

Barcelona & Paris

with Avignon & the Provence countryside

Day 1: Fly out from USA

Your European adventure begins today, with an overnight flight from the US to Europe.

Day 2: Bienvenidos a España

The itinerary for your first day in Europe will be arranged to maximize your time, the exact order depending on your arrival time (East Coast groups will usually arrive before lunchtime, West Coast groups late afternoon or evening).

We'll check into our centrally-located hotel for two nights, & if time allows your tour leader will introduce you to Barcelona on a relaxed walking tour of central Barcelona, including the colorful market & lively *Las Ramblas*, a pedestrianized street at the heart of the city's life. Dinner this evening will be in the city's Gothic quarter, & afterwards there will be a chance to soak in the atmosphere during an after dinner stroll.

Day 3: "Barcelona!"

Today is dedicated to discovering the vibrant & exciting city of Barcelona.

During the morning our expert local guide will introduce you to the capital of Catalonia, a distinct & proud region with its own history & traditions. Amongst the sights we'll visit will be the *Sagrada Familia*, a stunning but still-incomplete cathedral that is just one of the city's architectural masterpieces designed by Antoni Gaudi.

During the afternoon you will have free time to explore at leisure - perhaps to visit the Picasso Museum, to tour the home of F.C.Barcelona, or just to lie on the beach!

Day 4: From Catalunya to Provence

We depart Barcelona this morning to begin our journey into France.

En-route a stop will be made to visit Figueres, famous as the home of artist Salvador Dali OR Carcassone, a walled medieval city in the French Pyrenees.

Late this afternoon we arrive in Avignon for a three-night stay.

After dinner your tour leader will introduce you to this charming town on an introductory stroll through the squares & backstreets, stopping along the way for some great gelato!

Day 5: Avignon, City of Popes

Our exploration of Avignon begins with a guided tour of the city, led by an expert local guide. Afterwards enjoy included visits to the huge Palais des Papes, once home to a succession of French Popes, & the St. Benezet Bridge, made famous in the nursery rhyme *Sur le Pont d'Avignon*.

This afternoon you'll have free time to sightsee further, to stroll through the medieval streets & squares, or perhaps just to relax in one of Avignon's cafes & be entertained by the popular street performers.

Day 6: A Day in Provence

Today we discover the Provence of history & art on a day trip into the countryside of this sun-drenched region.

Our stops will be the *Pont du Gard* aqueduct, France's greatest Roman construction; the hilltop ghost town of Les Baux & its once-powerful citadel; & Arles, chosen by Van Gogh for its 'different light' & vistas (many of which are still recognizable today from his paintings!), & equally renowned for its impressive Roman ruins & arena.

Day 7: TGV to Paris, the City of Lights

It is time to bid farewell to Provence today as we board France's high-speed TGV train for the approximately 3 hour journey to Paris, arriving by lunchtime.

After arrival we'll enjoy lunch before our expert Parisien guide will introduce you to the 'City of Lights' on a panoramic city tour, including a visit to Notre Dame Cathedral.

After dinner tonight ride the Paris metro to visit Montmartre, an historic artists' district with spectacular views over the city. It's the perfect place to end your first day in Paris, sipping a drink in a sidewalk cafe or having your portrait done by a local artist.

Day 8: Paris in Depth

Today is dedicated to getting to know Paris better.

This morning your Tour Leader will introduce you to some of the city's hidden corners on our Central Paris Walking tour, exploring the city's covered arcades & quieter streets.

Later your visit to the Louvre Museum will surely be a highlight of your trip, whether your interest in the museum's 'greatest hits' or perhaps less-visited collections.

The rest of the afternoon is free for you to explore independently, but your tour leader will be on hand to help you - whether you choose to shop for the latest French fashions or browse the Latin Quarter bookstores.

After dinner this evening our included 'Paris By Night' tour features a Seine River cruise & a trip up the Eiffel Tower for spectacular views of the city!

Day 9: Versailles, Summer Palace of French Royalty

We travel outside the city by train this morning to visit the Palace of Versailles, once the magnificent summer home of France's royalty.

After viewing the interior (& learning how the king & his court lived) you'll have plenty of time to explore the pristine grounds which include the famous fountains & Marie Antoinette's 'Little Hamlet' where the queen played farm!

Later this afternoon we'll return to Paris in time for some last minute shopping or sightseeing before your farewell dinner.

Day 10: Au Revoir Paris

Sadly our week comes to an end, your morning flight from Paris arriving home later today.