



## **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!*

### **Itinerary**

Created on Apr 1, 2025

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## **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.

*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 1<sup>st</sup>-century Romans. We return to Toulouse mid-afternoon for time at leisure.

*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!*

*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 prehistoric cave paintings found nearby. After lunch at a charming local inn, we spend the afternoon on a leisurely boat ride along the Dordogne River, the lifeblood of this fertile region and redolent with history. As we pass clifftop castles and fortified medieval towns, the historical region of Aquitaine comes to life – this is where beloved Eleanor of Aquitaine reigned in the 12<sup>th</sup> century. We return to Sarlat, where dinner tonight is on our own.

*Meals:* Breakfast, Lunch

## **DAY 6: Sarlat/Rocamadour**

We take a brief walking tour this morning 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.

*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 18<sup>th</sup>-century mansion on the banks of the Loire River. Tonight, we enjoy dinner together at a local restaurant.

*Meals:* Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

## **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. Dinner tonight is on our own.

*Meals:* Breakfast, Lunch

## **DAY 9: Saumur/Chenonceaux**

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

*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.

*Meals:* Breakfast, Dinner

### **DAY 11: Crépon/Caen/Bayeux**

We begin our day with a visit to Caen's Memorial Museum commemorating World War II and the Battle for Caen. Our next stop is medieval Bayeux, miraculously spared wartime bombing. We take a walking tour of the town with time for lunch on our own, then visit a local apple orchard for a tour and tasting of several of their homemade ciders and liquors. Time permitting, we may visit Arromanches late this afternoon.

*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 82<sup>nd</sup> 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.

*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.

*Meals:* Breakfast

### **DAY 14: Paris**

We get acquainted with one of the world's great cities on this morning's sightseeing cruise on the River Seine, followed by 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, or to stroll the Champs-Élysées. Tonight we gather for a farewell dinner to bid "*adieu*" to France.

*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

### **PLEASE NOTE**

- The Bayeux Tapestry Museum will be closed for renovations from late August 2025 through 2026. On Day 11, for all departures after August 25, 2025, we take a walking tour of the town of Bayeux,

then visit a local apple orchard for a tour and tasting of several of their homemade ciders and liqueurs.

- For all 2026 departures, our Paris touring on Day 14 will feature a walking tour of both the Latin Quarter and Saint-Germain-des-Prés, followed by a cruise on the Seine. The afternoon will be free for independent exploration.

This tour itinerary was generated for Provincial French Countryside on Apr 1, 2025. 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.