



Beynac on the River Dordogne



Hotel Les Ursulines, Burgundy

La Francaise

France is a tapestry of history, culture, people and beauty that exerts a universal appeal on travellers the world over.

There is nothing as enchanting as springtime in Paris ... or any other time of year for that matter. Add overnight stays in the picturesque Bordeaux region, visits to the infamous landing beaches of Normandy, and excursions to the magnificent Loire Valley, and you have the perfect French experience.

Albatross Tours' 17 day 'La Francaise' itinerary offers guests the opportunity to explore regional France and immerse themselves among wonderfully preserved medieval villages, sleepy chateaux, manicured vineyards and local fresh produce markets bursting with ripe cheeses, pâté and crusty French baguettes.

With three night stays in Normandy, the Loire Valley, Bordeaux and Burgundy plus two more in the stunning Dordogne, the itinerary is as diverse and interesting as France itself.

Setting off from Paris (where a leisurely stroll down the Champs-Élysées is a prerequisite) the tour winds its way gently through the French countryside to Rouen, where Joan of Arc was burned at the stake in 1431. From there, it's on to visit the pretty fishing harbour of Honfleur and the Calvados distillery of Père Magloire, before arriving in Caen.

Renowned as William the Conqueror's city,

this historically significant city becomes home-base for the next three nights as guests explore Arromanches-les-Bains and the Landing Beaches Museum. A visit to view the magnificent Bayeux Tapestry and the stunning UNESCO World Heritage site of Mont St Michel are also on the agenda.

Leaving the beaches of Normandy, the tour heads to the verdant Loire Valley, where during the 15th and 16th centuries, the kings of France and their courtiers created grand holiday palaces.

Another three-night stay, this time in an imposing Chateau complete with lavish furnishings and surrounded by ten hectares of grounds, allows

guests to absorb the classic French ambience of the region.

A stop at Chambord to view the magnificent chateau created by King Francois I and a morning cruise on the River Cher under the arches of Chenonceau Chateau are just two of the highlights of this stage of the tour.

Heading back to the coast, there is time to stop in the town of Cognac for a tour (and a taste test) at the famous Remy Martin Distillery, before arriving in Bordeaux, where guests will settle in for another three-night stay.

While the tour allows plenty of free time for exploring this bustling city – and relaxing with a baguette and glass of wine in a sidewalk café – there are a couple of 'must-dos' included on the program. St Emilion, with its medieval ramparts and unusual 14th century underground church, and Medoc, one of the most famous wine producing regions in the world, are sure to charm the most discerning visitor.

From Bordeaux, the tour continues inland via Perigueux where guests will visit the fascinating Vesunna Museum and enjoy lunch in the shadows of the imposing Cathédrale St Front.

The next destination is Sarlat la Caneda in the Dordogne Valley. With its sleepy villages and lush landscape, Dordogne is the epitome of French rural life. While here, why not sample some of the delicious produce at the gourmet food markets? Or perhaps join the locals for a game of Pétanque, the traditional village sport?

The second last port of call on this 17-day odyssey is Autun in Burgundy. Boasting Celtic, Roman and medieval heritage, this charming town features a fascinating array of architecture – from Roman ramparts to the famous St Lazare Cathedral. And all are within easy walking distance to the hotel – a converted 17th century convent!

As the tour draws to a close, there is one last treat in store. Champagne! The rolling limestone hills of the central Champagne Region are a gorgeous backdrop as the tour makes its way to view the wine 'caves' of Mercier, the largest champagne producers in the world.

After overnighing in the nearby village of Bergeres Les Vertus, guests will visit Reims, the cathedral city where France crowned many of her kings, before the coach returns back to Paris, where the tour concludes. ●

ALBATROSS TOURS 'LA FRANCAISE'

17 DAY TOUR – VARIOUS DEPARTURES FROM MAY – SEP 2012

TOTAL COST \$6,489 PER PERSON TWIN SHARE*

PRICE INCLUDES:

- 16 nights accommodation
- Buffet breakfast daily
- Most dinners
- All sightseeing and excursions (as per itinerary)
- Entrance fees
- Experienced Tour Manager
- End of tour tips
- First class air-conditioned coach
- Hotel portage and local guides

There are no optional excursions or hidden extras. Groups are limited to 30 people. *Subject to change. Terms and conditions apply.

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