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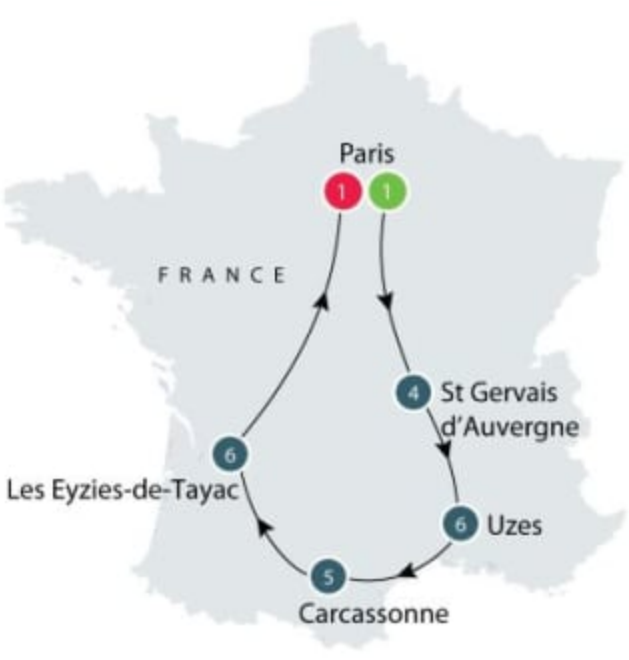
24 days
Duration

France
Destination

Level 2 - Moderate
Activity

Rural France | Small Group Tour for Seniors

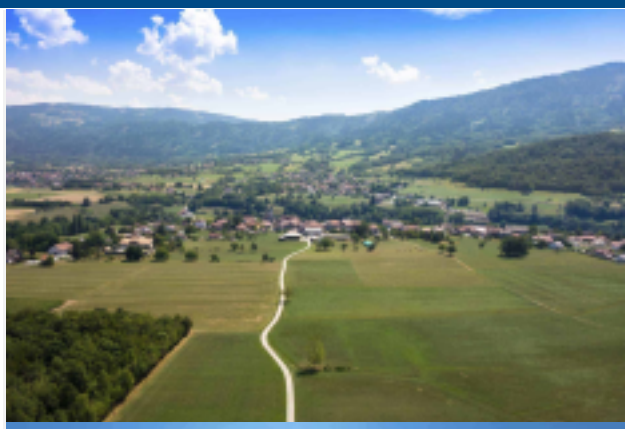
Apr 26 2024 to May 19 2024



Rural 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

.







On this small group Rural France programme, we spend 24 days exploring France beyond its bustling cities. During this tour you will explore the pastoral and provincial splendour of Rural France through French rural towns. France's rural villages and towns have resisted the dual siege of the automobile and the property developer. This decision has long protected the rural landscape, thus avoiding the incursions that laid waste to provincial centres in so many other European nations.

As you will see, many of France's beautiful towns remain untouched by the depredations of the last century. Within their walls the villagers conduct their daily lives much as they have done since Napoleonic times. These villages, or *communes,* maintain lives based on villagers' needs, rather than for those who seek to profit from them.

We start and finish this vacation program in Paris and explore small towns in France. This small group tour of rural France is limited to a maximum of 18 people. Travellers are escorted by a Program Leader, who works with a number of local professional guides who will give information about the towns of France and take you to the best restaurants and shops to rest your feet.

On these guided tours, they share with you the culture and the history of rural France. Topics include the local taxation system, the European Union and its impact on rural village life and the regional centres, as well as commentary about the history of the *pays,* an area whose inhabitants, sharing common interests, enter into a planning contract to build a community. *Pays* can translate to "region", as in Pays de la Loire.

Rural France Small Group Tour Itinerary

After beginning the program in Paris, we travel to the picturesque village of St-Gervais-d'Auvergne. En route, we pause at the elegant city of Orléans, site of Joan of Arc's turning point victory over the English in the 100 Year War. We then travel to the spa resort of Vichy. Vichy was the seat of France's World War II collaborationist government and is also

the source of the famous mineral water. We continue to St-Gervais-d'Auvergne and check into our hotel.

Set in the Puy-de-Dome region of the Auvergne in the southern-centre of France, St-Gervais-d'Auvergne is the region's capital. From here we then visit Saint-Flour, perched on the Auvergne's highest volcanic outcrop, where we have a full day walking tour of the town. This is quintessential medieval France surrounded by the rugged beauty of the region's volcanic landscape.







Other Highlights of France

Other highlights include visiting Avignon. Avignon is a walled city which was once the seat of the Popes. We travel as well to Uzes and the Pont du Gard in Languedoc-Roussillon. We will also stop off at the great citadel of Carcassonne, one of Europe's largest and best-preserved medieval fortresses. We also take time to explore the pre-historic Caves of Lascaux II. The Camargue, separated from the rest of France by 140,000 hectares of wetlands, pastures, dunes, and salt flats, will also feature on our itinerary.

This guided educational small group tour of rural France is one of many journeys offered by Odyssey Traveller each year. These programs are typically for the senior or mature-aged couple or solo traveller seeking a cultural or historic tour into France. If you want to go on a Seine river cruise, on walking tours through the Loire Valley, a visit to Versailles or the Sacre-Coeur Basilica on the summit of Montmartre or the French Riviera, or an exploration of Monet's Giverny, click here to see all of Odyssey travellers tours to France.

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 of Rural 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.







Tour Notes

- Group size is limited to a maximum of 14 participants.

Highlights

1. See Avignon, the working walled city which was once the seat of the Popes.
2. Explore the Camargue, separated from the rest of France by 140,000 hectares of wetlands, pastures, dunes, and salt flats.
3. Travel back many millennia to the pre-historic Caves of Lascaux II.
4. Visit the great citadel of Carcassonne, one of Europe's largest and best-preserved medieval fortresses.
5. Visit Uzes and Pont du Gard in Languedoc-Roussillon.

Itinerary

Day 1

Locations: Paris

Overview:

Upon arrival in Paris, we will come to the hotel individually. You will have some time to unpack and explore the city during the day, before the tour commences with an introductory session and a meal out at a local restaurant.

(D)

Accommodation:

1 night at Mercure Raspail or similar

Day 2

Locations: Paris

Overview:

After checking out from our hotel, we will depart Paris for St-Gervais-d'Auvergne. En route, we pause at the elegant city of Orléans, site of Joan of Arc's remarkable victory over the English during the 100 Year War. Then we travel to the spa resort of Vichy, a city with a rich but complex history, having been the home of France's collaborationist government during World War 2. We then continue on to St-Gervais-d'Auvergne, where we will be staying for the next four nights. Set in the Puy-de-Dome region of the Auvergne in the southern-centre of France, St-Gervais-d'Auvergne is the region's capital.

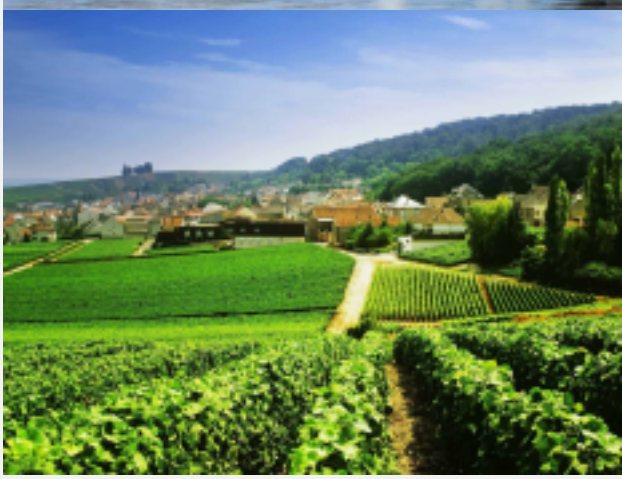
(B)

Accommodation:

4 nights at Castel 1904 Hotel or similar

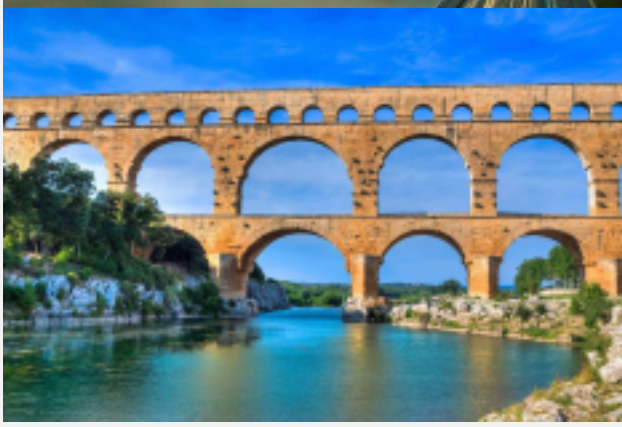












Day 3

Locations: St-Gervais-d'Auvergne

Overview:

We will have a full day tour of Saint-Flour, perched on the Auvergne's highest volcanic outcrop. This is quintessential medieval France surrounded by the rugged beauty of the region's volcanic landscape. We will return to our hotel and have the opportunity to find a local restaurant for dinner.

(B) (D)

Accommodation:

Castel 1904 Hotel or similar

Day 4

Locations: St-Gervais-d'Auvergne

Overview:

Today we will enjoy the view from Le Puy Mary, with its unspoiled landscape and panoramas of lush and verdant moorlands. We will explore Salers, one of the Auvergne's most attractive medieval villages, and the charming town of Tournemire, which is a member of the Association of the Most Beautiful French Villages. During our visit we will explore Chateau d'Anjony, which was built in 1430 by one of Joan of Arc's companions, Louis d'Anjony.

Accommodation:

Castel 1904 Hotel or similar

Day 5

Locations: St-Gervais-d'Auvergne

Overview:

This morning our local guide will lead us on a walking tour in the surrounding countryside. We will visit Orcival before stopping at a viewpoint to see Les Roches Tuiliere et Sanadoire at Lac de Guery. We



will view Mont Dore, then return to our hotel.

(B)

Accommodation:

Castel 1904 Hotel or similar

Day 6

Locations: Uzes

Overview:

This morning we will check out of our hotel and depart for Uzes, a charming medieval town in the Languedoc-Roussillon area near the Pont du Gard and the Roman aqueduct. It is a market town and a centre of gastronomy. New Zealand's premiere television cuisine personality Peta Mathias conducts her famous cooking schools in this medieval village during the summer months. En route to Uzes, we will pause at Le Puy, with its shrine-topped volcanic towers. We will arrive at our accommodation in time for dinner.

(B)

Accommodation:

6 nights at Hotel Patio de Violette or similar.

Day 7

Locations: Uzes

Overview:

Today we head out to Aigueze, a medieval town perched on an isolated outcrop, where we will start our days excursions. A local guide will join us here to head down the valley and explore the Gorges de l'Ardeche. We will drive through the region's picturesque villages, nestled against formidable limestone cliff faces, with plenty of opportunities for photos!

(B)

Accommodation:

Hotel Patio de Violette or similar.

Day 8

Locations: Uzes

Overview:

Today we will join our local guide for a full day tour. We will visit the delightful port of Saintes-Maries-de-la-Mer to see its Romanesque steeple and stroll through the narrow paved streets following the tracks of the pilgrims. We will also visit the fortified city of Aigues-Mortes, where we will enjoy a guided tour of the town. We will return to our accommodation for dinner.

(B) (D)

Accommodation:

Hotel Patio de Violette or similar.

Day 9

Locations: Uzes

Overview:

Today we will explore the impressive Roman city of Nîmes, established by the Romans more than 2 millennia ago. We will walk in the footsteps of the Roman amphitheatre's ancient spectators and experience some of France's best preserved classical buildings, including Maison Carree, with our local guide. We will stop at a local vineyard for a tour and tasting, then continue to the Roman city of Arles for another guided tour. The city boasts impressive Roman monuments, of which the earliest – the arena, the Roman theatre, and the cryptoporticus (subterranean galleries) – date back to the 1st century BC.

(B)

Accommodation:

Hotel Patio de Violette or similar.

Day 10

Locations: Uzes

Overview:

We will continue our journey to St-Rémy-de-Provence, which features an ancient Gallo-Roman interior, circled by the remnants of its circular 14th century wall and a protective circle of buildings. It was here where Van Gogh painted Starry Night. We will visit the site of the Roman Village of Glanum and the St. Paul de Mausole monastery, where Van Gogh admitted himself for treatment. We will then join our local guide for awalking tour of the town of Les Baux de Provence, located on a rocky plateau in the heart of the Alpilles, which provides a breathtaking panoramic of Arles and the Camargue. We will return to our accommodation for dinner.

Accommodation:

Hotel Patio de Violette or similar.

Day 11

Locations: Uzes

Overview:

Today we will visit the Pont du Gard, the Roman aqueduct running between Uzes and Nimes. At the peak of its use, over 200 million litres of water a day flowed to the Roman citizens of Nîmes 25 kilometres away. We will continue to Avignon, where we meet our local guide to see the main sights of the city, including the Palais des Papes, or Popes' Palace, a monumental structure that placed this sleepy French town on the European map.

Accommodation:

Hotel Patio de Violette or similar.

Day 12

Locations: Uzes

Overview:

After breakfast we will check out of our accommodation and depart Uzes for Carcassonne. En route we will pause to view the spectacular bridge at Millau, which towers above the Tarn Valley. It was designed by the British architect Lord Foster and it is the highest road bridge in the world. We will have time to explore Beziers, one of the oldest cities in France, with its Gothic Cathedral, quintessential cafes and tree-lined streets.

In the evening we will return for a group dinner at the hotel.

(B) (D)

Accommodation:

5 nights at Le Donjon Hotel or similar.

Day 13

Locations: Carcassonne

Overview:

Today we will take a boat trip on the famous Canal du Midi, then meet our guide for a walking tour of the delightful medieval city of Carcassonne, which is an ancient double walled fortified town, considered the best preserved in Europe. Free time this afternoon in Carcassonne will allow us to explore the city.

(B)

Accommodation:

Le Donjon Hotel or similar.

Day 14

Locations: Carcassonne

Overview:

Our first visit will be to Châteaux de Lastours, a series of towers and ruined castle defences perched on an isolated outcrop. Lastours's 4

castles date back to the Bronze Age, and is the burial site of the famous “princess with the necklace.” Her body was covered with objects such as amber pearls and jewelry, evoking Mycenaean or Egyptian art. Our next stop is Caunes-Minervois to visit the Benedictine Abbey. We will then view the castle remains at Minerve before returning to our accommodation for dinner.

(B) (D)

Accommodation:

Le Donjon Hotel or similar.

Day 15

Locations: Carcassonne

Overview:

We will enjoy a guided tour of the castle remains at Saissac. Next we will see the Jardins de l’Evieche in St. Ferrol. We enjoy free time in Montoleiu in the afternoon and evening.

(B) (D)

Accommodation:

Le Donjon Hotel or similar.

Day 16

Locations: Carcassonne

Overview:

Our local guide will meet us this morning to drive to Mirepoix for a walking tour, where we will see the central square with its covered medieval walkways. We will carry on to Montsegur where we will view the castle from the village, before returning to our accommodation.

(B)

Accommodation:

Le Donjon Hotel or similar.

Day 17

Locations: Les Eyzies-de-Tayac

Overview:

After we check out from our accommodation, we will depart Carcassonne for Les Eyzies-de-Tayac. We will travel first to Albi, where our local guide will lead us on a city tour, including the entrance to the Toulouse Lautrec Museum and the cathedral. After we have lunch individually, we continue to Cahors where we will have some time to explore at leisure. Dinner tonight is at our hotel in Les Eyzies-de-Tayac.

(B) (D)

Accommodation:

6 nights at Hotel Cro Magnon or similar.

Day 18

Locations: Les Eyzies-de-Tayac

Overview:

After a morning at leisure, we will travel to La Roque Gageac where we will join our cruise on the Dordogne River before returning to our hotel in Eyzies-de-Tayac.

(B)

Accommodation:

Hotel Cro Magnon or similar.

Day 19

Locations: Les Eyzies-de-Tayac

Overview:

Today we will visit the fortified town of Collonges la Rouge before visiting the pilgrimage town of Rocamadour. We will then visit the religious centre and view the Black Madonna, and return to Les Eyzies-

de-Tayac.

(B)

Accommodation:

Hotel Cro Magnon or similar.

Day 20

Locations: Les Eyzies-de-Tayac

Overview:

This morning we will visit the impressive chateau in Hautefort and then continue to the village of Badefols. Our next stop is a visit the medieval village of Saint Robert, before travelling to Brive la Gaillarde to visit the local distillery of Denoix for a tour and tasting.

(B)

Accommodation:

Hotel Cro Magnon or similar.

Day 21

Locations: Les Eyzies-de-Tayac

Overview:

Today we will visit to the picturesque town of Sarlat and the village of Domme with its spectacular views of the Dordogne. Sarlat dates back to the Viking era and is renowned for having the highest number of listed historical monuments in Europe. We will take a tourist train to the fortified medieval town of Domme, where we will see the trapezoid city plan from a viewpoint. Before arriving at our hotel we will visit the National Museum of Pre-History at Eyzies-de-Tayac. We will have dinner at our hotel this evening.

(B) (D)

Accommodation:

Hotel Cro Magnon or similar.

Day 22

Locations: Les Eyzies-de-Tayac

Overview:

Our local guide will meet us again this morning to lead us for a visit to the caves of Lascaux II, a copy of the decorated prehistoric caves at Lascaux. The caves are famed for Paleolithic cave paintings, dating from the dawn of time. They primarily consist of images of gigantic prehistoric creatures known from fossil evidence to have once roamed Europe. Next we will continue on to explore the attractive village of St. Leon sur Vezere, then the caves of Le Roque St Christophe.

(B)

Accommodation:

Hotel Cro Magnon or similar.

Day 23

Locations: Paris

Overview:

We will check out of our hotel this morning to depart for Paris. We will make a stop en route to visit the Châteaux de Chambord, one of France's most distinctive country estates, with its iconic blend of medieval and Renaissance styles. We then continue on to our hotel in Paris, where we will have a farewell dinner in the evening.

(B) (D)

Accommodation:

1 night at Mercure Raspail or similar.

Day 24

Locations: Paris

Overview:

Our Rural France tour will end this morning after breakfast.

(B)

Inclusions / Exclusions

What's included in our Tour

- 23 nights of hotel accommodation.
- 23 breakfasts and 10 dinners.
- Transport and field trips as indicated.
- Applicable entry fees and services of local guides.
- Touring by comfortable and modern coach.
- Service charges and gratuities.
- Detailed tour information booklet.
- Services of a tour leader.

What's not included in our Tour

- International airfare and departure taxes.
- Comprehensive international travel insurance.
- Meals not listed on the 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.