

A Taste of France

Burgundy, Champagne, & Paris

with visits to Perouges, Beaune, Dijon, Reims, & Fontainebleau

Day 1: International flight from USA to France

Your French adventure begins today as you meet up with your fellow travelers for an overnight flight across the Atlantic

Day 2: Bonjour Lyon!

We arrive this morning in Lyon, one of France's most compelling cities & a fabulous stop for gourmets, where we will check-in to our centrally-located hotel for a two-night stop.

This afternoon we will discover Lyon in the company of our expert local guide, walking the Old Town's narrow streets & visiting the Primatiale St-Jean, a masterpiece cathedral in the Lyonnais Romanesque style. Our explorations will include riding the funicular up Fourviere Hill - as well as offering great views over the city, it will take us to the Basilique Notre-Dame de Fourviere, a fortress-like church above the city.

Tonight we will enjoy a welcome dinner in a *bouchon*, a traditional Lyonnais restaurant typical of a city that is home to many of France's most famous cuisine.

Day 3: Perouges & the Beaujolais Region

This morning we head out of Lyon for a day in the country, beginning this morning with a visit to Perouges, a medieval hilltop village of 1,200 people saved from demolition by its courageous mayor in 1909! Rather than specific sights the village itself is the attraction, so there will be plenty of time to wander through the streets, soaking up the atmosphere of the cobbled streets & squares.

After lunch we continue our day with a scenic drive through the Beaujolais region, stopping to visit a local vineyard to learn about this world-famous wine region, see the cellars, & sample the product before returning to Lyon.

Day 4: The Road to Dijon – Cluny, Beaune & the Cote-d'Or

Departing Lyon this morning we drive north as we make our way towards Dijon, traveling through the picturesque countryside of the Cote d'Or, named for the natural ridge that dominates the landscape.

During the morning we will make two stops, first at the famed Abbey of Cluny, once second only to the Vatican in terms of its power throughout the Christian world. Later we'll also visit the Chateau of Cormartin, considered one of the finest historic homes in Burgundy.

At lunchtime we will arrive in Beaune, the most important town of the region, where we will spend the afternoon. After lunch we visit the Hotel-Dieu of the famed Hospices de Beaune, an institution founded over 550 years ago to care for the poor & still in operation today!

Our day ends in Dijon, checking-in for a two-night stay before enjoying another excellent group dinner.

Day 5: The Ducal City of Dijon

Our local Dijon guide will introduce you to beautiful Dijon this morning, taking us on a walking tour through the historic heart of the city as we visit sights such as the ducal palace - *Palais des Ducs et des Etats de Bourgogne* - & the Cathedral of Notre Dame.

This afternoon has been left completely free for you to explore at leisure, relax in an open air cafe on one of Dijon's picturesque squares, or perhaps shop for Dijon's famous mustard.

Day 6: From Burgundy to Champagne, via Chablis

Today we discover the homes of two of France's most famous white wines as we travel from Dijon to Reims.

Our morning stop will be in Chablis, a picturesque red-roofed village renowned for its dry white wines. The local church of St. Martin has been a center of pilgrimage for centuries – legend has it that Joan of Arc was once a visitor – & the church is decorated with ancient horseshoes & other ironwork left by the pilgrims. We will visit a small local winery, then enjoy time to explore the village & have lunch.

Later this afternoon we will arrive in Reims, home of perhaps the most famous of all wines, champagne. After checking-in for a two-night stay, we will rendezvous for our group dinner this evening in a renowned local restaurant.

Day 7: Reims: Coronations & Bubbles!

Although Reims was badly damaged during World War I, its greatest treasures survived the spectacular Cathedral Notre Dame de Reims (one of the greatest gothic cathedrals in France & coronation site of French kings for over 1,000 years) & the extensive champagne cellars buried beneath the city.

Our tour of the city this morning will take in the cathedral & other sites, including the Bishops' Residence. Then this afternoon we will tour of one of the historic champagne houses to discover the history & traditions of champagne production as well as its modern methods. During our visit we will also venture beneath the city to see the cellars, then of course we'll enjoy a tasting.

Day 8: Fontainebleau & Paris

We travel to our final destination today - Paris, France's wonderful capital city.

But first there's time this morning to visit Fontainebleau, where we will have lunch in the village & visit the magnificent royal chateau set in acres of gardens & woodland.

Upon arrival in Paris in the mid-afternoon, we will check-in for a three-night stay.

Dinner is included this evening, then we'll discover why Paris is known as 'The City of Lights', as we ascend the Eiffel Tower & take a nighttime cruise on the River Seine.

Day 9: Paris in Depth

A panoramic city tour of Paris this morning, led by our expert local guide, will take in Paris' legendary Notre Dame Cathedral, the Arc de Triomphe, the Champs Elysses, & many more of the city's most recognizable sights.

During the afternoon we will visit the famed Musee du Louvre to see, amongst thousands of other priceless works of art, the Mona Lisa & Venus de Milo. Your tour leader will help you to negotiate the crowds & make the most of your visit.

This evening there's an included trip to Montmartre, a picturesque area of narrow streets & cobbled squares that were once an artists' village separate from the city proper.

Day 10: Free time in Paris!

Today enjoy a totally free day to explore France's wonderful capital city at your leisure.

Your tour leader will be on hand to help you plan your day, whether you want to browse the bookstores of the Left Bank, shop in the stores of the Grand Avenues, or visit the great museums & art galleries of the city. You might even choose to venture out of the city to the grand palace of Versailles or Claude Monet's modest home at Giverny.

This evening, our last together in France, we'll rendezvous once more for a farewell group dinner.

Day 11: Travel home to the USA

Sadly today it's time to travel home. This morning we transfer to the airport for our transatlantic flight, arriving home later the same day.