

# Touring holidays of France

*Expressions*



## Bordeaux, the Basque Country and Carcassonne fly-drive holiday



# Bordeaux, the Basque Country and Carcassonne fly-drive touring holiday

9 NIGHTS / 10 DAYS

**Bordeaux**

**St Jean de Luz**

**Carcassonne**



This 9-night fly-drive touring holiday of the south-west of France combines an enormous variety of scenery, cultures and architecture. This gentle touring holiday concentrates on the southwest of France, starting with a flight into Bordeaux. Here collect your hire-car and spend three nights amide vineyards in a village on the outskirts of Bordeaux, with the Medoc and St Emilion within easy reach. Your hire-car will allow you the freedom to explore the region, including the city of Bordeaux itself. After three nights here you drive southwest through the Landes, characterised by the sweet-smelling pine forests that encircle tranquil lakes and long stretches of uninterrupted beaches along the Côte d'Argent bordering the mighty Atlantic. The thermal town of Dax makes for a good stop en-route, or you may consider a short diversion to the beaches of Biscarrosse or Mimizan. Your second stay is in Saint-Jean-de-Luz in the French Basque country, almost on the border with Spain. There is easy access to Biarritz, just 10 miles away, and San Sebastián on the other side of the Spanish border, one of the great food capitals of Europe. You have time to relax on the lovely sandy beach as well as to walk in the foothills of the Pyrenees. Your next stop is in the UNESCO World Heritage Site of Carcassonne, one of the most perfect mediaeval towns in Europe and in the region of Languedoc. From here explore the Cathar castles or the Minervois vineyards, or venture as far as the Mediterranean coast near Narbonne. At the end of the three-night stay in Carcassonne you return your hire-car to either Toulouse or Bordeaux, depending on which flight is best for you.

## PRICES

From £2,220 per person

Based on two people sharing a double or twin room.

## DATES

This rail holiday can be arranged throughout the year. Timings can vary depending on the month and day of the week. For more information regarding rail services to and within France, view our train guide.

## TOUR CODE

FRFD02

## WHAT'S INCLUDED

- Scheduled flights with British Airways London to Bordeaux, and Toulouse or Bordeaux to London
- Hire of a Group B car for the duration of your holiday
- 3 nights' bed and breakfast in a Deluxe double room at Le Saint-James, near Bordeaux
- 3 nights' bed and breakfast in a Classic double room at the Parc Victoria in Saint-Jean-de-Luz
- 3 nights' bed and breakfast In a Classic double room at the Hotel de la Cite in Carcassonne
- 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

## Day one arrive in Bordeaux

Upon arriving in Bordeaux, collect your hire-car and make for your hotel on the outskirts of the city of Bordeaux, standing amidst some of the most renowned vineyards in the world. You spend three nights here.

## Days two and three 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. Making your own way around this city and exploring in your own time is the best way to experience the place first-hand. To delve deeper into the heritage of the city, visit the Musée d'Aquitane, the Musée des Beaux-Arts, or catch a show at the Grand Théâtre de Bordeaux. Hidden amidst the local vineyards and rolling hills, lie other important historical sites. During your stay here, you might want to arrange a cookery lesson.

## Day four Bordeaux to St Jean de Luz

The drive of about 2 hours and 30 minutes to St Jean de Luz in the French Basque country and near the border with Spain takes you across the flat, pine-forested Les Landes and almost parallel to the Côte d'Argent, a long stretch of sandy beach that borders the Atlantic Ocean. You reach the pretty fishing port and seaside resort of St Jean de Luz where you spend three nights.

## Days five and six in the French Basque country

Saint-Jean-de-Luz is sits on the Pyrenean border between France and Spain and is renowned for its pretty architecture, sandy beach, gastronomy and light. The coastline here is a mixture of cliffs and sandy beaches, creating interesting scenery, and there are the



Bordeaux chateau

foothills of the Pyrenees in the distance. This fishing port has a charming town centre, lined with picturesque 17th century shipowners' houses. Many of the buildings are in the distinctive Basque half-timbered style, often with the beams painted a dark red or green, with matching shutters at the windows. The Church of Saint Jean Baptiste was the site of the marriage of Louis XIV in 1660. Its interior makes it a unique religious building, split onto three levels, and adorned with extravagant gold decoration, while in the centre of the main room hangs a model ship, harking back to the nautical history of the town. To the north is the sophisticated and larger resort of Biarritz and inland is the historic town of Bayonne. Just across the rocky Pyrenean border in Spain is San Sebastián - an essential day-trip. As well as its reputation for excellent cuisine, San Sebastián boasts of an impressive heritage and royal connection. The La Perla spa building on the waterfront was built for the Queen María Cristina and is still believed to be one of the most beautiful in the world. St Jean de Luz hosts numerous festivals including a Sardine festival at the end of July and beginning of August, a classical music festival in September and an International Basque Choral Singing Festival at Halloween.

## Day seven Basque country to Carcassonne

Our recommended route today is one that shows you another region of France and takes you across country. It will take you through a little-known part of the country. You start by heading in the direction of Pau but before Pau you turn north to Aire sur l'Adour and

then you are in the region of Gascony, land of Armagnac and the Three Musketeers. The countryside is rolling, it is a warm golden yellow with houses of the same colour, often with shutters in light blue, and brown roofs, it produces sunflower fields and vines, and its little towns and villages are strewn with abandoned castles, dating from the Middle Ages when this land was ruled by the English crown. Auch is the capital of Gascony and worth a stop, perhaps at lunchtime. You continue to the pink-tinged city of Toulouse and then join the motorway to Carcassonne.

## Days eight and nine in Carcassonne

The Gallo-Roman upper town of Carcassonne is now a UNESCO World Heritage Site and historically of great significance in France. Walk along the city walls, past the castle's amphitheatre, the basilica, and its 53 watchtowers, before making your way into the 12th century Château Comtal to view its archaeological exhibits and tour its inner ramparts. The lower Carcassonne town subverts its title as a city, instead offering a peaceful, somewhat sleepy atmosphere, with a central square that holds a weekly market and a number of small cafés. From Place Carnot, walk further out into the town centre to discover the quaint individual stores that sell unique gifts, or La Ferme, which sells fine food and wines. For a stunning experience of the region's châteaux, drive south to the Cathar Castles that pepper the dramatic landscape and guard its deep valleys, particularly the Château de Peyrepertuse. The Canal du Midi is perfect for a long afternoon

stroll or book a boat trip one afternoon to intensify the atmosphere of Carcassonne from the water. Beyond the walls of La Cité lie the wine regions of Minervois, to the north, and Corbières, to the south. If wine-tasting appeals, head into one of the many châteaux dotted around the countryside of these two regions. The Château Canet is the perfect spot to try some of the Muscat wines so typical of the Minervois region, as well as the olives from its three olive groves. Château Rives-Blanques in Cépie produces wines made available all over the world that you are encouraged by your warm hosts to taste on your visit. The less visited area of Saint Chinian, situated at the foothills of the Black Mountains and in the Parc Naturel Regional du Haut Languedoc, is worth a visit, known as it is for high quality produce; perhaps stop off at the Château de Combebelle.

### **Day ten Carcassonne to Toulouse or Bordeaux**

Depending on the most suitable flight time, you can fly from Toulouse or Bordeaux. Return your hire-car and then take your flight back to London.



Carcassonne

## GENERAL INFORMATION

This tailor-made touring holiday is one of several suggested touring 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.

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## OUR TOURS

Our tailor-made touring holidays are suggested itineraries which can be adapted in numerous ways. They can be fly-drive (with flight and hire-car included), self-drive (with ferry or Eurotunnel included with your own car) or rail and hire-car.

## FLEXIBLE ARRANGEMENTS

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

## 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.