

LA FRANCAISE

14 WONDERFUL DAYS - PARIS TO PARIS

IMAGINE... A tour designed not only to take in the great sights of regional France, but one that will also immerse you in those wonderfully preserved medieval villages, sleepy chateaux, vineyards and local fresh produce markets bursting with ripe cheeses, pate and crusty French baguettes. This 'French Affaire' enjoys leisurely three night stays in both the Loire Valley and Bordeaux plus two night stays in the delightful Dordogne and Burgundy. Highlights include visits to several magnificent chateaux in the Loire Valley, delightful seaside La Rochelle, the famous gourmet markets of Sarlat, Perigueux, on the River L'Isle, the old town of Beaune, historic Troyes, the Dordogne's incredibly picturesque villages including Bezenac, Beynac, La Roc Gageac and Domme. This unique tour is packed with so many unusual visits and highlights, yet we have set aside quality leisure time to truly relax and savour the French way of doing things. Enjoy the ambience, culture, magnificent sights, food and wine this country is so famous for. Join us as we sip cognac in the town of Cognac and champagne in Champagne. Let's face it, isn't that why you are travelling to France? Ahhh... C'est la vie!



DAY 1 PARIS

Your tour commences this evening with a welcome drink and dinner in your first class hotel. This is an ideal chance to meet your Tour Manager and fellow travellers. (D)

Your Paris hotel – Marriott Rive Gauche

DAY 2 AMBOISE IN THE LOIRE VALLEY

Today we make our way to the verdant Loire Valley where, during the 15th and 16th centuries, the Kings of France and their courtiers had their holiday palaces. Our first stop will be in the grounds of Chambord to view the magnificent chateau. This enormous chateau was created by King Francois I as a hunting lodge within the surrounding grounds, which consisted of over 5,000 wooded hectares. Lunchtime today is in Blois, known for its historic castle and old town with narrow cobbled streets. This afternoon we visit Chenonceaux, to enjoy both the interior and the stunning gardens (audio guide included). Possibly one of the most photographed of the Loire Chateaux, and the former home of Diane de Poitiers and Catherine de Medicis, Chenonceaux spans the river Cher on a series of arches. We spend the next three nights in the charming royal city of Amboise. (B)

Your Loire Valley Hotel – Hotel Novotel Amboise

DAY 3 AMBOISE IN THE LOIRE VALLEY

This morning we drive to the town of Usee with its 16th century chateau overlooking the Loire and Indre River Valley. Accredited as the castle in Charles Perrault's story 'Sleeping Beauty' it is also sometimes called the 'Castle of Dreams'. We then visit the charming village of Azay-le-Rideau with its graceful chateau, which sits on the lakeside. Later we visit the gardens of Chateau Villandry. Inspired by the classic gardens of the 16th and 18th century, different levels of the gardens include ponds, topiary, ornamental hedges and an extraordinary kitchen garden covering 12,500 square metres. Your afternoon is free to explore Amboise with its Royal Palace and the famous Manor House 'Le Clos Luce' - where Leonardo da Vinci once lived as a guest of King Francois 1st. Dinner tonight is included in your hotel. (B, D)

DAY 4 AMBOISE IN THE LOIRE VALLEY

Driving west along the river valley our morning stop will be in Saumur, one of the most charming towns of the Loire Valley, dominated by the fairytale turrets of her famous 14th century chateau. We then visit the city of Angers, where we spend lunchtime and much of the afternoon. We have included entrance to the 13th century granite Chateau d'Angers which houses the carefully restored medieval Apocalypse Tapestry with its magnificent glowing red, blue and gold threads. (B)

DAY 5 BORDEAUX

Arriving on the coast, our lunch time stop will be in arguably the most attractive and unspoiled town on France's Atlantic seaboard - the delightful port of La Rochelle. Later we make a stop in the town of Cognac to enjoy a tour through the famous Remy Martin Distillery, including a mini train ride and tasting. On arrival into Bordeaux city we enjoy an orientation tour before settling in to your centrally located hotel, where you stay for the next three nights. (B, D)

Your Bordeaux Hotel – Hotel Burdigala

DAY 6 BORDEAUX

This morning we visit the steep, narrow, hilly streets of St Emilion with its medieval ramparts, the ruins of the Cloître des Cordeliers and the unusual 14th century underground church. In the afternoon we drive to visit the Medoc, which is possibly the most famous, high quality wine producing region in the world. As a finale we have arranged a wine tasting in one of the superb local vineyards. (B, D)





Chateaux of Chambord

(© MDLF/Léonard de Serres)

DAY 7 BORDEAUX

Your day is entirely free to explore Bordeaux at leisure. The city's waterfront on the River Garonne makes an attractive spectacle and there is a stately 18th century town centre with its Place du Parlement, Place de la Bourse and medieval quarter. The perfect opportunity to relax and enjoy a baguette and a glass of wine in a sidewalk café! (B)

DAY 8 SARLAT LA CANEDA IN THE DORDOGNE

Heading east we spend the morning in Perigueux, on the River L'Isle, with its Cathédrale St Front looming large over the red roofs of the medieval market town. Later we reach the Dordogne region with its sleepy villages, medieval chateaux, meandering rivers and lush landscape that so epitomises French rural life. Enroute to Sarlat we stop at Les Ezyies-de-Tayac which was made famous by the local discovery of 20,000 year old Cro-Magnon skeletons and the pre-historic Lascaux cave paintings. Here we visit the fascinating National Museum of Prehistory located in the chateau which is embedded in the cliffs. The views from the terrace across town are excellent. Later we arrive at perfectly preserved Sarlat la Caneda, one of the most stunning towns in France, where we stay for the next two nights. Dinner tonight is included in a local restaurant. (B, D)

Your Dordogne Hotel – The Hotel Renoir

DAY 9 SARLAT LA CANEDA IN THE DORDOGNE

Your morning is completely free to explore the old town centre. Your tour has been specially timed to be here on a Saturday for the fantastic Sarlat markets, renowned as being amongst the very best in all of France. Enjoy the experience of sampling the myriad of local cheeses, foie gras, truffles, walnuts and wines. Time to buy some crusty bread and tapenade for a delicious picnic! This is the real France at its best! In the afternoon we will take a leisurely drive down the Dordogne river road past lush countryside, medieval castles and the incredibly picturesque villages including Bezenac, Beynac, La Roc Gageac and Domme. (B)

DAY 10 LYON

Crossing the 'Massif Central' we arrive into Lyon mid afternoon and enjoy an orientation tour. Lyon is the gastronomic, as well as the commercial, heart of south central France. Our hotel is in the centre and we stay here one night. There are more restaurants, and more Michelin stars, per square kilometre in

the Lyon area than anywhere else in Europe. We have left this evening free for you to dine out in one of the excellent local restaurants. (B)

Your Lyon Hotel – MGallery Hotel Le Royal Lyon

DAY 11 BEAUNE IN BURGUNDY

This morning we have arranged a visit to one of the silk factories located in the amazing quarter of Croix Rousse. The rest of the morning is at leisure to enjoy Lyon. Make sure you visit the Presqu'île, the narrow strip of land between the River Saône and the River Rhône, with its outstanding buildings and museums. In the early afternoon we drive north and make a stop in the village of Charnay-les-Macon to enjoy a tasting of the local Pouilly Fuisse wines. Later we continue to the old town of Beaune, capital of the Burgundian wine industry, where we visit the fascinating Hospices de Beaune. Covered with multicoloured glazed roof tiles the 'Hotel Dieu' was



(© MDLF/Jean François Tipelon-Jarry)



La Rochelle

(© MDLF/Daniel Gallon – Dangal)

built over 550 years ago to help the town's folk in a time of poverty and famine. Your hotel for the next two nights is centrally located within walking distance of all the major sights. (B, D)

Your Beaune Hotel – Henry II Hotel

DAY 12 BEAUNE IN BURGUNDY

Your morning will be spent in nearby Dijon. Capital of the grand Dukes of Burgundy in the 14th century, the town boasts many elegant buildings, embellished with statues and fine carvings. At the heart of Dijon lies the Palais des Ducs, once the home of the 17th century Burgundian court. In the early afternoon we drive through the golden hills and make a stop at the vineyard of Morin Pere et Fils for tasting of Nuits St George wines. The rest of your afternoon will be free in Beaune's old town. This evening we have included a special Burgundian dinner in a local restaurant. (B, D)

DAY 13 BERGERES LES VERTUS IN CHAMPAGNE

Mid morning we stop in the historic town of Troyes. Originally settled on the junction of several Roman roads, Troyes became an important religious and cultural regional centre. Nowadays the old town, set near the ornate façade of Cathédrale St Pierre et St Paul, is an architectural time capsule. The pedestrianised Rue Roger Salengro is lined with fine 16th century timber and brick houses, jutting out over the street, and on Rue Champeaux, the houses facing each other in the narrow alleyways virtually touch at the top. Later we enter the rolling limestone hills of the central Champagne Region where we take the famous Champagne Road to visit the wine 'caves' of Mercier, the largest champagne producers in the world. We stay the night in the nearby village of Bergeres Les Vertus, where we enjoy a farewell meal in our family run hotel. (B, D)

Your Champagne Hotel – Hostellerie de Mont Amie

DAY 14 PARIS

This morning we visit nearby Reims, capital of the Champagne region, and the cathedral city where France crowned so many of her kings. There will be time at leisure before we depart for nearby Paris where your tour ends on arrival mid afternoon. (B)

The Albatross Travel Difference

France is much, much larger than you think. It is essential that you avoid incessant one night stays followed by long days trapped on coaches following seemingly endless motorways.






At Albatross Travel, where possible and practical, we purposely avoid 'mad dash' touring and minimise one night stays. We enjoy three night stays in the Loire Valley and Bordeaux plus two night stays in the delightful Dordogne and Burgundy.

Our clever itinerary planning guarantees you will get full and half days at leisure throughout the tour. You see so much more than just the major sights as we plan our programme to take in the local markets and those evocative, less 'touristy' destinations.

With significantly less time wasted on motorways you will be able to enjoy the magical, stylish, romantic towns and villages and the sights of 'real France' which you have travelled so far to see.

Albatross Travel delivers a fuller and more rewarding experience.

Compare the Albatross Difference

 <p style="font-size: small;">Less time on coaches, average 189 kms travelled each day</p>	 <p style="font-size: small;">Maximum 30 passengers</p>	 <p style="font-size: small;">Over \$1,800 value of extras included - no hidden costs</p>	 <p style="font-size: small;">Guaranteed to depart with 7 or more passengers</p>	 <p style="font-size: small;">Book by 22 December and save \$300 pp</p>
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Albatross gives you more...

Highlights

- Stay 3 nights in the glorious Loire Valley
- See the magnificent chateau of Chambord
- Visit Chenonceaux Chateau and the gardens of Chateau Villandry
- Explore historic Blois, Saumur, Azay-le-Rideau, Leonardo's Amboise and 13th century Angers
- Relax in seaside La Rochelle, St Emilion and Perigueux on the River L'Isle
- Enjoy 3 nights in Bordeaux and sample Medoc wines and Remy Martin in Cognac
- Experience the markets in Sarlat la Caneda and discover the sleepy villages of the Dordogne
- Visit a silk factory in Lyon
- Stay in the old town of Beaune and visit Burgundy's capital, Dijon
- Explore historic Troyes and Reims
- Sample Burgundy wines at Nuits St George and visit the Champagne 'caves' of Mercier

Inclusions

- All excursions, scenic drives and sightseeing (as per the itinerary)
- Fully escorted by our experienced Tour Manager
- First class air-conditioned touring coach
- End of tour tips to Tour Manager and driver
- 13 nights selected accommodation as described
- Hotel portorage (1 bag per person)
- Welcome drink Paris
- Buffet breakfasts daily
- 8 dinners including welcome and farewell dinners, and special Burgundian dinner in Beaune
- Tours and tastings through vineyards as described in the itinerary and Remy Martin Cognac tour
- Entrances: Chenonceaux Chateau and Gardens with audio guide, Chateau Villandry Gardens, Angers Castle, National Museum of Prehistory in Les Eyzies, Lyon silk factory, Hospices de Beaune
- Quietvox personal audio system whilst on tour

Tour Price

14 days only **\$5,589** pp twin share
Single supplement \$1,349 (land only prices)

Special 2011 Departures

20 May; 15 July; 16 September

...come share our love of Europe



Saint Emilion (© Atout France/Sudres)