is held in Arles. Since the year 2000, Camargue rice has been awarded an IGP (*indication géographique protégée*) and so consumers can be certain that packets of rice showing the origin as “Camargue” respect the precise specifications and respond to the criteria of provenance and quality required. Maison du Riz in Albaron : www.maisonduriz.com. - www.rizdecamargue.com

The Camargue bull

The first French beef to be awarded an AOP label (first awarded in 1996), the AOP Taureau de Camargue which owes its particular characteristics to how it is farmed on the salt meadows known as “sansouïres”. The bull has become a key factor in maintaining the biodiversity of the Camargue. Raised on livestock farms or “ganadearias”, bull meat is used in the dish called La Gardianne, cooked in red wine and served with rice. There are several livestock farms that open their doors to the general public.

www.aoptaureaudecamargue.com

Camargue salt (Gard and Bouches-du-Rhône)

In the hamlet of Salin-de-Giraud and at Aigues-Mortes, on both sides of the Rhône delta, you can see long lines of white hillocks. These are cakes of salt. This white gold of the Camargue is stored, from the time it is harvested in the month of September until it is sent to chemical and food factories or to companies involved in snow clearance. Exploitation of salt goes back to ancient times but it became a veritable industry in the 19th century with the building of factories in the Camargue.

Maison des Produits de Camargue : new eco-build selling a range of products both directly and from local farmers.

Oysters from Bouzigues (Hérault)

Totally devoted to shellfish farming, the village of Bouzigues is full of producers who offer tastings of seafood plateaux, brasucades (barbecued mussels) and other seaside specialities... Much sought after by gourmets since ancient times, oysters from the Languedoc coastline are known for their hazelnut flavour, good sweet/savoury balance and crisp texture. They are grown on suspended ropes attached to tables and are alternately plunged in the water and pulled back out in order to imitate the movement of the tides.

There is even a museum dedicated to oysters : www.bouzigues.fr/musee/francais/musee.html

The Tielle de Sète



A speciality from Sète, the Tielle is a round fluted tart garnished with octopus and a slightly spicy tomato sauce. The Tielle Sétoise is based on the Tiella di Gaeta from Italy. Its name comes from the dish that is used to cook it. The Tielle gave farmers and fishermen a complete meal that would keep for several days. It has since become a real institution in the local gastronomy of Sète and is now sold by several artisan producers and offered on the menus of many restaurants.

www.tourisme-sete.com/gastronomie-sete-tielle.html

VIARHÔNA, FULL IMMERSION IN THE NATURAL ENVIRONMENT

The Rhône has long been used for industrial purposes and for navigation and producing energy. However, it is now time to protect and enhance its vulnerable natural spaces. The ViaRhône leads to a number of these wonderful sites worth exploring.

The variety and distinctiveness of these vulnerable natural spaces along the course of the river, such as “lônes”, marshland and little islands, provide a great way to discover a different perspective of the natural environment. Check out :

The Lavours marshland



At the foot of the Grand Columbar mountains and bordering the river Rhône, the Lavours marshland is one of the last great marshes of the Western Europe's plain. It consists of a mosaic of different environments : wetland meadows, reed beds and bogs, it is also a stop-over for migrating birds transiting the Jura and Alps. It is home to several species of outstanding birds : curlew, western marsh harrier, common snipe, bluethroat, Savi's warbler... With regard to amphibians, there is the marsh frog, the webbed salamander and the agile frog. There are also lots of insect species, such as the famous blue Maculinea butterfly. The most observed mammals are wild boar, roe deer, beavers, foxes, skunks and deer.

Smaller mammals include the greater white-toothed shrew and the harvest mouse in the wetland meadows, which also provide a perfect hunting ground for bats

www.reserve-lavours.com

The Grand Parc de Miribel Jonage

Located north-east of Lyon, on a 2200-hectare site, the Grand Parc des Iles de Miribel-Jonage is a special destination where you can enjoy a whole range of outdoor activities, whatever the season. The Parc offers about 20 sporting and fun activities, against an amazing backdrop : beaches, golf course, climbing, mountain biking, archery, children's games... In the summer, there is supervised bathing and a plethora of water-based activities for the amusement of everyone. For nature lovers, you can observe beavers, water birds, orchids etc along the canals, streams or footpaths than run through the alluvial forest. www.grand-parc.fr

The Ile du Beurre

The Ile du Beurre is one of the last alluvial areas of the Rhône to have retained its natural dynamics throughout periods of flooding. It is located on the banks of the Rhône, 40 km to the south of Lyon. The Ile du Beurre is not very accessible and therefore remains an important refuge for wildlife (237 species of vertebrates listed, both non-migratory and migratory) and it also shelters a wide range of plant species (390 species). A pedestrian trail enables walkers to explore, either on their own or with a guide, the characteristic landscape of the river Rhône as it was before it became more developed and to discover the local fauna and flora. There are hides and observation points dotted about, enabling people to watch life in the “lône” without being spotted.

www.iledubeurre.org

The Printegarde nature reserve (confluence Rhône-Drôme)

Located on a 460-hectare site (straddling the two *départements* of the Ardèche and the Drôme), this nature reserve is where the river Rhône and the river Drôme meet (their confluence is at the centre of the reserve), featuring alluvial forests and reed beds. There are lots of animal species, especially birdlife, which have found their own little paradise in this spit of land created by the Rhône over centuries. The ideal site for walks or bike rides, you can see a raft of bird species (black kite, white storks, grey herons, cormorants, wild ducks, kingfishers, multi-coloured European bee-eaters...) and dragonflies (about 40 different species noted, including the very rare and protected southern damselfly).

www.tourisme-eyrieuxrhoneveore.fr

The Camargue Regional Natural Park

The Rhône delta begins just outside of Arles. It is one of the most beautiful natural sites in Europe, an area where the fauna and flora protected by the Camargue Regional Natural Park are especially diverse. This vast wetland provides a major migratory stop-over for hundreds of thousands of birds every year and is also the only nesting place for pink flamingos in France. It is also the centre of Provençal culture and traditions, especially the raising of Camargue bulls and horses which graze between the marshland and saltwater lakes.

www.parc-camargue.fr

The Marais du Vigueirat

A protected natural 1200-hectare site, where two amazing ecosystems – the Rhône delta and the Steppe-like plains of La Crau – converge, the Marais du Vigueirat is one of the most impressive pieces of land owned by the Conservatoire du Littoral en Camargue, and listed as a National Natural Reserve. Here you can discover a mosaic of natural wetland environments, where over 2000 species of animals and plants have been listed, including every type of European heron and up to 35,000 ducks in the winter months.

There are five Camargue bull and horse farms, with year-round grazing on the land.

Throughout the year, the Marais du Vigueirat can be explored on your own and free of charge, with family trails on stilts and guided tours on foot or in horse-drawn carts.

For nature and bird lovers, there is a 5 km walk right in the middle of the natural reserve, with a trail that is dotted with various hides and towers for observing the fauna.

www.marais-vigueirat.reserves-naturelles.org/

The Scamandre Regional Natural Reserve

This site is typical of Mediterranean wetlands. Here you can find most of the Camargue's different biotopes : prairies, "sansouïre" (or salt marshes) and marshland. The Reserve notably has nine species of European herons, as well as the greatest percentage of France's current population of glossy ibis, plus, amongst the reptiles, the European pond turtle. It is important that this diversity is widely communicated in order to ensure that all the species are properly protected. The Reserve is easily accessible, thanks to the various trails that have been built to enable visitors to get a feel for the natural environment whilst trying to protect its peace and quiet at the same time.

www.camarguegardoise.com/index.php/R%C3%A9serve-naturelle-r%C3%A9gionale

The Maison du Grand Site de France de la Camargue Gardoise

This remarkable place boasts an exhibition which traces how the landscapes of the Camargue Gardoise were made. Via the intermediary of various visual displays, visitors are invited to learn about the role of Saint-Louis and the impact human activity has had, both in the past and today, on the maintenance of the diverse countryside. The Maison also organises educational events and there is a discovery trail through the area of the Camargue Gardoise, marked by the "Grand Site de France" label

www.camarguegardoise.com/index.php/La-Maison-du-Grand-Site-de-France-Camargue-Gardoise

KEY FIGURES...



ViaRhôna over the whole of the route

- 815 km from Lake Geneva to the Mediterranean
- 56 % of the route is on green ways
- Permanent signage planned for summer 2017 on the whole route (including finished and temporary sections)
- Completion by around 2020

At the beginning of 2017, the course of the itinerary is 76% complete over the whole route, of which :

- In Auvergne Rhône-Alpes : 83% of the route completed, which is 464 km of the total 557 km
- In PACA : 77% complete, which is 88 km of the total 114 km
- In Occitanie-Pyrénées-Méditerranée : 47 % complete, which is 68 km of the total 146 km

All the up-to-date facts and figures about the cycling market in France can be found on : departements-regions-cyclables.org

SELECTION OF EVENTS ALONGSIDE THE RIVER

It's great fun to enjoy the various local festivities as you are out and about on your bikes.

Festival des Nuits sonores à Lyon

May

Galleries, cinemas, museums and other well-known venues in Lyon host a series of musical concerts, offering an unforgettable spectacle of sound and light. Established in 2003, the festival welcomes musicians from the world over and has since gained a good reputation on the European circuit.

www.nuits-sonores.com

Festival Les Nuits de Fourvière à Lyon

June –beginning of August

Cultural and summer events in the unique setting of the Roman theatres at Fourvière. Eclectic programme.

www.nuitsdefourviere.fr

Festival Jazz à Vienne

End of June –mid July

Annual rendez-vous of some of the greatest names in the jazz world, within the impressive setting of Vienne's ancient theatre. Fringe festival throughout the town.

www.jazzavienne.com

Festival d'Avignon

July

The Festival d'Avignon is one of the largest festivals in the world for theatre and live performances. It features an official "In" programme and a fringe "Off" programme. The "In" festival has an eclectic programme based on live shows: theatre, dance, acrobatics... Avignon's main monuments and architectural masterpieces are transformed into performance spaces. The alternative "Off" event is a genuine festival within a festival, featuring circus acts, readings, theatre, street performances, dance, live music, stand-up comedy... all made possible because of the 1000 performers who will play in the street as well as the bars, theatres etc. Most of the "Off" performances are free of charge.

<http://festivaldavignon.fr/>

The International Photography Meetings in Arles

July to September

The Rencontres d'Arles, created in 1969 by photographers and photography enthusiasts Clergue, Lemagny, Rouquette, Dieuzaide, Tournier, Boubat, Brihat and Gautrand, organises every summer a range of exhibitions, conferences, evenings at the Roman theatre and meetings throughout the town, focusing on what is going on in the photographic world today and the works of the art's pioneers.

www.rencontres-arles.com/Home

La Fête des Prémices du Riz in Arles

Mid-September

Lasting three days, at the height of the rice harvest, this festival is based in the arenas and streets of the town. You will be entertained by an enthusiastic "corso" full of colourful highlights and loyally reflecting the long-established traditions of the Pays d'Arles.

www.myprovence.fr/agenda-culturel/fetes-traditionnelles/arles/17358-les-premices-du-riz

MAP OF THE VIARHÔNA ITINERARY



USEFUL CONTACTS

Raphaëlle Nicaise
Attachée de presse ViaRhôna
Rhône Alpes Tourisme
Tél : +33 (0)4 26 73 31 84
Tél portable : 33 (0)6 23 03 52 39
raphaelle.nicaise@rhonealpes-tourisme.com

Julia Grunert
Promotion ViaRhôna
Rhône Alpes Tourisme
Tél : +33 (0)4 26 73 31 85
Tél portable : +33 (0) 6 29 58 26 44
julia.grunert@rhonealpes-tourisme.com

ViaRhôna online :

www.viarhona.com

www.viarhona.tv

www.facebook.com/viarhona

www.twitter.com/viarhona

Contact the Photo Library for copyright-free images :

Connect via: <http://phototheque.rhonealpes-tourisme.com/>

Choose free access and type the keyword ViaRhôna. Place your chosen images in the basket and from there you will be able to send a request to receive downloads that allow you to retrieve the files.