

COUNTRY ROADS FRANCE IN STYLE



20 DAYS

TOUR OVERVIEW

Love life's little luxuries? Sophistication, elegance and charm await you as this unique destination has it all. France is no doubt one of the world's most visited countries and this is no wonder. With a rich cultural heritage, where else can one find such diversity, finesse and timeless beauty. Not to mention great cuisine and grand cru wines. France seemingly has it all.

Your adventure will start and finish in Paris. You will follow the popular wine trails, study the great painters, explore the many historical and cultural sights en route and enjoy 'joie de vivre' at its best.

This truly unique tour with an emphasis on central and southern France, is ideal for all who wish to leisurely explore the charming country roads and gain a good understanding of the many different regions, the culture and people. Travelling in spring time certainly gives it that extra dimension, think red poppies, purple wisteria and fields of yellow, no wonder artists have been inspired for so long.

Leisurely paced with a 5 night stay in a charming old-world hotel in Provence and a 3 night stay in a family-owned chateau in the Loire Valley, you will simply fall in love with all things French.

5 NIGHTS IN PROVENCE







TOUR HIGHLIGHTS

Chantilly • Reims • Epernay • Chablis • Vezelay
Dijon • Beaune • Lyon • Avignon
Aix en Provence • Les Baux de Provence
St. Remy de Provence • The Camarque Arles • Nimes
Carcassonne • Albi • Rocamadour • Lascaux II
Sarlat le Caneda • Limoges • Tours • Orleans
Villandry • Amboise • Chenonceaux • Giverny

(B/L/D) Breakfast / Lunch / Dinner included



DAY 1 - ARRIVAL PARIS

Chantilly (1 night)

Bienvenue or welcome! In Paris, your private coach and tour director will be awaiting you at the airport for transfer to your hotel located in Chantilly, a romantic area famous for its lace, castles, sandstone-coloured townhouses and surrounded by gardens and parkland. Upon arrival at our hotel, enjoy a light welcome breakfast awaits us before official check-in.

The afternoon is free to have a little rest or explore the local surroundings at your leisure. A special welcome dinner is planned at the hotel's charming restaurant offering refined French cuisine and wine. Welcome to France. (B/D)

DAY 2 - REIMS - EPERNAY

Champagne Region (1 night)

Bonjour! After hotel check-out, we head for the Champagne region to explore the famous town of Reims and visit the Cathedral Notre Dame, a true masterpiece of Gothic art. Enjoy lunch and take a stroll along streets where two thousand years of history are written and discover rich heritage.

We continue the day with a panoramic drive through the famous vineyards of the Champagne region before arriving in Epernay for a guided visit of a prestigious champagne cellar. A tasting of this famous drink starts our French adventure in timeless old-fashioned style. Dinner at the hotel. (B/D)





DAY 3 - CHABLIS - VEZELAY
Burgundy Region (2 nights)

Today we travel into the famous Burgundy region for check-in at our hotel close to Dijon. En route we stop in the wine village of Chablis to enjoy a tour and tasting of the local produce. Chablis is a well-to-do sleepy town and made its fortune growing, ageing and marketing the white wines that bear its name. True 'Chablis' derives its character from the area's unique clay and limestone soil which contains millions of fossilised oyster shells.

We continue our day with a visit to the Abbey of Vezelay, one of the most beautiful Romanesque churches which welcomed pilgrims during the Middle Ages. Located on the Hill of Eternity, Vezelay is small with a population of just 570 inhabitants. This tiny hilltop village is truly one of France's architectural gems. The ancient Basilique Ste. Madeleine is surrounded by a patchwork of vineyards, sunflower fields and grazing sheep.... dinner at the hotel. (B/D)

DAY 4 - DIJON

It is time for Dijon! The former capital 'City of the Dukes' of Burgundy cultivate the art of good living. Dijon is famous for its mustard, its sweet spiced cake, wooden panelled houses with multi-coloured roofs, varied architecture, museums, markets, parks, and nearby vineyards. Our visit today includes a walking tour of old Dijon also allowing ample free time for shopping and lunch. In the afternoon its time to taste and try the local delicacies! The evening is free, enjoy dinner at one of the many nearby restaurants. (B)



DAY 5 - BEAUNE
Rhone Valley Region (1 night)

Following breakfast and hotel check-out, we explore the town of Beaune, symbolised by its many golden and ruby colours. Upon arrival we will stroll through the morning 'country market' followed by a visit to the famous 'Hotel Dieu' and the tapestries of the Notre Dame's church. For a full understanding of Burgundy, an introduction to its wines is essential so a wine-tasting is included today. Names such as Cotes de Nuit and Hautes Cotes de Nuits are world famous. Via the 'Routes des Grand Crus' we head south, towards Lyon. Enjoy a relaxing evening at your leisure and enjoy the local cuisine. (B)



DAY 6 - LYON
Provence Region (5 nights)

In the morning we visit Lyon to take in the atmosphere of life at the local market along the river banks after which we travel further south and head for the charming Provence region. En route we will taste the famous nougat produced in the nearby town of Montelimar. Following the wine trails and passing many hilltop villages, we will arrive at our hotel. Provence is well loved and for good reason.

Beautiful light and a stunning natural landscape have attracted painters throughout history. On tour, you will learn about the lives of Monet, Cezanne, Van Gogh and Toulouse Lautrec just to name a few. The charming markets, the food and wine, the lavender all add to the charm. Provençal cuisine is world famous for its many herbs and fresh ingredients used. Well, its time we try it and taste the regional cuisine and wine at our hotel. (B/D)





DAY 7 - PROVENCE

Settled in, today we travel deep into the Provence to visit one of its most famous perfume factories. Perfume came into its own when Louis XV came to the throne in the 18th century. The use of perfume in France grew steadily. By the 18th century, aromatic plants were being grown in the Grasse region of France to provide the growing perfume industry with raw materials. France quickly became the European center of perfume and cosmetic manufacture. Cultivation of flowers for their perfume essence, which had begun in the 14th century, grew into a major industry in the south of France mainly in Grasse now considered the world capital of perfume. The afternoon and evening are at your leisure. (B)

DAY 8 - AVIGNON - LES BAUX DE PROVENCE

After a good rest we are heading for Avignon, the ancient residence of the popes for discovery of the town and a visit to the palace of the popes and the famous Avignon bridge. In the afternoon, a visit to Les Baux de Provence, a small medieval Provencal village typical for the region offering many charming crafts and excellent cuisine.

St. Remy de Provence is most famous for its Roman sites and the Vincent Van Gogh monastery where he lived and painted some of his most famous works, well worth a visit for all who love the works of the Dutch painter. Did you know he only sold 2 paintings in his lifetime?

This part of France is so special, it is easy to understand why the painters fell in love with the light and beauty of the countryside. A typical Provencal dinner is planned again at the hotel tonight to be enjoyed with the local wine. (B/D)

DAY 9 - A DAY AT YOUR LEISURE

Enjoy a leisurely breakfast as today is at your leisure. The evening is free to explore on your own. (B)

DAY 10 - AIX EN PROVENCE

Enjoy a visit to the enchanting town of Aix en Provence and experience the very essence of this part of France. Elegant 18th c. Provencal buildings, old fountains, local cuisine scented with garlic and sprinkled with hillside herbs, elegant shops, festivals and that famous 'joie de vivre'.

In 'Aix' as the locals call it, we will visit the home and studio of Paul Cezanne and admire the colourful paintings of this famous French master set amidst his large peaceful garden. Lunch and free time in Aix en Provence, a good time to buy souvenirs for your loved ones at home. At night, dinner at our hotel. (B/D)



DAY 11 - THE CAMARQUE - ARLES - NIMES Languedoc Roussillon Region (2 nights)

After hotel check-out, we wave goodbye to this beautiful area of France but will stay on in the south. We transfer to our hotel close to Carcassonne and take in some of the unspoiled Camarque region, an enormous national park known for its birdlife, flamingos, bulls, wild horses, gypsies and legends. Visits today to the typical Roman town of Arles where the painter Vincent Van Gogh also lived and painted the many sunflowers. Arles offers a rich historical heritage and today will also include a visit to its Roman amphitheatre.

Heading towards the Spanish-influenced city of Nimes and before hotel check-in, we visit the famous Pont du Gard, a UNESCO World Heritage Site, exceptionally well-preserved, three-tiered Roman aqueduct once part of a 50 km long system of canals built about 19 BC by the Romans. In the evening, dinner in the elegant dining room of the hotel. (B/D)

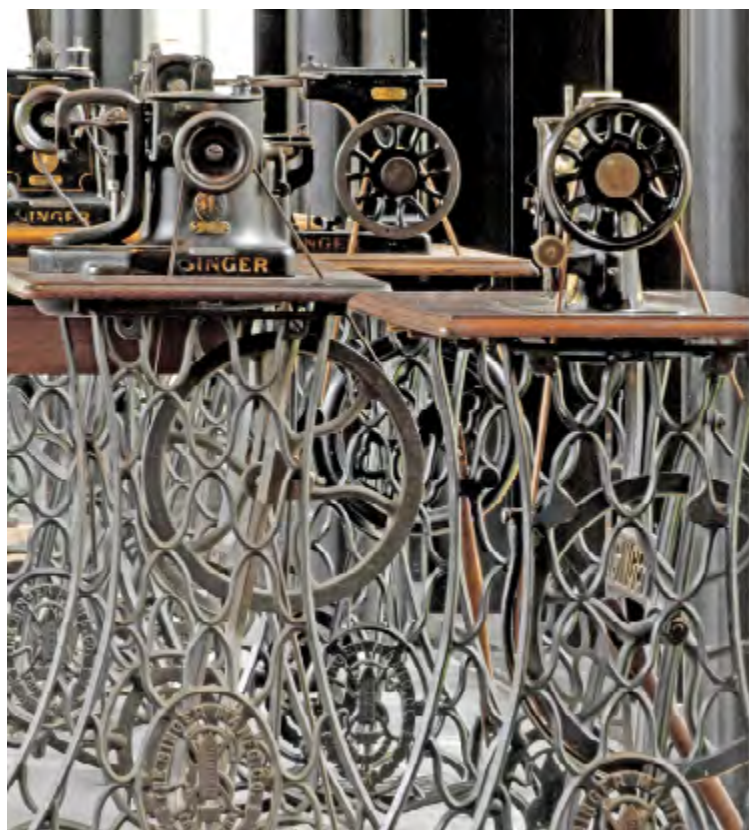


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DAY 12 - CARCASSONNE

In the morning, we will enjoy a walking tour of Carcassonne with free time for lunch and shopping. A hilltop town in southern France's Languedoc area, it is famous for its medieval citadel, La Cité, with numerous watchtowers and double-walled fortifications. The first walls were built in Gallo-Roman times, with major additions made in the 13th and 14th centuries. Château Comtal, a 12th-century castle within the Cité, offers archaeological exhibits and a tour of the inner ramparts.

Our hotel is located in the heart of this beautiful, unspoiled area of rural France. Dinner again at the tables of our ancient hotel tonight. (B/D)

DAY 13 - ALBI

Limousin, Dordogne, Lot Region (2 nights)

After hotel check-out, along scenic country roads, we set out for the town of Albi, famous for its impressive Cathedral and the museum of the eccentric painter Toulouse Lautrec which we will visit today. Via picturesque hilltop villages, we head for our hospitable hotel located in the heart of the lush Perigord region. Dinner at the tables of our charming residence located deep in the French countryside. You will note the area's speciality, duck in all shapes and sizes. (B/D)

DAY 14 - ROCAMADOUR - SARLAT LE CANEDA

We start the day with a pleasant scenic tour of the truly amazing Dordogne valley. Best known for its many limestone houses, rivers and medieval towns, today promises to be a relaxing day. We visit the pilgrimage village of Rocamadour, the most beautiful in the area. In the afternoon, we head for the captivating town of Sarlat le caneda. You will enjoy free time for a relaxing lunch and shopping. Make sure you try the local 'Foie Gras' (French pate), France's famous export product. Dinner again at the hospitable tables of our hotel. The French certainly know how to spoil us! (B/D)



DAY 15 - LASCAUX II - LIMOGES Loire Valley Region (3 nights)

Today we travel further north visiting the pre-historic site of Lascaux II to view the famous cave paintings. We continue our drive to the Loire Valley, best known for its many castles. En route, we will visit the old town of Limoges, famous for its enamel and colourful, delicate French ceramics and visit a typical local factory. Limoges' history of decorative objects dates back to the 12th century.

Learn tips and tricks in identifying fine porcelain. In a country brimming with a rich and colourful history, the Loire Valley is indisputably the king of fairytale castles, splendour and extravagant architecture. Set against the backdrop of the rich fertile river valley flowing through, dotted with picturesque villages, vineyards and sophisticated cities. Dinner at the hotel tonight. (B/D)

DAY 16 - CHENONCEAUX - AMBOISE

The day will be devoted to exploring this unique part of France so famous for its numerous castles. UNESCO listed in 2000, immerse yourself in the beauty of this magical landscape and visit two of the most impressive castles of all. Today we visit the castle of Chenonceaux, the jewel of the French Renaissance and its beautiful gardens.

You will view the castle, an example of typical 15th and 16th century architecture at its finest. In Amboise, we visit the Leonardo da Vinci House 'Le Clos Luce', where he came to live and work in 1516. Dinner at the hotel. (B/D)



DAY 17 - TOURS - VILLANDRY

Cosmopolitan and bourgeois, the nearby city of Tours has the air of a miniature Paris with wide 18th c. avenues and formal gardens. The French spoken in Tours is said to be the purest in France. After a walking tour of the city's old monuments you will enjoy free time for lunch. In the afternoon we continue with a visit to the stunning Villandry chateau and gardens, a real treat for all who love the formal, intricate, geometrically pruned hedges and colourful flower beds. Dinner again at our hotel. (B/D)



DAY 18 - ORLEANS

Chantilly Region (2 nights)

After hotel check-out, we head back to where we started, beautiful Chantilly!. En route, we will enjoy a visit to the elegant city of Orleans, a town marked by events which made the history of France. Best known of course for the victory of Joan of Arc (1429), the city flourished in the 17th c. through trade on the River Loire. Medieval alleys, ancient monuments, surrounded by green valleys and the many castles and wines of the Loire Valley, this city has a lot to offer. Dinner at the hotel. (B/D)

DAY 19 - GIVERNY

Monet used to say: 'Everyone discusses my art and pretends to understand, as if it were necessary to understand, when it is simply necessary to love'. One of the highlights of our tour, we will drive to Giverny to visit the famous Claude Monet house and gardens, spectacular in each season. A true treat for all garden lovers it offers an insight into the life of this famous French painter and his many masterpieces.

Seasons have an enormous effect on the gardens in Giverny. From early to late spring, daffodils, tulips, wisteria and irises appear, followed by poppies and lilies. Claude Monet, the undisputed leader of the Impressionists was born in Paris in 1840. Who does not know his famous 'Water Garden' or 'Water Lilies'? Breathe in the scents and scenes of the gardens Monet lovingly created over a period of 40 years. Located on the right bank of the river Seine, the painter noticed the village from a train window and made up his mind to move there.

Lunch in the local area before return to Paris for a guided city bus tour taking in the main landmarks. Relax and reflect on the many good times enjoyed in France. At night, our farewell dinner awaits us. (B/D)

DAY 20 - PARIS CDG AIRPORT

All good things come to an end, after breakfast and hotel-check out, we head for Paris Charles de Gaulle Airport where your tour director will wave goodbye! Bon voyage! (B)



TOUR PRICE INCLUSIONS

Meet and Greet Paris CDG International Airport. Return airport transfers in Europe. 19 nights in charming boutique/heritage accommodation including daily buffet breakfast, 3 course dinner (or lunch) with beverages based on typical traditional regional cuisine where indicated.

Private coach travel in Europe, entry fees covering sightseeing and entertainment, hotel service charges, city taxes, most tipping, baggage handling (1 bag pp). Services of a full-time professional tour director and local city guides.



DEPARTURE SCHEDULE LAND ONLY - 20 DAYS

Start date Paris - Tuesday, 3 September 2024
Finish date Paris - Sunday, 22 September 2024

Tour Price pp/twin share - AUD \$13,995
Single Supplement - AUD \$2,495