

2012 Travel Forum Members Tour

Country Roads of North East, Burgundy, Dordogne & Western France

Every year previous tour goers of Insight Vacations design and create a unique tour. This year's is the Country Roads of north East, Burgundy, Dordogne & Western France. Departs September 15, 2012 with a 19 day duration covering regional France with an optional 3 day extension tour in Paris.

Destinations: Paris, Reims, Champagne region, Verdun, Strasbourg, Alsace, Beaune, Lyon, Medoc Peninsula, Bordeaux, Ile de Re, Nantes, Loire Valley, St. Malo, Mont Saint-Michel

Cost

Main Tour

Twin (per person)	\$6,440
Single Supplement	\$2,291
Triple Reduction	\$309

Paris Extension Tour

Twin (per person)	\$1,577
Single Supplement	\$461
Triple Reduction	\$68

This tour is eligible for a 10% reduction in tour price if booked and paid before Jan. 31, 2012. As well as a 5% frequent Traveler Discount for previous Insight Vacations Travelers.

Itinerary

Day 1: PARIS AT LEISURE

On arrival at Charles de Gaulle Airport, Insight's Airport Transfer Service departs for your tour hotel at 08.30, 11.00 and 13.30. The afternoon is yours to relax and settle in. Tonight, join your Tour Director for a Welcome Reception and light informal meal, followed by a sparkling illuminations tour of the capital – the perfect introduction to the city of light.

Hotel: Le Meridien Etoile – Paris

Meals: Welcome Reception

Day 2: PARIS – REIMS – CHAMPAGNE

Follow the Marne Valley eastwards to Reims, important in French history as the

coronation place of generations of monarchs. Enjoy an orientation tour showing you the Gothic cathedral, one of the finest in France with its spectacular facade and glorious rose windows. After some free time to explore, embark on a beautiful drive through the leafy vineyards to Epernay, internationally renowned as the epicentre of France's most famous export. All will be revealed on your visit to the cellars of one of the great Champagne houses. Experience the French way of life tonight as you settle in to your peaceful countryside hotel, nestled in the heart of the Champagne vineyards.

Hotel: Hostellerie La Briqueterie – Champagne

Meals: Buffet Breakfast, Dinner

Meals: Buffet Breakfast

Day 3: CHAMPAGNE – VERDUN – STRASBOURG

Make a poignant stop at Verdun this morning, site of the heroic French stand in the First World War. See the ossuary and memorial tower that overlooks 15000 war graves. From here take the Voie Sacrée (Sacred Route), the main supply artery used by the French Army during the Battle of Verdun. Continue through the rugged forms of the wild Vosges Mountains to the Alsace region; bordered by the Rhine, it has changed nationality four times in just over one hundred years. Tonight, in the regional capital of Strasbourg, you have the choice of a number of great restaurants for your dining pleasure.

Hotel: Hilton - Strasbourg

Meals: Buffet Breakfast, Dine Around

Day 4: STRASBOURG SIGHTSEEING

Situated halfway between Prague and Paris, Strasbourg is rightly named the 'city at the crossroads'. It's also the official seat of the European Parliament and you see the futuristic buildings on your orientation tour. In contrast, an included canal cruise plies the tranquil waterways of Petite France where craftsmen's houses were built directly above the channels of the River Ill. Disembark in the heart of Strasbourg close to the old pedestrianised walled city and wonderful Gothic cathedral with its astronomical clock. Now you are at leisure to enjoy the city at your own pace.

Meals: Buffet Breakfast

Day 5: ALSACE

Today we travel to Colmar, possibly the prettiest city in France! Discover why on your orientation tour through the Old Town and little Venice. There is time to wander down the Rue des Marchands (Merchants Street) and Rue Mercière (Haberdasher Street) where there are many picturesque old houses and also see the imposing Dominican church. We then take the 'wine-road', seeing the fine vineyards, beautiful half-timbered houses decked with geraniums and perhaps a stork for which the province is famous. Stop in the tiny town of Riquewihr, home of fine Riesling wine and Kugelhupf cake. We do more

than ‘drink in the scenery’ as we pause amongst the vineyards, castles and quintessential Alsatian villages to savor the local specialties with an authentic lunch which includes the Gewürtztraminer wine from the nearby vines. This evening is at leisure in Strasbourg.

Meals: Buffet Breakfast, Highlight Lunch

Day 6: STRASBOURG – BEAUNE

Today you will travel via the UNESCO world heritage listed city of Besançon to Beaune where we will stay tonight. There is opportunity for an optional Burgundy Wine Tasting & Dinner which includes a scenic drive along the Cote D'or to the village of Gevrey Chambertin, home of Napoleon's favourite wine.

Hotel: Hotel de la Poste – Beaune

Meals: Buffet Breakfast

Day 7: BEAUNE - LYON

Today, you will first visit the famous Hospices de Beaune. Marvel at the multi-coloured roofs of this architectural jewel that has become one of the symbols of Burgundy. Founded in the 15th century, the Hospices were given some vineyards so they could make wine to auction off to support charities, and today the tradition continues.

After lunch, you will travel further south to Lyon, a city founded by Julius Caesar about 2,000 years ago, and, as a result, it has a wealth of Roman remains, as well as many impressive museums, renaissance architecture galore, and—of course—world-renowned cuisine. You will start your tour with a drive to the Basilique Notre Dame de Fourvière, Lyon's hallmark church, for a dramatic view of the town built at the confluence of the Rhône and the Saône Rivers. Later this afternoon, you'll have free time to explore. Perhaps simply relax with a glass of Beaujolais at one of the many taverns.

Hotel: Radisson Blu Hotel – Lyon

Meals: Buffet Breakfast

Day 8: LYON — DORDOGNE

Today you will cross the Massif Central, driving via Saint-Étienne, the capital of the Loire département, to Clermont-Ferrand, one of the oldest cities of France. After free time for lunch, you will continue on to your hotel in Vitrac, in the Dordogne region of south-west France.

Hotel: Hotel Domaine de Rochebois Vitrac

Meals: Buffet Breakfast, Dinner

Day 9: DORDOGNE EXCURSIONS

You will travel to nearby Rocamadour which spectacularly clings to the cliff of the Alzou canyon. Rocamadour is part of the medieval Christian pilgrimage route of Santiago de Compostela, where, Kings and peasants alike once crawled up the Grand Escalier (216 steps) on their knees to the Rocamadour chapel (and further to L'Hospitalet, with its views of the old town) seeking redemption and cures. After a walking tour of the town, you'll be free to savour views from the stony ramparts, wander through the cobbled lanes, climb the stairs as the pilgrims did (or take the lift) and maybe enjoy a meal with a glass of wine. You will then return to your hotel in Vitrac.

Meals: Buffet Breakfast, Dinner

Day 10: DORDOGNE EXCURSIONS

Today begins with a visit to the town of Domme with free time to explore. This famous 13th century bastide (fortified) town was founded on a dauntingly sheer cliff eight centuries ago, high above the Dordogne valley. Classified as "L'un des plus beaux villages de France", Domme offers cafes and restaurants with stunning views over the river.

You then travel to nearby La Roque-Gageac. Like Domme, La Roque-Gageac is one of the many villages labeled as "L'un des Plus Beaux Villages de France" in the area. Situated on the banks of the river, the ochre-coloured houses are built directly into the face of the huge cliff that overhangs La Roque-Gageac. You will have the opportunity to take a ride on a Gabare, the traditional flat-bottomed boats of the Dordogne that used to trade goods up and down the river.

From there to the nearby Château de Beynac. This 12th century fortress, one of the best preserved castles in the region, gives a remarkable insight into what it must have been like in The Hundred Years War. The Château de Beynac was captured, for a time, by the English King Richard-the-Lionheart. Inside the remarkably well preserved interior of the chateau, you will explore the dungeons, great hall and lookout towers with magnificent 360 degree views across the beautiful countryside.

Meals: Buffet Breakfast

Day 11: DORDOGNE — MEDOC PENINSULA

Today begins with a chance to appreciate some of Europe's oldest art: the 13,000-year-old drawings of Rouffignac Cave. You will hop aboard a subterranean train to marvel at depictions of bison, horses and rhinos that have been called the "Sistine Chapel of the Prehistoric World." Then it's on to Sarlat-la-Canéda. Probably the most famous town of Perigord, Sarlat has survived almost unchanged since the Middle Ages and Renaissance. Arched alleyways and ancient narrow cobbled lanes radiate out from the Sarlat main square. After lunch, follow the scenic Dordogne River to the town of Bergerac and on to the renowned wine village of St. Emilion where you will sample some great regional wines. Finally drive to your hotel, a former château, located in Bordeaux's other great

wine area, the Medoc Peninsula.

Hotel: Hotel Le Relais de Margaux

Meals: Buffet Breakfast, Dinner

Day 12: BORDEAUX SIGHTSEEING

This morning drive into the classical city of Bordeaux, a port situated alongside the river Garonne. An orientation tour will show you the magnificent Esplanade des Quinconces before you will then have time for lunch and sightseeing before returning to your hotel.

Meals: Buffet Breakfast, Dinner

Day 13: MEDOC PENINSULA – ILE DE RE - NANTES

Your first stop this morning is in the old Naval port of Rochefort. Then it's on to La Rochelle, a seaport on the Bay of Biscay. Cross the 2.9 km bridge to reach the Ile de Re with a lunch stop in the fishing village of St. Martin de Re. Rejoin the mainland and travel on to Nantes for the night. Later, there is an opportunity to take an optional dinner boat cruise on the river Erdre.

Hotel: Hotel Mercure Nantes

Meals: Buffet Breakfast

Day 14: NANTES – LOIRE VALLEY

Enter the valley of the Loire and stop to visit the medieval abbey of Fontevraud founded by Eleanor of Aquitaine. She still lies buried here along with her husband Henry Plantagenet and son Richard the Lion Heart. On to the town of Chinon where you can take lunch before continuing to your very own castle for two nights.

Hotel: Domaine de la Tortiniere

Meals: Buffet Breakfast, Dinner

Day 15: LOIRE VALLEY

A delightful day starting with the Château de Chambord blending traditional French medieval forms with classical Italian structures. Da Vinci is believed to have designed a staircase here. Continue to the charming town of Amboise for free time to wander and take lunch. Your final visit is at the manor of Clos Lucé, Leonardo da Vinci's home, where you can study working models of the Renaissance Man's cleverest inventions. Tonight there is a chance to have dinner in a cave!

Meals: Buffet Breakfast

Day 16: LOIRE VALLEY – ST MALO

Drive north, passing cities of Le Mans and Rennes to St. Malo, a walled 15th century port city and one of the most charming places in France. Discover this old fortified 'Breton' town on a walking tour with your local expert guide.

Hotel: Best Western Balmoral

Meals: Buffet Breakfast, Dinner

Day 17: MONT SAINT-MICHEL SIGHTSEEING

A guided tour of Mont Saint-Michel will take you to the hill-top abbey surrounded by sea. A simple oratory was built here in the 8th century, but was subsequently expanded & enhanced over the years. The abbey's increasing fame attracted pilgrims and, by medieval times, a 'ville basse' had developed, with shops & guest houses. Return to St. Malo for the balance of the afternoon at leisure.

Meals: Buffet Breakfast

Day 18: ST MALO – PARIS Today you will leave Brittany and travel to Paris. This evening, join your new found friends for a Celebration Dinner with local wine. A perfect finalé to your tour.

Hotel: Radisson Ambassador

Meals: Buffet Breakfast, Celebration Dinner

Day 19: PARIS

Sadly your discovery tour of France comes to an end. Departure transfers arrive at Charles de Gaulle Airport at 08.00 and 11.00.

Paris Optional Post Tour Package

Day 1: PARIS SIGHTSEEING

Today you will be taken on a guided city tour. You will see all the main sights; Notre Dame Cathedral, the Louvre, Place de la Concorde, Champs Élysées, the Arc de Triomphe and the Eiffel Tower. You will then embark on a relaxing River Seine cruise which concludes with a visit to the gilded Église du Dome in Les Invalides to see Napoleon's tomb. Tonight, why not enjoy the spectacle of a world famous Parisian Cabaret.

Day 2: PARIS MONTMARTRE SIGHTSEEING

This morning you will be taken on a guided walking tour of Montmartre and Sacré-Cœur Basilica. In free time, explore the narrow streets of this 'Bohemian' quarter or wander amongst the artists on the famous Place du Tertre. Enjoy a free afternoon and

evening for last minute shopping in the antique shops of the Left Bank. Tonight you will enjoy a delicious dinner of Parisian cuisine with wine. Then an illuminations tour will reveal the magic and sparkling grandeur of this 'city of light' - a vision to last a lifetime!

Day 3: PARIS

Departure transfers arrive at Charles de Gaulle Airport at 08:00 and 11:00.