Senior Travellers guided educational small group tour of rural France

30 Apr 20 to 23 May 20

Rural France small group tour.

On this program, “Senior Travellers guided educational Small Group tour of rural France”, we spend 24 days exploring France beyond the cities. We start and finish this vacation program in Paris. This small group tour of rural France is limited to a maximum of 18 people.
Travellers are escorted by a program leader.

Your program leader works with a number of local professional guides. This team of guides share with you the culture and the history of rural France. Topics include the local taxation system to the quirkiness of the European Union and its impact on rural village life and the regional centres. As well as commentary about the more traditional history of the “Pays”.

During this tour you will explore the pastoral and provincial splendour of Rural France. 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. This is despite the fact that even small rural roads are sealed.

As you will see, the result is that many of France’s villages and 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 those for who seek to profit from them. Indeed, a villager after an interval of 200 years, stepping back today into their old market square carpeted with white limestone and shaded by plane trees, would instantly feel themselves to be truly back at home.

**Rural France tour itinerary:**

After beginning the program in Paris we travel to 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-Dôme 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. As well we travel 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 Senior Travellers guided educational Small Group tour of rural France is one of some 25 journeys offered by Odyssey to France each year. These programs are typically for the senior or mature
couple or solo traveller seeking a cultural or historic tour into France.

Head over to our blog for a guide to touring France!

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.

**Tour Notes**

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

**Top 5**

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.

**Itinerary**

**Day 1**

**Locations:** Paris

**Overview:** Upon arrival in Paris, we will come to the hotel individually. There will be some free time to explore Paris’s monumental architecture which reflects the city’s diverse and
interesting history. Our tour will commence with a tour orientation and a welcome dinner at a local restaurant.

**Accommodation:** 1 night at Mercure Raspail.

**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 turning point victory over the English in the 100 Year War. Then we travel to the spa resort of Vichy, seat of France's World War II collaborationist government and world-famous mineral water. We continue to St-Gervais-d'Auvergne and check into our hotel. Set in the Puy-de-Dôme region of the Auvergne in the southern-centre of France, St-Gervais-d'Auvergne is the region's capital.

**Accommodation:** 4 nights at Castel 1904 Hotel.

**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.

**Accommodation:** Castel 1904 Hotel.
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.

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.

Accommodation: Castel 1904 Hotel.

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.

**Accommodation:** 6 nights at Hotel Patio de Violette or similar.

**Day 7**

**Locations:** Uzes

**Overview:** Today our local guide will join us to explore the stunning villages of the Gorges de l’Ardeche in the Rhone-Alpes. Experience the grandeur and beauty of the gorges with limestone cliffs rising to 300 metres. We will stop at Aigueze to enjoy the view before returning to our hotel.

**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.

**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. 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.

**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 join our local guide for our walking 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 view down over 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 intact Roman aqueduct running between Uzes and Nimes. In Roman times 200 million litres of water a day flowed to the 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 which transformed this sleepy provincial town into a centre of European power.

**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, a charming small city. We will stroll along the café-lined and tree-lined Allées Paul Riquet and gaze up at the majestic Cathedrale Saint Nazaire, which can be seen on its hilltop perch from almost anywhere in the city. Tonight, we enjoy dinner in the hotel.

**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.

**Accommodation:** Le Donjon Hotel or similar.
Day 14

Locations: Carcassonne

Overview: Our first visit will be Lastours to see the chateau perched on its rocky outcrop. Lastours’s 4 castles date back to the Middle-Bronze Age. Lastours has the tomb of a young girl known as “the 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.

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.

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.

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.

Accommodation: 6 nights at Hotel Cro Magnon.

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.

Accommodation: Hotel Cro Magnon.

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.

Accommodation: Hotel Cro Magnon.
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.

Accommodation: Hotel Cro Magnon.

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.

Accommodation: Hotel Cro Magnon.

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.

**Accommodation:** Hotel Cro Magnon.

**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 at Chambord to visit the chateau. On arrival in Paris we will take a short orientation tour of the city. This evening we will gather for our farewell dinner.

**Accommodation:** 1 night at Mercure Raspail.

**Day 24**

**Locations:** Paris

**Overview:** Our Rural France tour will end this morning after breakfast.

**Accommodation:**

**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**
• Return economy class international airfare and departure taxes.
• Comprehensive travel insurance.
• Meals not listed on the itinerary.
• Items of a personal nature such as telephone calls and laundry.

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