



Provincial French Countryside

Experience the beauty, allure, and hospitality of provincial France, at an easy pace and in a unique style. Anchored by stays in vibrant Toulouse and enchanting Paris, the journey features diverse Languedoc, the remote Dordogne, the lovely Loire Valley, and historic Normandy as we stay in charming rural inns and small country hotels. It's a small group tour de force!

**With an Post-Tour Extension:
Paris – On Your Own**

Itinerary

Created on Mar 11, 2024

Provincial French Countryside Day-by-Day Itinerary

DAY 1: Depart U.S. for Toulouse, France

DAY 2: Arrive Toulouse

After arriving in Toulouse in the Midi-Pyrénées today, our time is at leisure until we meet our tour director this evening for a welcome dinner and a briefing about the journey ahead.

Accommodations: Plaza Hotel Capitole Toulouse

Meals: Dinner

DAY 3: Toulouse/Carcassonne

Today we tour nearby Carcassonne, the quintessential medieval town with the longest city walls in Europe. Sitting atop a hill overlooking vast green plains that stretch all the way to the Pyrénées, Carcassonne boasts battlements and ramparts dating to the 1st-century Romans. We return to Toulouse mid-afternoon for time at leisure.

Accommodations: Plaza Hotel Capitole Toulouse

Meals: Breakfast

DAY 4: Toulouse/Albi/Sarlat

We travel today to the historic market town of Albi in the Midi-Pyrénées. Hometown of Belle Époque artist Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec, Albi was built with rose-colored bricks that cast a warm glow over the medieval streets and ramparts. Our city tour here includes the medieval Cathedral and Palais de la Berbie, an ancient fortress now a museum of works by Toulouse-Lautrec. Leaving Albi, we travel to the rugged, unspoiled countryside of the Périgord region and the Dordogne Valley. We continue on to Sarlat-la-Canéda, one of France's prettiest villages and one of Europe's best preserved medieval gems, with more registered historic sites than anywhere else on the continent. We're in the land of the truffle and *foie gras*, so *bon appétit!*

Accommodations: Au Grand Hotel de Sarlat

Meals: Breakfast, Dinner

DAY 5: Sarlat/Lascaux IV

This morning we tour the International Center for Cave Art at Lascaux IV, showcasing reproductions of the original pre-historic cave paintings found nearby. After lunch at a charming local inn, we spend the afternoon on a leisurely cruise along the Dordogne River, life-blood of this fertile region and redolent with history. As we pass cliff-top castles and fortified medieval towns, the historical region of Aquitaine comes to life – this is where beloved Eleanor of Aquitaine reigned in the 12th century. We return to Sarlat, where dinner tonight is on our own.

Accommodations: Au Grand Hotel de Sarlat

Meals: Breakfast, Lunch

DAY 6: Sarlat/Rocamadour

This morning we take a brief walking tour then have time at leisure to visit some of Sarlat's museums or art galleries – or simply to wander the atmospheric cobblestone streets. After lunch on our own we visit nearby Rocamadour, a revered pilgrimage site and medieval village whose three tiers cling almost impossibly to a sheer limestone cliff. We take a guided walking tour then enjoy some free time before we return to Sarlat mid-afternoon. Dinner tonight is on our own.

Accommodations: Au Grand Hotel de Sarlat

Meals: Breakfast

DAY 7: Sarlat/Le Dorat/Saumur

This morning we depart for the Loire Valley, stopping in the small market town of Le Dorat for lunch at a local restaurant. From here we travel on to picturesque Saumur and our hotel, a converted 18th-century mansion on the banks of the Loire River.

Accommodations: Hôtel Anne d'Anjou

Meals: Breakfast, Lunch

DAY 8: Saumur

Late this morning we visit a local winery where we enjoy a tour and a tasting, then we return to our hotel in the early afternoon and have time to enjoy this town of half-timbered houses and cobblestone streets as we wish. Options include exploring the town's old quarter; visiting the Cavalry Museum; or tasting the renowned locally made sparkling wine at Maison du Vin. Tonight, we enjoy dinner together at a local restaurant.

Accommodations: Hôtel Anne d'Anjou

Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

DAY 9: Saumur/Chenonceaux

We're in chateaux country, where England battled for control of France; where Joan of Arc triumphed; and where a great opulence reigned during the 16th century. Originally built as fortresses to keep intruders out, the Loire Valley's grand chateaux now welcome visitors from around the world. We tour a most impressive one today: Chenonceau, the Renaissance masterpiece considered the most romantic chateau of all. We enjoy dinner tonight at local restaurant.

Accommodations: Hôtel Anne d'Anjou

Meals: Breakfast, Dinner

DAY 10: Saumur/Mont-St-Michel/Crépon

Traveling north this morning, we stop at Mont-St-Michel, Normandy's famed Gothic abbey that sits atop a 264-foot-high rock formation at the edge of the sea and was constructed between 1017 and 1521 of granite hauled stone by stone from Brittany. After a guided tour and some free time for lunch and to explore on our own, we return to our hotel for time at leisure. Tonight, we dine together at our hotel.

Accommodations: Manoir de Mathan

Meals: Breakfast, Dinner

DAY 11: Crépon/Bayeux/Caen

Miraculously spared during wartime bombing, medieval Bayeux is our first stop today. Here we visit the Tapestry Museum, home of the 1,000-year-old Bayeux Tapestry depicting the exploits of William the Conqueror. Later we visit Caen's Memorial Museum devoted to "history for peace." Time permitting, we may visit Arromanches late this afternoon.

Accommodations: Manoir de Mathan

Meals: Breakfast, Dinner

DAY 12: D-Day Landing Beaches

A poignant, inspiring day is ahead as we travel to the very places where Allied forces overcame overwhelming odds to alter the course of World War II. We visit Pointe du Hoc, where American Rangers scaled towering cliffs to establish a beachhead; Utah Beach; and Ste-Mère-Eglise, where the 82nd Airborne Division successfully parachuted on June 5, 1944. We end the day at the American Cemetery overlooking Omaha Beach in Colleville. It's a particularly moving site; row upon endless row of white marble crosses and Stars of David honor the nearly 10,000 American troops who lie here.

Accommodations: Manoir de Mathan

Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

DAY 13: Crépon/Giverny/Paris

This morning we visit the village of Giverny and the home and gardens of Impressionist artist Claude Monet. Here we see the familiar lily pond and wisteria-covered Japanese footbridge of Monet's paintings, as well as his home, now restored to its original design. Then we travel to Paris, reaching our hotel late afternoon. We are free for dinner on our own in this culinary capital.

Accommodations: Hôtel Château Frontenac

Meals: Breakfast

DAY 14: Paris

Today we get acquainted with one of the world's great cities, seeing the highlights on this morning's city tour, including a guided visit to the Musée Rodin. This afternoon is free for independent exploration, perhaps to visit another of the city's fine museums, such as the Louvre or Musée d'Orsay; take a boat ride on the Seine, or to stroll the Champs Elysees. Tonight we gather for a farewell dinner to bid "adieu" to France.

Accommodations: Hôtel Château Frontenac

Meals: Breakfast, Dinner

DAY 15: Depart for U.S.

This morning we depart for the airport and our connecting flights to the U.S.

Meals: Breakfast

This tour itinerary was generated for Provincial French Countryside on Mar 11, 2024. Please visit the Provincial French Countryside page at <https://www.odysseys-unlimited.com/tours/europe/provincial-french-countryside/> for the latest and most accurate information.