

# Overseas Adventure Travel<sup>®</sup>

THE LEADER IN PERSONALIZED SMALL GROUP ADVENTURES SINCE 1978

Your O.A.T. Adventure Travel Planning Guide<sup>®</sup>



French Impressions: From the Loire  
Valley to Lyon & Paris

2025

# Overseas Adventure Travel®

347 Congress Street, Boston, MA 02210

Dear Traveler,

I am thrilled that you are considering exploring the world with O.A.T. There are so many wonderful destinations to discover, and the itinerary described inside is a perfect way to fulfill a travel dream.

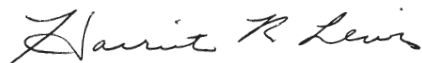
When you join us, you will slip seamlessly into local life as you explore off the beaten path in your small group. Like all our itineraries, this one is designed to give you an intimate understanding of your destination, not just a superficial view. You will get to know community leaders and try your hand at local trades during your *A Day in the Life* experience, share traditional fare and lively conversation during a Home-Hosted Visit, discuss the Controversial Topics impacting everyday life, and visit sites supported by Grand Circle Foundation. And if you choose to travel solo, you will enjoy all these cultural experiences at an unmatched value, with our FREE Single Supplements—just one of the reasons we continue to be the leader in solo travel.

To ensure you experience the true culture and feel supported every step of the way, we provide the services of a local Trip Experience Leader from the beginning of your adventure to the end. Along with introducing you to the history and culture of their homeland, these friendly experts will gladly help you out with any special requests to make your trip even more special. You can also rely on the seasoned team at our regional office, who are ready to help 24/7 in case any unexpected circumstances arise.

Plus, you can put your own personal stamp on your trip, like the **87% of our travelers who personalize their experience**. Perhaps you will choose to see more of your destination by adding an optional trip extension to your itinerary. You can also arrive a few days early to explore independently and get acclimated, customize your air itinerary, and more.

I hope you find this Travel Planning Guide helpful. If you have any further questions, do not hesitate to contact one of our Travel Counselors at **1-800-955-1925**.

Warm regards,



Harriet R. Lewis

Chair

Overseas Adventure Travel

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Angers

## French Impressions: From the Loire Valley to Lyon & Paris

### Small Group Adventure

**France:** Angers, Limousin, Sarlat, Carcassonne, Lyon, Paris

Small groups of no more than 16 travelers, guaranteed

**17 days starting from \$5,495**

including international airfare

Single Supplement: **FREE**

For departure dates & prices, visit [www.oattravel.com/fra2025pricing](http://www.oattravel.com/fra2025pricing)

Beginning in Angers, immerse yourself in the history and culture of the Loire Valley. Explore fairytale-like châteaux, stroll medieval hilltop towns, and visit the site of a World War II tragedy. Along the way, you'll do—and dine—as the French do: Venture to the French countryside and eat your way through Lyon, France's culinary epicenter. Cap it all off in *chic* Paris.

### IT'S INCLUDED

- 15 nights accommodation
- International airfare, airport transfers, government taxes, fees, and airline fuel surcharges unless you choose to make your own air arrangements
- All land transportation
- 30 meals—15 breakfasts, 8 lunches, and 7 dinners including one Home-Hosted Dinner
- 22 small group activities
- Services of a local O.A.T. Trip Experience Leader
- Gratuities for local guides, drivers, and luggage porters
- 5% Frequent Traveler Credit toward your next adventure

*Prices are accurate as of the date of this publishing and are subject to change.*

**French Impressions: From the Loire Valley to Lyon & Paris**



## WHAT TO EXPECT

① ② ③ ④ ⑤ Moderate

**Pacing:** 6 locations in 16 days

**Physical requirements:** Walk 3 miles unassisted and participate in 2-3 hours of physical activities each day. Expect unpaved roads, hilly terrain, and uneven walking surfaces, including slippery cobblestones and stairs.

**Flight time:** Travel time will be 10-15 hours and will most likely have one or two connections

View all physical requirements at [www.oattravel.com/fra](http://www.oattravel.com/fra)

## FRANCE: THE O.A.T. DIFFERENCE

**Unbeatable Value:** Travel at the lowest price and per diems in the industry.

**People-to-People Experiences:** Venture to a small village outside Carcassonne for *A Day in the Life* experience on a wine *domaine*. With an expert wine producer as your guide, you'll learn about the region, work the vineyards, and even create a unique blend to share with your fellow travelers.

**O.A.T. Exclusives:** Enjoy a **Home-Hosted Dinner** with the family who owns and runs the *chambre d'hôte* (bed and breakfast) we'll be staying at in Limousin, where we'll learn what daily life is like in this part of France. Plus, we'll meet with a local French farmer to discuss the controversial nature of *foie gras* production.

## ITINERARY SUMMARY

DAYS	DESTINATION
1	Fly to Nantes, France
2-4	Angers
5	Limousin
6-8	Sarlat
9-11	Carcassonne
12-14	Lyon
15-16	Paris
17	Return to U.S.

## PERSONALIZE YOUR ADVENTURE

### OPTIONAL EXTENSIONS

**Northern France: Fontainebleau, Bayeux & the Beaches of Normandy**

**PRE-TRIP:** 6 nights from **\$2,695**

**The Best of Provence: Avignon & Aix-en-Provence**

**POST-TRIP:** 6 nights from **\$2,895**

### ARRIVE EARLY

We recommend that you relax after a long flight or explore more in depth before your trip. Prices shown include accommodations and private airport transfer.

- Arrive early in **Fontainebleau** before your Northern France pre-trip extension from **\$190** per room, per night
- Arrive early in **Angers** before your main adventure from **\$240** per room, per night

# French Impressions: From the Loire Valley to Lyon & Paris

## YOUR DETAILED ITINERARY

### BEGIN YOUR ADVENTURE WITH AN OPTIONAL PRE-TRIP EXTENSION

#### **6 nights in Northern France: Fontainebleau, Bayeux & the Beaches of Normandy**

**Day 1** Depart U.S.

**Day 2** Arrive in Paris, France • Overland to Fontainebleau

**Day 3** Explore Fontainebleau

**Day 4** Fontainebleau • Explore Barbizon • Art workshop

**Day 5** Fontainebleau • Explore Giverny • Overland to Bayeux

**Day 6** Explore Bayeux • Visit Bayeux Tapestry

**Day 7** Bayeux • Normandy beaches

**Day 8** Bayeux • Overland to Angers • Begin main trip

#### **Day 1** Fly to Nantes, France

**Afternoon/Evening:** Depart the U.S. on an overnight flight to Nantes, France.

#### **Day 2** Arrive in Nantes • Transfer to Angers

- Destination: Angers
- Accommodations: Hotel de France or similar

**Activity Note:** Please be aware that rooms are often not available before 3pm at hotels throughout France. Travelers arriving on early flights may not be able to receive their room key until 3pm.

**Morning:** You'll arrive in Nantes this morning or this afternoon. An O.A.T. representative will meet you at the airport and help with the transfer to your hotel, where you'll be joined by travelers who took our optional *Northern*

*France: Fontainebleau, Bayeux & the Beaches of Normandy* pre-trip extension or who arrived early in Angers for the main trip.

Upon arrival in Angers, you will check in and receive your room assignments.

The remainder of your morning is free to relax and settle in after your overnight flight.

**Lunch:** On your own—ask your Trip Experience Leader for suggestions on where to dine.

**Afternoon:** Our small group will gather together for an orientation walk around the vicinity of our hotel led by your Trip Experience Leader.

After, you'll then have a few hours of free time to begin getting acquainted with this medieval city. Angers is best known as the gateway to

the Loire Valley, a fertile wine-growing region that was once the playground of the French nobility. This aristocratic legacy can still be seen today in the sumptuous châteaux that dot the landscape and have earned the Loire Valley a UNESCO World Heritage designation. But you don't have to leave Angers to glimpse a French castle—the city itself is home to Château d'Angers, a well-preserved medieval castle that features thick defensive walls, a moat, and 17 towers meant to ward off attacks. You can visit Château d'Angers during your free time while we're in Angers.

Later, we'll meet with our Trip Experience Leader for a Welcome Drink in the hotel. This is a great opportunity to get to know your fellow travelers, and to toast to the discoveries to come—with a glass of French wine, of course.

**Dinner:** On your own, whenever you'd like. Your Trip Experience Leader will be happy to provide recommendations.

**Evening:** Free for your own discoveries. Perhaps you'll take an evening stroll through the streets of Angers, or stop by a neighborhood bistro for a nightcap.

### Day 3 Explore Angers

- Destination: Angers
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner
- Accommodations: Hotel de France or similar

**Breakfast:** At the hotel.

**Morning:** We'll gather with our fellow travelers and Trip Experience Leader for a Welcome Briefing.

Then, we'll set off on a walking tour of Angers in the company of a local guide. Today, Angers is a university town home to thousands of students, but its history stretches back more than 2,000 years. We'll learn about Angers's luminous past, first as the seat of the

Plantagenet dynasty in the twelfth century and later as one of Europe's leading intellectual centers during the Renaissance, as we stroll the city's cobbled streets. This history is reflected in the city's architecture, which sports everything from medieval cathedrals and half-timbered houses to Art Deco buildings from the 20th century.

**Lunch:** At a local restaurant.

**Afternoon:** After lunch, you're free to make your own discoveries in Angers. You might choose to delve into the history of Angers by exploring the city's chateau. Later, we'll engage in a short French language lesson led by our Trip Experience Leader before walking to a nearby restaurant for our Welcome Dinner.

**Dinner:** Enjoy a Welcome Dinner at a local restaurant.

**Evening:** On your own—you are free to return to your room to rest before your explorations tomorrow.

### Day 4 Angers • Visit Château de Villandry • Boule de Fort demonstration

- Destination: Angers
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch
- Accommodations: Hotel de France or similar

**Breakfast:** At the hotel.

**Morning:** We'll drive to the 16th-century Château de Villandry in the Loire Valley. Inhabited since the Middle Ages, it was home to notable figures such as Jean Le Breton, minister of Francis I; the Marquis de Castellane, ambassador of Louis XV; and Jerome Bonaparte, brother of Napoleon I. The grounds are especially famous for their elaborate Renaissance-era gardens. It is a perfect example of formal French gardening, symmetrically laid out with knot gardens, square gardens bordered by box hedges, a water

garden with ponds and fountains, and even a child's hedge maze. When we arrive, we'll enjoy a guided tour with a local guide, followed by some free time to explore the château and its lovely gardens on your own.

**Lunch:** At a local restaurant.

**Afternoon:** Afterwards, we'll drive to Bouchemaine, where we'll learn all about a beloved local game played exclusively in this region of France. We'll meet with some members of the local club for a demonstration of the sport. We'll also have a chance to play a practice game and share a drink with some club members to learn why this sport is so close to their hearts. Then, we'll return to our hotel where the rest of the day is at leisure.

**Dinner:** On your own in Angers.

**Evening:** Free to do as you'd like, perhaps with an evening stroll.

## **Day 5 Overland to Limousin • Visit Oradour-sur-Glane • Home-Hosted Dinner and overnight at a *chambre d'hôte***

- Destination: Limousin
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner
- Accommodations: *Chambre d'Hôte* in Limousin

**Activity Note:** This will be a long transfer day. Our journey by bus from Angers to Limousin will take about five hours, with stops along the way. Also, beginning in October 2025, the Oradour-sur-Glane Memory Center (*Center de la Mémoire*) will be closed for renovations. While we will be unable to visit the exhibition, we will still be able to access the martyr village of Oradour-sur-Glane, where we have added a guided tour.

**Breakfast:** At the hotel.

**Morning:** We'll check out of our hotel early this morning and begin our overland drive to the historical region of Limousin. The first leg of our drive is just over four hours, so we'll break up the journey with a coffee stop at a small village along the way.

Then, we'll continue our drive to Oradour-sur-Glane, stopping along the way for lunch.

**Lunch:** At a local restaurant.

**Afternoon:** Following lunch, we'll make our way to Oradour-sur-Glane. Once we arrive, we'll have some free time to explore and learn about the town's tragic history.

It was here on June 10, 1944—just four days after Allied troops stormed the beaches in Normandy—that a German SS company slaughtered all 643 residents of Oradour and destroyed the village. Today, the winding village lanes are dotted with husks of buildings and crumbling ruins; after the war, Charles de Gaulle ordered Oradour-sur-Glane to be left in its ruined state to commemorate the atrocity that took place here. As a result, the village seems stuck in time.

We'll spend a sobering time here in Oradour-sur-Glane, learning about the history of the Nazis in wartime France and about the unthinkable horrors humans have inflicted upon one another. You'll have time to visit the exhibition center to listen to a commemorative narrative recounting the story of this French village that became the target of Nazi barbarism. You can also spend a little time walking through the village on your own.

Afterwards, we'll set off for Limousin, arriving late this afternoon. Here, we will check into a family-owned *chambre d'hôte* for the evening. The French equivalent of a bed and breakfast, the hosts of our *chambre d'hôte* will offer us a

unique look into the lives and livelihood of a family from this sparsely-populated region of central France.

**Dinner:** During our stay here, we'll enjoy a **Home-Hosted Dinner** with the hosts of our *chambre d'hôte*. Because of our small group size, we're given the chance to connect with locals on a one-to-one level, and to even share a little with our hosts about who we are and what has brought us to France. This will be a great opportunity to ask them about life in Limousin, any special customs they practice, and more.

**Evening:** At leisure. You may want to relax in your comfortable room after the day's activities.

## Day 6 Overland to Sarlat

- Destination: Sarlat
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch
- Accommodations: Grand Hotel de Sarlat or similar

**Activity Note:** Our journey by bus from Limousin to Sarlat will take about four hours, with two stops along the way.

**Breakfast:** At the *chambre d'hôte*.

**Morning:** We'll bid *adieu* to our hosts this morning and board our bus to begin the next leg of our adventure to Sarlat, in France's picturesque Dordogne region. Along the way, we'll stop in the historic city of Limoge, whose porcelain craftsmanship dates back to the Middle Ages, where we'll visit one of the porcelain workshops.

**Lunch:** At a local restaurant en route to Sarlat.

**Afternoon:** After lunch, we'll continue our drive to Sarlat. Upon arrival, we'll check into our hotel, where you'll have some time at your leisure.

Then, set off on a walking tour through Sarlat's medieval old town with an expert local guide. As we wander the narrow, maze-like lanes, we'll learn the story of the town's founding, which began as a Benedictine abbey in the ninth century. We'll stroll the Rue de la Republique, the main thoroughfare; pause outside the cathedral, which blends Roman, Gothic, and more recent architectural styles; and witness many more of Sarlat's medieval gems.

**Dinner:** On your own. Ask your Trip Experience Leader for dining options in the area. Most menus feature duck and goose dishes, which are regional classics in this part of France.

**Evening:** Free to do as you'd like. Perhaps you will begin exploring Sarlat with a nighttime stroll, or retire early to your room to write about the day's events in your travel journal.

## Day 7 Explore Sarlat • Optional Rocamadour tour

- Destination: Sarlat
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Dinner
- Accommodations: Grand Hotel de Sarlat or similar

**Breakfast:** At the hotel.

**Morning:** Today is free to explore Sarlat and the surrounding Dordogne on your own. If your visit falls on a Wednesday or Saturday, you may like to visit Sarlat's outdoor market.

Or, perhaps you will join our optional tour to Rocamadour. Built into the side of a cliff, Rocamadour is an important pilgrimage site: The town was initially built on the site of a shrine to the Madonna known for its healing powers, and is a popular stop for the devout on the way to Spain's Santiago de Compostela. While its religious significance has earned Rocamadour UNESCO World Heritage status, its

improbable cliffside location and picturesque homes have earned it the top spot on a national list of favorite French villages.

Upon arrival, we'll walk down the way of the cross to the cliffside sanctuary that is home to the town's most famous religious icon, the Black Madonna. Henry II, Eleanor of Aquitaine, and Louis IX all paid a visit to the Black Madonna to seek her blessing before undergoing long journeys.

Then, we'll meet a local woman who restores old stained glass windows. She'll give us a glimpse into this intricate craft and we'll have the chance to ask her any questions we may have. We'll then walk to a local spot for lunch.

**Lunch:** On your own, whenever you'd like. Travelers on the optional tour will have lunch at a local restaurant in Rocamadour.

**Afternoon:** Free for you to continue exploring Sarlat. For those on the optional tour, you'll have some free time to stroll Rocamadour and its little shops at leisure, after which point we'll board our bus and be back at our hotel in Sarlat. The rest of the afternoon is free to further explore Sarlat.

**Dinner:** At a local restaurant in Sarlat.

**Evening:** Free for your own discoveries—ask your Trip Experience Leader for recommendations on where to best take in Sarlat by night, or retire to your room.

## **Day 8 Sarlat • Lascaux caves visit • Commarque Castle • Visit a *foie gras* farm**

- Destination: Sarlat
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Dinner
- Accommodations: Grand Hotel de Sarlat or similar

**Breakfast:** At the hotel.

**Morning:** Today we'll join our Trip Experience Leader for an opportunity to experience the wonders of the Dordogne. We'll drive this morning to explore Lascaux IV, a near-perfect replica of the Paleolithic cave that holds one of the world's most impressive examples of prehistoric paintings.

**Lunch:** On your own in Sarlat.

**Afternoon:** The next few hours are free for you to continue exploring Sarlat.

Then, we'll head to visit the ruins of medieval Commarque Castle. Unlike other castles in the Dordogne which were renovated into modern residences over the centuries, Commarque Castle was seemingly forgotten, and was left for the forest to reclaim. As you explore the austere, stony ruin, take in the beauty and fresh air of its idyllic countryside setting.

After, drive to a local farm, where we'll learn about *foie gras*, a specialty food product popular in French cuisine. *Foie gras* is the fattened liver of a duck or goose, which is traditionally enlarged through artificial and—some say—inhumane practices. We'll meet with the farmer to learn about the history and production of the product, as well as its reputation around the world.

We'll explore the production facility as we talk with the farmer, giving you ample time to learn about this culinary tradition and perhaps even sample *foie gras* if you're so inclined.

**Dinner:** Sit down for a traditional dinner at the farm.

**Evening:** We'll bid farewell to our host and head back to the hotel. The evening is free for your own discoveries. Consider venturing to a local bar to try one of the many varieties of local Bergerac wine.

## **Day 9 Discover Albi • Overland transfer to Carcassonne**

- Destination: Carcassonne
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch
- Accommodations: Hotel Le Donjon or similar

**Activity Note:** This will be a long transfer day, including about a 5-hour bus ride to reach Carcassonne, with stops along the way.

**Breakfast:** At the hotel.

**Morning:** We'll begin our drive to Carcassonne, located in southern France's Languedoc region. Our route will take us through the Parc Naturel Regional Des Causses du Quercy, an area of outstanding natural beauty known for its wooded, verdant valleys and ancient caves, which feature prehistoric wall paintings. About 30,000 people live within the park's confines in a series of quaint villages.

En route, we'll stop in Albi, a small town stretching along the Tarn River in Southern France. You'll enjoy a walking tour with your Trip Experience Leader along Albi's cobbled, medieval streets. Designated as a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 2010, Albi is well known for its red-hued architecture, including the Saint-Salvi Collegiate Church and its cloister as well as the Pont-Vieux over the Tarn.

Following our discoveries, we'll walk to a local restaurant for lunch.

**Lunch:** At a local restaurant.

**Afternoon:** After lunch, you'll have a little over an hour of free time to explore more of Albi on your own.

Then, we'll reconvene and drive south to Carcassonne. When we arrive, we'll check into our hotel. After some time to settle into your room, your Trip Experience Leader will lead a brief orientation walk around the hotel's vicinity.

**Dinner:** On your own. You may wish to join your Trip Experience Leader at a local restaurant.

**Evening:** Free. Ask your Trip Experience Leader for recommendations, or retire early to your room in preparation for tomorrow's early start.

## **Day 10 Explore Carcassonne • Visit Château Comtal • Optional paper mill tour**

- Destination: Carcassonne
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Dinner
- Accommodations: Hotel Le Donjon or similar

**Breakfast:** At the hotel.

**Morning:** This morning, take part in a discovery walk of Carcassonne with your Trip Experience Leader. We'll stroll La Cité, a UNESCO World Heritage Site that overlooks Carcassonne's winding, narrow streets. The Basilique Saint-Nazaire here shows the handwork of the eleventh to 14th centuries, with a Romanesque nave and Gothic choir illuminated by stained glass windows. As we explore, we'll learn about La Cité's long history, which stretches back to the Gauls and Romans. Afterwards, you'll get to explore the castle at your own pace with an audio-guide.

**Lunch:** On your own today in Carcassonne.

**Afternoon:** After lunch, enjoy a few hours at leisure. Perhaps you'll stroll the medieval cité and peruse the local shops and cafés.

Or, you may wish to join us on an optional tour to a nearby paper mill. We'll drive to Brousses to discover one of the last remaining, and one of the oldest, paper mills in France. We will be given a tour of the family owned and operated mill by one of the family members who will be eager to share their traditional process with us. We'll also take part in a paper-making workshop.

**Dinner:** At a local restaurant.

**Evening:** Free for you to make your own discoveries. You may choose to join your fellow travelers for a nightcap in the hotel bar.

### **Day 11 Carcassonne • *A Day in the Life of a French wine domaine***

- Destination: Carcassonne
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch
- Accommodations: Hotel Le Donjon or similar

**Activity Note:** Depending on availability, we may visit a different château during today's *A Day in the Life* experience.

**Breakfast:** At the hotel.

**Morning:** Today we'll drive to Pennautier, a village with just 2,500 residents. Our destination is Château Auzias, a boutique *domaine* (wine-producing territory) where we'll enjoy *A Day in the Life* experience with a local winemaker.

Upon arrival, we'll be greeted by a member of the community, who hails from a family of French wine producers and grew up in the vineyards of Burgundy before traveling to Chile and Argentina as a young man to study new wine-making techniques. Hired by the owners of Château Auzias to manage the *domaine* with a focus on sustainability, our host now lives here full-time.

The *domaine* spans almost 400 acres; we'll tour a small portion of it with our host as he tells us more about the area and the wines that are produced here. Château Auzias is located in the heart of the Languedoc-Roussillon region. Unlike Burgundy and Bordeaux, which attract thousands of tourists annually with their big-name châteaux and high-dollar vintages, Languedoc is a true hidden gem. As the largest and most prolific wine producing region in France, Languedoc was once better known for its high quantity than its high quality. But in the 1990s, the region's bulk-bin reputation began

to shift when boutique wine-makers started to focus on capturing Languedoc's diverse *terroir*. While the region is still responsible for more than one-third of France's wine exports, it is also a haven for passionate producers like our host who are obsessed with authenticity. When in-the-know locals are thirsty for a glass of something exciting and full of character, they turn to Languedoc.

A number of varietals are produced in the region, but Château Auzias is focused on popularizing Cabardès. After learning about the *domaine* and the specialized techniques, we'll put our knowledge to the test in the vineyards. Depending on the season, we may help cut the grapes from the vines, tend to the soil, or assist with upkeep. Or, you might opt to sip a glass of wine and take in the rustic beauty of our surroundings instead.

We'll then continue to further our education in viticulture. Working as a group, we'll create our own special wine blend to take home.

**Lunch:** With the help of members of the community, we'll begin preparing our *grillade vigneronne* (winemaker's grill). This convivial meal is typical of the harvest season, when workers gather to celebrate a successful day in the vineyards. We'll enjoy a similarly lively atmosphere as we dine on fresh produce and locally produced meat and indulge in wine from Château Auzias.

**Afternoon:** After lunch, we'll return to Carcassonne. After returning to the hotel, the remainder of the afternoon is yours to explore the walled city.

**Dinner:** On your own; ask your Trip Experience Leader to recommend options for local fare or a taste of home.

**Evening:** At your leisure. You may choose to join your fellow travelers for a nightcap in the hotel bar.

## Day 12 Transfer to Lyon via high-speed train

- Destination: Lyon
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch
- Accommodations: Hotel Mercure Lyon Centre Plaza Republique or similar

**Activity Note:** Luggage will be transferred from our hotel in Carcassonne to our hotel in Lyon. You will not have access to your luggage until we reach our hotel in Lyon, so please be sure to bring anything you may need, such as medications. Timings today may vary due to train schedule and availability.

**Breakfast:** At the hotel.

**Morning:** We'll depart for the train station for our transfer to Lyon.

**Lunch:** At a local restaurant in Lyon.

**Afternoon:** After our lunch, we'll drive to our hotel. From here, we'll take a vicinity walk with our Trip Experience Leader. Then we'll check into our hotel and receive our room assignments.

The remainder of the afternoon is at leisure.

**Dinner:** On your own. Ask your Trip Experience Leader for the best Lyonnaise fare in the area. Known as a food capital of France (as you'll see during your tasting tour tomorrow), Lyon is full of gastronomical wonders. Perhaps you'll try *soupe à l'oignon Lyonnaise*, which is known internationally as "French onion soup" but was, in fact, first created in Lyon.

**Evening:** Free for your own discoveries. Perhaps you will explore the city during a nighttime stroll, or join fellow travelers in the hotel bar.

## Day 13 Lyon • Local foods of Lyon tour

- Destination: Lyon
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch
- Accommodations: Hotel Mercure Lyon Centre Plaza Republique or similar

**Breakfast:** At the hotel.

**Morning:** Lyon is known as France's culinary capital, so it is only fitting that we explore this delightful city through our stomachs. Mid-morning, we'll embark on a 3-hour walking tour, which will include lunch. There's no better or more authentic way to experience Lyonnaise cuisine than a *bouchon*, so our food tour also includes a visit to one of these convivial eateries that focus on simple, rich dishes using quality ingredients in a family-like atmosphere. We'll meet with the owner and learn a little history of bouchons in Lyon, which are a centuries-old Lyonnaise tradition, rooted in local workers seeking out warm, home-cooked meals in a friendly setting.

We'll continue our tasting tour, featuring more samples of typical Lyonnaise fare with a local guide. Depending on where you stop on your tour, you'll be treated to a variety of sweet and savory options, including many varieties and preparations of *saucisson* (sausage). The city also has the good fortune of being surrounded by some of France's best wine-growing regions. Pair your nibbles with a glass of wine from the nearby Beaujolais or Côtes du Rhône regions for a culinary match made in heaven.

**Lunch:** Included in the food tour.

**Afternoon:** The rest of the day is at your leisure. Lyon stretches across two rivers—the Rhône and the Saône; strolling across the many elegant bridges that connect the city's banks is a great way to see the sights (and walk off the rich food). You might also like to visit the Musée des Confluences, which is nestled at the very spot where the two rivers converge.

The museum's futuristic exterior is a worthy attraction on its own, but the exhibits it houses—thematically organized around the Earth, eternity, societies, and species—are fantastically thought-provoking.

**Dinner:** On your own.

**Evening:** Free. Ask your Trip Experience Leader for suggestions, or take an evening stroll to see the city's many monuments lit up.

### **Day 14 Lyon • WWII Resistance walking tour**

- Destination: Lyon
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Dinner
- Accommodations: Hotel Mercure Lyon Centre Plaza Republique or similar

**Breakfast:** At the hotel.

**Morning:** During the Second World War, Lyon played such a key role in the liberation of France from Nazi occupation, it was labeled “capital of the Resistance.” We'll set off on a walking tour of the historic sites associated with the French resistance during Lyon's dark days of occupation and deportation. During our walk, you'll learn about some of the key figures and heroes of the period, like Resistance leader Jean Moulin; see where Resistance fighters gathered and where round-ups took place; and stroll through Lyon's *traboules*, the small, secret passageways used by Resistance fighters to escape the Gestapo and continue their clandestine battle for a free France.

**Lunch:** On your own. You can ask your Trip Experience Leader for dining options in the area.

**Afternoon:** After lunch, you have free time to explore Lyon on your own. Perhaps you'd like to enjoy the natural beauty and green spaces of Parc de la Tête d'Or, France's largest

urban park. Or, you might like to seek out a *tarte aux pralines* (praline tart), a popular Lyonnaise dessert.

**Dinner:** At a local restaurant.

**Evening:** Free to do as you'd like for your last night in Lyon.

### **Day 15 Transfer to Paris via high-speed train • Paris discovery walk • Seine River cruise**

- Destination: Paris
- Included Meals: Breakfast
- Accommodations: Les Jardins du Marais or similar

**Activity Note:** Luggage will be transferred from our hotel in Lyon to our hotel in Paris. You will not have access to your luggage until we reach our Paris hotel. Timing throughout this day may vary due to train schedule and availability.

**Breakfast:** At the hotel.

**Morning:** We'll check out of our hotel and drive to the Lyon train station. Here, we'll board a TGV—a high-speed French train that can travel at speeds up to 200 miles per hour—to Paris. The TGV is the first high-speed train of its kind: It connects all of France's major arteries, and is even said to have inspired the Japanese *shinkansen*, or bullet train. Relax as you watch the French countryside whiz by through the window, and perhaps mingle with French locals onboard.

**Lunch:** On your own. You might grab a bite to eat at the station before boarding, but sandwiches and salads are also available for purchase on the train.

**Afternoon:** We should arrive at Paris's Gare de Lyon station a little after midday. Then, we'll take the metro to the center of Paris where we'll set off on a discovery walk in the heart of the city.

You'll then walk to the Seine River with your Trip Experience Leader for a sight-seeing cruise of Paris. Some of stops on the tour include Notre Dame Cathedral and Hôtel de Ville.

Afterwards, we'll head back to our hotel for check in and receive our room assignments, then the remainder of the day is yours.

**Dinner:** On your own. Consider visiting a classic neighborhood bistro to dine on a quintessential Paris meal like *steak-frites* (steak and fries).

**Evening:** Free for you to continue exploring Paris on your own.

## Day 16 Explore Paris

- Destination: Paris
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Dinner
- Accommodations: Les Jardins du Marais or similar

**Breakfast:** At the hotel.

**Morning:** This morning, we'll meet in the lobby of our hotel and then hop on the Metro to enjoy a discovery walk through one of your Trip Experience Leader's favorite districts in Paris. After our walk, you'll have some free time here to explore this hidden gem on your own.

**Lunch:** On your own, whenever you'd like. If the day is nice, you might choose to picnic beneath the Eiffel Tower's watchful eye on the Champ de Mars.

**Afternoon:** The rest of the day is yours to explore Paris on your own. Everyone has their own vision of a perfect day in Paris—so enjoy a free day in the iconic capital to bring your vision to life. Maybe you'll stroll along the Left

Bank, admiring the architecture and savoring the smell of freshly-baked croissants wafting out of *boulangeries*. Or, spend the day taking in masterpieces from the Renaissance to the 20th century and beyond at one of Paris's many world-class art museums. Today, Paris is your oyster.

**Dinner:** At a local restaurant. Our small group will enjoy a Farewell Dinner featuring regional specialties and, of course, French wine to toast to the discoveries we've made and experiences we've shared.

**Evening:** Spend your last night in Paris as you wish. Take an evening stroll to see the city's monuments lit up, or join your fellow travelers at the hotel bar for one final nightcap as you discuss highlights and favorite memories from your adventure.

## Day 17 Return to U.S. or begin post-trip extension

- Included Meals: Breakfast

**Breakfast:** At the hotel.

**Morning:** Transfer to the airport for your flight home. Travelers taking our *The Best of Provence: Avignon & Aix-en-Provence* post-trip extension will head to Avignon this morning.

## END YOUR ADVENTURE WITH AN OPTIONAL POST-TRIP EXTENSION

### 6 nights in *The Best of Provence: Avignon & Aix-en-Provence*

**Day 1** Train transfer to Avignon

**Day 2** Explore Avignon

**Day 3** Avignon • Optional *Pont du Gard* tour

**Day 4** Overland to Aix-en-Provence • Visit Carrières de Lumières • Visit St. Remy

**Day 5** Explore Aix-en-Provence • Visit L'Epicerie aux Huiles

**Day 6** Cruise the calanques of Cassis • Explore Cassis

**Day 7** Return to U.S.

## OPTIONAL TOURS

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During your trip you will be able to book optional tours directly with your Trip Experience Leader. He or she will ask you to confirm the payment for these tours by filling out a payment form. Optional tours can only be purchased with a credit or debit card. We accept Visa, MasterCard, and Discover credit cards. We also accept Visa and MasterCard debit cards, but it must be a debit card that allows you to sign for purchases.

In order to correctly process these charges, there can be a delay of 2–3 months from the date of your return for the charges to be posted to your account. Therefore we ask that you use a card that will not expire in the 2–3 months following your return.

**Please note:** *Optional tour prices are listed in U.S. dollar estimates determined at the time of publication and are subject to change. Optional tours may vary.*

### Rocamadour

(Day 7 \$180 per person)

This optional tour visits Rocamadour, a UNESCO World Heritage Site. Along with its religious significance, the improbable cliffside location and picturesque homes of Rocamadour have garnered it the top spot on a national list of favorite French villages. Upon arrival, you'll have discovery walk led by your Trip Experience Leader, then you'll meet a local artist. Later, we'll enjoy lunch at a local restaurant. After lunch, we'll return to our hotel.

### Paper Mill Tour

(Day 10 \$120 per person)

Drive to the town of Brousses to discover one of the last remaining—and one of the oldest—paper mills in France. We will be given a tour of the family owned and operated mill by one of the family members who will be eager to share their traditional process with us. We'll also take part in a paper-making workshop.

## PRE-TRIP

### Northern France: Fontainebleau, Bayeux & the Beaches of Normandy

#### INCLUDED IN YOUR PRICE

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- » 6 nights accommodation
- » 12 meals—6 breakfasts, 3 lunches, and 3 dinners
- » 7 small group activities
- » Services of a local O.A.T. Trip Experience Leader
- » Gratuities for local guides, drivers, and luggage porters
- » All transfers

#### PRE-TRIP EXTENSION ITINERARY

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*Delve into French art and history on this journey from the bucolic landscapes of Fontainebleau to the hallowed beaches of Normandy. Along the way, you'll explore a forest that inspired an artistic movement, learn more about the life of Claude Monet in Giverny, and pay tribute to the brave men who helped turn the tide of World War II in Europe.*

##### **Day 1 Depart U.S.**

- Destination: Paris

**Afternoon/Evening:** Depart today on your overnight flight to Paris, France.

##### **Day 2 Arrive in Paris, France • Overland to Fontainebleau**

- Destination: Fontainebleau
- Accommodations: Hotel Campanile Fontainebleau or similar

**Activity Note:** Please be aware that rooms are often not available before 3pm at hotels throughout France. Travelers arriving on early flights may not be able to receive their room key until 3pm.

##### **Morning/Afternoon:** *Bienvenue en France!*

Upon arrival in Paris, you'll be greeted by an O.A.T. representative who will assist with your transfer to Fontainebleau. Your Trip Experience Leader will be waiting to greet you at the hotel.

After checking in, receiving our room assignments, and getting settled, you may wish to join your Trip Experience Leader on an orientation walk through the neighborhood surrounding the hotel.

Late this afternoon, we'll join our fellow travelers and Trip Experience Leader for a Welcome Drink to toast to the discoveries ahead.

**Dinner:** On your own. Perhaps you'll dine at one of the restaurants we passed during our orientation walk this afternoon.

**Evening:** Free for independent discoveries. You may want to go for a leisurely evening stroll to get better acquainted with Fontainebleau, or retire to your room to rest up for tomorrow's discoveries.

### Day 3 Explore Fontainebleau

- Destination: Fontainebleau
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Dinner
- Accommodations: Hotel Campanile Fontainebleau or similar

**Breakfast:** At the hotel.

**Morning:** Following breakfast, our group will convene in a meeting room at the hotel for a Welcome Briefing. Then, we'll set off on foot to begin making our discoveries.

Fontainebleau is a city of contrasts. At its heart is the Château de Fontainebleau, a pristine, 1,500-room estate that once hosted a who's who of European royalty—from Catherine de Medici and the "Sun King" Louis XIV, to Marie Antoinette and Napoleon Bonaparte.

We'll have a discovery walk of Fontainebleau with our Trip Experience Leader. Then, you can enjoy a visit to Château de Fontainebleau with a video-guide tour before returning to the city center for free time.

**Lunch:** On your own. Your Trip Experience Leader would be happy to recommend a restaurant serving up French specialties.

**Afternoon:** Free for independent discoveries. You may wish to continue exploring Fontainebleau, or you can ask your Trip Experience Leader to recommend an activity.

**Dinner:** We'll reconvene with our small group early this evening for a Welcome Dinner at a local restaurant in Fontainebleau, where we'll dine on French fare and toast to the discoveries ahead.

**Evening:** On your own. Perhaps you'll seek out a glass of wine or a local pastry before returning to your hotel.

### Day 4 Fontainebleau • Explore Barbizon • Art workshop

- Destination: Fontainebleau
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch
- Accommodations: Hotel Campanile Fontainebleau or similar

**Breakfast:** At the hotel.

**Morning:** After breakfast this morning, we'll make our way to the small town of Barbizon, nestled in the forest of Fontainebleau.

Captivated by its bucolic location, several notable artists took up residence in Barbizon, including Théodore Rousseau and Charles-François Daubigny. In fact, the area was so inspiring to these 19th-century pre-Impressionist painters that they eventually formed the Barbizon school, a movement focused on Realism and sculpture.

We'll witness the landscapes that sparked their creativity as we hike through the village and visit a local workshop to engage with a professional artist in Barbizon. We'll also have an opportunity to put our own skills to the test and apply paint to canvas or try our hand at sculpting.

**Lunch:** At a local restaurant.

**Afternoon:** The early afternoon is yours to do as you please. You may want to continue to indulge in the artistry of Barbizon or explore the surroundings that inspired these artists on your own.

**Dinner:** On your own. Fontainebleau abounds with fine restaurants serving delicious, seasonal cuisine. Your Trip Experience Leader would be happy to recommend his or her favorite spot.

**Evening:** Yours to do as you please. You may opt for one final stroll through the streets of Fontainebleau or return to the hotel to prepare for our transfer to Bayeux tomorrow.

### **Day 5 Fontainebleau • Explore Giverny • Overland to Bayeux**

- Destination: Bayeux
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Dinner
- Accommodations: Hotel du Luxembourg or similar

**Activity Note:** The tour of Monet's home and gardens is not available in March and November. We will offer a walking tour of Honfleur.

**Breakfast:** At the hotel.

**Morning:** We'll begin our northbound journey to Bayeux. En route, we'll stop to explore Giverny—the village that inspired Claude Monet.

Monet first witnessed Giverny while looking out a train window in 1883, and the unique light of the Seine Valley kept him in residence for 43 years, until his death in 1926. We'll spend the morning exploring the artist's home and gardens, left by his son Michel to the Academie des Beaux-Arts in 1966 and now dedicated to the great painter. The house is furnished as it was when the leader of the Impressionist School lived here, including his precious collection of Japanese engravings.

The gardens have been replanted, and as you stroll through them, you'll see with your own eyes the landscapes that have graced countless Monet paintings. You'll spot the familiar

Japanese bridge and water garden shaded by weeping willows, its pond still full of the water lilies that so permeated his work. "I want to paint like the birds sing," Monet said. Perhaps you'll agree that the idyllic setting in Giverny would lend itself to his dream.

**Lunch:** On your own. You may want to grab a quick snack to spend more time in the gardens or you can ask your Trip Experience Leader for other dining options.

**Afternoon:** We'll continue making our way to Bayeux after lunch. Upon arrival late this afternoon, we'll check in to our hotel and receive our room assignments.

After settling in, you may join our Trip Experience Leader for an orientation walk through the neighborhood surrounding the hotel.

**Dinner:** At a local restaurant.

**Evening:** Free for independent discoveries. You may wish to go for a stroll to see the historic city center.

### **Day 6 Explore Bayeux • Visit Bayeux Tapestry**

- Destination: Bayeux
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Dinner
- Accommodations: Hotel du Luxembourg or similar

**Breakfast:** At the hotel.

**Morning:** Following breakfast this morning, we'll join our Trip Experience Leader on a discovery walk around Bayeux. Located less than 10 miles from the English Channel, Bayeux has long used its strategic seaside location to its advantage, amassing significant wealth through international trade. The result is a

village that exudes elegance; its historic center was largely spared during World War II and boasts a variety of lovely architectural details.

Valuable goods aren't the only things to have crossed the channel from France to England. In 1066, Norman forces invaded England, claiming the English throne for French-born William the Conqueror. The event is depicted in a massive eleventh-century tapestry that we'll visit after lunch.

**Lunch:** On your own. Ask your Trip Experience Leader for options.

**Afternoon:** This afternoon, we'll head to the special museum that houses the Bayeux Tapestry, and learn much more about its history and significance on an audio-guided tour.

The remainder of the afternoon is yours to do as you please.

**Dinner:** At a local restaurant.

**Evening:** On your own. Perhaps you'll visit the hotel bar for a nightcap, or return to your room to relax after a full day of discoveries.

## **Day 7 Bayeaux • Normandy beaches**

- Destination: Bayeux
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch
- Accommodations: Hotel du Luxembourg or similar

**Breakfast:** At the hotel.

**Morning:** We'll travel to the coast for a full-day tour of D-Day discoveries. The D-Day landings, code-named "Operation Overlord," were the largest amphibious landings in recorded history, with the beaches of Normandy bearing the brunt of the invasion. Beginning at 6:30am on June 6, 1944, nearly 7,000 landing craft hit the highly-fortified coastline. Those vessels carried tens of thousands of soldiers from

the United States, Great Britain, Canada, and many other Allied nations, all of whom arrived determined to carry out General Eisenhower's order, "Full victory—nothing else."

First, we'll visit the American Military Cemetery. You'll see a monument honoring the fallen, and visit the cemetery of Colleville sur Mer, where 9,386 American soldiers were laid to rest. We'll also walk over to WN62, a heavily fortified German stronghold looking out over Omaha Beach, and then walk down the hill to the beach.

Then, we'll take a stroll along Omaha Beach for an up-close look at where the first Allied footing was achieved in German-occupied France. When they arrived on shore, the Allies were met with a deafening barrage of German gunfire. As Nazi soldiers shot from secure concrete pillboxes built high above the open sand, Allied fighters were mowed down while exiting the Higgins boats and wading to shore. In time, some doggedly made it to the ridge overlooking the beach, finding shelter from the hail of enemy bullets. More than a thousand Allied troops died on Omaha Beach alone.

**Lunch:** At a local restaurant.

**Afternoon:** Prior to the amphibious invasion on June 6, thousands of paratroopers landed behind enemy lines in an ill-fated attempt to head off Nazi troops. Several hundred of these paratroopers touched down in the surrounding villages. From there, we'll continue on to Pointe du Hoc, a sheer cliff overlooking both Utah and Omaha beaches, both of which were essential to the D-Day landings. Our local guide will explain how Pointe du Hoc helped the Allies secure the beaches—and ultimately, victory.

Our D-Day discoveries conclude with a stop at a secluded lookout point. As we take one last look at this fabled spot, we'll hear a few final words about its place in the history books.

We return to the hotel late this afternoon, and the balance of the day is yours.

**Dinner:** On your own. You may opt to have dinner in the hotel tonight, or ask your Trip Experience Leader to recommend a favorite spot for local fare.

**Evening:** Free to pursue your own interests. You might want to go for one final stroll through Bayeux or use this time to pack for your transfer to Angers.

## **Day 8 Bayeux • Overland to Angers •**

### **Begin main trip**

- Destination: Angers
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch

**Breakfast:** At the hotel.

**Morning:** We'll depart Bayeux this morning on our overland journey to Angers, the gateway to the picturesque Loire Valley.

**Lunch:** At a local restaurant en route to Angers.

**Afternoon:** After lunch, we'll check in to our hotel and meet the rest of the travelers and begin our *French Impressions: From the Loire Valley to Lyon & Paris* adventure.

## POST-TRIP

### *The Best of Provence: Avignon & Aix-en-Provence*

#### INCLUDED IN YOUR PRICE

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- » 6 nights accommodation
- » 12 meals—6 breakfasts, 4 lunches, and 2 dinners
- » 4 small group activities
- » Services of a local O.A.T. Trip Experience Leader
- » Gratuities for local guides, drivers, and luggage porters
- » All transfers

#### POST-TRIP EXTENSION ITINERARY

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*Immerse yourself in the charms of southern France, where sun-bleached medieval villages perch atop hills, fragrant lavender fields dot the countryside, and the light is so beautiful and enticing it gave birth to a new movement in painting. On this extension, you'll spend three nights in Aix-en-Provence, the chic university town that rivals Paris in sophistication. Then, venture to the small town of St. Remy, the one-time residence of Van Gogh, to soak up the idylls of the Provençal countryside. Along the way, you'll cruise the azure waters of the Mediterranean, break bread with a local sculptor, and discover for yourself what makes southern France such a beguiling destination.*

##### **Day 1 Train transfer to Avignon**

- Destination: Avignon
- Included Meals: Lunch
- Accommodations: Hotel in Avignon

**Morning:** Depart Paris this morning, and take a train to Avignon.

**Lunch:** At a restaurant in Avignon.

**Afternoon:** After lunch, we'll check into our hotel in Avignon. The rest of the afternoon is free to make your own discoveries.

Later, join your Trip Experience Leader for a Welcome Briefing and discuss our upcoming discoveries.

**Dinner:** On your own—ask your Trip Experience Leader for recommendations.

**Evening:** You are free to spend the evening as you wish.

##### **Day 2 Explore Avignon**

- Destination: Avignon
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch
- Accommodations: Hotel in Avignon

**Breakfast:** At the hotel.

**Morning:** Today, marvel at Avignon, known as the “City of Popes,” on a morning walking tour. For much of the 14th century, the popes left the turmoil of Rome and took up residence in Avignon. Beginning with Clement V (who was born here), they built residences, chateaux, a number of fortified palaces, and churches in Avignon. We'll have a guided exploration of the impressive Palace of the Popes during our tour.

**Lunch:** At a local restaurant.

**Afternoon:** The latter part of the day is yours to make your own discoveries in Avignon. Wend the winding streets of some of the medieval city's ancient neighborhoods or relax at an outdoor café.

**Dinner:** On your own in Avignon. Perhaps you'll be adventurous and try the local specialty *pieds et paquets*—which translates to “feet and packages”—a savory one-dish meal of pork tripe and trotters.

**Evening:** On your own—ask your Trip Experience Leader for recommendations.

### **Day 3 Avignon • Optional Pont du Gard tour**

- Destination: Avignon
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Dinner
- Accommodations: Hotel in Avignon

**Breakfast:** At the hotel.

**Morning:** We'll set off on a walk with our Trip Experience Leader along Avignon's Rue des Teinturiers. This picture-perfect cobblestone street follows the small channel of the Sorgue—its cheerful babble mingling with the bustle of locals and visitors popping in and out of the many charming little shops and cozy cafés.

**Lunch:** On your own in Avignon.

**Afternoon:** Enjoy a day to explore Avignon at your own pace. You might like to stroll the Place de l'Horloge (Clock Tower Square), the city's lively main square, or walk along the scenic Pont d'Avignon.

Or, join our optional Pont du Gard tour to visit the ancient Roman aqueduct bridge and the museum.

Upon arrival, we'll join our Trip Experience Leader on a walk, crossing over the Pont du Gard bridge. Enjoy free time to discover this ancient masterpiece—perhaps you'll walk up to the viewing point, explore the Pont du Gard Museum, or stroll the beach below. After some time here, we'll return to our hotel where the rest of the afternoon is free.

**Dinner:** At a local restaurant.

**Evening:** Free to explore independently. Cap off your evening with a sweet treat such as a *tarte tropézienne*, a sugar-coated brioche stuffed with rich cream.

### **Day 4 Overland to Aix-en-Provence • Visit Carrières de Lumières • Visit St. Remy**

- Destination: Aix-en-Provence
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch
- Accommodations: Hotel in Aix-en-Provence

**Breakfast:** At the hotel.

**Morning:** We'll begin our journey to Aix-en-Provence today, stopping first at St. Paul de Mausole, the asylum where Van Gogh spent time towards the end of his life.

Then, we'll drive to St. Remy de Provence, a small market town set at the foot of the French Alps. The town is often associated with Van Gogh, and indeed our drive will take us through what is referred to as Van Gogh Country. The Seine, the Epte, and the Oise are the three French rivers referred to as the “Rivers of Light.” It was to the areas around these three rivers (which neighbor each other in this vicinity) that the Impressionist artists flocked to paint the landscapes and scenes that are so recognizable throughout the world. When we arrive, join your Trip Experience Leader for a discovery walk of St. Remy, after which, you'll be free to explore this town on your own.

**Lunch:** At a local restaurant in St. Remy.

**Afternoon:** After lunch, we'll next continue our drive to Aix-en-Provence, stopping in the town of Baux-de-Provence to visit the Carrières de Lumières, a unique and immersive art experience set in a former stone quarry. Walk through the larger-than-life exhibits, which feature famous paintings projected onto the stone walls and set to music, to experience art as you never have before.

When we arrive in Aix-en-Provence, we'll check in to our hotel. You'll have time to settle in and relax before joining your Trip Experience Leader on a walk around the hotel's vicinity.

**Dinner:** On your own in Aix-en-Provence, whenever you'd like. Hungry from your day of traveling? You may want to try a local dish, such *daube provençale*—the South of France's take on boeuf bourguignon.

**Evening:** You have the freedom to spend the rest of your evening as you wish—perhaps you and your fellow travelers will toast the day's discoveries at one of the city's many wine bars.

## **Day 5 Explore Aix-en-Provence • Visit L'Epicerie aux Huiles**

- Destination: Aix-en-Provence
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Dinner
- Accommodations: Hotel in Aix-en-Provence

**Breakfast:** At the hotel.

**Morning:** In the company of a local guide, we'll set out on a walking tour of Aix-en-Provence—or Aix, as the locals call it. Known for its wide, leafy boulevards and elegant squares lined with historic mansions, Aix brings chic sophistication to Provence. We'll stroll down Cours Mirabeau, the city's

café-lined main thoroughfare. Following our tour, you are free to make your own discoveries in Aix.

**Lunch:** On your own. Maybe you'll seek out *ratatouille*, the famous vegetable casserole made with layers of tomatoes, onions, peppers, eggplant, and zucchini.

**Afternoon:** After lunch, we'll visit L'Epicerie aux Huiles, a producer of fine French olive oil. We will learn how olive oil is made in Provence, then sample a few different varieties.

Then, you'll have a few hours of free time to continue exploring Aix on your own. You may consider a visit to the charming Vieil Aix, north of Cours Mirabeau. The neighborhood is all narrow lanes, pretty squares, and detailed architecture—with endless places to browse and shop.

**Dinner:** At a local restaurant.

**Evening:** Free for you to do as you'd like—check with your Trip Experience Leader for suggestions.

## **Day 6 Cruise the calanques of Cassis • Explore Cassis**

- Destination: Aix-en-Provence
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch
- Accommodations: Hotel in Aix-en-Provence

**Activity Note:** Today's calanques cruise tour may be cancelled due to weather conditions along the coast.

**Breakfast:** At the hotel.

**Morning:** Today we'll board our bus once more and drive to Cassis, a small fishing village near the Calanques National Park, known for its idyllic beauty, unique landscapes, and diverse cultural. The *calanques* is a series of narrow inlets, boarded by steep limestone cliffs, offers

incredible views of the Mediterranean. To access them, we'll board a boat and cruise along the shore.

**Lunch:** At a local restaurant in Cassis.

**Afternoon:** Later, you may choose to embark on a leisure cruise along the *calanques*.

We'll return to Aix-en-Provence in the late afternoon. Later in the day—right before dinner—we'll gather with our fellow travelers for a Farewell Drink and toast to the experiences we've had and the memories we've made. *Santé!*

**Dinner:** On your own in Aix. Maybe you'll tuck into a bowl of *soupe au pistou*, a summertime soup made with zucchini, basil, and white beans.

**Evening:** Spend your last night in France as you wish. Check with your Trip Experience Leader for suggestions.

## Day 7 Return to U.S.

- Included Meals: Breakfast

**Breakfast:** At the hotel.

**Morning:** You'll check out of your hotel in Aix-en-Provence and transfer to the airport this morning. From there, you'll catch your return flight home to the U.S. *Bon voyage!*

## OPTIONAL TOUR

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### Pont du Gard

(Day 3 \$125 per person)

One of the most impressive Roman Aqueducts in the world, Pont du Gard stands almost 160 feet high and is on three levels—the longest measuring 300 yards. Spanning the Gard River Valley, Pont du Gard was built shortly before the Christian era and was part of the almost 30-mile long aqueduct bringing water from Uzès to Nîmes.

Two thousand years after its construction, the ancient edifice is still a veritable masterpiece, as much for the technical aspect, as for its simple beauty, luring more than two million visitors a year to this UNESCO World Heritage Site.

You'll enjoy an included visit to the superb museum dedicated to the history of the Pont du Gard aqueduct before returning to your ship.

# TRAVEL DOCUMENTS & ENTRY REQUIREMENTS

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## Your Passport

- Must be in good condition
- Must be valid for at least 6 months after your scheduled return to the U.S.
- Must have the required number of blank pages (details below)
- The blank pages must be labeled “Visas” at the top. Pages labeled “Amendments and Endorsements” are not acceptable

## Need to Renew Your Passport?

Contact the National Passport Information Center (NPIC) at **1-877-487-2778**, or visit the U.S. Department of State’s official website at **www.travel.state.gov** for information on obtaining a new passport or renewing your existing passport. The U.S. Department of State allows for passport renewal by mail or, for applicable citizens, renewal online. We advise you review the process and requirements for online passport renewal on the official website.

You may also contact our recommended visa service company, PVS International, at **1-800-556-9990** for help with your passport.

## Recommended Blank Pages

Please confirm that your passport has enough blank pages for this vacation.

- **Main trip:** You will need 2 blank passport pages.
- **Pre-trip extension to Fontainebleau & Bayeux:** No additional passport pages are needed.
- **Post-extension to Avignon & Aix en Provence:** No additional blank pages are needed.

## Visa Required

**We’ll be sending you information with detailed instructions, application forms, and fees about 100 days prior to your departure.** In the meantime, we’re providing the information below as a guideline on what to expect. This info is for U.S. citizens only. All visas and fees are subject to change.

- **Europe (France):** Starting in 2025, U.S. citizens will be required to fill out an online European Travel Information and Authorization System (ETIAS) visa-waiver to enter countries in the European Union. There is no confirmed start date for the ETIAS at the time of printing. The ETIAS will be valid for 3 years.

## **Traveling Without a U.S. Passport?**

If you are not a U.S. citizen, or if your passport is from any country other than the U.S., it is your responsibility to check with your local consulate, embassy, or a visa services company about visa requirements. We recommend the services of PVS International, a national visa service located in Washington D.C.; they can be reached at **1-800-556-9990** or **[www.pvsinternational.org](http://www.pvsinternational.org)**.

## **Traveling With a Minor?**

Some governments may require certain documentation for minors to enter and depart the country or to obtain a visa (if applicable). For further detail on the required documentation, please contact your local embassy or consulate.

## **Emergency Photocopies of Key Documents**

We recommend you carry color photocopies of key documents including the photo page of your passport plus any applicable visas, air itinerary, credit cards (front and back), and an alternative form of ID. Add emergency phone numbers like your credit card company and the number for your travel protection plan. Store copies separate from the originals.

If you plan to email this information to yourself, please keep in mind that email is not always secure; consider using password protection or encryption. Also email is not always available worldwide. As an alternative, you could load these documents onto a flash drive instead, which can do double-duty as a place to backup photos during your trip.

## **Overseas Taxes & Fees**

This tour may have taxes and fees that cannot be included in your airline ticket price because you are required to pay them in person onsite. All taxes are subject to change without notice and can be paid in cash (either U.S. or local currency). If applicable, you will receive a list of these fees with your Final Documents.

## RIGORS, VACCINES & GENERAL HEALTH

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### Is This Adventure Right for You?

**Please review the information below prior to departing on this adventure.** We reserve the right for our Trip Experience Leaders to modify participation, or in some circumstances send travelers home, if their condition would adversely affect the health, safety, or enjoyment of themselves or of other travelers.

#### PACING

- 6 locations in 16 days

#### PHYSICAL REQUIREMENTS

- Not appropriate for travelers using wheelchairs, walkers, or other mobility aids
- You must be able to walk 3 miles unassisted and participate in 2–3 hours of physical activities each day
- We reserve the right for Trip Experience Leaders to restrict participation, or in some circumstances send travelers home, if their limitations impact the group's experience
- You may encounter animals on this trip. We make every effort to keep these encounters safe, however animals may behave unpredictably or dangerously at times. Please use caution when interacting with animals on this trip: Keep a safe distance, stay alert, and respect the animals

#### CLIMATE

- Daytime temperatures range from 40–75°F in northern France and 50–90°F in the south
- July–August are the warmest months
- March and November weather can be unpredictable and change quickly

#### TERRAIN & TRANSPORTATION

- Unpaved roads, hilly terrain, and uneven walking surfaces, including slippery cobblestones, stairs, and sand
- Depending on group size, travel by 16-passenger up to 53-passenger coach, and high-speed train

#### FLIGHT INFORMATION

- Travel time will be 10–15 hours and may involve one connection

#### ACCOMMODATIONS & FACILITIES

- We spend 15 nights in hotels, all of which feature private baths

## Steps to Take Before Your Trip

Before you leave on this adventure, we recommend the following:

- Check with the CDC for their recommendations for the countries you'll be visiting. You can contact them online at **[www.cdc.gov/travel](http://www.cdc.gov/travel)** or by phone at **1-800-232-4636**.
- Have a medical checkup with your doctor at least 6 weeks before your trip.
- Pick up any necessary medications, both prescription and over-the-counter.
- Have a dental and/or eye checkup. (Recommended, but less urgent)

## No Vaccines Required

### Recommended Vaccines

At the time of writing there were no required vaccines for this trip. The CDC recommends that all travelers be up to date on their routine vaccinations and on basic travel vaccines like Hepatitis A and Typhoid, but these are suggestions only. However, this could change in future so we encourage you to check with the CDC yourself before meeting with your doctor.

### Medication Suggestions

- An antibiotic medication for gastrointestinal illness

### Traveling with Medications

- **Pack medications in your carry-on bag** to avoid loss and to have them handy.
- **Keep medicines in their original, labeled containers** for a quicker security screen at the airport and a better experience if you get stopped by customs while overseas.
- **Bring copies of your prescriptions**, written using the generic drug name rather than a brand name to be prepared for any unforeseen loss of your medications.

We recommend checking with the State Department for medication restrictions by country: **[travel.state.gov](http://travel.state.gov)** (Go to "Find International Travel Information", select "Country Information", then enter the country into the search bar; if you don't see any medications specifically mentioned under the "Health" section, then you can presume major U.S. brands should be OK).

## Staying Healthy on Your Trip

### Jet Lag Tips

- Start your trip well-rested.
- Begin a gradual transition to your new time zone before you leave or switch to your destination time zone when you get on the plane.
- Attempt to sleep and eat according to the new schedule.

- Avoid heavy eating and drinking caffeine or alcoholic beverages right before—and during—your flight.
- Drink plenty of water and/or fruit juice while flying
- Stretch your legs, neck, and back periodically while seated on the plane.
- After arrival, avoid the temptation to nap.
- Don't push yourself to see a lot on your first day.
- Try to stay awake your first day until after dinner.

## Allergies

If you have any serious allergies or dietary restrictions, we advise you to notify us at least 30 days prior to your departure. Please call our Travel Counselors at **1-800-221-0814**, and we will communicate them to our regional office. Every effort will be made to accommodate you.

## Water

- The tap water in France is safe to drink.
- If you prefer bottled water—or if you know your stomach is particularly sensitive to changes in diet/water—you can buy it at grocery stores, cafes, roadside stands, and restaurants.
- Note that if you order water in a restaurant, you will probably get bottled water as a matter of course. This is common throughout Europe. If you want tap water, you should specify.

## Food

- France has high food safety standards, meaning it is OK to eat almost anywhere, even from market stalls. The water is safe, so ice, fruits, and salads are OK too.
- That said, use the same commonsense rules that you would in the U.S.—if an establishment looks unclean, or if the food seems to have sat out for too long, avoid it. Also note that there are a few French specialties that are traditionally served raw (oysters; *steak tartare*), which have a slightly higher risk of causing an upset stomach.
- Your Trip Experience Leader can suggest restaurants for the meal you take on your own.

# MONEY MATTERS: LOCAL CURRENCY & TIPPING GUIDELINES

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## Top Three Tips

- **Carry a mix of different types of payments**, such as local currency, an ATM card, and a credit card. Traveler's checks are not recommended.
- **You will not be able to pay with U.S. dollars on this trip**; you will need euros instead.
- **The easiest way to get euros on the trip is to use a local ATM.** Or if you want to arrive with some cash in hand—which can be useful if you arrive on a Sunday or during a bank holiday—then you can change a small amount through your own bank before you leave.

## Local Currency

For current exchange rates, please refer to an online converter tool like [www.xe.com/currencyconverter](http://www.xe.com/currencyconverter), your bank, or the financial section of your newspaper.

**Euro Countries:** European Euro (€)

## How to Exchange Money

If you want to exchange money before your trip, you can usually do so through your bank or at an exchange office. Your departure airport in the U.S., a travel agent, or an AAA office are also possible outlets. Or you can wait and change money on the trip instead—but it might be helpful to arrive with some local currency in case you run into a bank holiday or an “out of order” ATM.

On your trip, the easiest way to obtain local currency is to withdraw funds from a local ATM. The ATM will give you local money and your bank at home will convert that into U.S. dollars.

You may be able to exchange cash at some hotels, large post offices, and money exchange offices, however they do not typically offer good exchange rates and can be difficult to find. To exchange cash, you'll usually need your passport and bills in good condition (not worn, torn, or dirty). New bills (post 2004) are best.

Please note that many banks in Europe will only exchange money for their own customers. Never exchange money on the street. All exchange methods involve fees, which may be built into the conversion rate; ask beforehand.

## ATMs

When using the ATM, keep in mind that it may only accept cards from local banks, and may not allow cash advances on credit cards; you might need to try more than one ATM or more than one card.

Many banks charge a fee of \$1–\$10 each time you use a foreign ATM. Others may charge you a percentage of the amount you withdraw. We recommend that you check with your bank before you depart.

Lastly, don't forget to memorize the actual digits of your card's PIN number (many keypads at foreign ATMs do not include letters on their keys—they only display numbers.)

In most countries, ATMs are widely available in major cities. If you are in a rural location, it will likely be harder to find an ATM.

## Credit & Debit Cards

While traveling, most countries and major cities will accept credit cards. Even if you don't plan on using a credit card during your trip, we still suggest that you bring one or two as a backup, especially if you are planning a large purchase (artwork, jewelry). We also suggest that you bring more than one brand of card (i.e. Visa, MasterCard, American Express) if possible, because not every shop will take every card. For example, although Discover and American Express cards are accepted in some countries outside the U.S., they are not widely adopted, so other brands will work at a much larger range of stores, restaurants, etc.

If you are visiting a country that does not commonly accept credit cards, they will be listed below.

**France:** Credit and debit cards are widely accepted in France. For small purchases or markets, you may need cash instead.

## Chip Cards

Many countries have adopted credit cards that have an embedded computer chip. These cards are inserted into the reader instead of swiped. The card owner then authorizes the purchase using a PIN instead of signing.

Though this technology is common in the U.S., occasionally there are machines in other countries that can't read U.S. cards or the machine can read the card, but asks for a PIN. This doesn't happen often, and is nothing to worry about. You can usually resolve the situation by asking the cashier to let you sign. (If you don't speak the language, just mime signing on your hand.) If you are not able to sign for a purchase, such as at an automated ticket booth, you can use another form of payment, such as a debit card that has a PIN.

## Notify Card Providers of Upcoming Travel

Many credit card companies and banks have fraud alert departments that will freeze your card if they see suspicious charges—such as charges or withdrawals from another country. To avoid an accidental security block, it is a good idea to notify your credit card company and/or bank you will be using your cards abroad. You can do this by calling their customer service number a week or two before your departure. Some banks or credit card companies will also let you do this online.

You should also double-check what phone number you could call if you have a problem with a card while you are abroad. Don't assume you can use the 1-800 number printed on the back of your card—most 1 800 numbers don't work outside of the U.S.!

## Tipping Guidelines

Of course, whether you tip, and how much, is always at your own discretion. But for those of you who have asked for tipping suggestions, we offer these guidelines:

- **O.A.T. Trip Experience Leader:** It is customary to express a personal “thank you” to your Trip Experience Leader at the end of your trip. As a guideline, many travelers give \$10–\$14 USD (or equivalent in local currency) per person for each day their Trip Experience Leader is with them. *Please note that these tips can only be in cash. If you are taking any of the optional extensions, your Trip Experience Leader during the extension(s) may not be the same as the one on your main trip.*
- **Housekeeping staff at hotels:** \$1–2 per room, per night
- **Included in Your Trip Price:** Gratuities are included for local guides, drivers, and luggage porters on your main trip, extensions, and all optional tours.

*Please Note: Tips can be converted and paid in local currency (this is usually preferred). But for your convenience, our staff also accept tips in U.S. dollars. Please do not use personal or traveler’s checks for tips.*

### Time at Leisure

When you are exploring on your own, it’s useful to know when to tip and how much, because local customs often differ from the U.S. Here are a few helpful guidelines for the most common services a traveler might use:

- **Taxis:** Tipping is not customary, but many locals will round up the fare and let the driver keep the change. If the driver helps you with heavy luggage, then 10% is a nice gesture.
- **Restaurants, cafes, and bars:** The tip for the waiter or bartender is usually included in the prices or added on as a service fee. Look for a statement on the menu like *service compris* which means “service is included”, or for a service charge on the bill. If you would like to leave a tip on top of the service fee (or in the rare case when the service is not included) then 10% would be considered generous.
- **Public Restrooms:** Most public restrooms in Europe have attendants that clean and stock the supplies. It is customary to leave a small tip for them—half a euro—so hold on to those coins! Some restrooms are pay-toilets; you pay the staff at the entrance or drop the appropriate coin into the slot on the stall door. Many restaurants, cafes, and shops offer pay-toilets only or reserve their restrooms for patrons only.

## AIR, OPTIONAL TOURS & STAYING IN TOUCH

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### Land Only Travelers & Personalized Air

#### Quick Definitions

- **Land Only:** You will be booking your own international flights. Airport transfers are not included.
- **Air-Inclusive:** You booked international air with us. Airport transfers are included as long as you didn't customize your trip's dates (see next bullet).
- **Arrive Early or Stopover (select adventures only):** If you chose one of these Personalization options and purchased air through O.A.T, accommodations and airport transfers are included. However, if you chose one of our Personalization options, but did not purchase air through O.A.T., accommodations are included, but airport transfers are not. If you chose one of our Personalization options, and purchase air through O.A.T. but not the accommodations, the airport transfers are not included. We have included transfer options below.
- **Personalization on Your Own:** If you have not purchased air through O.A.T. and decided to arrive early, stay longer, or stop in a connecting city on your own, you are responsible for airport transfers and accommodations. For your convenience, a preliminary list of your included hotels is available on your My Planner at [www.oattravel.com/myplanner](http://www.oattravel.com/myplanner) under "My Reservations" to help you with selecting a hotel for your additional time.

### Air Inclusive Travelers

If you have purchased international air with us, there are some points that may be helpful for you to know.

- **U.S. Departure:** If you are among a group of ten or more travelers who depart the U.S. from your international gateway city, it is our goal to have an O.A.T. Representative assist you at the U.S. airport with the check-in of your flight. Unless there are extenuating circumstances beyond our control, the Representative will be at the check-in counter three hours before your departure time. If you are flying domestically before your international flight, the representative will be stationed at the check-in counter for your departing international flight, not at the domestic arrival gate.
- **U.S. Return:** If you are among a group of ten or more travelers who return to the same U.S. gateway city, an O.A.T. Representative will meet you as you exit Customs and help you find taxis, buses, hotel accommodations, or connecting flights. Again, it is our goal to have our Representative waiting to assist your group. In rare instances, unforeseen circumstances may prevent this service.

- **Flying with a Travel Companion:** If you're traveling with a companion from a different household, and both of you are beginning and ending your trip at the same airport on the same dates, let us know you'd like to travel together and we'll make every effort to arrange this (please note, however, that this is not always possible). If you request any changes to your flights, please be sure that both you and your companion tell us that you still want to fly together.
- **Selecting Your Seats:** If your airline allows pre-assigned seats, you will be able to select and view them directly from the airline's website after booking. Some airlines will not allow seat confirmation until your reservation is ticketed 45–30 days prior to departure, and/or they may charge a nominal fee. You may locate your itinerary on an airline's website utilizing the Record Locator Number found on the Air Itinerary in your My Planner.

### **Airport Transfers Can Be Purchased**

For eligible flights, airport transfers may be purchased separately as an optional add-on, subject to availability. To be eligible, your flight(s) must meet the following requirements:

- You must fly into or fly home from the same airport as O.A.T. travelers who purchased included airfare.
- Your flight(s) must arrive/depart on the same day that the group arrives or departs.
- If you are arriving early, you must have arranged the hotels through our Arrive Early personalization option

Airport transfers can be purchased up to 45 days prior to your departure; they are not available for purchase onsite. To learn more, or purchase airport transfers, please call our Travel Counselors at **1-800-221-0814**.

If you don't meet the requirements above, you'll need to make your own transfer arrangements. We suggest the Rome to Rio website as a handy resource: [www.rome2rio.com](http://www.rome2rio.com)

### **Optional Tours**

Optional tours are additional add-on tours that allow you to personalize your adventure by tailoring it to your tastes and needs. And if you decide not to join an optional tour? Then you'll have free time to relax or explore on your own—it's about options, not obligations.

### **What You Need to Know**

- All optional tours are subject to change and availability.
- Optional tours that are reserved with your Trip Experience Leader can be paid for using credit/debit cards only. We accept MasterCard, Visa, and Discover credit cards; we can also take MasterCard or Visa debit cards as long as the card allows you to sign for purchases. (You won't be able to enter a PIN.)

- To ensure that you are charged in U.S. dollars, your payment will be processed by our U.S. headquarters in Boston. This process can take up to three months, so we ask that you only use a card that will still be valid three months after your trip is over. The charge may appear on your credit card statement as being from Boston, MA or may be labeled as “OPT Boston”.
- Your Trip Experience Leader will give you details on the optional tours while you’re on the trip. But if you’d like to look over descriptions of them earlier, you can do so at any time by referring to your Day-to-Day Itinerary (available online by signing into My Planner at [www.oattravel.com/myplanner](http://www.oattravel.com/myplanner)).

## Communicating with Home from Abroad

### Cell Phones

If you want to use your cell phone on the trip, check with your phone provider to see if your phone and service will work outside of the U.S. It may turn out to be cheaper to rent an international phone or buy a SIM card onsite. If you want to use a local SIM, just make certain your phone can accept one.

### Calling Apps

We recommend you use WhatsApp while abroad to communicate home and with your Trip Experience Leader while onsite. You will need a Wi-Fi connection if you do not have international coverage. Other calling options include smartphone apps such as Skype or FaceTime. You will need a Wi-Fi connection for these apps and the calls may count towards your phone plan’s data allowance. Many smartphones—and some tablets or laptops—come with one of these apps pre-installed or you can download them for free from the appropriate apps store.

### Calling Cards and 1-800 Numbers

When calling the U.S. from a foreign country, a prepaid calling card can be useful because it circumvents unexpected charges from the hotel. Calling cards purchased locally are typically the best (less expensive, more likely to work with the local phones, etc.).

One reminder: Do not call U.S. 1-800 numbers outside the continental United States. This can result in costly long distance fees, since 1-800 numbers do not work outside the country.

### Internet

WiFi is readily available in some restaurants, cafes, and hotels. Some businesses will offer free WiFi, and some will charge for the service; charges vary. Cafes and chain restaurants are good places to look for free WiFi, although it is expected that you’ll buy a drink while you’re in the café. Many hotels will also have a computer in the lobby or in the business center that travelers can use; there may or may not be a fee.

## How to Call Overseas

When calling overseas from the U.S., dial 011 for international exchange, then the country code (indicated by a plus sign: +), and then the number. Note that foreign phone numbers may not have the same number of digits as U.S. numbers; even within a country the number of digits can vary depending on the city and if the phone is a land line or cell phone.

**France:** +33

## PACKING: WHAT TO BRING & LUGGAGE LIMITS

### Luggage Limits

MAIN TRIP LIMITS	
Pieces per person	One checked bag and one carry-on per person.
Weight restrictions	Varies by international airline. The current industry standard is <b>50 lbs for checked luggage</b> and <b>15 lbs for carry-ons</b> .
Size Restrictions	Standard airline size: checked luggage should not exceed 62 linear inches (length+ width + depth) and carry-on should not exceed 45 linear inches.
Luggage Type	Duffel bag or soft-sided suitcase. Please do not bring a hard-sided (clamshell) suitcase.
TRIP EXTENSION(S) LIMITS	
Same as the main trip.	
REMARKS/SUGGESTIONS	
<b>Luggage rules:</b> Luggage rules and limits are set by governmental and airline policy. Enforcement of the rules may include spot checks or may be inconsistent. However one thing is the same across the board: If you are found to have oversized or overweight luggage, you will be subject to additional fees, to be assessed by—and paid to—the airline in question.	

#### Don't Forget:

- **These luggage limits may change.** If the airline(s) notify us of any changes, we will include an update in your Final Documents booklet.
- It's a good idea to reconfirm baggage restrictions and fees directly with the airline a week or so prior to departure. For your convenience, we maintain a list of the toll-free numbers for the most common airlines on our website in the FAQ section.
- **Baggage fees are not included in your trip price;** they are payable directly to the airlines.

#### Your Luggage

- **Checked Luggage:** One duffel bag or suitcase. Look for one with heavy fabric, wrap-around handles, built-in wheels, and a heavy duty lockable zipper.

- **Carry-on Bag:** You are allowed one carry-on bag per person. We suggest a tote or small backpack that can be used as both a carry-on bag for your flight and to carry your daily necessities—water bottle, camera, etc—during your daily activities.
- **Locks:** For flights that originate in the U.S., you can either use a TSA-approved lock or leave your luggage unlocked. Outside of the U.S. we strongly recommend locking your luggage as a theft-prevention measure.

### Clothing Suggestions: Functional Tips

- As you will experience a range of temperatures and weather conditions, we suggest that you **pack at least a few layers**. For example, you'll want good-quality rain gear and a jacket/sweater year-round. (Even in summer, the evenings in northern France can be cool or the AC might be on high.) In fall and winter, you'll need a warm coat, hat, gloves, and a scarf.
- You can often buy clothing designed especially for travel, which may save space in your luggage. For example, clothing in quick-dry fabric that you can wash by hand and re-wear.
- **You'll be on your feet a lot during the trip**, and walking over some rough and slippery surfaces. The soles of your shoes should offer good traction.

### Style Hints & Dress Codes

- **Dress on our trip is functional and casual.** The locals in France usually go for a “smart casual” look. Even in the fanciest hotels and restaurants men don't need a jacket and tie—though you won't feel out of place wearing them.
- **Shorts are fine for sightseeing except in some religious buildings**, where men and women may be expected to have legs and arms covered.

### Suggested Packing Lists

We have included suggestions from Trip Experience Leaders and former travelers to help you pack. These packing lists are only jumping-off points—they offer recommendations based on experience, but not requirements. We recommend using [www.weather.com](http://www.weather.com) and consulting the “Climate” chapter of this handbook.

**And don't forget a reusable water bottle**—you'll need it to take advantage of any refills we offer as we are working to eliminate single-use plastic bottles on all of our trips.

### Recommended Clothing

- ☐ **Shirts:** A mixture of short and long-sleeved shirts in a breathable fabric, like cotton or cotton-blend. Polo shirts are more versatile than T-shirts.
- ☐ **Bottoms:** Trousers and/or jeans. Skirts or dresses are also an option.
- ☐ **Shoes and socks:** We recommend you wear sturdy walking shoes or supportive sports shoes with good traction.

- ☐ Light rain jacket/windbreaker with hood
- ☐ Wide-brim sun hat or visor for sun protection
- ☐ Sweater, sweatshirt, or jacket (even in the summer as the AC can be cold)
- ☐ Underwear and sleepwear

## Seasonal Clothing Recommendations

### For late spring or summer departures:

- ☐ Swimsuit, in case your hotel has a pool
- ☐ Shorts are fine in the summer, although they may not be allowed in some religious buildings

### For fall and winter departures:

- ☐ A coat and sweaters or sweatshirts to layer

## Essential Items

- ☐ Daily essentials: toothbrush, toothpaste, floss, hairbrush or comb, shaving items, deodorant, etc. Our hotels will provide the basics like soap and shampoo, but if you are sensitive to fragrances or new products, you may wish to bring your preferred brands. Most hotels do not provide a washcloth, so you may wish to pack one.
- ☐ Spare eyeglasses/contact lenses; sunglasses
- ☐ Sunscreen, SPF 15 or stronger
- ☐ Light folding umbrella
- ☐ Pocket-size tissues
- ☐ Moist towelettes and/or anti-bacterial “water-free” hand cleanser
- ☐ Electrical plug adapters
- ☐ Camera gear with extra batteries or battery charger

## Medicines & First Aid Gear

- ☐ Your own prescription medicines

- ☐ Travel first aid kit: Band-Aids, headache and pain relief, laxatives and anti-diarrhea tablets, something for upset stomach. Maybe a cold remedy, moleskin foot pads, antibiotic cream, or allergy medication.
- ☐ Optional: An antibiotic medication for gastrointestinal illness

## Home-Hosted Visits

Many of our adventures feature a visit with a local family, often as part of the *A Day in the Life* experience. It is customary, though not necessary, to return your hosts' generosity with a small gift. If you do bring a gift, we recommend that you bring something the whole family can enjoy, or something that represents your region, state, or hometown. Get creative and keep it small—peach jelly from Georgia, maple sugar candy from New England, orange blossom soap from California; something that can be used or used up is best. When choosing a gift, be certain to consider the local culture as well. For example, we do not recommend alcohol in Muslim communities because it is forbidden in Islam, and your hosts may be religious. Not all O.A.T. adventures include a Home-Hosted Visit; please check your final itinerary before you depart.

## Electricity Abroad

When traveling overseas, the voltage is usually different and the plugs might not be the same shape.

### Voltage

Electricity in France is 230 volts. In the U.S. it is 110 volts. Most of the things a traveler will want to plug in—battery chargers, smartphones, tablets or computers—can run off both 110 and 220–240. But you should check the item or the owner's guide first to confirm this before you plug it in. If you have something that needs 110 volts—like a shaver or a hairdryer—you can bring a transformer to change the current. (But transformers tend to burn out, so it might be better to leave whatever it is at home.)

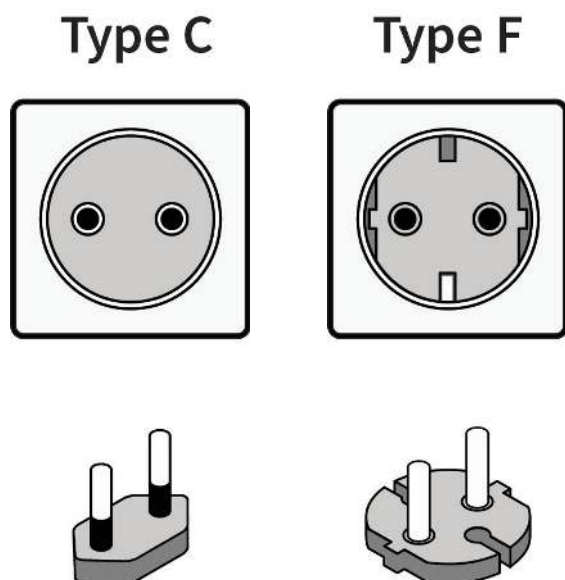
### Plugs

The shape of plugs will vary from country to country, and sometimes even within a country depending on when that building was built. To plug something from the U.S. into a local socket you'll need an adapter that fits between the plug and the socket. Even though you'll only need types C, F, and E for this trip, it may be easier to purchase an all-in-one, universal adapter/converter combo. Versatile and lightweight, these can usually be found at your local electronics goods or hardware stores. Sometimes you can buy them at large retailers too, like Target or Walmart. If you forget to bring an adapter, you might also find them for sale at the airport when you arrive at your destination.

Different plug shapes are named by letters of the alphabet. Standard U.S. plugs are Type A and Type B. Here is the list of plugs for the countries on this trip:

*Note that a C plug will fit in an F socket, so only one type of adapter is needed.*

**France:** C and E



### Availability

Barring the occasional and unpredictable power outage, electricity is as readily available on this adventure as it is in the U.S.

## CLIMATE & AVERAGE TEMPERATURES

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**Angers, France (Loire Valley):** The Loire River acts like a boundary separating France's northern and southern climates. Both the river and the Atlantic Ocean have a significant effect on Angers, creating a climate that is mild but rainy all year. (In fact rainfall is so common here that you should expect at least a few gray skies during your trip.) Snow and frosts can occur, but usually are limited to a handful of days throughout the entire winter. Summer temperatures are generally in the 70s or 80s, but can spike up into the 90s during heat waves. Spring and fall are nice during the day, with high temperatures in the mid-50s to mid-60s range, but can drop to 40 degrees or lower at night.

**Sarlat-la-Canéda, France (Dordogne):** Sarlat enjoys a temperate climate similar to Norfolk, Virginia or southern Oregon. July and August are hot, with highs in the 80s (or even hotter); December, January, and February are cold, especially at night when it can be below freezing. The rest of the year temperatures stay in the 50s to mid-70s range. While rainfall can happen at any time of year, sunshine is far more common than rainy days.

**Carcassonne, France (Southwest):** Southern France's climate is similar to Spain's northern coast. It has an oceanic-maritime climate, with temperate weather year-round and rare major temperature fluctuations or extremes. The warmer months tend to be in July and August. The cooler months tend to be in December, January, and February.

**Lyon, France (Rhône region):** Lyon has a moderate climate, with at least a few rainy days every month. Spring temperatures are usually in the 40s to 60s range, although nights can be chilly in April. Summer usually brings highs in the 80s, with occasional heat waves getting up into the 100s. The days start to cool off in September and October, and can start to dip below the 40s in late November. Winter usually doesn't bring much snow—only 3 or 4 days a month, with little accumulation—but temperatures do get below freezing, especially at night.

**Bayeux, France (Normandy):** Normandy, lying in the northwestern part of France, has a typical maritime climate similar to the U.S. mid-Atlantic states. Temperatures are mild throughout the year—usually in the 40-60 range. The winds from the ocean bring moisture, so it often humid or rainy no matter the season. It can also be very windy, especially along the coast. Expect to have shifts in the cloud cover—from sunny to overcast and back to sunny—throughout the day as the winds change.

**Aix-en-Provence, France (Provence):** Compared to northern France, the Provence region enjoys more sunshine, higher temperatures, and longer spells of consistent weather. The summers are generally sunny and warm with low humidity, but there can be occasional heat waves. Spring and fall see average highs in the 60s, but tend to be the rainiest months. Winter is mild and snowfall is rare—maybe once every three years.

**Paris, France:** The City of Light has about the same weather as our Middle Atlantic States, though it's usually not warmer than 75° F, or colder than 30° F. The main characteristic of the city's weather is its changeability. Bright skies can abruptly turn cloudy and a chilly drizzle ensue; then just as quickly as the rain begins it will end.

Another volatile aspect of Parisian weather is the blasts of rapidly moving air—probably the result of a wind tunnel effect caused by the city’s long boulevards being bordered by buildings of uniform height. But other than the occasional winds and rain (which add an undeniable drama to many of the city’s panoramas), Paris offers among the most pleasant weather conditions of any capital in Europe, with a highly tolerable average temperature of 53°.

The early spring can still be on the cool side, but later on in the season, temperatures are usually comfortable, often reaching into the low 60s. Summers are rarely overly warm—the upper 70s is the norm—though a spell of hot weather in the 90s can settle in for a few days, or even a week or two in July and August. Early autumn is slightly cooler, with temperatures edging toward the 50s. By November, it may dip into the 40s. Rain is a common occurrence year-round.

### Climate Averages & Online Forecast

The following charts reflect the **average** climate as opposed to exact weather conditions. This means they serve only as general indicators of what can reasonably be expected. An extreme heat wave or cold snap could fall outside these ranges. As your departure approaches, we encourage you to use [www.weather.com](http://www.weather.com) for a more accurate forecast of the locations you visit.

## Average Daily High/Low Temperatures (°F), Humidity & Monthly Rainfall

MONTH	ANGERS, FRANCE			SARLAT-LA-CANEDA, FRANCE		
	Temp. High- Low	% Relative Humidity (am-pm)	Average # of Days with Rainfall	Temp. High-Low	% Relative Humidity (avg)	Average # of Days with Rainfall
JAN	45 to 38	85	25	49 to 36	--	10
FEB	54 to 41	80	13	52 to 36	--	8
MAR	56 to 42	76	21	59 to 40	--	9
APR	60 to 43	71	21	64 to 43	--	10
MAY	68 to 49	72	14	71 to 50	--	10
JUN	73 to 57	66	11	77 to 55	--	5
JUL	79 to 61	65	8	82 to 58	--	5
AUG	78 to 58	66	8	82 to 58	--	6
SEP	74 to 53	69	2	76 to 53	--	7
OCT	66 to 49	78	12	67 to 49	--	9
NOV	54 to 44	84	19	55 to 41	--	9
DEC	51 to 45	85	22	50 to 37	--	9

MONTH	CARCASSONNE, FRANCE			LYON, FRANCE		
	Temp. High-Low	% Relative Humidity (avg)	Monthly Rainfall (inches)	Temp. High-Low	% Relative Humidity (am-pm)	Average # of Days with Rainfall
JAN	50 to 38	85	2.7	42 to 33	88 to 76	10
FEB	52 to 38	80	2.1	46 to 34	88 to 69	8
MAR	58 to 42	75	2.1	53 to 38	86 to 58	10
APR	63 to 46	75	2.9	58 to 42	84 to 55	12
MAY	70 to 53	75	2.2	67 to 50	85 to 56	10
JUN	78 to 59	70	1.8	73 to 57	83 to 54	9
JUL	84 to 63	65	1.1	80 to 61	81 to 47	7
AUG	83 to 63	65	1.7	79 to 60	85 to 50	8
SEP	76 to 57	75	1.7	72 to 54	90 to 56	8
OCT	67 to 52	85	2.3	61 to 47	91 to 68	11
NOV	56 to 44	85	2.3	50 to 39	90 to 75	12
DEC	50 to 39	85	2.5	44 to 35	88 to 78	11

MONTH	BAYEUX, FRANCE			AIX-EN-PROVENCE, FRANCE		
	Temp. High-Low	% Relative Humidity (avg)	Monthly Rainfall (inches)	Temp. High-Low	% Relative Humidity (avg)	Average # of Days with Rainfall
JAN	47 to 37	84	2.7	54 to 45	67	11
FEB	48 to 37	81	1.9	58 to 46	60	5
MAR	53 to 39	79	2.1	59 to 47	56	11
APR	56 to 40	76	2.1	67 to 54	53	11
MAY	62 to 45	76	2.6	70 to 54	50	12
JUN	67 to 49	75	1.8	85 to 69	44	9
JUL	71 to 53	74	1.9	89 to 75	46	9
AUG	72 to 53	76	1.3	87 to 73	47	8
SEP	68 to 51	77	2.7	78 to 64	51	6
OCT	62 to 47	80	2.9	71 to 59	61	13
NOV	53 to 42	84	2.7	55 to 47	67	21
DEC	48 to 38	84	3.1	55 to 47	68	10

MONTH	PARIS, FRANCE		
	Temp. High-Low	% Relative Humidity (am-pm)	Average # of Days with Rainfall
JAN	45 to 37	89 to 79	20
FEB	47 to 37	87 to 71	16
MAR	54 to 42	87 to 65	18
APR	60 to 45	86 to 58	17
MAY	67 to 52	86 to 57	16
JUN	73 to 57	86 to 58	17
JUL	77 to 60	85 to 54	13
AUG	77 to 60	87 to 51	12
SEP	70 to 55	91 to 59	14
OCT	61 to 49	92 to 69	17
NOV	51 to 42	91 to 76	17
DEC	46 to 38	89 to 81	19

## ABOUT YOUR DESTINATIONS: CULTURE, ETIQUETTE & MORE

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### O.A.T. Trip Experience Leaders: A World of Difference

During your adventure, you'll be accompanied by one of our local, Trip Experience Leaders. All are fluent in English and possess the skills, certification, and experience necessary to ensure an enriching adventure. As locals of the regions you'll explore with them, our Trip Experience Leaders provide the kind of firsthand knowledge and insight that make local history, culture, and wildlife come alive. Coupled with their unbridled enthusiasm, caring personalities, and ability to bring diverse groups of travelers together, our Trip Experience Leaders ensure that your experience with O.A.T. is one you'll remember for a lifetime.

### French Culture

It would be hard to find someone who was not familiar with at least some aspects of French culture. Few nations have surpassed France's legacy when it comes to exporting art, literature, fashion, cuisine, film, and entire schools of intellectual thought. But that doesn't mean that French culture has not been misunderstood.

For example, the French are justly proud of their cultural heritage, and that pride is often embodied in the nation's unofficial symbol, the Gallic rooster. But the flip side of Gallic pride is the stereotype of French snobbery. The French very much believe in their national motto of *Liberté, Égalité, Fraternité* (Liberty, Equality, Fraternity). But in their daily interactions, the French are rather formal with people outside their social circle, and they follow a strict set of manners to avoid social missteps (*faux pas*). That mannerly approach, combined with the extreme directness of their language, makes many visitors jump to the conclusion that the French are cold or arrogant. *Au contraire*, when you get to know a French person, that sense of decorum generally takes a back seat to affectionate and loyal friendships.

When you get to that stage, you'll have to master the art of the French air kiss or *faire la bise*. This is how French people greet acquaintances, by leaning in and gently brushing their right, then left cheeks together while making a subtle kissing sound with their lips. If someone wishes you hello or goodbye with *la bise*, consider it a compliment!

Most people in France share a strong appreciation for the arts and intellectual discourse. A lot of that is going on whenever you walk into a café, where people will be engaged in lively conversations for what seems like hours. There's an historical precedent for this, for during the 18th century, France was the epicenter of the Enlightenment. It was an era that gave us radical new philosophies, science and art based on the sovereignty of reason, and empiricism. The French openness to new ideas is evident in their embrace of innovative artistry— from the Impressionists to Dadaism to Abstract Expressionism and beyond. The French brothers Louis and Auguste Lumière are generally considered the inventors of modern cinema, and their legacy has been expanded by a host of acclaimed filmmakers from Abel Gance to Jean Renoir to Jean-Luc Godard to Francois Truffaut and too many others to list.

When it comes to gastronomy, it goes without saying that the French have elevated their cuisine to an art form. The French have always considered dining as something worthy of one's time as opposed to being a necessity or even a sinful indulgence. They appreciate every morsel of their meal on a sensory level, for the technique of the chef, and for what that dish may represent in terms of national, regional or just family history. They are particular about all these things, and especially, about the freshness and quality of ingredients. But because they also see chefs as artists, they delight in innovative culinary interpretations of classic dishes. So when you sit down to dine in France, you are not just consuming a meal, you are tapping into the French spirit.

## **Religion and Religious Observance**

It is estimated that 63–66% of French people identify as Catholics, with another 7–9% identifying as Muslims. The second largest group are those who claim to be unaffiliated with any religion (23–28%), followed by small numbers of Jews, Buddhists, and others. That does not mean that religion has not impacted everyday customs. For example, people do have church weddings, baptisms and religious funeral rites. But most French people consider belief to be a private matter, and do not attend church regularly.

All these figures are estimates because the government has not officially collected any data on religious preferences since 1972. This all has to do with a very important aspect of French culture called *laïcité*. You could translate it as secularism, but it goes deeper than that. *Laïcité* is the complete separation of religious spheres from public spheres. Its underlying aim is to ensure religious freedom for all, and it is constitutionally enshrined. But *laïcité* is not without controversy. The concept has come under fire as France has become less homogeneously Christian. Some critics say it actually impedes religious freedom, and they cite the 2004 ban that made it illegal to display conspicuous religious symbols in public schools or civil workplaces. In addition to banning the wearing of crucifixes, the ruling forbade the wearing of the hijab, the traditional head covering worn by observant Muslim women.

## **Language**

The official language spoken throughout France is French. Even in places where people occasionally speak a regional dialect, all official communications are in French. The most widely spoken regional languages in France are the German dialects along the border (such as Alsacien); Megreb (an Arabic–French mix from North Africa); and Occitan, a Gallo–Romance language spoken in some southern areas such as Languedoc, Gascony, and parts of Provence. In Normandy, the Norman language is sometimes used, as are Basque and Catalan in some parts of France that border the Pyrenees. Though some regional words have filtered into common usage, the vast majority of people speak French as a first language.

English is the most common foreign language, spoken by more than 39% of people. You may have heard the stereotype that the French will refuse to speak English with you, even if they understand it. This is not true. However, it is true that the French are very proud of their language (it was once the language of international diplomacy) and they are mindful about preserving it. So if you make even the slightest effort to speak a few words in French, your hosts will be very appreciative.

Beyond the basic French you may have learned in school, there are many colorful contemporary idioms. You may be interested to know about *verlan*. It's a popular French linguistic trend that creates slang words by spelling them (loosely) backwards. It's been popular with young people for some time, but now even their parents are catching on and many *verlan* words have been entered into the dictionary. So in *verlan*, *fou* (crazy) becomes *ouf*. *Louche* (strange or shady) becomes *chelou*. Another very common *verlan* term is *vénère*. It comes from the word *énervé*, which means "annoyed" or "irritated."

## Taking Photographs

The etiquette of photographing people in most countries is about the same as it would be on the streets of your hometown. You need permission to take a close-up, but not for a crowd scene. Be especially polite if you want to photograph children or older women. If you want to shoot a great portrait, show interest in your subject and try to have a bit of social interaction first. Then use sign language to inquire if a picture is OK.

Please do not take photographs of military personnel, military compounds, or other official institutions/personnel (such as police). This may result in the confiscation of your camera.

In museums or at archaeological sites, there may be restrictions on using your flash. Please obey any signs or directions by staff; the no-flash rule protects the fragile artifacts and artwork from damage by repeated exposure to light. Occasionally, there may also be a small fee levied by the museum or site for the privilege of taking photos.

## Safety & Security

As you travel, exercise the same caution and awareness that you would in a large American city. Don't be overly nervous or suspicious, but keep your eyes open. If you are venturing out after dark, go with one or two other people.

Carry a one-day supply of cash, and your passport, in a travel pouch. Don't leave valuables unattended in your hotel room. Most hotels will offer use of a hotel safe at the front desk or an electronic in-room safe (for which you can set your own personal number). Please utilize this.

Pickpockets may create a sudden distraction. In any sort of puzzling street situation, try to keep one hand on your wallet or money belt. If an encounter with a local turns out to be long and complicated and involves money or your valuables, be very careful.

## French Cuisine

It would be an understatement to say the French have an appreciation for fine food. They have a reverence for it, and it shows in the quality of French cuisine, which was designated by UNESCO as part of the World's Intangible Cultural Heritage. You certainly don't need to dine at a Michelin-starred restaurant to experience the best of French cuisine. A visit to just about any local *marché* (open-air market), *pâtisserie* (pastry shop), *boulangerie* (bakery), *café*, *bistro*, or *brasserie* may well be as memorable an outing as visiting the famed monuments and museums.

Classical French dishes formed the basis of what we once called *haute cuisine*. But some of these dishes were regional in origin. Fortunately, because there is such widespread regard for gastronomy, regional dishes may appear on menus far from home, especially in large cities. Some of these dishes include:

- **Soupe à l'oignon:** a sweet and savory broth of caramelized onions, beef stock, and sherry with a crust of grilled Comté or Gruyère cheese.
- **Coq au vin:** a specialty of Burgundy, made with chicken braised with red Burgundy wine, lardons, mushrooms, and garlic.
- **Entrecôte à la Bordelaise:** A traditional dish in Bordeaux. It is a rib eye steak cooked in a red wine sauce with bone marrow.
- **Bouillabaisse:** A seafood soup made from fish and shellfish cooked in a broth of onions, tomatoes, saffron, and herbs.
- **Coq au Riesling:** A flavorful dish of chicken braised in white Riesling wine, accented with lardons of bacon and button mushrooms, and enriched with a silky touch of crème fraîche
- **Flammekueche** (or in French, *tarte flambée*): A chewy flatbread smothered with *fromage blanc* (a tangy fresh cheese), *crème fraîche* or sour cream, slivered onions, and crispy *lardons* of bacon.

## Shopping: What to Buy, Customs, Shipping & More

There may be scheduled visits to local shops during your adventure. There is no requirement to make a purchase during these stops, and any purchase made is a direct transaction with the shop in question, subject to the vendor's terms of purchase. O.A.T. is not responsible for purchases you make on your trip or for the shipment of your purchases.

### Returns

If you discover an issue with an item, you should contact the vendor directly and expect that any resolution will take longer than it would in the U.S. We recommend that you keep a copy of all your receipts, invoices, or contracts, along with the shop's contact information. Keep in mind, local practice may vary from U.S. standards, so don't assume that you have a certain number of days after the purchase to speak up or that you are guaranteed a refund.

### Crafts & Souvenirs

#### France

Popular French souvenirs include fashion, art, antiques, perfume, food, and wine. Each region has its own specialties, but you can often find them for sale in other parts of the country. If time is short, try checking out a big department store, like Galeries Lafayette or Printemps. Or look for Monoprix chains, which have lower prices and are more for everyday shopping (sort of like the French version of Target).

The French value-added tax (VAT) is typically 19.6% and can be as high as 33.33% on luxury articles. Depending on how much you spend on certain goods, you may be eligible for a partial refund of this tax. Ask the shopkeeper or salesperson at the time of purchase. Be sure to save all receipts for Customs. (Generally, you have to spend over 175€ at the same shop, on the same day, and have filled out a special form for this process.)

## U.S. Customs Regulations & Shipping Charges

For all things related to U.S. Customs, the ultimate authority is the U.S. Bureau of Customs & Border Protection. Their website, **[www.cbp.gov](http://www.cbp.gov)** has the answers to the most frequently asked questions. Or you can call them at **1-877-227-5511**.

The top three points to know are:

- At time of writing, your personal duty-free allowance is \$800 for items brought with you. Items totaling more than \$800 are subject to duty fees.
- **Items shipped home are always subject to duty when received in the U.S.** Even when the shop has offered to include shipping and duties in the price, this typically means shipping to the nearest customs facility and payment of the export duties—not door-to-door shipping or payment of the import duties. All additional duties or shipping charges would be your responsibility. Unless an item is small enough to send by parcel service (like FedEx), chances are you will need to arrange shipping or pick-up once the item is in the U.S. and will need to pay customs duties.
- It is illegal to import products made from endangered animal species. U.S. Customs & Border Protection will seize these items, as well as most furs, coral, tortoise shell, reptile skins, feathers, plants, and items made from animal skins.

## DEMOGRAPHICS & HISTORY

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### France

#### Facts, Figures & National Holidays

- **Area:** 248,573 square miles
- **Capital:** Paris
- **Language:** French
- **Location:** France is a large country, two and a half times as big as Great Britain, extending for some 600 miles from north to south and from east to west. It has coastlines on both the Atlantic Ocean and the Mediterranean Sea. Its southern land border is Spain; to the north are Belgium, Luxembourg, and Germany; to the east are Switzerland and Italy.
- **Geography:** Except for extreme northern France, which is part of the Flanders plain, the country may be described as four river basins and a plateau. Three of the streams flow west—the Seine into the English Channel, the Loire into the Atlantic, and the Garonne into the Bay of Biscay. The Rhône flows south into the Mediterranean. For about 100 miles, the Rhine is France's eastern border. In the Alps, near the Italian and Swiss borders, is Europe's highest point—Mont Blanc, at 15,781 feet.
- **Population:** 68,042,591 (Estimate)
- **Religion:** Roman Catholic 48%, None 34%, Islam 4%, Protestant 3%, Buddhist 2%, Jewish 1%, Other 2%
- **Time Zone:** France is on Central European Time, six hours ahead of U.S. EST. When it is 6am in Washington D.C., it is noon in Paris. Daylight Saving Time begins the last weekend in March and ends the last weekend in October.

## National Holidays: France

In addition to the holidays listed below, France celebrates a number of national holidays that follow a lunar calendar, such as Easter and Whit Monday. To find out if you will be traveling during these holidays, please visit [www.timeanddate.com/holidays](http://www.timeanddate.com/holidays).

01/01 New Year's Day

05/01 Labor Day

05/08 World War II Victory Day

07/14 Bastille Day

08/15 Assumption of Mary

11/01 All Saints' Day

11/11 Armistice Day

12/25 Christmas Day

## France: A Brief History

That the French do things with flair has been borne out by history. Even their most famous prehistoric treasure, the 17,000-year old cave paintings of Lascaux, are a dazzling work of art. The rest of French history is just as dazzling, colored by events and ideas that have impacted all of humanity, far beyond the borders of this hexagon-shaped crucible of culture.

When the Celts arrived in Gaul in the 5th century BC, it was already occupied by Iberians, Ligurians, and Greeks, who established the oldest city in France, Massilia (Marseille). It was a major port with temples, theaters, an agora, and a flourishing wine trade. The city had forged an alliance with Rome by the time Julius Caesar conquered Gaul in 57–52 B.C. Julius often gets credit for founding Lutetia (Paris), but the Gallic Parisii tribe had already established a settlement there on the banks of the Seine. The Romans erected their own magnificent cities whose ruins still stand in Arles, Nimes, Vienne, Lyon, and beyond.

During the 5th century AD, the Franks invaded and converted to Christianity under Clovis I. A national spirit emerged when Charlemagne, King of the Franks, was crowned Holy Roman Emperor in 800 AD. Though his reign left an indelible imprint, French national history is considered to begin in 987, when Hugh Capet centralized the monarchy. During the 12th and 13th centuries, trade prospered, guilds were founded, and cathedrals were built. But the 14th century brought the Hundred Years War with England (1337–1453), whose Norman kings held vast estates in France. The English were expelled and as in the days of Charlemagne, the throne held a powerful mystique, this time with the aid of Joan of Arc, whose divine voices urged her to lead France to victory at Orleans in 1429 and to champion Charles VII as king.

During the 16th and 17th centuries, France moved closer towards absolute monarchy, best exemplified by Louis XIV, whose reign was unequalled for its autocracy—and magnificent style. From Versailles, he presided over a gloriously gilded France—so resplendent that it earned him the title of “the Sun King.” Ironically, the very splendor of the French monarchy precipitated its downfall, for it was exorbitant to maintain. That burden fell to the peasants and middle class, as nobles and the clergy were exempt from the taxes. That ended with the French Revolution in 1789. King Louis XVI and Marie Antoinette were guillotined, the monarchy was abolished, and the new (but short-lived) First Republic was established.

The ensuing chaos led to the rise of Napoleon, who became emperor in 1804 and built an empire across nearly all of Europe. Though Napoleon was a dictator, his Napoleonic codes brought unprecedented legal rights and civil liberties to his domains, in many places ending feudalism. With his fall in 1814, the monarchy was restored. France's Third Republic was founded in 1870, during which the groundbreaking Impressionist school of painting emerged, as well as the Modernist movement. From 1914–18, France fought with the Allies in World War I, prevailing but suffering devastating losses. Between wars, France nourished major intellectual movements: Constructivism, Dadaism, Surrealism, and Existentialism.

In 1940, France was invaded by Germany who set up a puppet government in Vichy under Marshal Philippe Petain. On D-Day, June 6, 1944, the Allies landed in Normandy and went on to liberate Paris in August. A provisional government was set up under General Charles de Gaulle. He remained France's most influential statesman of the 20th (or perhaps any other) century, becoming president in 1958 until his resignation in 1969. Post-war France saw the break-up of its remaining colonial outposts. The country was one of the leaders in the founding of the European Union (1993) and the Eurozone (1999).

More recently France, like its European neighbors, had to contend with the fallout of the 2008 global economic crisis. Unemployment, immigration, structuring the post-Brexit EU, and climate change are some of the issues France must address with its historic resourcefulness—and characteristic flair.

## RESOURCES

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### Suggested Reading

#### Western France

***All the Light We Cannot See*** by Anthony Doerr (2014, Fiction) This Pulitzer Prize winning, World War II novel traces the lives of a blind French girl and a German orphan, until they intersect in the besieged coastal city of St. Malo. The narrative is driven forward by a puzzle box of a mystery, with some passages so beautifully written they will bring tears to your eyes.

***The Nightingale*** by Kristin Hannah (2015, Fiction) Two sisters in a Loire Valley village take different paths to survival when the Nazi occupation begins. A page-turner about the women of the French Resistance, their resilience, and the choices that define a life.

***The Languedoc Trilogy*** by Kate Mosse (Historical Fiction) These New York Times bestsellers (*Labyrinth*, 2005; *Sepulchre*, 2007; and *Citadel*, 2012) are ingenious mystery novels set in modern and medieval Carcassonne, France, with strong female protagonists. The books are impeccably researched and offer vivid descriptions of the life and times of this most mysterious city.

***The Debt to Pleasure*** by John Lanchester (1996, Fiction) This wickedly funny book follows an erudite (and sinister) food critic as he travels through France to his house in Provence. Along the way, we get witty observations on French life, regional recipes, and clues about a shocking mystery that is about to unravel.

***The Perfect Heresy: The Life and Death of the Cathars*** by Stephen O'Shea (2003, History) The Languedoc region of southern France was a haven for the Cathars, a heretical Christian sect whose members came from all classes, and whose beliefs inspired the wrath of Popes and monarchs. This book traces their rise and shockingly brutal fall in the Languedoc village of Montailou in the Pyrenees.

***The Summer of Katya*** by Trevanian (1983, Fiction) From the genre-shifting, bestselling author of *The Eiger Sanction*, this moody thriller takes place in the French Basque country in 1914, and centers on a young doctor's obsession with a mysterious young woman, and her possibly murderous family.

#### France

***The Seine: The River That Made Paris*** by Elaine Sciolino (2020, Nonfiction) Sciolino traces the history, route, and impact of the Seine River through the stories of its people—a riverbank bookseller, the Seine police, a houseboat owner, fishermen, and film directors, to name a few. She also includes a touching chapter on the 2019 Notre Dame fire, which was put out with water pumped from the river.

***A Brief History of France*** by Cecil Jenkins (2017, History) Exactly what the title promises: A compact overview of the history of France. Look for the 2017 edition, which was updated to include more recent events.

***The Miracle of Dunkirk: The True Story of Operation Dynamo*** by Walter Lord (2017, History) A well-written and comprehensive account of the British evacuation from Dunkirk in 1940 with the help of the French. The author has been praised for his ability to weave the personal stories of the survivors—who he interviewed in great depth—into the overall narrative of how events unfolded.

***My Life in France*** by Julia Child with Alex Prud'homme (2007, Memoir) Memoir of the famous chef's first, formative stay in France in 1949. Child describes herself as a “rather loud and unserious Californian,” without a word of French. She enrolled at the Cordon Bleu and toiled with increasing zeal and competence. With the bestselling *Mastering the Art of French Cooking*, she revolutionized the American idea of cooking. This memoir recalls gorgeous meals in bygone Parisian restaurants, and reveals the personality and some of the secret arts of a culinary genius.

***Paris to the Moon*** by Adam Gopnik (2001, Travel Essays) A self-described “comic-sentimental essayist,” Gopnik spent the years from 1995 to 2000 in Paris writing the “Paris Journals” for the *New Yorker*. Collected here are his most charming, insightful, heartfelt, and humorous dispatches on the Parisian people, culture, food, economy, and lifestyle.

## Suggested Films & Videos

### France

***Loving Vincent*** (2017, Biography) Van Gogh's paintings come to life in this remarkable, animated film created by 125 artists, who hand-painted each of the film's 65,000 frames in the style of Vincent Van Gogh. The plot follows the efforts of a postmaster's son to solve the mystery of van Gogh's life and death in Auvers-sur-Oise.

***Midnight in Paris*** (2011, Comedy) Screenwriter Gil Pender (Owen Wilson) escapes his romantic troubles by roaming the streets of Paris at night, where he is miraculously (and hilariously) transported back to 1920s Paris, where Ernest Hemingway, Gertrude Stein, Salvador Dali, F. Scott Fitzgerald and the entire “Lost Generation” await him.

***Amelie*** (2001, Romantic Comedy) This quirky gem tells the heartwarming story of a shy waitress in Paris who decides to change the lives of those around her for the better, while struggling with her own isolation. The award-winning film is a whimsical depiction of everyday life, sure to capture the hearts of its viewers time and time again.

***Chocolat*** (2000, Drama/Comedy) In this warm and beautifully filmed romance, a lovely chocolatier (Juliet Binoche) falls in love with a handsome gypsy (Johnny Depp), disrupting life in a prim riverside village. Many scenes were filmed in the Dordogne region.

***Saving Private Ryan*** (1998, Drama). Probably the best (and most riveting) depiction of the Normandy D-Day landings and their aftermath. It won Steven Spielberg an Oscar for Best Director.

## Useful Websites

### **Overseas Adventure Travel**

[www.oattravel.com](http://www.oattravel.com)

### **Overseas Adventure Travel Frequently Asked Questions**

[www.oattravel.com/faq](http://www.oattravel.com/faq)

### **International Health Information/CDC (Centers for Disease Control)**

[www.cdc.gov/travel](http://www.cdc.gov/travel)

### **Electricity & Plugs**

[www.worldstandards.eu/electricity/plugs-and-sockets](http://www.worldstandards.eu/electricity/plugs-and-sockets)

### **Foreign Exchange Rates**

[www.xe.com/currencyconverter](http://www.xe.com/currencyconverter)  
[www.oanda.com/converter/classic](http://www.oanda.com/converter/classic)

### **ATM Locators**

[www.mastercard.com/atm](http://www.mastercard.com/atm)  
[www.visa.com/atmlocator](http://www.visa.com/atmlocator)

### **World Weather**

[www.intellicast.com](http://www.intellicast.com)  
[www.weather.com](http://www.weather.com)  
[www.wunderground.com](http://www.wunderground.com)

### **Basic Travel Phrases (80 languages)**

[www.travlang.com/languages](http://www.travlang.com/languages)

### **Packing Tips**

[www.travelite.org](http://www.travelite.org)

### **U.S. Customs & Border Protection**

[www.cbp.gov/travel](http://www.cbp.gov/travel)

### **Transportation Security**

#### **Administration (TSA)**

[www.tsa.gov](http://www.tsa.gov)

### **National Passport Information Center**

[www.travel.state.gov](http://www.travel.state.gov)

### **Holidays Worldwide**

[www.timeanddate.com/holidays](http://www.timeanddate.com/holidays)

### **History & Culture**

[en.wikipedia.org](http://en.wikipedia.org)

## Useful Apps

### **Flight Stats**

Track departures, arrivals, and flight status

### **LoungeBuddy**

Get access to premium airport lounges around the world

### **Timeshifter**

Personalized tips for avoiding jetlag, based on neuroscience and your own data

### **GoogleMaps**

Maps and directions anywhere in the world

### **Triposo**

City guides, walking maps, and more – and it works offline

### **Rome2rio**

Where to go, what to see, and what to do in more than 160 countries

### **Flush or Sit or Squat**

Find a clean toilet anywhere

### **Uber**

Ride sharing around the world

### **Visa Plus and Mastercard Cirrus**

#### **ATM locations**

Shows the location of the nearest ATM in your network

### **TunnelBear**

Provides a secure VPN (virtual private network) that will encrypt your browsing data when you use a public WiFi network

### **What's App, Skype, or Signal**

WiFi calling anywhere in the world

### **Duolingo, FLuentU, or Babbel**

Learn dozens of foreign languages

### **Google Translate**

Fast and simple translations

### **XE**

Currency conversions

### **SizeGuide**

Clothing and shoe sizes in all countries

### **Best Units Converter**

Converts currency, mileage, weights, and many other units of measurement

### **Tourlina**

For women only, it connects you with other female travelers

### **Happy Cow**

Locate vegan and vegetarian eateries in 195 countries

### **Eatwith**

Dine with locals all over the world

### **Meetup**

Connects you with locals who share your interests

### **Skyview**

Identifies constellations and heavenly bodies

### **Travello**

Find travel friends on the road

### **ALIX for One**

Created by and for women, it identifies solo-friendly dining spots in major international cities

### **TripWhistle**

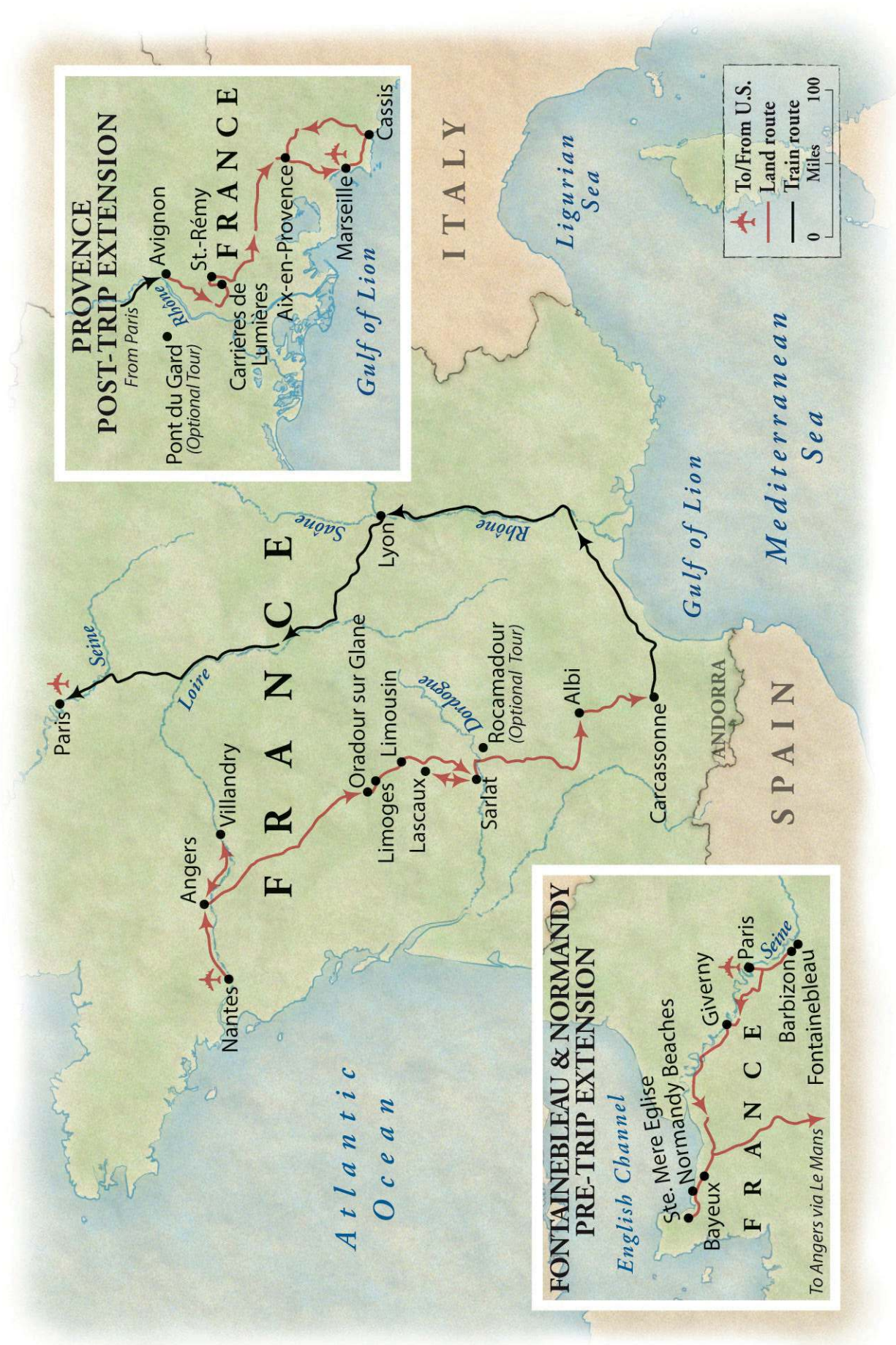
Maps your location and provides emergency numbers for police, medics, and more

### **GeoSure**

Safely navigate neighborhoods around the world

### **Chirpey**

For women only, connect with other women, find out what's safe, meet up, and more



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8-time travelers from Stevensville, MI



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5-time traveler from Pinellas Park, FL



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30-time traveler from Woodbury, NY



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