



From
£10,115 GBP

Single Room
 £12,603 GBP

Twin Room
 £10,115 GBP

Prices valid until
 30th December 2026

21 days

Duration

France

Destination

Level 2 - Moderate

Activity

History of France by Rail | Escorted Small Group Tour for Seniors

Oct 04 2026 to Oct 24 2026

History of France by Rail

History of France by Rail offers participants an unforgettable journey through French history based in Paris. On this educational tour, based on Ina Caro's famous book of the same title, we live for almost three weeks in one of the central arrondissements of Paris. Using charming Paris apartments as a base, we live as the locals do, enjoying the charms of Parisian life. We have time to enjoy the bustle of daily



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<https://www.odysseytraveller.com>

12-Apr-2026

Parisian life, with morning coffee at the local boulangerie and visits to the local markets and its elegant arcades. In the evening there is, of course, time to explore while visiting local cafes and charming restaurants.

From this base, we come together each day as a small group to journey by rail to the beautiful medieval city centres of France. While here, we experience short tours in such historic and scenic cities as Caen, Chartres, Rouen, Tours, and Avignon. Riding the train is a great way to reach out into the history of this fascinating country.

Exploring the History of France enables both couples and single travellers to journey with like-minded individuals. A couple of hours is all it takes to arrive in the heart of some of these magnificent cities. Consequently, we have many hours to join a local guide for a walking tour of the city. We return towards the end of each day on a fast train back into Paris ready for another adventure the following day. On most days, the program provides us with the evening free to explore Paris.

Our start time each day is usually after the morning rush when we meet up with the program leader. This escorted European small group tour for seniors includes just two overnight stays outside of Paris, in Tours and Avignon. This program is limited to a maximum of fifteen people. Let the history of France come alive on this extraordinary cultural tour!

If you'd like to learn more about France, visit our country profile where all the other tour departures are listed as well. For more details on this tour, click the 'Top 5' or 'Itinerary' buttons above! If you're keen to experience this tour, please call or send an email. Or, to book, simply fill in the form on the right-hand side of this page.

Articles assisting senior travellers to prepare for this History of France by Rail Tour

The following list of articles are either published by Odyssey Traveller for mature aged and senior travellers or carefully selected from external

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sources to maximise their knowledge and enjoyment of France when visiting:

- [Exploring France by rail some tips.](#)
- [Ten of the best travel books on France](#)
- [Ten things to do in France when you visit](#)
- [Designing Paris](#)
- [Paris; leaders and landmarks](#)
- [Guillamot prevents the collapse of Paris](#)
- [The elegant arcades of Paris.](#)
- [Questions about France](#)
- [Studying Gargoyles and grotesques](#)
- [Around the world in six coffees](#)
- [Ten of the best French cookery books.](#)
- [Ten of the Best art galleries in Europe to visit.](#)
- [A guide on France for mature travellers](#)
- [A guide to Alsace](#)
- [History of Alsace; Britannica.com](#)
- [Burgundy's climat; a UNSECO world heritage listing](#)
- [Avignon, the palace of Popes](#)
- [History of Avignon 15-18th century](#)
- [Exploring Chartres cathedral](#)
- [War of religion; France](#)
- [Published articles on French history.](#)



Other Railway Journeys by Odyssey Traveller

Odyssey Traveller has several railway tours that may also be of interest. All of these tours are especially designed for the active senior traveller. Just click through to see the itinerary and sign up!

- If you prefer staying in France, Odyssey offers a Paris-Bordeaux-Provence By Train Tour which runs for 22 days.
- A short version of this tour runs for 11 days: French history by rail.
- Odyssey Traveller's Helsinki to Irkutsk tour on the Trans-Siberian Railway runs for 21 days and spends multiple nights in Helsinki, St Petersburg, Moscow, Yekaterinburg, Krasnoyarsk, and Irkutsk, with stops at Russia's oldest national nature reserve, Stolby Nature Sanctuary, and Lake Baikal. You can also do a reverse tour, starting in Irkutsk and finishing in Helsinki.
- The Vladivostok to Krasnoyarsk tour moves westward from Vladivostok, where in 1891 tsar-to-be Nicholas first laid the stone that would be the foundation of the railway, to the old town of Krasnoyarsk in the heart of Siberia. This tour is also offered with a reverse itinerary.
- The 30-day Trans-Mongolia and Russia tour takes you on the Trans-Siberian and the Trans-Mongolian Railway lines. The tour begins in Ulaanbaatar, the capital of Mongolia, and concludes with a cruise on the waterways between Moscow and St Petersburg.

Tour Notes

- We recommend that overnight bags be used for the visits to Avignon and Tours.
- Sole use studio apartment has an additional fee for the tour.

- Twin bedded rooms are not available in our Paris Apts (only double beds) you have the option of sharing a 2 Bedroom Apt at additional cost*
- Single supplement based on 2 bedroom apartment sharing one bathroom.
- Our apartments in Paris will be available for the duration of the stay.
- Why not extend the stay to one month in Paris in an apartment. This reduces the accommodation cost substantially.

Highlights

1. Enjoy overnight stays in the historic cities of Avignon in Provence and Tours in the Loire Valley.
2. Experience everyday life as the Parisians do, from our apartment.
3. Explore the newly opened Louvre Museum Extension in the city of Lens.
4. Explore Paris and journey by rail to regions and great cities to learn about their historical significance and influence on France.
5. Shop for fresh food at open-air markets and savour the local cuisine and culture.

Itinerary

Day 1

Locations: Paris

Overview:

Upon arrival in Paris we will come to the accommodation individually. We will settle in to our apartments and meet in the early evening for a

briefing followed by our welcome dinner at a local restaurant.

Accommodation:

7 nights at a Paris apartment located in a central arrondissement.

Day 2

Locations: Paris

Overview:

Today we begin our tour with a guided walking tour of the Île de la Cité, including a visit to the Archaeological Crypt and a visit to the nearby Notre Dame Cathedral. Here we discover remnants of buildings and monuments from the 3rd century including two Gallo-Roman rooms heated by hypocaust. After free time for lunch we travel by Metro to the great Cathedral of St. Denis to learn about its place in the history of French architecture and to see the magnificent Royal Tombs.

Accommodation:

Paris apartment located in a central arrondissement.

Day 3

Locations: Paris

Overview:

The market in the Marais area is our morning activity. Here we can stock up for our apartment needs with vegetables, fruit, cheeses, wines, and anything necessary or unnecessary-but-desired! In the afternoon we will enjoy a guided walk of the area including the beautiful Place des Vosges with its connections with the great King Henri IV and famous characters such as Mme de Sévigné and Victor Hugo.

Accommodation:

Paris apartment located in a central arrondissement.

Day 4

Locations: Paris to Caen

Overview:

We will have an early start as we meet for our journey to the city of Caen in Normandy by rail. Here we discover the 11th century with a visit to the Abbey of William the Conqueror and see his simple, black marble tomb. A leap to the 20th century takes us to the thought-provoking Memorial Museum with its dedication to the events of WWII.

Accommodation:

Paris apartment located in a central arrondissement.

Day 5

Locations: Paris to Chartres

Overview:

Today we meet at Montparnasse Station for a full-day visit to Chartres where we will have a guided tour of France's first High Gothic Cathedral with its magnificent stained glass windows. Back in Paris, in the evening, we hope to complete this era of history at a concert in the Ste Chapelle of Louis IX. (If we are lucky, the sun will light up the glorious stained glass windows of this exquisite chapel.)

Accommodation:

Paris apartment located in a central arrondissement.

Day 6

Locations: Paris to Reims

Overview:

Our full-day tour today takes us by TGV (fast train) to the city of Reims, site of the coronation of most of the French Kings. It was here that Joan of Arc brought Louis VII to be crowned after the tide of the 100 Years War was turned. During our guided walking tour of the city, we will visit the Cathedral, learn of its history and admire its stained glass including a modern series of windows by Marc Chagall. We will also learn about

the city's post WWI Art Deco redevelopment.

Accommodation:

Paris apartment located in a central arrondissement.

Day 7

Locations: Paris

Overview:

Today we have a free morning for shopping and other domestic chores, before we enjoy a leisurely cruise on the Seine followed by dinner at a local restaurant.

Accommodation:

Paris apartment located in a central arrondissement.

Day 8

Locations: Avignon

Overview:

The TGV will take us south to Avignon for an overnight stay. On arrival we will have a guided tour of the city including a visit to the Popes' Palace.

Accommodation:

1 night at the Cloitre St Louis hotel or similar.

Day 9

Locations: Avignon to Paris

Overview:

The morning is free to explore Avignon and maybe visit the Pont D'Avignon or the mighty Cathedral on the Rock before we return on the TGV to Paris.

Accommodation:

2 nights at a Paris apartment located in a central arrondissement.

Day 10

Locations: Paris

Overview:

We will have time to catch our breath with a free day in Paris to explore on our own. Our Tour Leader will have some suggestions to assist those who want a “planned day.”

Accommodation:

Paris apartment located in a central arrondissement.

Day 11

Locations: Tours

Overview:

We travel on the TGV through the French countryside to the city of Tours in the Loire Valley. On arrival our guide will take us on a walking tour of the city including the delightful Place Plumereau with its half-timbered houses and a visit to the Musée du Compagnonnage (Museum of the Guilds). We spend the night in the city and enjoy dinner in our hotel.

Accommodation:

2 nights at the Hotel Grand or similar.

Day 12

Locations: Tours

Overview:

Where better to explore the development of castle architecture than the Valley of the Kings! Our guided tour will take us to the 3 glorious (and very different châteaux) of Chinon (Joan of Arc connection), Villandry (with its glorious gardens), and the delightful island château of Aizay le Rideau (one of the earliest French châteaux which seems to rise directly out of the water).

Accommodation:

Hotel Grand or similar.

Day 13

Locations: Paris

Overview:

We will have a free morning in Tours to explore before we return to Paris on the TGV.

Accommodation:

8 nights at a Paris apartment located in a central arrondissement.

Day 14

Locations: Paris

Overview:

Today we meet at the Gare De Lyon to travel by rail to Fontainebleau Château, built by François I but with connections to Napoleon. We can explore the château and gardens in our own time with an audio guide.

Accommodation:

Paris apartment located in a central arrondissement.

Day 15

Locations: Paris to Rouen

Overview:

Today gives us an intriguing juxtaposition of historical periods. We travel to the Norman capital of Rouen to visit the Cathedral much painted by Monet and to see the contrasting modern Joan of Arc memorial church, marking the place where this French heroine was burnt at the stake by the English. There will be time to explore the delightful streets and squares with their half-timbered houses.

Accommodation:

Paris apartment located in a central arrondissement.

Day 16

Locations: Paris to Château of Vaux-le-Vicomte

Overview:

A bus will take us to the Château of Vaux-le-Vicomte, regarded as the inspiration for the great Versailles of Louis XIV. Built by his minister, Fouquet, (and the cause of Fouquet's downfall!), designed by the great architect Le Brun and with magnificent gardens (regarded as the very first "French Garden") created by Le Nôtre, this château is a gem to visit. The fountains usually play on Saturdays.

Accommodation:

Paris apartment located in a central arrondissement.

Day 17

Locations: Paris

Overview:

We begin the day with a guided Revolutionary Walk to discover the sites and haunts of the plotting and scheming which led up to that event in 1789. The afternoon is free for continued personal exploration on the Left bank (Panthéon, St Étienne etc).

Accommodation:

Paris apartment located in a central arrondissement.

Day 18

Locations: Paris to Lens

Overview:

In December 2012, the industrial city of Lens became home to an innovative renovation of one of its old coal mining sites – a satellite of the Paris Louvre. This ultra modern glass and steel complex houses a wealth of exhibits from the core displays of the Louvre – on medium or long-term basis. We will take the TGV for the day to be among the first

visitors to enjoy this experience.

Accommodation:

Paris apartment located in a central arrondissement.

Day 19

Locations: Paris to Giverny

Overview:

We continue our artistic theme, but this time in the outdoors as we travel to Giverny to visit the delightful house and garden of the great Impressionist painter, Claude Monet.

Accommodation:

Paris apartment located in a central arrondissement.

Day 20

Locations: Paris

Overview:

Our morning visit is to the Musée Jacquemart André – an elegant late 19th century house with outstanding 16th – 18th century European and Italian Renaissance art, sculpture, and furniture. In the afternoon we visit the magnificent Palais Garnier, home of Paris Ballet and Opera, for a guided tour and the chance to enjoy the work of Marc Chagall once more with the painted ceiling of the auditorium. We enjoy a farewell dinner at a local restaurant.

Accommodation:

Paris apartment located in a central arrondissement.

Day 21

Locations: Paris

Overview:

Our tour concludes today after breakfast.

Inclusions / Exclusions

What's included in our Tour

- 17 nights of apartment accommodation in Paris.
- 3 nights of hotel accommodation offering twin share rooms.
- 3 breakfasts and 4 dinners.
- All travel on the TGV and metropolitan trains as listed in the itinerary.
- Applicable entry fees and services of local English speaking guides.
- Service charges and gratuities.
- Services of specialist tour leader for the duration of the tour.
- Detailed tour information booklet.

What's not included in our Tour

- International airfares and departure taxes.
- Comprehensive travel insurance.
- Items of a personal nature such as telephone calls and laundry.

Level 2 - Moderate

Participants must be able to carry their own luggage, climb and descend stairs, be in good health, mobile and able to participate in 3-5 hours of physical activity per day, the equivalent of walking/hiking up to 8 kilometres on uneven ground.

Please do not hesitate to contact us with any requests for further information about this tour or any others offered by Odyssey Travel.