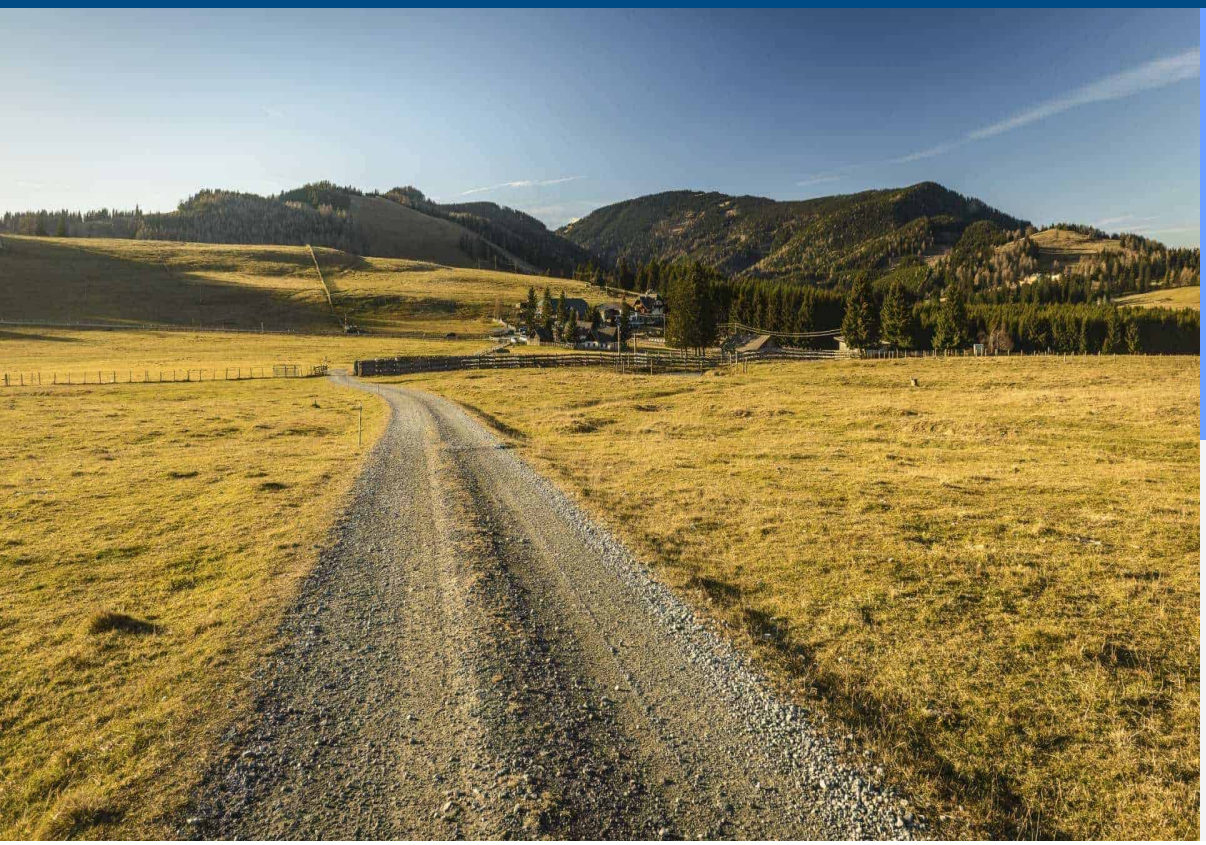
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Duration

France
Destination

Level 2 - Moderate
Activity

Secret France | Small group tours France | Places of cultural interest for seniors

May 11 2024 to Jun 04 2024



Secret France small group tour

Odyssey offers easy, convenient, and relaxed escorted small group tours across Western Europe and beyond. We explore France's fairy-tale natural beauty, its ancient Roman, and Imperial heritage, its World Heritage Sites, and world famous cities, all with some truly spectacular scenery along the way. This and more is all waiting to be explored on one of Odyssey's small group tours of France, designed for the senior

traveller, and led by experienced, and enthusiastic like minded people.

This small group tour commences in Zurich, Switzerland before crossing into France. This Secret France small group tour is a chance to see a new side of this wonderful country and enjoy a travel experience like no other. Designed with the mature traveller in mind, this group holiday gives you the chance to see eight different locations over 25 days while experiencing local culture, trying regional cuisine, exploring breathtaking architecture and admiring beautiful scenery. From Zurich the tour will move south towards Sare before returning north to Paris where the tour finishes. With the chance to take in quaint villages, sample great wine and learn more about the history of France, Switzerland and Spain, this will surely be a memorable vacation.







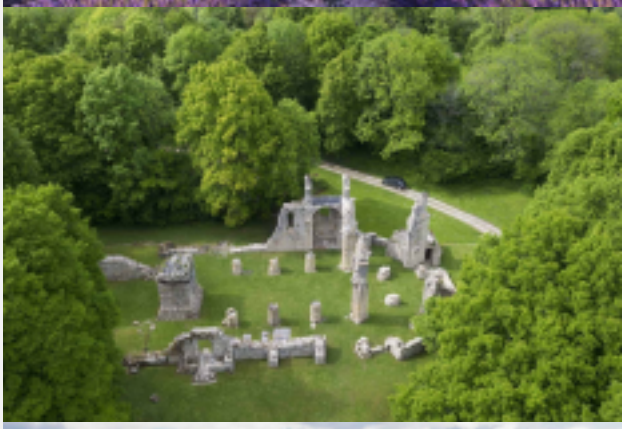
The Secret France Itinerary

For a significant part of its journey, the tour follows old pilgrim pathways, taking the group deep into the villages, valleys, shrines and ski resorts of these high regions. From Zurich, after a quick stop in Geneva, we begin our adventure in La Clusaz, a small, friendly village in Auvergne-Rhône-Alpes region. With traditional chalets and fresh mountain air, it is a quintessential ski town. While based in La Clusaz, we will explore Chamonix and walk a small part of the majestic Mont Blanc massif mountain range. Expect stunning views of the Alps and for those brave enough, the Mer de Glace ice cave is on offer. We will also visit Yvoire, the medieval flower village that lies on the shores of Lake Geneva. One of France's hidden gems, this little village has quaint waterfront restaurants from which to enjoy French cuisine and tranquil spots to enjoy the colours and scents of blooming flowers.

From there, we make our way to the Haute Loire region stopping at Chambéry and Lyon. Chambéry is often overlooked by tourists visiting the French Alps but this charming Alpine town has a lot to offer. A gateway to Italy, the town is enriched with food, art and architecture from both countries. Based in Montfaucon, we will spend the following days visiting Le Puy-en-Velay, a town renowned for its production of green lentils and marking the start of the medieval pilgrimage trail to Santiago de Compostella, Tence, a tiny town with old world charm and

Lamastre. The group will also visit the rural region of Saint-Agreve and the tiny village of Le Chambon-sur-Lignon. Expect to learn some incredible history here. During the Nazi occupation the villagers of Le Chambon played a vital role in hiding and helping rescue Jewish refugees. Approximately 5,000 Jewish refugees survived the Holocaust because of the kindness among the people of Le Chambon and its neighbouring villages. There is a plaque in Le Chambon put there by Jews upon which is written “May the Righteous Be in Everlasting Remembrance.” In 1990 the men and women of Le Chambon and the surrounding villages received a Diploma of Honour from the Yad Vashem Institute of Israel in recognition of what they did for so many Jewish people who were being persecuted. In 2013 a permanent memorial and museum opened to the public in Le Chambon. The museum is dedicated to keeping this story of rescuers and those they helped rescue alive.







After this, we head to Figeac, a medieval town of the Midi-Pyrenees. With architecture dating as far back as the 13th century, and many well-preserved townhouses and small palaces from the Middle Ages, Figeac is a great place to base ourselves. We will visit Saint-Cirq-Lapopie, a picturesque cliffside village overlooking the magnificent Lot Valley and the chateau royal in Najac.

En route to Sare, we will stop in Toulouse, often known as the Pink City due to the terracotta used in many of its buildings. From Sare, expect to see some of the Basque Country’s most iconic landmarks. We will experience the beauty of Cambo-les-Bains, a spa town, take a city tour of San Sebastian, a resort town of lush hillsides and dazzling beaches on the Bay of Biscay in Spain’s mountainous Basque Country, and visit St Jean Pied de Port, an unspoiled walled town deep in the French Basque hinterland.

We then make our way to Biarritz, an elegant seaside resort town and St. Emilion, a beautiful French wine town that offers the ideal mix of history and amazing food and drink. Our tour ends in Paris, the city of love, where we explore some famous landmarks before heading to our

departure point.

This is one of those vacation packages that offers you a little bit of everything. You will have the chance to see unspoiled French villages, take in the religious and cultural history of the region, try new cuisines, taste delicious Bordeaux wine, stroll through the mountains and share all this with like-minded people.

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 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

For all the articles published by Odyssey Traveller, please click through to this link

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.

Other Odyssey Tours:

The small group tour Secret France is only one of many of the small group tours offered by Odyssey Traveller to France, you can view all the tours to France via this link.

To view the entire collection of tours to Europe click here offered to mature aged and Senior travellers each year.

For more details, 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.

Odyssey Traveller regularly offers tours designed for the active senior or mature traveller to enjoy in a small group holiday and learning environment. We also publish articles to provide more information to our loyal and prospective participants.

About Odyssey Traveller

We specialise in educational small group tours for seniors, typically groups between six to 12 people from Australia, New Zealand, USA, Canada and Britain. Our maximum number of people on a tour is 16 mature aged travellers.We have some 220 tours and offer 400 scheduled departures on offer each year. Odyssey has been offering this style of adventure and educational programs since 1983.

Odyssey Traveller is committed to charitable activities that support the environment and cultural development of Australian and New Zealand communities.

Odyssey Traveller scholarship for Australia & New Zealand University students.

We are also pleased to announce that since 2012, Odyssey has been awarding $10,000 Equity & Merit Cash Scholarships each year. We award scholarships on the basis of academic performance and demonstrated financial need. We award at least one scholarship per year. We're supported through our educational travel programs, and your participation helps Odyssey achieve its goals. Students can apply for the scholarship by clicking on this link to find out more details.

Join our loyalty program when you join an international small group tour.

Every International small group tour taken typically contributes to your membership level in our Loyalty Program for regular travellers. Membership of the alumni starts when you choose to take your first international small group tour with Odyssey Traveller, discounts in tour pricing for direct bookings accrue from your third tour with Odyssey Traveller. To see the discounts and benefits of being a Bronze, Silver, Gold, and Diamond alumni member with us, please see this page.

For more information on Odyssey Traveller and our educational small group tours, visit and explore our website, and remember to visit these pages in particular:

- Terms and conditions applicable for booking an Odyssey Traveller tour.
- FAQ's about Odyssey Traveller

Alternatively, please call or send an email.

Tour Notes

- Group size limited to 14.

Highlights

1. Visit the underground Cathedral of St Emilion.
2. Visit Lourdes.
3. See Orleans, site of Joan of Arc's great victory.
4. Walk on part of the Mont Blanc Massif.
5. Penetrate the Basque country on both sides of the Pyrenees.

Itinerary

Day 1

Locations: Zurich

Overview:

Upon arrival in Zurich we will come to the hotel individually. Our tour begins with a welcome meeting at the hotel followed by dinner.

(D)

Accommodation:

1 night at Novotel Zurich Airport Messe or similar.

Day 2-3

Locations: French Alps

Overview:

After breakfast we board our coach and head for Geneva, where we will stop and have the opportunity to explore the city. We will then continue on to the town of La Clusaz, nestled high in the mountains of the Aravis range in Haute Savoie (Upper Savoy), which will be our base for the next five nights. We will arrive in time for dinner at a local restaurant, where we can try the region's famed cuisine.

(B) (D)

On the next day we will take a coach to Annecy, where we will walk around the city before taking a cruise around the crystal-clear, spring-water fed lake. We will have time for lunch at a local restaurant, after which we will drive up to the 13th-century Château de Menthon-Saint-Bernard, which stands guard over the lake and offers views across the region.

(B) (L)

Accommodation:

5 nights at La Christiania, Hotel La Clusaz, or similar.

Day 4

Locations: French Alps

Overview:

Today we will have a walking tour of Le Grand Bornard, and then will be able to visit the Maison du Patrimoine.

(B) (L)

Accommodation:

La Christiania, Hotel La Clusaz, or similar.

Day 5

Locations: French Alps

Overview:

We will visit the ski resort town of Chamonix and the picturesque Montenvers rack-railway which runs from the town to an altitude of 1913 metres. From its upper terminus, we can walk on a small part of the Mont Blanc Massif and, if conditions permit, those adventurous enough have the opportunity to visit the cave carved inside the Glacier itself.

(B) (L) (D)

Accommodation:

La Christiania, Hotel La Clusaz, or similar.

Day 6

Locations: French Alps

Overview:

Since ancient times, the upper valleys of the Rhône and Lake Léman (also called Lake Geneva and through which the French/Swiss border runs), have allowed for a route through the Alps between Italy and France. Today we also visit Yvoire and Thonon-les-Bains.

(B) (L)

Accommodation:

La Christiania, Hotel La Clusaz or similar.

Day 7

Locations: Haute Loire

Overview:

En route to the Haute Loire region, we visit Chambéry which was once the capital of Savoie and a staging post on the way to Italy from France. The city is still the gateway to many of the skiing resorts in the Alps. We also stop for a guided tour of the city of Lyon – in former times a major

centre of the silk industry in France, before travelling to Montfaucon.

(B) (D)

Accommodation:

4 nights at Hotel Ibis Centre or similar.

Day 8

Locations: Haute Loire

Overview:

Right in the middle of the Massif Central, Le Puy-en-Velay is one of the most remarkable-looking towns in France. Set in the middle of a basin surrounded by spectacular basalt plateaux and peaks, its own towering peaks – each with a distinctive church or statue – appear to be playthings tossed up from deep within the earth by giants. After our guided tour of Le Puy, we visit St. Michael d'Aiguihle.

(B) (L)

Accommodation:

Hotel Ibis Centre or similar.

Day 9

Locations: Haute Loire

Overview:

Our first stop will be the small town of Tence on the pilgrimage route to Santiago de Compostela, with its small Penitents' Chapel. Next we will visit the French ski resort of Les Estables, the gateway to 8 individual pistes, major ski runs served by 5 ski lifts.

(B) (L)

Accommodation:

Hotel Ibis Centre or similar.

Day 10

Locations: Haute Loire

Overview:

The rural region of Saint-Agrève is located between the high Doux and Eyrieux valleys and the Haut-Lignon plateau. We will visit the ski resort of Lalouvesc and Lamastre, a small town located southeast of France in the Ardèche. Then we will see Montfaucon-de-Velay and its celebrated chateau.

(B) (L)

Accommodation:

Hotel Ibis Centre or similar.

Day 11

Locations: Figeac

Overview:

En route to our next destination we stop at the magnificent new creation of Lord Norman Foster, the viaduct of Millau. Later we explore the city of Rodez with our guide, capital of the Aveyron Department with its famous grey-rose cathedral before travelling to Figeac.

(B) (D)

Accommodation:

6 nights at Les Fleurines or similar.

Day 12

Locations: Figeac

Overview:

Today we will visit Cordes sur Ciel (Cordes on the sky), which was renamed in recent times because of the way it rises above low lying mists on winter mornings. Here we meet our local guide for a walking

tour.

(B) (L)

Accommodation:

Les Fleurines or similar.

Day 13

Locations: Figeac

Overview:

Saint-Cirq-Lapopie is perched on a cliff overlooking a meander of the River Lot and is a masterpiece of medieval architecture. We also visit Cahors, popular with writers and artists over the centuries.

(B) (L)

Accommodation:

Les Fleurines or similar.

Day 14

Locations: Figeac

Overview:

We will spend a morning in the medieval hilltop town of Najac with its spectacular castle. The afternoon will be spent in the city of Albi with visits to the magnificent Cathedral of Ste Cécile and the renowned Toulouse-Lautrec Museum.

(B) (L) (D)

Accommodation:

Les Fleurines or similar.

Day 15

Locations: Figeac

Overview:

We will take visits to the Bastide towns of Villefranche de Rouergue (with its market) and Sauveterre de Rouergue, as well as continue the

Toulouse-Lautrec theme as we visit his family home, Château de Bosc, at Naucelle.

(B) (L)

Accommodation:

Les Fleurines or similar.

Day 16

Locations: Figeac

Overview:

Conques (pronounced “conk” and named for the shell-shaped structure of the land) is home to a magnificent Romanesque church and the only medieval shrine that still survives intact on the pilgrimage route across the Pyrénées to Santiago de Compostela in Spain. We begin our guided walking tour visiting St. Foy Church and the Treasury.

(B) (L)

Accommodation:

Les Fleurines or similar.

Day 17

Locations: Hautes-Pyrénées

Overview:

Our “en route” stops today will include the rose-red city of Toulouse and the modern pilgrimage site of Lourdes, one of the Europe’s great shrines and centres of spiritual and natural healing.

(B) (D)

Accommodation:

5 nights at Hotel Euzkadi or similar

Day 18

Locations: Pyrenees-Atlantiques

Overview:

From the Basque town of Sare we will explore Cambo-les-Bains, a spa town in the French Basque country, which pioneered cures for respiratory disease, and the home of Edmond Rostand, author of “Cyrano de Bergerac.” Throughout our visit to Cambo-les-Brains we learn about Basque cakes. We also explore the picturesque town of Ainhoa, regarded as “one of the most beautiful villages in France.”

(B) (L) (D)

Accommodation:

Hotel Euzkadi or similar

Day 19

Locations: Pyrenees-Atlantiques

Overview:

After our city tour of San Sebastián, the capital of the Basques in Spain, we visit Iglesa de Santa Maria. After lunch we continue to Pamplona, the place of the running of the bulls in Spain, for a guided visit.

(B) (L)

Accommodation:

Hotel Euzkadi or similar

Day 20

Locations: Pyrenees-Atlantiques

Overview:

We board the train to the fabled La Rhune mountain in the heart of the Basque country, and explore the fishing port of St Jean de Luz.

(B) (D)

Accommodation:

Hotel Euzkadi or similar

Day 21

Locations: Pyrenees-Atlantiques

Overview:

Today we complete our exploration of the Basque country with time in the village of Sare and town of St Jean Pied de Port at the base of the Roncevaux Pass, one of the traditional crossing points of the pilgrimage route to Santiago de Compostella in Spain.

(B) (L)

Accommodation:

Hotel Euzkadi or similar

Day 22

Locations: Pyrenees-Atlantiques

Overview:

Today we will make the journey across to Bordeaux. On the way we will stop off to visit the Anglet where Pelota gloves are manufactured, and then the city of Biarritz (French capital of the Basques), where we will have a guided tour of the beach side town. We will then continue straight to Bordeaux, in time for dinner at a local restaurant.

(B) (D)

Accommodation:

2 nights at Hotel Bordeaux Centre or similar

Day 23

Locations: Loire Valley

Overview:

Our next stop is St. Emilion, where we will have a guided tour of the underground church, which was carved out of surrounding limestone. The rest of the day if free for you to explore Bordeaux, the capital of a region with a very rich history, although perhaps now more famous for

its wine!

(B)

Accommodation:

Hotel Bordeaux Centre or similar

Day 24

Locations: Paris

Overview:

Today we will take a high speed train from Bordeaux to Paris, where you will have time to walk around the city before having a farewell dinner at the hotel for the final night.

(B) (D)

Accommodation:

1 night at Relais Monceau or similar

Day 25

Locations: Paris

Overview:

Our tour ends after breakfast.

(B)

Inclusions / Exclusions

What's included in our Tour

- 24 nights of hotel accommodation.
- 24 breakfasts. 15 lunches and 10 dinners.
- Applicable entry fees and services of local guides.
- Transport and field trips as indicated.
- Service charges and gratuities.

- Services of a Tour Leader.
- Detailed tour information booklet.

What's not included in our Tour

- International airfares and 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.