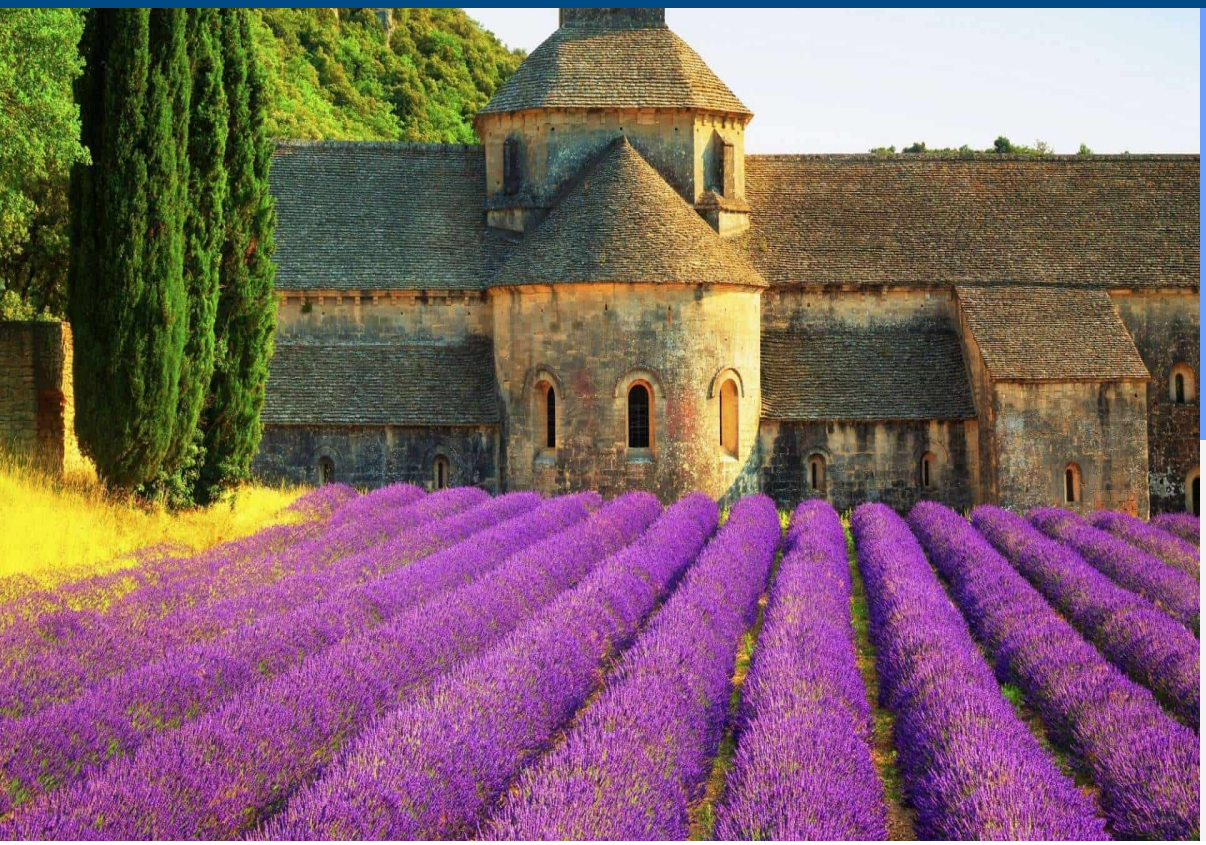
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France, Switzerland
Destination

Level 2 - Moderate
Activity

Provincial France | Small Group Tour for Seniors

May 20 2024 to Jun 11 2024



Provincial France Small Group Tour for Seniors

On this small group tour exploring provincial France, drift through Alsace, Burgundy, Provence and the stunning Jura Mountains on the byways and waterways of France. With a key focus on the region's history, our French foray commences in Alsatian wine country and concludes in Paris, after detouring through the south of France. Our escorted tours are designed specifically for mature-aged and senior

travellers – whether travelling solo or with a companion – who prefer small group travel with an educational focus. These tours are fully escorted, accompanied by an Odyssey Program Leader and local guides.







Provincial France Small Group Tour Itinerary

Our dreamy tour of provincial France opens in Alsace to the country's north-east. Bordered by Switzerland to the south and Germany to the east, this region is unlike anywhere else in the world. Its vine-clad slopes and half-timbered villages are the stuff of fairy tales, and they are overlooked by the rolling Vosges Mountains. The Alsatian capital, Strasbourg, tells of a history of contention with Germany that has led to profound Germanic influences. Now the official seat of the European parliament, the city's medieval past is inscribed in the pastel-hued buildings that shimmer in its watery canals.

On our guided tours of the destinations, we visit Beaune, Dijon, Geneva, Lyon, Nice, and many more villages in between. We explore Burgundy, once a great medieval Duchy, but now better known for its quaint villages and slow-flowing canals. We cross briefly into Switzerland and check out the Jura Mountains, a region rarely visited by tourists. This range of wooded hills and undulating plateaux is known for its untapped wilderness.

We next explore southern France, exploring Provence and the Côte d'Azur, France's sun-drenched southeastern regions which have inspired artists such as Van Gogh, Cézanne and Picasso. In the summer months, holidaymakers flock to the beaches and chic resorts. However, in the relatively quiet spring we explore the remote mountain plateaux, perched villages and dramatic gorges, as well as the Mediterranean coastline. While in Provence we also learn about the region's Roman heritage and the cultural aspects of this stunning place.

We board the Train à Grande Vitesse (TGV), France's famous high-speed train, traversing the countryside en route to Paris where the tour concludes after a farewell dinner in the city of light, possibly dining

alfresco on the cobblestone streets.

You can learn more about France with our country profile where all other tour departures are listed as well. For more details about 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 about France published by Odyssey Traveller

The following list of articles, represents some of the articles published by Odyssey Traveller for mature aged and senior travellers to maximise their knowledge and enjoyment of France and in particular the Eastern side of the country when visiting;

- Ten of the best travel books on France
- Ten things to do in France when you visit
- 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

External articles to assist you plan your visit to France

- 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 Chatres cathedral
- War of religion; France
- Published articles on French history







Highlights

1. Explore the quaint half-timbered wine-producing villages of Alsace and Strasbourg.
2. Venture into Germany’s Black Forest from Alsace and into Switzerland’s Geneva with a trip on its famous lake from the Jura.
3. Train à Grande Vitesse (TGV) which travels at 300 kilometres per hour through the French countryside.
4. Provence with its perfume at Grasse, St Paul de Vence along with the Cote d’Azur, the old port of Nice and Antibes.
5. In Burgundy, canal boating and explore the quintessential towns and villages of Dijon and Beaune.

Itinerary

Day 1

Locations: Zurich

Overview:

On arrival in Zurich, we meet for a welcome dinner and orientation.

Accommodation:

Radisson Zurich Airport Hotel or similar



Day 2

Locations: Turckheim - Riquewihr - Turckheim

Overview:

This morning we transfer by coach to the village of Turckheim in the Alsatian wine region. This picturesque spot will be our base for the next six days as we take day trips to explore the countryside.

Along the way, we stop in at Riquewihr, a popular destination for lovers of historic architecture. We take a tour of the city, including its Town Hall, interesting fountains and the Thieves' Tower – former site of a historic prison.

The village of Riquewihr continues to be built around its heritage wine industry. We experience a wine tasting at Domaine Dopff et Irion, Chateau de Riquewihr. Afterwards, we travel the 20 minutes to Turckheim where we check into our hotel. Dinner will be provided tonight.

Accommodation:

Hotel Des Deux Clefs or similar

Day 3

Locations: Turckheim - Freiburb - Schainsland - Turckheim

Overview:

Today, we cross into Germany in order to further our understanding of the Germanic influence in this region. We make our way to Freiburg via the Grand Canal D'Alsace, channel of the mighty Rhine River. Freiburg is a vibrant university city in Germany's Black Forest.

From here, we step aboard the Schauinslandbahn, Germany's longest cable car. It stretches for 3.6km providing panoramic views of Freiburg, the Rhine Valley, and the Kaiserstuhl and Vosges Mountain ranges. It takes us to Shauinsland, a mountain whose name translates to 'look-

into-the-country'.

From here, we head back to Turckheim and spend the remainder of the day at leisure.

Accommodation:

Hotel Des Deux Clefs or similar

Day 4

Locations: Turckheim - Strasbourg - Turckheim

Overview:

Our destination today is Strasbourg, vibrant capital of Alsace, which is located roughly 1.5 hours from Turckheim. On arrival, we take a boat tour along the Strasbourg canals to orient ourselves, before delving into the city's main sights.

They include La Petite France, once a poor area occupied by mills and tanneries. Today, the reflections of its pretty 16th and 17th century houses shimmer in the surrounding waterways. And the Barrage Vauban, a defensive bridge and weir built by legendary military engineer Sebastien Vauban in the 17th century.

We have entrance to the stunning Cathedral de Notre Dame. Subject to availability, we will visit the European Parliament. Our final stop today is the Cave Historic, a 600-year-old wine cellar located in the Strasbourg Hospital. Afterwards, we return to our hotel in Turckheim.

Accommodation:

Hotel Des Deux Clefs or similar

Day 5

Locations: Turckheim - Colmar - Turckheim

Overview:

This morning is set aside for your leisure.

In the afternoon, we travel to nearby Colmar to explore. We view the city's main sights, including Adolf House, built around 1350 and named for Auguste Adolf – its last private owner. This well preserved house is thought to be Colmar's oldest. We also view Pfister House, the first

example of Renaissance architecture in the city. We check out Little Venice and Saint Martin's Church and visit the Hansi Village and Museum. Hansi was the pseudonym of the Colmarian writer and water-colourist Jean-Jacques Waltz (1873-1951). The museum provides insights into Colmar as it was during the artist's lifetime.

Afterwards, we return to Turckheim. We have dinner in a local restaurant tonight.

Accommodation:

Hotel Des Deux Clefs or similar

Day 6

Locations: Turckheim - Route des Cretes - Turckheim

Overview:

We spend a full day touring the Alsatian countryside today, along the Route Des Cretes. Partly built during WWI to supply French frontline troops, the Route des Cretes (Route of the Crests) takes you to the Vosges' highest ballons – the bald, crested mountain peaks that top the mountains. We take in several WWI sites en route. The Crest Road links up Cernay and Sainte-Marie-aux-Mines over 77 kilometres.

Following this, we stop in at a Munster Fromagerie for a talk and cheese tasting. We then return to our hotel in Turckheim.

Accommodation:

Hotel Des Deux Clefs or similar

Day 7

Locations: Turckheim

Overview:

Today is made up of two separate activities. In the morning, we visit Haut Koenigsbourg Castle for a tour with the services of our local guide.

In the afternoon, we change pace with a visit to a local vineyard. Pending availability, we will receive a tour from the winemaker Phillipe

Blanck, followed by a tasting.

We return to Turckheim for our final night in Alsace.

Accommodation:

Hotel Des Deux Clefs or similar

Day 8

Locations: Turckheim - Nancy - Beaune

Overview:

This morning we depart for Beaune via Nancy, formerly the capital of the Duchy of Lorraine. This elegant city will transport you back to the 18th century, and our local guide will lead us through its picturesque streets.

We spend time in the Historic Old City and visit The Dukes Palace, the original residence of the Dukes of Lorraine dating back to the 15th century. We walk UNESCO heritage-listed Stanislav Square, considered Europe's most beautiful royal square. And we admire the influence of the Art Nouveau movement – a decorative style of architecture and fine art that peaked between 1890 and 1910.

We have scheduled some free time in Nancy so that you may fully immerse yourself in its charms, wandering its streets like a local. You might like to sample the Bergamotes de Nancy, a hard, golden candy flavoured with the delicate essential oil of the bergamot fruit.

Eventually, we board our coach for the drive to Beaune – home for the next four nights. We enjoy dinner in a local restaurant tonight.

Accommodation:

La Maison des Courtines or similar

Day 9

Locations: Beaune

Overview:

Beaune (pronounced a bit like *'bone')* provides a taste of Burgundy at its finest. This popular destination is all about wine, and the city is a labyrinth of hidden cellars, set beneath its cobbled streets. Beaune is

surrounded by the vineyards of the Côte d'Or.

Our local guide escorts us to the ramparts. The well-preserved, circular ramparts are the product of three major constructions, beginning in the 12th century and completed in the 17th.

Next, we have entrance to Hospices de Beaune, or Musée de l'Hôtel-Dieu. This is one of France's finest examples of 15th century gothic architecture and the jewel of Beaune.

We attend a guided tour of the Maison Bouchard Aine & Fils – a beautiful winery that offers a multi-sensory experience of wine.

After this stimulating morning, your afternoon can be spent at your leisure. There are no more activities scheduled today.

Accommodation:

La Maison des Courtines or similar

Day 10

Locations: Beaune - Vezelay - Arcy Sur Cure - Avalon - Beaune

Overview:

We explore Burgundy's countryside today, stopping in at Vezelay first stop. This charming hilltop village has been a centre of Christianity since the Middle Ages. It is a popular starting point for the Camino Santiago de Compostela, or Way of Saint James pilgrimage walk into Spain.

Our local guide shows us the city, including the ramparts and Basilique Saint-Marie-Madeleine, a masterpiece of Romanesque architecture said to hold the remains of Mary Magdalene.

We enjoy lunch in a local restaurant in Vezelay before transferring to nearby Arcy sur Cure, site of an impressive paleolithic cave system. We venture into these caves to view their well-preserved paintings.

Next stop is Avallon, located a twenty minute coach ride away. We enjoy a guided walking tour of the old town, taking in its medieval ramparts and towers. We visit the quirky Costume Museum, described by travellers as a hidden historic gem. It displays fashion from the 16th to 20th centuries, modelled by lifelike figures posed in rooms that are

styled to perfection.

We board our coach back to Beaune at the end of the day.

Accommodation:

La Maison des Courtines or similar

Day 11

Locations: Beaune - Chateauneuf - Beaune

Overview:

This morning is set aside for your leisure. You may like to board a cap canal cruise that takes you through a 3km tunnel. Or perhaps you have a favourite cafe you wish to revisit on our final full day in Beaune.

In the afternoon, our coach will take us to Chateauneuf. Along the way, we will stop to pick up those who took the canal cruise. Chateuaneuf is one of France's most beautiful villages. Its fairy tale-esque turreted towers date back to the twelfth century. We explore the cobbled streets and historic architecture before returning to our hotel in Beaune.

We have dinner in a local restaurant tonight.

Accommodation:

La Maison des Courtines or similar

Day 12

Locations: Beaune - Dijon - Clairveux Les Lacs (Jura Mountains)

Overview:

We depart Beaune this morning and head for Dijon. We travel past the pretty vineyards of Nuits Saint George. On arrival in Dijon, our local guide shows us its main attractions. This half-timbered city is made for walking with its Medieval and Renaissance architecture and lively fountains. Our tour includes the Court House, Place de la Liberation and the historic Rue des Forges. We visit the Palais Du Ducs, or Palace of the Dukes of Burgundy. The Palace houses the city's town hall and the

musée des Beaux-Arts (art museum).

We depart Dijon for Clairveux Les Lacs, at the edge of the Jura mountains. Dinner will be provided tonight.

Accommodation:

Hotel Les Deux Lacs or similar

Day 13

Locations: Clairveux Les Lacs - Menétrux-en-Joux - Les Rousses - Clairveux Les Lacs

Overview:

We transfer to Menétrux-en-Joux this morning, where we visit the Hérisson Falls, a lush oasis in the Jura mountains.

From here, we travel onward to Les Rousses. In winter, this village is home to some impressive ski runs. We will be taking a tour of its fort. Once a vast military complex, it has been re-purposed to house a fromagerie. Our guided tour concludes with a cheese tasting.

After a little more time to explore Les Rousses, we return to our hotel in Clairveux Les Lacs.

Accommodation:

Hotel Les Deux Lacs or similar

Day 14

Locations: Clairveux Le Lacs - Arbois - Montigny-les-Arsures - Clairveux Le Lacs

Overview:

This morning we transfer to Arbois via La Reculée des Planches, where we stop in to view the valley and waterfalls.

Picturesque Arbois is set along the Cuisance River. Our local guide shows us around this lovely village. We visit the family home of 19th century French biologist/chemist Louis Pasteur, where his laboratory is

still intact.

We enjoy a wine tasting at Domaine André et Mireille Tissot winery in Montigny-les-Arsures, before transferring on to Arc et Senans.

In Arc et Senans, we visit the Saline Royal, or Royal Saltworks. This historic building is an important monument of Enlightenment thinking, and it is designed around the principles of rational geometry and hierarchy.

Afterwards, we return to our hotel in Clairveux Le Lacs.

Accommodation:

Hotel Les Deux Lacs or similar

Day 15

Locations: Clairveux Les Lacs - Geneva - Yvoire - Clairveux Les Lacs

Overview:

Today we make an early start for Geneva, Switzerland. We cross into this fascinating city, home to the headquarters of international organisations including the World Health Organisation, and a rich and vibrant counterculture made up of artists and creatives.

Cosmopolitan Geneva is Switzerland's second largest city. We explore its main sights with our local guide, including the Giant Fountain, Cathedral, Reformers Wall and Place des Nations – a large square at the footsteps of the United Nations Office.

In the afternoon, we take a leisurely cruise to French Yvoire, a medieval city on the banks of Lake Geneva. From key military site to sleepy fishing village, and now regarded one of France's most beautiful cities, Yvoire should not be missed.

We return to our hotel in Clairveux Les Lacs at the end of the day.

Accommodation:

Hotel Les Deux Lacs or similar

Day 16

Locations: Clairveux Les Lacs - Perouges (Ain)

Overview:

We depart Claireveux Les Lacs this morning for Perouges in the Ain department of eastern France. This medieval, walled city is among Europe's finest. Its yellow-stone buildings may be familiar to lovers of cinema, for it has provided a backdrop for period films including *The Three Musketeers.*

There are no scheduled activities once we arrive in Perouges, so you can spend it at your leisure. Try to scope out the local delicacy of galettes de Perogues – a thin, sugar-crusted galette that looks a little like a pizza.

Accommodation:

Hotel la Berangere or similar

Day 17

Locations: Perouges - Lyon - Avignon

Overview:

We travel to Avignon today, via a stop to explore Lyon.

Lyon is a cosmopolitan, waterfront city that is France's third largest. It is vibrant and sophisticated, and we visit its Basilica of Notre Dame, Parc de la T'ete D'or and Cathedral.

We then continue south to Avignon, the heart of Provence. Its architecture is sure to surprise and delight: the quirky, ecclesiastical style is the result of this city being home to the Pope in the 14th century. The greatest legacy of this time is the Palais des Papes, which we visit, along with the Pont Saint Bénezet (the postcard perfect Bridge of Avignon) and the Musée du Petit Palais (a gallery and museum that houses an impressive collection of Renaissance art).

Dinner will be provided tonight.

Accommodation:

Ibis Style Avignon or similar

Day 18

Locations: Avignon - La Colle-sur-Loup (Alpes-Martimes)

Overview:

We travel east today, bound for St Paul De Vence via La Colle-sur-Loup in the Alpes-Maritimes department. St Paul De Vence is one of the oldest medieval towns on the French Riviera, and is home to an impressive array of art galleries and museums. Nestled among nature, it is an art-lovers paradise, not far from the ocean and the mountains. Our local guide leads us through the village's main sights. A special walking tour takes us by the place that once lured famous artists such as Chagal and Matisse.

Dinner will be provided in La Colle-sur-Loup once we have checked into our hotel.

Accommodation:

Club Belambra or similar

Day 19

Locations: La Colle-sur-Loup - Nice - Eze - La Colle-sur-Loup

Overview:

We explore Nice today, which is located less than an hour's drive from our base in La Colle-sur-Loup. France's fifth largest city, Nice straddles the seaside. We explore its main sights, including the Promenade des Anglais, with our local guide.

After a morning in Nice, we reboard our coach for Eze, a jewel of the Mediterranean that provides stunning ocean views. Eze is medieval buildings meets lush vegetation, all perched within the hilltops, perfect for our walking tour.

Next stop on our coastal drive is St Jean Cap Ferat, a comparatively sleepy fishing village. It is home to the Villa Ephrussi De Rothschild, a lavish seaside villa constructed in the early twentieth century by Baroness Beatrice de Rothschild of the famous banking family. The Baroness filled her villa with objets de art, and on her death, she donated the property and its contents to the Académie des Beaux Arts.

We visit this fabulous institution, now opened to the public.

Afterwards, we return to our hotel in La Colle-sur-Loup.

Accommodation:

Club Belambra or similar.

Day 20

Locations: La Colle-sur-Loup - Grasse - Gourdon - La Colle-sur-Loup

Overview:

We visit nearby Grasse this morning, considered the world's capital of perfume. Our local guide takes us on a walking tour of the old town, and we visit the Cathedral to view three paintings by Rubens. We also explore the history of perfume and soap making at the Fragonard factory, which is located in the heart of the old town.

From Grasse, we travel to Gourdon to visit the Church of Saint-Pierre and the village's pretty medieval houses. We then return to La Colle-sur-Loup, and have dinner in a local restaurant.

Accommodation:

Club Belambra or similar

Day 21

Locations: La Colle-sur-Loup - Antibes - La Colle-sur-Loup

Overview:

Antibes is just ten minutes drive from La Colle-sur-Loup, and its old town makes a great base for a walking tour. We view the 16th century ramparts and the star-shaped Forte Carre.

There are no further activities scheduled for our afternoon in Antibes, so you may spend it at your leisure exploring this charming village, before we return to our hotel.

Accommodation:

Club Belambra or similar.

Day 22

Locations: La Colle-sur-Loup - Nice - Paris

Overview:

We depart La Colle-sur-Loup and return to Nice this morning, to board a train bound for Paris. France's high-speed Train à Grande Vitesse, or TGV, is world class, and we can watch the French scenery from our windows as we cross north to the capital.

On arrival, we are transferred to or hotel in Paris. Our farewell dinner will take place tonight.

Accommodation:

Relais Monceau or similar.

Day 23

Locations: Paris

Overview:

Our tour concludes after breakfast.

Inclusions / Exclusions

What's included in our Tour

- 22 nights accommodation.
- 22 breakfasts and 10 dinners.
- Transport and field trips as indicated.
- Applicable entry fees and services of local guides.
- Gratuities and necessary tips.
- Services of an Odyssey group leader.
- Detailed Tour Information Booklet.

What's not included in our Tour

- International airfares.

- Comprehensive international travel insurance.
- Meals not included on itinerary.
- 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.