

# Touring holidays of France

*Expressions*



Gardens and vineyards at the heart of France self-drive holiday



## Gardens and vineyards at the heart of France self-drive holiday

7 NIGHTS / 8 DAYS

Champagne

Burgundy

Berry

Loire Valley



This 7-night self-drive touring holiday of the vineyards and gardens of the heart of France is a gentle but fascinating tour featuring several regions: Champagne, Burgundy, Berry and the Loire Valley. Each region abounds with interest for the visitor with vineyards and gardens, some well-known, others deserving to be discovered. Your tour starts in Calais, from where you drive into the lush, green, agricultural landscape of the Champagne region. After two nights here, Burgundy beckons. The route through countryside ripe for wine-growing and -making encourages visitors to stop and visit the wine merchants and their vines as you go. Then you cross into the very heart of France and the little-known region of Berry. You can visit the gardens of the Prieure d'Orsan and then stay at the Grand Hotel du Lion d'Or, known for its fine restaurant. From here it is only a short drive to the Sancerre vineyards and the city of Bourges. The last region on the tour is the Loire Valley with its renowned châteaux and undulating vineyards, producing rare light reds and popular whites. There are mediaeval chateaux such as Chinon, Renaissance chateaux such as Chenonceau and numerous gardens including Villandry and Cheverny. On the way back to Calais, it would be possible to visit Monet's garden at Giverny.

### PRICES

**From £1,980 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

FRSD07

### WHAT'S INCLUDED

- Eurotunnel return crossing from Folkestone to Calais for car and passengers
- 2 nights' bed and breakfast in a Classic double room at La Briqueterie near Épernay
- 2 nights' bed and breakfast in a Tradition double room at the Château de Gilly in Gilly-lés-Cîteaux
- 1 night's bed and breakfast in a Standard double room at the Grand Hotel du Lion d'Or, Romorantin-Lanthenay
- 2 nights' bed and breakfast in a Classic double room in the chateau at the Château de Marçay near Chinon
- 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 Champagne

Today, your self-drive touring holiday of the gardens and vineyards at the heart of France starts with your drive from Calais to the Champagne region. What you can fit in today once you arrive will depend on how early you leave Folkestone. The drive from Calais to Epernay is about 3 hours. You spend two nights in the Champagne region.

## Day two in Champagne

You have a whole day to explore the Champagne region. From your base in Epernay, you have the champagne houses of Epernay on your doorstep. Further north, there is Reims, although you may want to visit here on the first day. Venture into the nearby countryside to see the Aisne and Marne Valleys, which see the vineyards thrive, before viewing and tasting the produce of this landscape in one of the hundreds of underground chalky wine cellars in either Épernay or Reims. These Gallo-Roman cellars notably belong to champagne firms of international repute, such as Moët et Chandon and Mercier. Champagne Tribaut, a family-run business that supplies companies such as Krug and Taittinger, opens their cellars and vineyards to guests for tours and wine-tasting sessions. This intimate, homely experience lets the visitor see an alternative side of wine-growing to large scale production. Equally, just across the Marne Valley, you can find the vineyards that produce Pinot Noir, or head southwards through the Côte des Blancs to taste the local mineral-packed Chardonnay. Aside from vineyards and galleries, Reims offers a wealth of impressive architecture and culture, from the Gothic Cathedral Notre-Dame with its wine-grower carvings, and the Palais du Tau, to the floral delights of Nanteuil-la-Forêt.

## Day three Champagne to Burgundy

Your drive today from door to door is about 3 hours, but you may want to stop for sightseeing along the route. Troyes and Dijon are obvious places of interest. In Dijon visit the Musée des Beaux-Arts, for a short tour of its many tombs and ancient structures, and see the statue of Bareuzai the wine grower, on the Rue des Forges, who acts as a guiding spirit for the whole of Dijon. Your destination for today is the wine village of Gilly-les-Cîteaux where you spend two nights.

## Day four in Burgundy

The Burgundy region is best known for its Pinot Noir red wines, and Chardonnay white wines; however, Gilly-les-Cîteaux is perfectly suited for an exploration of all the wines Burgundy has to offer. The closest vineyard



Beaune

to the Château de Gilly is the relatively small vineyard of Vougeot, though the neighbouring, more recently cultivated vineyard of Clos de Vougeot is home to the produce of 70 wine growers. From here visitors can explore the Christian Clerget estate and the Château de Clos, which has four huge 12th Century winepresses, and taste the wine produced there. In nearby Chenôve, the Cuverie des ducs de Bourgogne houses two 13th Century winepresses, for visitors to view. Marsannay-la-Côte produces a selection of rosé wines that are obtained after a short maceration of Pinot Noir grapes. These wines can be tasted at the Domaine Regis Bouvier and the Château de Marsannay. However, the most famous of the Côte de Nuits wines is Chambertin, produced in Gevrey-Chambertin, a village very close to Gilly-les-Cîteaux. When sitting down for a meal, partake in the tradition of drinking a kir before your meal, as this blend of crème de cassis and white wine, produced locally, is the perfect start to a delicious evening. Venture further out to visit the famous Chablis or take a tour of the white wine vineyards and cellars on the hillside village of Montagny-lès-Buxy.

## Day five Burgundy to Romortantin-Lanthenay

Today you are heading for the very centre of France in the region of Berry, and to the beautiful garden of the Prieure d'Orsan, near Bourges. This garden is the main focus of the day and should be visited. The priory, which dates from 1107 when it was founded by Robert d'Arbrissel (who also founded

the Abbey of Fontevraud, burial place of Richard the Lionheart and numerous other Plantagenets including Eleanor of Aquitaine), is now delightfully restored, as are the gardens, inspired by the mediaeval monastic gardens that would have been here for years after the founding of the priory. The gardens have come to the interest of the British public recent years due to being featured in Monty Don's recent BBC Two programme on French gardens and deserve to be visited almost more than any other garden in France. The gardens are situated between the priory buildings and are divided into individual areas of intense interest: there are vines, fruit trees, a flourishing kitchen garden, a maze, lavender beds and wild flower meadows. It is an artistic creation that resembles a tapestry yet where organic crop rotation is practised. The thought and the care that goes into the attention to detail is spectacular. It is a truly wondrous place. The gardens are peaceful, the birdsong is vibrant and butterflies abound. You can also walk on the grass! We also recommend a trip into the surreal, but magnificent city of Bourges, with its charming medieval streets and fantastic cathedral. In the centre of Bourges lies the Marais, an area set aside for locals to cultivate their own gardens, veined with canals perfect for the small wooden boats that residents use to navigate them. The Marais is so large that it has led to Bourges being named one of France's greenest cities. Springtime in Bourges and the International Ecological Film Festival are two festivals, among others, not to

be missed in spring and summer. Just north of Bourges, La Borne is a village famous for its stoneware and ceramics. The Centre for Contemporary Ceramics offers a valuable insight into the Berry way of life. A little off the most direct route to your stop for the night is the wine-village of Sancerre, again another recommended stopping off point. The Domaines Vacheron and Henri Bourgeois are owned by two of the oldest and best reputed wine-making families in the area. To pick up more information about the wines of the area, visit the Maison de Sancerre in the old town and take the interactive tour, which culminates in a wine tasting. Nearby is Chavignol, home of the Crottin de Chavignol, a versatile goat's cheese that goes well with the local wine. You spend one night in the village of Romorantin-Lanthenay, chosen for its strategic position at the end of a long day and for the hotel with a superb restaurant. Cellars on the hillside village of Montagny-lès-Buxy.

### Day six Romorantin-Lanthenay to Loire Valley

Today you are on the doorstep of the Loire Valley, known as the Garden of France, and you should start to enjoy the rolling, fertile landscape with its orchards and vineyards as well as the magnificence of its abundant chateaux and their gardens. It is worth heading north first to visit the Château de Cheverny, home to the same family for 600 years. Many treasures can be found at Cheverny including a 17th century Gobelin tapestry on display in the Arms room and a Louis XIV chest of drawers in the Boule style. The park contains four distinct gardens: a tulip garden, a pleasure garden, a maze and a vegetable garden. From here you can go further north to Amboise. Amboise, on the banks of the river Loire, is home to the Château d'Amboise, a 15th century residence of Charles VIII and where you will find the tomb of Leonardo da Vinci. Nearby is the Château du Clos Lucé where Leonardo Da Vinci lived. In the grounds are displays of working models of his designs. South of Amboise is the Château de Chenonceau, known sometimes as the 'Ladies Castle' due to its string of female owners, such as Catherine de Medici and Diane de Poitiers, and not to be missed. This château offers an extensive art gallery and a collection of exquisite Flemish tapestries, as well as wine-tasting opportunities. The gardens have lawn and wide flower beds, spectacularly colourful in summer. Your stop for two nights is south of Chinon.



Chinon

### Day seven in the Loire Valley

From your base south of Chinon, you have a full day to explore this part of the Loire Valley. Chinon itself runs along the bank of the river Vienne, at the base of a rocky hill atop which sits the Chinon Fortresse Royale. The fortress dates from the 10th Century and has been repeatedly tied in to the legend of King Arthur. Inside, however, puts a modern twist on the history of the town with its high-tech, interactive facilities. Wine, art and history tours are also available in Chinon; or, if something a little different, visit the Musée de la Poire Tapée de Rivarenes (Pressed Pear Museum). Nearby, there are numerous beautiful châteaux, available for wine-tasting and exploring, such as the Château de Montgeoffrey, or dine on food grown on the estate at the Château de Rivau. The Chinon area specialises in Chinon Blanc wines grown from Chenin Blanc grapes or Pineau-de-Loire. For Loire Valley red wines or rosés, head to Bourgueil and Saint-Nicholas-de-Bourgueil for a wine-tasting tour, both less than half an hour from Chinon. Another two famous chateaux are reached easily from Chinon: Azay-le-Rideaux and Villandry. Villandry in particular has magnificent gardens, with numerous box and parterres in a classical French style. Azay-le-Rideau is built on an island in the Indre River, under the patronage of King Francois I. It combines French tradition and Italian innovation and typifies the style of architecture that developed in the 16th century.

### Day eight Loire Valley to Calais

Leave the hotel after breakfast and drive back to Calais for your return Eurotunnel crossing.

## 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.

The logo for Expressions Holidays, featuring the word "Expressions" in a white, elegant script font on a dark blue rectangular background.

### 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).

Expressions Holidays  
Lynx House, Pynes Hill, Exeter EX2 5JL



## 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.