



PROVENCE III

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Uzès, with its high towers and narrow medieval streets, is a place lost in time. It's almost as if it were built on the back lot of a Hollywood studio to resemble a fairytale French village. But I assure you, it's not. It's authentic Provence.

Uzès may be small (population 8,300), but makes up for its size with architecture that is pure theater. You can see the skyline long before you reach it. The town's lofty towers strike a dramatic note, while soaring buildings such as La Tour Fenestrelle offer an architectural exclamation mark.

But all tours of Uzès must begin at the heart of this heavenly destination: the arcade-lined *Place aux Herbes*. (Have you ever heard of a more evocative name for a town square?) This is where most things happen in Uzès. One of the most colorful *Saturday markets* in the South of France is held here every week. It's frenetic, so if you can't abide crowds go to the smaller Wednesday version instead. This is the place to stock up on fabulous food, including olives, cheese, olive oil, vegetables, and fragrant herbs—some of the best ingredients for a great French meal.

There are also some wonderful cafés here for a leisurely brunch in the sun, such as *Café de l'Oustal*. Once you're caffeinated, and have checked out the comestibles, make for the streets. The pretty, pedestrian-only streets of Uzès' center offer beautiful boutiques selling gorgeous women's wear and luxury goods—much more upscale than you'd imagine from a country town miles from Paris. The side streets leading off from *Place aux Herbes* hide many of the more interesting and sophisticated shops. Their stylish cream-and-gray façades add to the experience.



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When you're shopped-out and feel like grabbing a late lunch, there's Les Terroirs (5 Place aux Herbes)—one of Uzès' best dining spots. Check out its fine food shop for a foodie souvenir to take home. Two other excellent dining establishments are Le Comptoir du 7 (5 Boulevard Charles Gide) and Au Petit Jardin (66 Boulevard Gambetta).

After you've wandered the village, you can climb one of the famous towers, or grab a photo of Uzès' own leaning tower of Pisa, La Tour Fenestrelle. Then, if the weather is sunny, hop back in the car and head out into the surrounding countryside for more scenery.



One of the landmarks of this area is the incredible form of the Pont du Gard, the ancient Roman aqueduct bridge that crosses the Gardon river in Vers-Pont-du-Gard near Remoulins. It is part of the Nîmes aqueduct, a structure 30 miles/50 kilometers long that was built by the Romans to carry water from a spring at Uzès to the Roman colony of Nîmes. No visitor to this part of the region should miss it.

If you want to finish off your visit with a small thrill (okay, a spill and a thrill), try canoeing down the Gardon river. It's one of the loveliest ways to see the landscape.

