



Jewels of Southwest France 2026

Close your eyes and imagine the ripple of grapevines swaying in Bordeaux's warm breeze. The satisfying crunch of fresh Atlantic oysters being shucked in Arcachon Bay. The tap of footsteps meandering slowly along the cobblestones of ancient Carcassonne. The honeyed scent of fresh Périgord strawberries at the Sarlat Market. These are just some of the moments you can experience in Southwest France – and we can't wait for you to relish them with us on this intimate tour.





About your tour notes

These tour notes contain everything you need to know before your tour departs – from where to meet your fellow guests and local guide to what essentials to pack for your journey. We recommend you print this document out and bring it with you on your tour. Give a copy to loved ones at home so they can follow your adventure, too.

Important: please refresh this document as close to your departure as possible to ensure you're equipped with the latest information available.

Hotel De Normandie @ 18:00

9 Cr du 30 Juillet 7 et, Bordeaux, 33000

Hotel De Normandie @ 17:00

9 Cr du 30 Juillet 7 et, Bordeaux, 33000



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Tour highlights

- ✓ Savour the tantalising flavours of fresh Arcachon Bay oysters, Bayonne ham, Blanquette de Limoux wine and world-famous Bordeaux reds
- ✓ Admire the famous prehistoric paintings of the UNESCO-protected Lascaux Cave at Lascaux II
- ✓ Visit the UNESCO-listed medieval citadel of Carcassonne

More inclusions

- ✓ 10 breakfasts, 5 dinners
- ✓ 10 nights in thoughtfully selected accommodation
- ✓ Luxury minicoach

Currencies you'll use

- France - EUR



Included meals

Breakfast (B) is included daily.

Some of your lunches and dinners are also included, either in hotels or local restaurants. These are indicated by (L) and (D) in the itinerary.

Please note that drinks will not always be included.

We will do our best to accommodate any specific dietary requirements you may have. Please ensure to make these clear to us before your tour begins so we can communicate them to our hotels, restaurants and suppliers.

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Your itinerary

Day 1 | Bordeaux (France)

Where better to begin our journey of Southwest France than beautiful Bordeaux? After meeting the group, we'll clink glasses over a delicious welcome meal. *Bon appétit!*

Included today



Accommodation

Hôtel de Normandie (or similar)



Meals

+ Dinner

Day 2 | Bordeaux – Arcachon Bay – Biarritz

This morning we'll move on to Atlantic Ocean-fringed Arcachon Bay, where we'll get our first taste of coastal cuisine with fresh oysters and a glass of local wine from one of the port's traditional cabins. We'll then stop to see the Great Dune of Pilat – Europe's highest sand dune, with panoramic views over the bay. This afternoon, we'll round off our day in the glamorous seaside town of Biarritz – where we'll have the evening free to wander the waterfront promenade and sample more local delicacies at our leisure.

Included today



Accommodation

Alfred Hotels Port-Vieux (or similar)



Experiences

+ Oyster tasting with a glass of wine



Meals

+ Breakfast

Day 3 | Biarritz – Bayonne – Biarritz

Today we've a full day taking in the beauty of the French Basque Country. First, we'll indulge our cultural sides in Bayonne – an art and history hub just a short drive away from Biarritz. Here, we'll discover a local family business going back three generations at the Bayonne Ham Museum – where we'll indulge in a ham tasting before returning to the hotel for an afternoon of leisure time.

Included today



Accommodation

Alfred Hotels Port-Vieux (or similar)



Experiences

+ Ham tasting in museum with local guide



Meals

+ Breakfast

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Day 4 | Biarritz – Lourdes – Midi-Pyrénées

Today we'll turn to the east – and on to beautiful Pau. We'll then travel through the Midi-Pyrénées region (along roads made famous by the Tour de France), pausing en route at the spiritual town of Lourdes. Whilst here, we'll have the opportunity to see the Sanctuaire Notre-Dame de Lourdes and the Massabielle Grotto – a significantly holy site within the Christian faith. In keeping with the spirit of our surroundings, we'll check into our atmospheric accommodation before enjoying this evening's included dinner.

Included today



Accommodation

Hotel du Barry (or similar)



Experiences

+ Visit Lourdes with Tour Leader



Meals

+ Breakfast
+ Dinner

Day 5 | Midi-Pyrénées – Carcassonne

Following the trail of knights, we'll continue our own crusade through the Midi-Pyrénées and past picture-perfect bastides. Along the way, we'll visit a local winery and enjoy a glass of the region's speciality – a sparkling Blanquette. Our final stop of the day will be medieval Carcassonne, where we'll have the evening to spend at our leisure.

Included today



Accommodation

Hôtel Le Donjon (or similar)



Experiences

+ Wine tasting in Midi-Pyrénées with local winery visit



Meals

+ Breakfast

Day 6 | Carcassonne

Today you'll be free to discover Carcassonne's chivalric secrets at your own pace. From the alleys, passageways and 52 towers of the UNESCO-listed medieval citadel (which dates back two millennia) to the Château Comtal and its ramparts, there's plenty to keep you occupied. Later this evening, we'll come together for an included dinner at a local restaurant – swapping stories and photographs of the day's discoveries.

Included today



Accommodation

Hôtel Le Donjon (or similar)



Meals

+ Breakfast
+ Dinner



Day 7 | Carcassonne – Albi Region

Today we'll leave the stronghold of Carcassonne behind and make tracks to the 'red city' of Albi. Here, we'll enjoy a leisurely walking tour around the town – taking in the magnificent Cathédrale Sainte-Cécile as we go. Enjoy some free time for lunch before we venture onwards to our hotel for the night that's tucked away in a nearby medieval village typical to the Albi region. Tonight, we'll savour a sumptuous meal together.

Included today



Accommodation

Hôtel des Consuls (or similar)



Experiences

+ Walking tour of Albi with
Tour Leader



Meals

+ Breakfast
+ Dinner

Day 8 | Albi Region – Sarlat-la-Canéda

After breakfast at our hotel, we'll have a little free time to wander the village's charming streets. Then, it's onwards to one of the most beautiful towns in the Dordogne: Sarlat-la-Canéda. En route, we'll stop off in several idyllic French villages to stretch our legs and admire the scenery.

Included today



Accommodation

Hôtel Saint-Albert (or
similar)



Meals

+ Breakfast



Day 9 | Sarlat-la-Canéda – Beynac-et-Cazenac – Sarlat-la-Canéda

On the itinerary this morning: a stroll through stunning Sarlat-la-Canéda with our Tour Leader, including a visit to the town's traditional market. We'll follow this up with a delightful visit to the riverside town of Beynac-et-Cazenac. We'll enjoy some free time to explore the town's magnificently well-preserved medieval château – which has kept watch over the Dordogne from its hilltop position for nine centuries. Afterwards, we'll return to Sarlat-la-Canéda for an evening spent at our leisure – perhaps exploring the picturesque alleyways or dining at one of the charming local restaurants in town.

Included today



Accommodation

Hôtel Saint-Albert (or similar)



Experiences

- + Walking tour of Sarlat-la-Canéda with Tour Leader (including the traditional market)
- + Entrance to Château de Beynac



Meals

- + Breakfast

Day 10 | Sarlat-la-Canéda – Vézère Valley – Sarlat-la-Canéda

Today our travels through the Dordogne will lead us to the prehistoric paintings of the UNESCO-protected Lascaux Cave – which was discovered when it was happened upon by a group of teenagers back in 1940. We'll admire the replica Lascaux Cave II before making a stop at the pretty village of Les Eyzies. Then, we'll follow the 'Royal Road', winding between craggy rocks and flowing rivers until we get to a local truffle farm. Local guides will give us an exclusive lesson in seeking out the rare delicacies and we'll have a chance to savour some delicious truffle products during a tasting session. Tonight, we'll come together in Sarlat-la-Canéda and savour a farewell dinner at a local restaurant.

Included today



Accommodation

Hôtel Saint-Albert (or similar)



Experiences

- + Visit Lascaux Cave II
- + Truffle-hunting in Vézère Valley with tasting



Meals

- + Breakfast
- + Dinner



Day 11 | Sarlat-la-Canéda – Saint-Émilion – Bordeaux

We'll spend the final day of our tour in historic Saint-Émilion, a village perched above beautiful rolling countryside and countless vineyards. Here, we'll have the chance to sample some of the region's 'heavy reds' and say a final *santé*. We'll then return to Bordeaux, where we'll say our goodbyes.

Included today



Experiences

- + Wine tasting in Saint-Émilion with vineyard visit



Meals

- + Breakfast



Travel advice

Finances

Changing money

Cash: Foreign money can be changed at banks, airports, some railway and tube stations, and at major hotels (though at a less favourable rate).

Credit cards: Visa and MasterCard are widely accepted. American Express is only accepted in some larger establishments.

Cash machines: ATMS are widely available.

Tipping

Tipping is entirely at your discretion. If you feel you have received exceptional service, it is recommended that you tip £1-2/€ per day for Drivers and £4- 5/€ per day for Tour Leaders.

Insurance

Before travelling with Back-Roads Touring, it is compulsory for all guests to take out comprehensive travel insurance. Please ensure your insurance covers medical expenses (including repatriation), cancellation cover, loss or damage to baggage and personal effects, money and personal liability.

We recommend you carry your insurance details with you at all times. You may be asked to provide details of your medical insurance or a payment guarantee in some countries before medical assistance can be provided.

For more information, please see our [FAQ page](#).

If you have any further questions, please don't hesitate to contact our friendly Customer Service team [here](#).

Passports and visas

Please ensure your passport is valid for at least six months after the last day of your tour. Some countries will refuse entry if you do not have at least six months validity remaining on your passport after your departure date. Depending on your nationality, you may require a visa to enter certain



countries.

It is your responsibility to obtain visas prior to your tour's departure. To determine which visas you'll need, you can consult either your own government's website or the government websites of the countries in which you will be travelling.

Please note: Some visas can take up to six weeks to acquire, so don't leave it until the last minute. Also, bear in mind that the validity of a visa often runs from its date of issue rather than the date of entry into the country. Please check with the appropriate embassy/embassies prior to departure as requirements do change periodically.

We advise you to either carry a photocopy of your passport (and visa, if applicable) with you while abroad, or to ensure that you leave a copy with relatives back at home. This will enable the local embassy or high commission to arrange a replacement if the original should be lost or stolen. If you do take copies with you on your tour, please ensure that you keep these separate from your original documents.

Medication and mobility

Whilst on your tour, we want you to have the smoothest journey possible which requires x mobility conditions:

- You must be fit enough to get on and off the vehicle on a regular basis, and to walk around towns and villages or to attractions.
- You must be able to walk up and down stairs and use a shower over the bath.

Please note that, unfortunately, we are unable to accommodate mobility scooter or wheelchair users as we frequently stay in traditional-style hotels and the majority do not have lifts or ground-floor rooms.

If you take medicine for certain conditions, such as diabetes or heart problems, please carry it with you at all times.

Please declare any medical conditions you may have in advance of your tour. If you are in any doubt as to whether our tours are suitable for you, please contact our friendly Customer Service team [here](#).



Mental health and wellbeing

Culture shock, homesickness and periods of feeling down happen regardless of age. Be rest assured that if you're feeling low, your Tour Leader and Driver will do their utmost to make you smile.

Measures you can take to look after your mental health and wellbeing while on the road with us are:

- Call loved ones. Hearing a familiar voice whilst in an unfamiliar destination can help ground you and remind you you're not alone.
- Eat well. Nobody feels their best when they're hungry. There are plenty of nutritious culinary delights to be savoured along the road!
- Integrate with your fellow guests. The more you socialise with the group, the less likely you'll feel homesick.

Transport

We travel in premium mini-coaches equipped with comfortable seats, air conditioning and large windows for enjoying the view.

With far more flexibility than a standard-size coach, we're able to take the scenic route – winding through beautiful countryside to the heart of tiny villages and coastal towns.

Will I have regular access to Wi-Fi?

Most accommodation we stay in will offer free Wi-Fi as well as many restaurants and cafes you may visit. If you would like more regular internet access without large roaming fees, you can purchase a Back-Roads Touring eSIM [here](#).



What to Pack

Based on our experience, the following items are essential.

Please note, this is a general packing list for Back-Roads Touring tours. What you pack will depend on the countries you're visiting as well as the time of year you plan to travel.

Clothing

- | | | |
|---------------|-----------------------------|-----------------------------|
| ✓ Sun hat | ✓ Long-sleeved tops | ✓ Light jacket |
| ✓ Sunglasses | ✓ Short-sleeved tops | ✓ Waterproof jacket |
| ✓ Sleepwear | ✓ Shorts/skirts | ✓ Trousers |
| ✓ Warm jacket | ✓ Socks | ✓ Swimwear |
| ✓ Underwear | ✓ Smart casual evening wear | ✓ Walking/comfortable shoes |

Other essentials

- | | | |
|---------------------------|--|--------------------|
| ✓ Multi-use adapter plug | ✓ Toiletries | ✓ Camera |
| ✓ Batteries | ✓ Sunscreen | ✓ Towel |
| ✓ Umbrella | ✓ Reusable water bottle | ✓ Insect repellent |
| ✓ Any personal medication | ✓ Basic medical kit (paracetamol, aspirin, plasters etc) | |

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How much luggage can I bring

As we travel in mini-coaches, luggage space is limited. Here's what you can take with you on tour:



1 x suitcase



1 x small carry-on bag
(backpack or handbag)

If you have more luggage, please make arrangements to store it prior to joining the tour. **We are unable to carry extra luggage on the mini-coach.**

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FAQs

Which type of hotels will we stay in?

Our carefully selected accommodation is full of charm and historic details – expect elegant country inns, grand town centre hotels and even the odd castle! For this reason, rooms vary in size, and most hotels don't have lifts – meaning you'll likely need to access your room via stairs. Porterage will be included wherever possible.

Although air conditioning is mostly unavailable in historic buildings, fans will be provided during hot spells. Most hotels have bathtubs with overhead showers (rather than walk-in showers), so you'll be able to enjoy a soak at the end of the day.

What's breakfast like in France?

A typical French breakfast spread is simple but wholesome. It usually includes a range of cold meats, cheeses and bread, buttery homemade pastries, freshly squeezed juices and a hot drink of your choice. If you have any dietary requirements, we'll ask about these before you begin your tour and accommodate them whenever we can.

Will we have free time to explore each destination on our own?

To help you discover those secret local spots, there will be free time in many of the locations we visit. Often, it'll be a few hours in the afternoon, over lunchtime or following a morning walking tour. Sometimes though, you'll have a whole day to explore – such as on Day 6 when you'll be based in the majestic medieval city of Carcassonne.

That's everything!

We can't wait to welcome you on tour.

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