

# Rail holidays to France

*Expressions*



## Loire Valley, Bordeaux and Dordogne by rail and car



## Loire Valley, Bordeaux and Dordogne by rail and car

8 NIGHTS / 9 DAYS

Amboise

Chinon

Bordeaux

Dordogne



This 8-night rail-drive touring holiday to the Loire Valley, Bordeaux and the Dordogne combines travelling by Eurostar and TGV with the use of a hire-car so that you can explore each region in depth. You take the Eurostar to Paris and change to the high-speed TGV to Tours. With a departure about 09.30 hrs from London you reach Tours by about 15.00 hrs. You then have the use of a hire-car to tour the region, before continuing by train to Bordeaux, where you collect another hire-car for your use in the regions of Bordeaux and the Dordogne. You return the car to Libourne at the end of your stay in France, before taking the TGV back to Paris. You return to London by Eurostar. If you leave Libourne just before 11.00 hrs, you reach London just after 16.30 hrs. The first of the three regions you visit is the Loire Valley, strategically important during the Hundred Years War. The remains of mediaeval strongholds and fortresses still bear witness to this. Eventually the fortified castles were replaced by chateaux designed to be for enjoyment and relaxation. The numerous chateaux are obvious places of interest (Chambord, Cheverny, Villandry, Chenonceau, Aazy-le-Rideau among many others) but there are many gardens, some attached to chateaux, vineyards, walks, river trips, local festivals, museums and galleries, son-et-lumiere shows, markets (Tours boasts no fewer than twenty markets), and fine dining with an array of Michelin-starred restaurants. Your second region is that of Bordeaux where you have both the city itself with its wide boulevards, river frontage, museums, galleries and restaurants and the surrounding vineyards. You can tour the Medoc and see the famous chateaux or visit the pretty wine-town of St Emilion. Your third region is a short drive inland; the Dordogne is one of the loveliest regions of France and renowned for its hearty cuisine, prehistoric sites at Les Eyzies and Lascaux, mediaeval castles that perch above the river valley, and pretty market towns in stone of rich tones of golden brown.

### PRICES

**From £1,960 per person**

Based on two people sharing a double or twin room.

### DATES

This rail holiday can be arranged throughout the year. Timings and the route can vary depending on the month and day of the week.

### TOUR CODE

FRBR08

### WHAT'S INCLUDED

- Eurostar standard class London to Paris return, and TGV second-class Paris to Tours return
- Hire of a group B car for 4 days in the Loire valley
- Hire of a group B car for 5 days in Bordeaux and Dordogne
- 3 nights' bed and breakfast in a Traditional double room at Le Choiseul, at Amboise
- 2 nights' bed and breakfast in a Comfort double room at Les Sources de Caudalie, near Bordeaux
- 3 nights' bed and breakfast in a Superior double room at Le Vieux Logis, at Tremolat
- Concierge service and Expressions Holidays regional helpful hints

### WHAT'S NOT INCLUDED

- Early check-in or late check-out at any hotels (although we can arrange this on request at additional cost)
- Any other services not mentioned above, such as transfers and meals except breakfast at hotels
- Personal holiday insurance. This is essential and cover should be in place from when you book the holiday.
- Local tourist tax, usually between Euros 1 and 3 per person per night, and payable locally to the hotel
- Transfers in Paris

## DAY-BY-DAY ITINERARY

All train times are approximate and may vary depending on travel dates.

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### Day one London to Amboise

Your rail-drive touring holiday of the Loire Valley, Bordeaux and Dordogne starts with a Eurostar journey from London to Paris, a change of stations in Paris and then the high-speed TGV from Paris to Tours St Pierre des Corps, at the heart of the Garden of France. If you leave London about 09.30 hrs you arrive in Tours about 15.00 hrs. You collect your hire-car from the station and your first stay is at Amboise, just to the east of Tours and about 40 minutes' drive. You stay in Amboise for three nights.

### Days two and three in Amboise

You have two full days to explore this part of the Loire Valley. There are numerous places of importance to visit within a very short drive. Amboise, on the banks of the river Loire, is home to the Chateau d'Amboise, a 15th century residence of Charles VIII and where you will find the tomb of Leonardo da Vinci. Nearby is the Chateau du Clos Lucé where Leonardo Da Vinci lived. In the grounds are displays of working models of this designs. Not far from Amboise is the Château de Chenonceau, known sometimes at the 'Ladies Castle' due to its string of female owners, such as Catherine de Medici and Diane de Poitiers, is not to be missed. This château offers an extensive art gallery and a collection of exquisite Flemish tapestries, as well as wine-tasting opportunities. You can dine in L'Orangerie, the on-site restaurant, or relax in the tea rooms, before exploring the wax museum or enjoying a boat ride. In the warmer summer months of July and August, night strolls around the castle and its grounds are very atmospheric, particularly with the backdrop of music by Arcangelo Corelli. Whilst in Amboise, you may want to visit the capital of the region, Tours. It is an ancient university town and this region purports to speak the 'purest' form of French. The old town is a delight with its narrow streets and tall, gabled, half-timbered houses. The Cathedral of Saint Gatien dates from the 12th century but most of it is obviously flamboyant Gothic, completed about the same time as the Chateau de Chenonceau. In Montlouis-sur-Loire, we recommend visiting the Domaine de la Taille aux Loups to taste the local wine: the dry and fizzy Moelleux wines from this region.

### Day four Amboise to Bordeaux

You return your hire-car to Tours St Pierre des Corps station and take the TGV to Bordeaux. This is a frequent service but if you take the train at 11.00 hrs from St Pierre des Corps you arrive in Bordeaux-St-Jean at just before 13.00 hrs. Time to collect your hire-car and drive the short distance to your overnight stop



Dordogne valley

in the Bordeaux region. You stay here for two nights.

### Day five in Bordeaux

The city of Bordeaux is a thriving hub of wine-making in the Aquitaine region. On the bank of the Gironde Estuary, just south of the Médoc Peninsula, and about 40 minutes' drive from world-famous Saint-Emilion, Le Saint-James is the ideal place to be based in order to explore this region. Track down one of the impressive wine châteaux dotted across the region, such as the Château Rauzan Gassies and the Château Mouton Rothschild, to taste the fruity Merlot and Cabernet Sauvignon, and experience the distinctive vanilla and coffee aromas that develop as the wines of the area age. Other grape varieties in the region include Cabernet Franc, Petit Verdot, and Malbec. Within the port city of Bordeaux, much more than wine-tasting is on offer. Stroll around the city streets to get a feel for the wealth of extensive and interesting architecture. Recommended stop-off points include The Amphithéâtre de Bordeaux dit Palais Gallien, the Cathédrale de Bordeaux, the Opéra National de Bordeaux, and the Basilica of St. Michael.

### Day six Bordeaux to the Dordogne

Today you leave the Bordeaux area to drive for just over two hours into the heart of the Dordogne to the village of Tremolat on the northern bank of the river. In terms of the route, we would suggest that you spend some time visiting along the way. Perhaps this is the day to visit St Emilion as you leave Bordeaux and possibly to call into the Bergerac before reaching your destination for the night. You spend three nights in Tremolat. Make the most

of your days in Trémolat, walk into the centre of the village to appreciate the imposing and austere Saint Nicolas Church. Its riverside position makes it ideal for kayaking and fishing, and the neighbouring hills make for fantastic hiking trails. You stay here for three nights.

### Days seven and eight in the Dordogne

The Dordogne is renowned for its rich and hearty cuisine and the region produces all manner of fascinating food stuffs, from walnuts to mushrooms, from cheese to truffles, from foie gras to pork delicacies. There is wine too, at Bergerac and Monbazillac. The Dordogne has a great number of very picturesque small towns, most of which have markets on various days of the week. Sarlat is probably the best known but Domme, La Roche Gageac, Les Eyzies and Beynac are worth seeking out. Some of the towns also have night-time markets where you can eat, drink and listen to music. You have two full days in this area to become acquainted with all manner of foodie things but also to experience the rich culture and history of the region, from the prehistoric cave paintings at Lascaux and Les Eyzies to the mediaeval fortresses that perch on rocky crags above the meandering valley of the Dordogne, to beautifully fashioned gardens, at Eyrignac and Marqueyssac for example.

### Day nine Dordogne to London

You return your hire-car to Libourne this morning and take the TGV from here to Paris. If you leave Libourne just before 11.00 hrs you arrive back in London on the Eurostar just after 16.30 hrs.

## GENERAL INFORMATION

this rail holiday is one of several suggested rail holidays we can offer you exactly as it is but also with any alterations you might want including extra nights in one or more places or adding in extra places. All our tours can be extended so that you can include a longer stay in one mountain or lake resort too, perhaps at the end of the itinerary. Do call to discuss the options with our travel consultants.



### OUR TOURS

**Our rail tours are for individuals travelling on their own or in their own family group. You do not join a group and you are not escorted.**

### FLEXIBLE ARRANGEMENTS

Our arrangements are very flexible in that you choose to travel on any day you want, subject to availability of trains and hotels. As mentioned above, additional nights can be added at any point.

### EUROSTAR

A rail holiday to France starts with a journey by Eurostar from London St Pancras, Ebbsfleet or Ashford stations in the UK to either Paris Gare du Nord or Lille Europe. In summer months there are direct trains on Saturdays from London St Pancras to Avignon with no change required.

Eurostar offers almost hourly departures every day, allowing you to travel from the centre of London to the centre of Paris on the same train in three hours. Not all trains stop at the Ebbsfleet and Ashford stations in Kent, but parking is plentiful at both stations and it allows you to avoid London.

Check-in is 30 minutes prior to departure, customs formalities are completed before boarding and there is no limit to the amount of baggage that can be taken on board. The Eurostar trains themselves have 8 coaches which are split into Standard Class, Standard Premier and Business Premier as well as 2 cafeterias. Standard Premier customers are served a light cold meal and enjoy a more spacious environment than Standard Class, while Business Premier customers receive a hot meal and unlimited beverages as well as lounge access.

### TRAIN TIMES

We have planned our itineraries based on train times that work day by day at the time of planning which can be up to a year before you travel. Usually train times stay more or less the same every day, season by season. The times we have planned will be discussed with you at the time you enquire about the holiday and they are detailed to you in your written holiday quotation. It may be that the timetable changes between the planning of the itinerary and when you come to book but we can always adjust the itinerary to suit the actual train times and any requirements you have for particular times of travel.

### FIRST OR SECOND CLASS

We will automatically include travel in second class but lots of our clients do upgrade to first class service. On Eurostar this is called Premier Standard for leisure travellers as it gives you an upgraded on-board service and more spacious seating but without paying for the fully-flexible business tickets. On the TGV trains within France, upgrading to first class gives you more spacious seating with increased legroom. The price of upgrading varies from route to route but is something that is not always proportionately a lot more on the price of the overall holiday, so well-worth considering.

### TRANSFERS

Transfers in Paris between stations and from the station to each hotel are not automatically included in the price of the holiday. In Paris most clients choose to take a taxi between the stations rather than go on the Metro but we can arrange a private car with driver to take you in between. This is quite useful if you are a family group that can't fit into one Paris taxi.

### OUR PRICES

**The sample prices mentioned in this leaflet are generally a 'from' price based on the cheapest season of travel. However, train fares and hotel rates can change (up and down depending on offers), so we give you an accurate price for your holiday when we provide you with a quotation. Our sample prices should be used as an indication of how much a particular combination will cost and to show the differences on average between the hotel categories on offer.**

### BOOKING CONDITIONS

Our booking conditions apply to all holidays. A copy can be found on our website and a copy is also sent to you with a written quotation and when you make a booking.

### FINANCIAL PROTECTION

Expressions Holidays offers full financial protection for all holidays you book with us. If your holiday includes a flight, the ATOL (3076) covers the costs of the holiday. If the holiday does not include a flight, it is the ABTOT bond that protects the cost of the holiday. We are also members of AITO (the Association of Independent Tour Operators).

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## HOW TO BOOK

To make a booking, just phone us on

**01392 441250**

and we can take you through the details we need and start the booking process.