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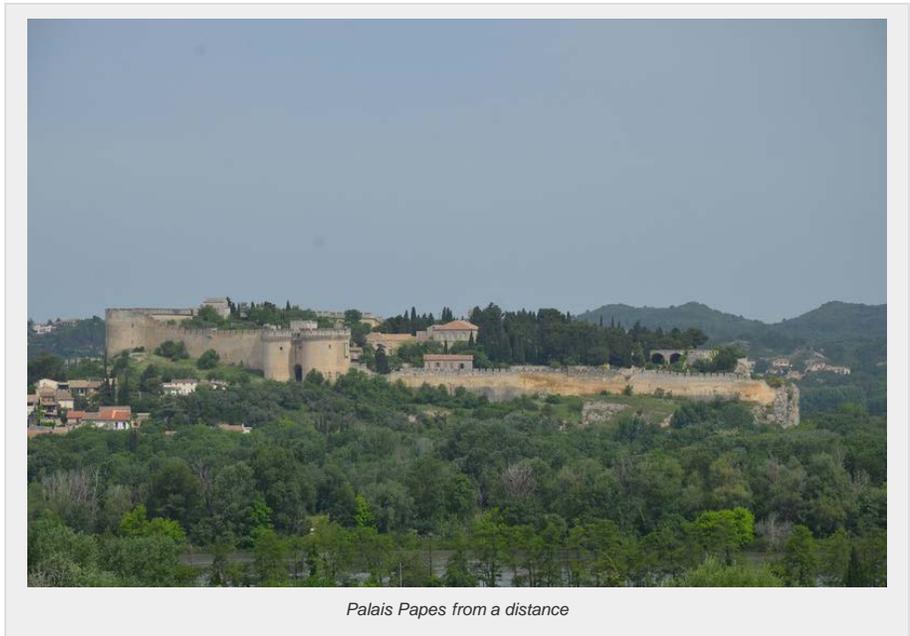


## A Weekend in Charming Avignon

2015/06/02 by [Jan Ross](#)



Although Paris is clearly the undisputed star of French tourism, [exploring the many French towns](#) that are scattered throughout the country is a must for any true Francophile. Of course, even if you're just a simple traveler looking for relaxing strolls and warm crossiants, French towns like Avignon are the place to go. Thankfully, today's guest writer [Jan Ross](#), from [Wanderlust Wonder](#), is here to tell us the best way to spend a weekend in charming Avignon.



Palais Papes from a distance

My husband and I could not have chosen a better hotel for our weekend in charming Avignon, even if we had spent days researching the different locations and their amenities. Fortuitously, the lovely boutique [Hotel de L'Horloge](#) was interested in working with us and provided us with a two night stay for our introduction to this lovely, medieval, walled city, and we were also provided with complimentary access to the area tourist attractions. After a quick train ride from Marseilles to Avignon, we headed up the cobblestone streets to our hotel dragging our wheeled luggage in company with other tourists disembarking the train. There are taxis available right outside the train station, but don't bother to pay for a ride as the hotel is just a short walk away.

We walked into the small lobby with hardwood floors and a small sitting area with freshly baked cinnamon rolls displayed on a plate, and were welcomed by the friendly staff who spoke fluent English. An elevator took us to our floor although we did have to navigate a few stairs to access our room so be aware you might have to carry your luggage a short distance.



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Our double room was quite roomy with a king sized bed, nice sitting area with desk, and a bathroom with tub and shower. There are rooms available with small terraces as well as suites and many face the Place de l'Horloge where the hotel is located. If you want quiet, as we did, I suggest you request a room that does not face this area as it is a very busy place at all hours. The hotel has several quiet nooks with comfortable furniture for reading or just relaxing and also provides free Wi-Fi.

After settling in, we headed out to explore the city. Just a few steps from the hotel is the Place de l'Horloge which could not possibly look more French or more inviting. A large stone plaza surrounded by dozens of restaurants all offering outdoor seating, a unique two-tiered merry-go-round, and plenty of both locals and tourists strolling around, it provided the perfect introduction to Avignon.

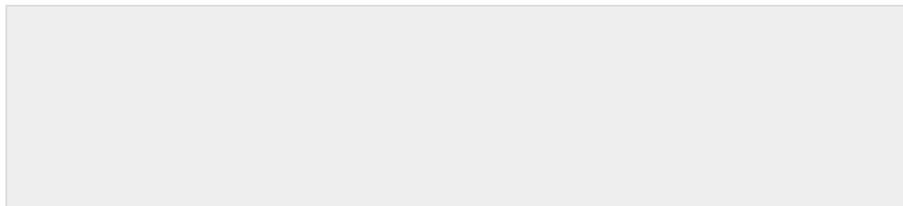


Palais de Papes

### What to See in Avignon

[Avignon is a UNESCO World Heritage site](#) located in south eastern France on the left bank of the Rhone River, and is well known for two major tourist attractions – the [Pont d'Avignon](#), a bridge built in the 12<sup>th</sup> century and made famous by the children's song "Sur le Pont d'Avignon" and the [Palais de Papes](#) or Pope's Palace which was home to several popes and is one of the most visited monuments in France.

These two sites are fascinating but one of the most interesting things about Avignon is the ancient wall and medieval ramparts which still surround the city so be sure to stroll around outside the city centre. Originally a Roman city (the Place de l'Horloge actually houses the remains of the Roman forum), the walls were built in the early 1300's by the popes who resided in the city and, surprisingly, made Avignon the seat of the Papacy rather than Rome for over 70 years. A walk outside the still standing stone walls and ramparts makes one appreciate the time and effort taken to fortify the city.



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Pont d'Avignon

A perfect introduction to the city can be taken on Le Petite Train d'Avignon, a miniature trolley like train which leaves from the Palais de Papes on a 40 minute tour of the city and includes medieval streets and neighborhoods along with the Pont d'Avignon. Tickets are very reasonable and the tour is available in a variety of languages via headphones.



Le Petite Train d'Avignon

A tour of the Palais de Papes also gives you an appreciation of the time, effort, and man hours required to build this amazing edifice. Avignon became the Pontifical residence under Pope Clement V in 1309 and his successors made it the capital of Christianity, and transformed what had been a palace into the still standing Palais de Papes. The International Gothic style of the palace was impressive, and the papal library was equally impressive, being the largest in Europe at the time. With walls 17-18 feet thick and built on a natural spur of rock (many buildings in Avignon are built, rather astonishingly, right into the existing rock), it was nearly impregnable to attack. Captured during the French Revolution, it was used as a barracks and prison for many years, and the soldiers and prisoners caused still existing damage to the structure, prying off parts of statues and pieces of irreplaceable murals to sell. The castle is now a museum and tickets can be purchased at the entrance for tours, although you should be aware there is a great deal of walking and stair climbing involved in a tour.



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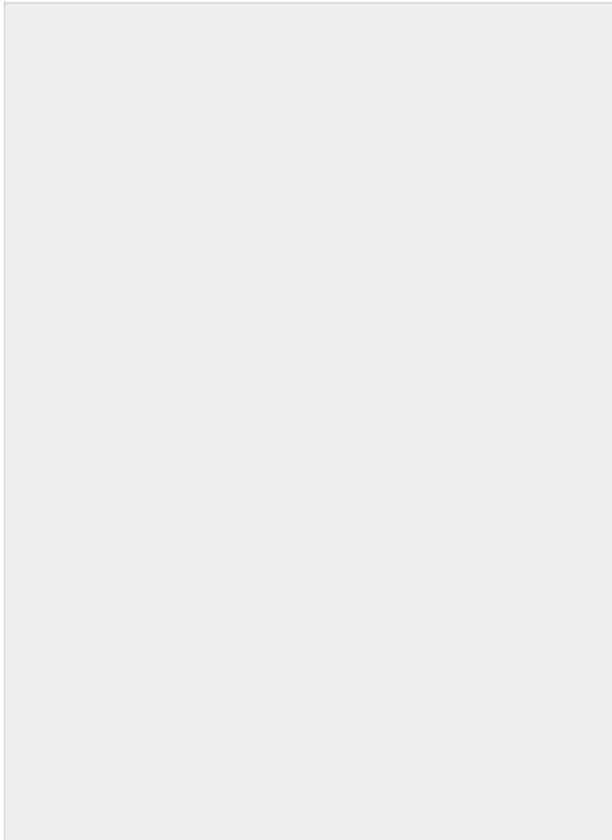


*Place de l'Horloge*

The beautiful Pont d'Avignon is well worth an afternoon visit and is an easy stroll from the Place de l'Horloge. Built in the late 1100's, the bridge stretched completely across the Rhone and had 22 arches but was dismantled and rebuilt several times due to flooding by the Rhone. It is now only a tourist destination which reaches half way across the river. Under the bridge is a museum which shows a movie and explains the history of the bridge via several multimedia presentations. You can purchase a ticket for the bridge alone or one which also included the Palais des Papes.

The walk to the bridge is along streets lined with shops and you will want to purchase some traditional items from Provence, the French region where Avignon is located, and where lavender is the main export. Small sachet bags, lotion and other bath products, and tablecloths are pretty and practical gifts which are easy to pack.

The smell of lavender will always remind you of your visit to this beautiful and unique city!





Glassed Conservatory at the Hotel de L'Horloge

### Where to Eat in Avignon

A daily, hot, buffet breakfast was provided at the Hotel de L'Horloge which was fresh and delicious – I suggest you try to get a seat in the charming, glassed conservatory which overlooks the street. For lunch and dinner, you just need to stroll out into the Place de l'Horloge where dozens of restaurants offer everything from a traditional Croque Monsieur (hot, grilled ham and cheese sandwich) to pizza to a variety of pasta dishes and other hot meals. Order a cold bottle or Orangina, a tart drink which tastes like a combination of orange juice and seltzer, but don't expect a lot of ice as it is not traditional in France. For a relaxing night in, a [Carrefour](#) grocery is located just a block away from the hotel, and you can purchase delicious sandwiches, cookies, chips, and drinks to take back to the hotel.



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Have you experienced a weekend in charming Avignon or are you planning a trip? Join the conversation at the [My Itchy Travel Feet page on Facebook](#) or [send us an email](#) to ask a question or share your experience.

Disclosure: The Hotel de L'Horloge provided accomodation for Jan's stay.

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## Author Bio



Jan Ross is a travel writer with over 200 articles in a variety of venues, both print and online. She travels often with her photographer husband who is tasked with documenting their trips with photos. Together, they manage a travel blog called [Wanderlustwonder.com](http://Wanderlustwonder.com).

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