

Touring holidays of France

Expressions



Grand Tour of France self-drive holiday



www.expressionsholidays.co.uk
01392 441250

Grand Tour of France self-drive holiday

11 NIGHTS / 12 DAYS

Champagne

Burgundy

Provence

Albi

Dordogne

Loire

Normandy



This 12-night self-drive grand touring holiday of France takes you in a rather circular route from Calais to Provence, across to the Dordogne, north to the Loire and Normandy before returning home. You start at the gateway to France, Calais, and then drive south-eastwards through the Pas-de-Calais and Picardy, passing Reims to stay in the Champagne region at Epernay. Continue towards Burgundy, with its Romanesque churches and abbeys. As you drive south, this touring route runs parallel with the Saône River all the way to Lyon, the point of confluence with the mighty Rhône. From here, drive alongside this mighty river, following its course further southwards, admiring the changing scenery until you reach the red terracotta roofs of Provence. There is time to explore and delight in this charming region: ancient province of the Romans, land of poets and painters. Witness the stunning variety of the landscape of France as you journey from region to region, to spend time at Albi on the River Tarn and then amongst the lush green countryside and vineyards of the Dordogne. You then reach the Loire Valley, and discover the region's majestic châteaux, regal gardens and hunting forests. Your final stop is near the very pretty, artists' haven and fishing port of Honfleur on the Normandy coast.

PRICES

From £2,180 per person

Based on two people sharing a double or twin room.

DATES

This self-drive holiday can be arranged for any departure date subject to availability.

TOUR CODE

FRDS01

WHAT'S INCLUDED

- Eurotunnel return crossing from Folkestone to Calais for car and passengers
- 1 night's bed and breakfast in a Classic double room at La Briqueterie, Épernay
- 1 night's bed and breakfast in a Tradition double room at the Château de Gilly, Gilly-lès-Cîteaux
- 2 nights' bed and breakfast in a Classic double room at Hostellerie de Crillon le Brave, Crillon-le-Brave
- 2 nights' bed and breakfast in a Deluxe double room at La Réserve, Albi
- 2 nights' bed and breakfast in a Superior double room at Le Vieux Logis, Tremolat
- 2 nights' bed and breakfast in a Standard double room at the Château de Marçay, Chinon
- 1 night's bed and breakfast in a Country room at Auberge de la Source, near Honfleur
- 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 Calais to the Champagne region

You cross by Eurotunnel from Folkestone to Calais, and then drive south-east passing the historic towns of Arras and Laon into the Champagne region, to spend one night at Epernay. Nestling between the Aisne and Marne valleys, Epernay and its nearby rival, Reims, are at the heart of the Champagne vineyards. If time permits, visit a winery such as Champagne Tribaut. This family run business supplies such prestigious companies as Krug and Taittinger and opens its cellars and vineyards for tours and tastings.

Days two Champagne to Burgundy

Journey south from Epernay passing the mediaeval town of Troyes and the cathedral city of Dijon, into the arable land and rolling hills of Burgundy. Another of France's most prestigious wine regions, Burgundy is set apart by the golden hue of its limestone villages, which turn ochre in the light of the setting sun and seem to cast the communities back to their mediaeval roots. You stop in the village of Gilly-les-Citeaux, surrounded by the vineyards of Burgundy and near the famous villages of Vosne-Romanee and Nuits-St-Georges. You spend one night here.

Day three Burgundy to Provence

Today's drive follows the course of the Saone and the Rhone to the village of Crillon-le-Brave in the Vaucluse, and near the Chateauneuf-du-Pape and Beaumes-de-Venise vineyards, at the foot of Mont Ventoux. It is a drive of 4 to 5 hours but there is plenty to do along the way with all sorts of interesting side excursions that you could choose from. You can choose to dally a while in Burgundy itself, perhaps visiting Beaune or any of the wine villages nearby, or veer off the main route to visit the Benedictine abbey of Cluny, founded in the 10th century, or take a detour into Beaujolais, with its steep vineyards and villages of golden-brown stone. Then continue following the Rhone valley south, perhaps with further sorties into the Roman towns of Vienne or Orange, before reaching Crillon-le-Brave where you stay for two nights.

Day four in Provence

From Crillon-le-Brave we suggest you spend today visiting the Luberon with its charming landscape of vines, olives, lavender and sunflowers, hill-top villages of golden stone such as Bonnieux and Gordes, and perhaps stopping off at the town of Fontaine-de-Vaucluse with its spring waters and associations with romantic poets dating back to Petrarch.



Beaujolais vineyards

Day five Provence to Albi

Today's route can be covered in just over four hours, but there are various interesting deviations that you might be interested in. The first is to visit the Roman aqueduct, the Pont du Gard, and then to journey north-west through Uzès and Ales and into the Cevennes national park. At some point north of Ales you cut across in a south-westerly direction so long as you join the A75 in order to cross the famous Viaduc de Millau, designed by Norman Foster and which crosses the valley of the River Tarn. Shortly after crossing the bridge you take a more straightforward route to Albi on the River Tarn where you stay for two nights.

Day six in Albi

A UNESCO World Heritage Site, Albi is bursting with the remarkable history of France. The most immediate point of interest in this small town is its red-brick mediaeval cathedral, St. Cecilia's. Witness how its imposing exterior blends into the delicate wood and stone decoration of its interior. Adorning the whole western wall are extensive murals depicting the Last Judgement. Just next door, the Bishop's palace houses the Toulouse Lautrec museum, dedicated to the works of the post-impressionistic iconographer Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec. From outside the cathedral, you can make your way west to the square which overlooks the River Tarn or pass the museum to walk across the thousand-year-old Old Bridge. Albi retains the look and feel of its traditional way of life. Nearby, visit the vineyards of Gaillac and its neighbouring

fortified villages, navigate the beautiful mediaeval streets of Cordes sur Ciel.

Day seven Albi to the Dordogne

Today we recommend taking the day to take a leisurely drive from Albi towards Montauban and then to venture into the land of the Three Musketeers, Gascony. Gascony is a charming, soft and gentle land of brown-stone villages and golden fields, gently undulating, and whose numerous castles bear witness to the fortifications of by-gone centuries, when this land was a bastion of the English, ceded to France only in 1453. Gascony is known for its Armagnac and its sunflowers, its rural way of life and is still very much a secret part of France. Stop off in the pretty towns of Auch, Lectoure or Condom before reaching your base in the Dordogne.

Day eight in the Dordogne

Your base is in the village of Tremolat in the valley of the River Dordogne and within reach today for excursions to capture the essence of this popular region. The Dordogne valley is scattered with ruined castles that you see as you drive along the river. Sarlat is a bustling and very pretty market town you might want to visit and prehistory presents itself in the caves at Les Eyzies and Lascaux. If you head east instead you reach the town of Bergerac and its vineyards.

Day nine Dordogne to the Loire Valley

From Tremolat you pass the vineyards of St Emilion and Pomerol before taking the

motorway north passing Cognac, Saintes and Poitiers. Your stop is south of the mediaeval town of Chinon.

Day ten In the Loire Valley

You have a full day to explore the Loire Valley. The town of Chinon itself sits on the bank of the river Vienne, at the base of a rocky hill that supports the Chinon Fortresse Royale. The Fortress dates from the 10th century. For a more unusual angle, visit the Musée de la Poire Tapée de Rivarennes (Pressed Pear Museum). Slightly more classic visits would be to the chateaux of Villandry and Azay-le-Rideau, both not far from Chinon, or to the wine town of Saumur on the Loire, the troglodyte houses in the cliffs south of the Loire and the abbey at Fontevraud. It is worth also booking a 'son et lumiere' show at one of the chateaux for the evening.

Day eleven Loire Valley to Normandy

Your penultimate day takes you north from the Loire valley passing Le Mans and Alencon, Lisieux and Pont-l'Eveque to your overnight stay in the countryside near Honfleur.

Day twelve Normandy to Calais

Stop off to visit the picturesque fishing port of Honfleur before crossing the Seine and making your way back to Calais for your return Eurotunnel crossing.



Chinon



Honfleur

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.

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.

Expressions

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.