



A Guide To Visiting The Lavender Fields of Provence, France

Description

The dream of visiting a Lavender farm was planted in my mind by a travel article I had read in my teens, where the author vividly described the scenic beauty of the farm and the beautiful landscape of purple hued plains. The picture lingered in my mind for many years and when we decided to visit France, the Lavender farm field trip was a must see in the itinerary.



Best time to visit

The ideal time to visit the farms is in summer from mid-June till mid-August, when the lavender flowers are in full bloom and you can saturate yourself in the aromatic fields of Provençal's fragrance. Guided tours are available from many places and you could also choose between a morning, afternoon or full-day tour, and then get ready for a once in a lifetime experience, wandering around the violet-coloured fields. There are many places where you find lavender farms, we visited the ones on the Valensole plateau as part of our guided tour.



After deciding to do a field trip I searched through the various options on www.viator.com and booked the Provence Lavender Fields Tour from Aix-en-Provence for half a day tour which is for 4 hours. The price was approx. 49 Euros per person. (quite a steal compared to all other tours)

We were to be picked up from the tourist office at the city centre opposite the Apple showroom. This tour was for a maximum of 8 people and promised as many stops as we wanted for photos. Besides the lavender farms, the tour covered everything lavender, including the cultivation, distillation, and meeting a local producer at the distillery.



On the appointed day, we were picked up from the tourist office albeit half hour late (which had me worried for a while that this would be a no show). We were driven in an 8 seater air conditioned van and our tour had an elderly couple, a mother daughter Chinese duo, a European solo lady adventurer and us – an Indian mother and young daughter along with a French driver cum guide.

Though the driver cum guide, Pierre, was busy chatting with the European adventurer lady, we did not feel left out. He was interspersing his chat with a commentary of the countryside and it was a good 40 mins picturesque drive from Aix-en-Provence to the Valensole plateau, which we thoroughly enjoyed.



We were taken to a lavender farm first. The saturation of colour and smells was truly glorious. It was that time of the year when Provence puts on her purple and golden garb.

June, July and August are the months of blooming lavender with poppy flowers alongside sunflowers fields. Lavandin (an hybrid of Lavender which is darker in colour) and wild lavender grows at an altitude of 500 to 1700m range, in the sun and on a dry soil, an interesting bit of information was imparted by Pierre. The first glimpse of the farms was a delight for our senses.



Lavender satiates the eyes, nose as well as the palate. We strolled among lavender plants, spotted butterflies and bees working on the flowers, tasted a lavender ice cream and bought lavender products all in the day's schedule.



Walking through the sea of lavender surrounding me, I couldn't help remember the poet Wordsworth and his famous poem on daffodils. If he had set his eyes on the lavender farm, he would have certainly penned a poem on the beauty of the scene now surrounding us on a summer afternoon, with the lavender hue dispersed for acres, stretching till eyes can see, thereby bestowing fame and glory to the place and the flower. That is the thought that propped in my mind when I saw the lavender field for the first time. Simply stunning!!.



While we were expecting to see a lot of lavender (which we did) what we didn't expect was the sight of poppy plants or the pink blooms known as redbuds, or the sunflowers or cherry trees. These bonus delights made us realize what a treasure trove of nature's abundance these farms were. Here you see the pink blooms in all their glory.



The cherry tree laden with cherries was a site to behold. The tour had allocated one hour for us to roam the fields and take as many pictures as we want, and we neer realized when the one hour was over.



After having our fill of the lavender fields we were taken to the distillery or the production unit of Lavender essential oils. The distillery was very old but still was perfectly operational. The distillery even now used electric steam boilers that steam the essential oil from the lavender. This process takes about 3 hours to extract 100% pure Lavender Essential Oil, with its early appearance after approximately 45 minutes.



The distillery offered a variety of the blue gold in numerous forms be it essential oils, floral water, eau de toilette or soap, Besides the production unit, the farm had a shop which sells all their produce, where one can buy authentic lavender oil, soap and perfume.



I bought square soap enriched with Shea butter, a 100% lavender essential oil, and a lavender perfume.



Food

We had lunch at Brasserie du Plateau restaurant in the Valensole village.



This was part of the tour which included a lunch break to grab a meal on your own and my daughter who loves non-vegetarian food, especially steak and filet, gorged on Filet mignon au poivre and loved it! Being vegetarian I had to make do with salad and fries. Our lunch was accompanied with red wine Roshe Mazet. The best part was the wine was cheaper than water.



We ended the lunch with the lovely lavender ice-cream – a treat that still lingers and brings back memories.



I hope this article impels you to grab your camera and set out to experience the wild beauty of Provence's lavender creating memories that last forever.

So come, breathe the delicate fragrance, live your life a little....



Travel Update : Please note that there could travel restrictions for international travellers to France because of the ongoing pandemic. Before travelling, please always check the latest government advice about COVID-19 travel restrictions in your destination.