

La Francaise

17 Wonderful Days - Paris to Paris



Chateau de Chambord, Loire Valley, © MDLF/Léonard de Serres

Albatross gives you more...

- Enjoy 3 nights in Normandy exploring Honfleur harbour, the Normandy landing beaches, Bayeux, historic Caen and stunning Mont St Michel
- Stay 3 nights in an enchanting Loire Valley Chateau and cruise on the River Cher under the arches of Chenonceau Chateau
- Visit the gardens of Chateau Villandry and see the magnificent Chateau Chambord, explore historic Blois, Azay-le-Rideau, Amboise and Angers
- Relax in the Atlantic port of La Rochelle, visit the Villa Vesunna, Lascaux II Caves and explore Perigueux
- Spend 3 nights in the heart of Bordeaux town and visit St Emilion
- Enjoy 2 wonderful nights in the Dordogne Valley and experience the fabulous markets in Sarlat la Caneda, enjoy a picnic lunch, play petanque and cruise down the River Dordogne
- Stay 3 nights in Burgundy in a converted convent in Autun and explore Beaune, Dijon historic Troyes and Reims
- Sample Bordeaux wines in the Medoc, Calvados in Normandy, Remy Martin in Cognac, the wines of Burgundy at Meursault and sip Champagne in Champagne!

The Albatross Difference



More sightseeing time off the coach, average 194 kms travelled



Max 30 passengers for a more personal touring experience



Over \$1,700 value of extras included with no hidden costs

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, and get to know, your Tour Manager and fellow travellers. (D)

Your Paris hotel – Millennium Hotel Paris Opera

DAY 2 CAEN IN NORMANDY

Your morning stop will be in Rouen, where Joan of Arc was burned at the stake in 1431. The old town still boasts wonderful half timbered buildings and the Notre Dame Cathedral. In the afternoon we will explore the pretty fishing harbour of Honfleur with its cobbled streets lined with shops and pavement cafes. Later at Pont l'Evêque we stop at the Calvados distillery of Père Magloire to take a guided tour of the distillery and a tasting of this apple liquor. Your hotel for the next three nights is in the centre of William the Conqueror's city – Caen, opposite the marina and close to the pedestrian area. (B, D)

Your Normandy Hotel – Mercure Caen Centre Porte de Plaisance

DAY 3 CAEN IN NORMANDY

A fascinating morning exploring the Normandy landing beaches, including visits to Arromanches-les-Bains and the Landing Beaches Museum. Later we will also visit the magnificent Bayeux Tapestry, depicting William the Conqueror's invasion of Britain in 1066. The remainder of your afternoon will be at leisure in Caen with its well preserved historical old town, heritage buildings, castle and abbeys. (B)

DAY 4 CAEN IN NORMANDY

Driving through the lush countryside we reach the borders of Normandy and Brittany and visit the UNESCO World Heritage site of Mont St Michel. The abbey is perched atop a rocky outcrop linked to mainland France by a narrow causeway. (B, D)

DAY 5 CHATEAU DE CHISSAY IN THE LOIRE VALLEY

Today we make our way south to the verdant Loire Valley where, during the 15th and 16th centuries, the Kings of France and their courtiers created their grand holiday palaces. First stop is in the city of Angers where we have

included entrance to the massive 13th century granite chateau, which houses the carefully restored medieval Apocalypse Tapestry with its magnificent glowing red, blue and gold threads. In the afternoon we follow the River Loire past Saumur and Usee with its 16th century 'Sleeping Beauty' chateau, to reach our Chateau hotel where we spend the next three wonderful nights. (B, D)

Your Loire Valley hotel – Chateau de Chissay*. Your feature hotel, located near Montrichard is an imposing Chateau decorated with 19th century style furnishings. All bedroom windows open onto the surrounding 10 hectare of grounds. See a picture on page 6 of this brochure or visit www.chateauchissay.com

* The July departure stays at the Chateau de Rochecotte and dines in a different restaurant on day 6.

DAY 6 CHATEAU DE CHISSAY IN THE LOIRE VALLEY

This morning we visit the city of Amboise with its Royal Palace, where Leonardo da Vinci once lived as a guest of King Francois I. Today's popular Sunday markets, on the banks of the River Loire, make a wonderful visit. This afternoon we will stop at 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. Later we take an afternoon break in Blois, known for its historic castle and old town with narrow cobbled streets. Dinner tonight is included in a local character restaurant. (B, D)

DAY 7 CHATEAU DE CHISSAY IN THE LOIRE VALLEY

We enjoy a morning cruise along the River Cher to take in the wonderful view of the magnificent Chateau Chenonceau, spanning the river on a series of graceful arches. Possibly one of the most photographed of the Loire chateaux this was the former home of Diane de Poitiers and Catherine de Medici. After cruising under the arches we visit the stunning gardens and interior of the chateau (audio guide included).

Lunchtime will be spent in the charming village of Azay-le-Rideau with its elegant chateau. 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. (B)

DAY 8 BORDEAUX

Arriving on the coast, our lunch time stop will be in delightful La Rochelle, arguably one of the most attractive and unspoiled towns on France's Atlantic seaboard. 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. We arrive in the bustling city of Bordeaux, on the banks of the Garonne, and make our way to our centrally located first class hotel, where we stay for the next three nights. (B, D)

Your Bordeaux Hotel – Hotel Burdigala

DAY 9 BORDEAUX

This morning we visit the steep, narrow, hilly streets of St Emilion with its medieval ramparts, the ruins of the Cloitre 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)

DAY 10 BORDEAUX

Your day is entirely free to explore Bordeaux at leisure. Your hotel is well located within walking distance of all the important city sites and the pedestrian shopping streets of Bordeaux old town. 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)





Mont St Michel

DAY 11 SARLAT LA CANEDA IN THE DORDOGNE

Our first stop on reaching Perigueux, by the River L'Isle, will be at the fascinating Vesunna Museum which strikingly encloses the remains of an enormous Roman Villa (4,000 sq metres!), complete with beautiful mosaics and wall paintings (audio guide included). We then spend lunchtime in Perigueux town with its Cathédrale St Front looming large over the small, café filled squares, and medieval, stone alleyways. This afternoon we continue to the Dordogne Valley with its sleepy villages, medieval chateaux, meandering rivers and lush landscape that so epitomises French rural life. We stay the next two nights in perfectly preserved Sarlat la Caneda, one of the most stunning towns in France. Dinner tonight is included in a local restaurant. (B, D)

Your Dordogne Hotel – Hotel Renoir. We have selected this superior tourist class hotel because it is located within walking distance of the wonderful old town,

it is family run, offers wonderful ambience and every room is different and with its own character.

DAY 12 SARLAT LA CANEDA IN THE DORDOGNE

Your tour has been specially timed to be in Sarlat on a Saturday for the colourful, gourmet food markets, renowned as being amongst the very best in all of France. We are joined by an expert local guide to explore the market and sample the myriad of local cheeses, foie gras, truffles, walnuts and wines. It is time for you to buy some crusty bread and local delicacies to share, as we then make our way to the old town square in La Roc Gageac, to enjoy a delicious picnic and a game of Pétanque (Boules), the traditional French village sport. This is the real France at its very best! Later we will board a barge and drift slowly down the River Dordogne past medieval castles to visit the incredibly picturesque village of Domme. (B)

DAY 13 AUTUN IN BURGUNDY

This morning we will stop at Lascaux, a UNESCO World Heritage Site, famous for its magnificent Palaeolithic cave paintings. Whilst the actual caves themselves are now closed to the public, we visit the nearby Lascaux II museum to see the superb replicas of the cave paintings found in the Great Hall of the Bulls and the Painted Gallery. Later we cross the Massif Central to reach Autun, in Burgundy, where we stay for the next three nights. (B, D)

Your Burgundy Hotel - Hotel les Ursulines. This charming hotel was once a 17th century convent, it boasts a gourmet restaurant and you will dine in an 18th century former chapel. The terrace with its French style gardens overlooks the Roman ramparts of the old city and has a magnificent view of the Morvan hills. See the hotel photo on page 7 or www.hotelursulines.fr/uk/index.php

DAY 14 AUTUN 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 including the Palais des Ducs. 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 multi coloured glazed roof tiles the 'Hotel Dieu' was built over 550 years ago to help the town's folk in a time of poverty and famine. (B, D)

DAY 15 AUTUN IN BURGUNDY

This morning has been left entirely free to explore this delightful town



Beynac on the River Dordogne

and relax on the terrace of your hotel, overlooking the Moravian Hills. Autun is a Celtic, Roman and medieval town containing architecture spanning the ages - from Roman ramparts to the famous St Lazare Cathedral, all within easy walking distance from your hotel.

This afternoon we have included a scenic drive through the rustic Burgundy countryside, past manicured vineyards, to the village of Meursault where we have arranged a private tour and wine tasting at Chateau Meursault. Your evening is at leisure in Autun. (B)

DAY 16 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 is an architectural time capsule. The pedestrianised Rue Roger Salengro is lined with fine 16th century timber and brick houses, 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, with Champagne, in our family run hotel. (B, D)

Your Champagne Hotel – Hostellerie de Mont Amie

DAY 17 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)

Overall the tour was great. Our tour leader was fantastic and obviously loves what he does. The smaller tour group of 22 passengers was much appreciated as it gave us the opportunity to get to know everyone personally.
Sandra

Tour 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
- 16 nights selected accommodation as described
- Hotel portorage (1 bag per person)
- Welcome drink Paris
- Buffet breakfasts daily
- 11 dinners including welcome and farewell dinners, local restaurant dinners Loire Valley and Sarlat.
- Tours and tastings through vineyards and distilleries as described including Calvados, Remy Martin Cognac, Medoc and Burgundy wines and Mercier Champagne
- Entrances: Mont St Michel, Arromanches Landings Museum. Bayeux Tapestry, Angers Castle, Chenonceau Chateau and Gardens with audio guide, Chateau Villandry Gardens, Vesunna Roman Villa museum with audio guide, Lascaux II museum, Hospices de Beaune
- Cruise on River Cher, Pétanque lesson and River Dordogne barge cruise
- Personal audio system whilst on tour

2012 Dates and Prices

17 days only \$6,489 pp twin share

Single supplement \$1,499 (land only prices in Australian dollars)

SPECIAL EARLYBIRD OFFER - Book by 22 Dec 2011 to save \$300 pp!



STARTS	ENDS	STARTS	ENDS
15 May	31 May	28 August	13 September
29 May	14 June	18 September	4 October
10 July	26 July		

