

FRANCE – DORDOGNE GASTRONOMY, WINE & EASY WALKING

7-day / 6-night small group GUIDED holidays for the discerning - includes Sarlat, Lascaux Caves

Departs: Ask for details

Cost from: \$4,640 per person twin share Single room supplement from \$745

Distance: Walking: easy afternoons



This is an opportunity for you to relax and have fun in a house-party atmosphere cooking with three or four different French chefs and walking and discovering a very unique region of South West France. Our local English-speaking hosts and guides moved to an 18th Century farmhouse in the Lot Valley almost 20 years ago, enthused by the romance and beauty of the area. Their love of the flora and fauna, their combined fascination for food, wine and local traditions and their personal contacts make these special holiday experiences offering considerably more than you could find as an individual traveller.

There is much hands-on cooking, with the freshest of vegetables and farmyard meats, and all taking place in the gastronomic heart of France. You will touch on *haute cuisine* and *nouvelle cuisine* and learn how to work with simple base food like *crème brûlée* and *mousse* and turn them into totally different and exotic dishes by the simplest of ways, receiving lots of recipes to bring home with you. There is a little walking but it is really to enjoy the autumn colours, to breathe in the fresh country air and to work up an appetite.

Over several years we have developed a wonderful selection of small group fully guided tours, mostly walking tours but food and wine plays an important role in each itinerary in the Lot or Dordogne Valleys or the Pyrenees region in France, in Umbria in Italy or in Suffolk in England. Cooking weeks or short breaks focusing on truffles are available in spring or autumn in France.

This small group bespoke party take place in ideal settings where you stay in the most charming small quality auberges. The Manor House of Le Vert for instance is the auberge they use for a part of most walks in France. Beds and bathrooms are spacious and extremely comfortable with lovely views over the surrounding countryside. The hospitality of all those running the Manor House could not be better but what guests love is that the host, Bernard, is one of the great cooks of the region. He specialises in *Nouvelle Cuisine*, delightful cooking of sophistication and contrasts of delicate flavours.

Our Small Group Guided Walking Holidays include:

- Twin share in comfortable, quality hotels, inns and private homes - single rooms are on request.
- All meals and wine with most meals (pre and post meal drinks except if staying at inns/ hotels)
- Fully guided walking, support staff and vehicle, luggage transfers and local transport for the walks
- Knowledgeable English speaking guides.
- Maximum group size of 14.

Call OUTDOOR TRAVEL on 1800 331 582 for details or reservations



Suggested itinerary:

Day 1 Arrive at Toulouse airport and be transferred to an 18th Century chateau sitting nestled within its own walled parkland surrounded by lofty sweet chestnut trees. This will be your base – with local English speaking hosts - for the next three nights. All bedrooms have a good ensuite shower and toilet.

Day 2 This morning we visit the wonderful market at the medieval village of Issigeac for ingredients for lunch and dinner. Return to our chateau to the most-lovely of kitchens made available to us here. Madame La Cuisse will come and show us just why French cuisine is one of the best in the world. Chopping, slicing, sewing, wrapping and using her very best *savoir-faire* with the fresh local produce, she will prepare the evening's dinner with us. In the afternoon we visit a local truffle farm and see how one masters the art of *trufficulture* before returning for the final dinner preparations and a delicious dinner therefore with wines carefully chosen from James' cellar. **Walk 3km**

Day 3 After breakfast we set off to the world famous caves at Lascaux before continuing to the most beautiful and visited town in Dordogne Sarlat famed where we will stop for lunch. In the afternoon we will drive to the 17th Century Chateau of Marqueyssac to take in the gardens that are filled with the most extraordinary asymmetrical topiary that are rest along a ridge dominating the river Dordogne. From here you can also take in the most fabulous Dordognais scenery of towering castles and small river ports from one of the viewing points around the gardens. From here we return for the last night in the chateau.

Day 4 We leave the lush beauty of the Dordogne for the tranquil beauty of Le Vert, a Quercy manor house hotel to start cooking with our host and chef, Bernard Philippe. Bernard will show us how, from the simple base of a crème brûlée for example, you can have such diversity of presentation and of flavours. This is a rare chance to see a master chef at work. Local flavourings of lavender and saffron will be used as well as many others to help put his theory into effect. The results of this meeting will be sampled in the evening at dinner. We drive then to Lario, your host's home, for a long and leisurely lunch with wine from a good cellar. After lunch we will visit a small unknown frescoed church before we return to your hotel for the next three nights, a beautifully restored Quercy Manor House. **Walk 3km**

Day 5 After breakfast we drive to start a walk to Lario here we will talk about the versatility of the *magret* - the breast of the fatted duck - an excellent and tender 'cut' of meat. We show the different ways it is enjoyed in South West France. Lunch will be on the terrace at Lario, with the magret and assorted salads and wines. In the afternoon we walk to a small local lavender distillery and see how this ancient culture existed here – there were once many distilleries in the Quercy but few remain. We then return to the manor house. **Walk 6.5km**

Wine aficionados may visit the châteaux of Cèdre and Triguédina to see what exceptional wines are being conjured up by these excellent vinicultures. Le 'GC' of Cèdre and the Black Wine and Vin de Lune Moelleux of Triguédina. Back to Lario for lunch.

Day 6 French President Charles de Gaulle once said, *How can you govern a country which has two hundred and forty-six varieties of cheese?* Well we will look this morning at several of these wonders and what wines and breads complement their flavours. Goat, ewe and cow from smelly to mild will all come under scrutiny. Madame Lasfargues will come and help us cook cheese soufflés for lunch on the terrace looking down to the distant hilltop bastide of Lauzerte. In the afternoon we take a walk to gain an appetite for the evening's dinner and return to Lario for the last demonstration of the week. This is a theatrical affair as we learn how the local pastry 'Pastis' is made. We return to our hotel for dinner. **Walk 7km**

Non-cooks enjoy the morning's wine and cheese tasting and the afternoon walk.

Day 7 Tour ends after breakfast with a transfer to Toulouse airport.



"The French Cooking Week was great fun, wonderful hosts and everything organised for the week was interesting and enjoyable. There was enough walking to offset the over-indulgence of the rich food and the accommodation was charming. I would recommend it to anyone interested in sampling a slice of French life."
Andrea

Contact OUTDOOR TRAVEL for more details, brochures and reservations

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"We enjoyed Diana and James' company very much and their organisation was very professional. They both had a lot of knowledge regarding the region, food and wine and also made us very welcome at their home, we also met their children and they were great as well. The accommodation was very good and we also met some very nice people including locals who we would probably not have met if we were travelling by ourselves. I will be recommending this tour to my friends." Diane

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