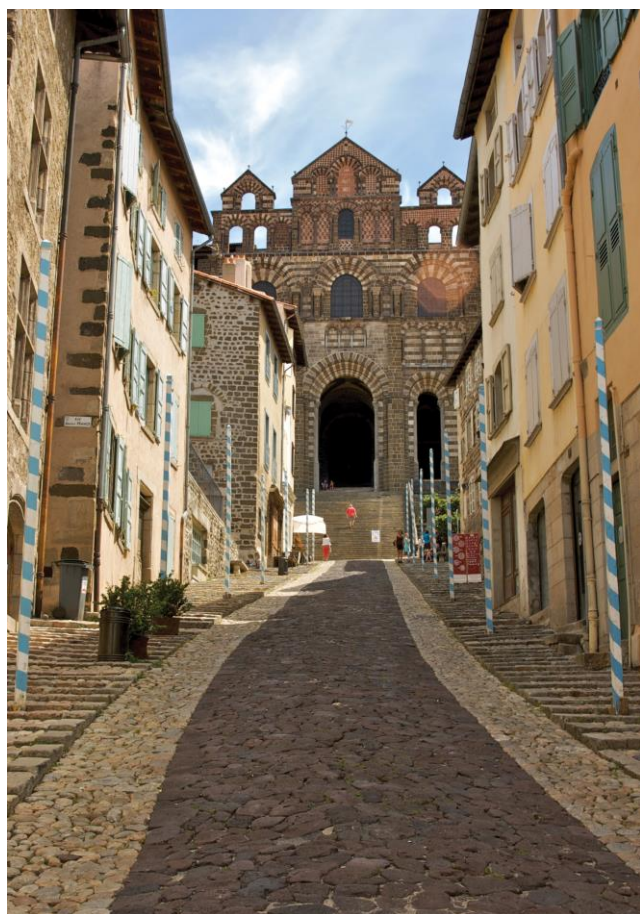




Tour Information



Auvergne by Rail





Travel

Passports

You may need to renew your British Passport if you are travelling to an EU country. Please ensure your passport is less than 10 years old (even if it has 6 months or more left on it) and has at least 6 months validity remaining from the date of travel. EU, Andorra, Liechtenstein, Monaco, San Marino and Swiss valid national identification cards are also acceptable for travel. For more information, please visit: [passport checker](#)

Visas

As a tourist visiting from the UK, you do not need a visa for short trips to most EU countries, Iceland, Liechtenstein, Norway and Switzerland. You will be able to stay for up to 90 days in any 180-day period. For all other passport holders please check the visa requirements with the appropriate embassy.

For further information, please check here: [travel to the EU](#)

For all other passport holders please check the visa requirements with the appropriate embassy.

French consulate: PO Box 57, 6A Cromwell Place, London SW7 2EW; Tel (020) 7838 2000/1. Information Service: Tel (0891) 887 733, Fax: (020) 7838 2046. Opening hours: 0900-1130 (and 1600-1630 for visa collection only) Mon-Fri (except British and French national holidays).



Tickets

You will be issued with return train tickets. Please take care not to lose your tickets and please check that the details on your tickets are accurate. Your ticket is non-transferable and non-refundable. No refund can be given for non-used portions.

Standard Premier on Eurostar tickets is indicated by two asterisks in the class type section in the top right-hand corner. A light meal will be served to passengers travelling Standard Premier on Eurostar. Standard class Eurostar tickets do not include any food or drink on board, although there is a buffet car serving drinks and snacks.

SNCF train tickets do not include any food or drink on board, although a buffet car is available.

Train Seats

On all legs of the journey, you have reserved seat and carriage numbers which are shown clearly on your ticket.



Baggage

As with most trains, passengers are responsible for carrying baggage onto and off the train. Baggage can be stored on overhead shelves or at the entrance to the carriages. Trolleys are available at St Pancras and Lille, but bags do need to be carried on to the platform. Porters are sometimes but not always available at St Pancras.

Travel Editions recommends a luggage delivery service called **thebaggageman**, where your suitcase can be picked up from your home before departure and delivered straight to your hotel; therefore, removing the worry about carrying your cases onto and off the trains.

For further information:

<http://www.thebaggageman.com>

Labels

Please use the luggage labels provided. It is useful to have your home address located inside your suitcase should the label go astray.

Border Control

At border control, you may need to:

- show a return or onward ticket.
- show you have enough money for your stay.
- use separate lanes from EU, EEA and Swiss citizens when queueing.

Taking food into EU countries

Please note you are not able to take meat, milk or any products containing them into EU countries

Transfers

On arrival in Clermont-Ferrand, transfer by coach to Issoire (approx. 30 mins) and Le Pariou Hotel.

Special Requests

If you haven't done so already, please notify Travel Editions of any special requests as soon as possible to allow sufficient time to make the necessary arrangements.



Accommodation

Le Pariou Hotel, Issoire

The 3-star, friendly, family-run Le Pariou Hotel is located in a green and peaceful spot just outside the centre of charming Issoire, just a short walk from the main sights of the town. Its excellent restaurant “Le Jardin” prides itself on its cuisine that uses locally-sourced ingredients. Facilities at this comfortable hotel include bar, lounge area, sun terrace, garden, outdoor pool (seasonally heated) and spacious, contemporary bedrooms with private bath/shower, hairdryer, TV, telephone, and minibar. A safe is available at the reception.

Unfortunately, rooms at Le Pariou do not include coffee/tea making facilities, so we recommend you bring a travel kettle if required.

For more information, please visit their website:

<http://www.hotel-pariou.com/en,1,1473.html>



Food

Auvergne’s cuisine tends to be simple, rustic, hearty and delicious. The region is famous for its Charolais beef, its dairy products, and the quality of its pork – the mountain air is perfect for drying ham and curing sausages.

Most of the traditional dishes combine pork with garden vegetables such as cabbage and potatoes – *soupe au chou* (cabbage and pork soup), *potée auvergnate* (hotpot which includes cabbage, potatoes, leeks, carrots, turnips and pork meat), *Aligot* (melted cheese, mashed potatoes and sausage). Other local specialities include *Tripoux* (sheep tripe with sweetbreads, herbs and garden vegetables), *Pounti* (meat loaf), *Salade Auvergnate* (dandelion and bacon salad), and *coq au vin*. Don’t miss the famous tiny green *Le Puy lentils* – in a salad with bacon, onion and vegetables, or cooked with salt meat.

General de Gaulle once asked, with a certain amount of pride, how it was possible to rule a country which produced 365 different kinds of cheese; the volcanic region of Auvergne makes an important contribution to this selection with its *Bleu d’Auvergne*, *Saint-Nectaire*, *Fourme d’Ambert*, *Salers*, and *Cantal*.

Traditional sweets tend to be fruit based, such as the *Tarte aux myrtilles* (blueberry pie), *Clafoutis aux fruits* (flan like dessert made with local grown fruit) and *Pompe aux pommes* (apple chausson). Coffee is served after the meal and will be black, in small cups, unless a *café au lait* (or *crème*) is requested.

Almost all restaurants offer two types of meals: *à la carte* (extensive choice for each course, generally more expensive) and *le menu* (a set meal at a fixed price). The bill (*l’addition*) will not be presented until it is asked for, even if clients sit and talk for half an hour after finishing their meal. Usually, a discretionary service charge is added to your bill in restaurants and bars, and no further tipping is required.

Generally speaking, mealtimes in France are strictly observed. Lunch is as a rule served from noon to 1330, dinner usually from 2000-2130, but the larger the city, the later the dining hour.



Drink

Wine is by far the most popular alcoholic beverage in France, and the choice will vary according to region. One of the oldest wine producing areas in France, viticulture in the Auvergne dates back to Roman times. The main grape varieties, Pinot noir (red), Gamay (red and rosé), Chardonnay and Sauvignon (whites), produce light, fresh and fruity wines. Try the local AOCs Saint-Pourçain and Côtes d’Auvergne.

In elegant restaurants the wine list will be separate from the main menu, but in less opulent establishments will be printed on the back or along the side of the *carte*. The waiter will usually be glad to advise an appropriate choice. If in doubt, try the house wine; this will usually be less expensive and will always be the owner’s pride.

Liqueurs from the plants of the area - *liqueur de Verveine du Velay* (served cold as a digestive), *gentiane* (as an aperitif)

Meals included in the holiday are:

Breakfast and dinner daily at the hotel.



Destination

A region dominated by the volcanic majesty of the Massif Central, Auvergne is delightfully rustic, with the prevailing culture rooted in the past. Virtually untouched by the ravages of modern tourism, the Auvergne is truly a destination for Francophiles who appreciate the rugged terrain, picturesque scattered antiquated towns, unspoilt rural French atmosphere, magnificent Romanesque churches and outlandish pinnacles of lava.

Auvergne regional tourist board's website:
<http://www.auvergne-tourism.com/-1-2.html>

Places of interest included in your tour:

Issoire

A small, tranquil and attractive town, Issoire's turbulent history stretches back to Roman times. An important aeronautical centre and a mecca for glider pilots thanks to strong local air currents, Issoire boasts an outstanding 12th century abbey church - *St-Aistremoine*, notable for the Bosch-like fresco of "The Last Judgement" with sinners being cast into the mouth of a dragon. You can also visit the lively market in the town's medieval core where you'll find lots of delicious local produce and plenty of ideas for lunch!

Montpeyroux

One of "Les Plus Beaux Villages de France", the small village of Montpeyroux perches on a hilltop overlooking the surrounding picturesque valleys. Stroll the old streets and visit the 12th century *St Pierre's church*.

Puy-de-Dôme

The summit of the famous dormant volcano, Puy-de-Dôme, gives the most wonderful views of the surrounding region. Take the recently opened *Panoramique des Dômes* rack railway up to the top, follow the path, formerly a Roman road, and the whole of the Auvergne will open up before you.

For more information about the Panoramique des Dômes: <http://www.panoramiquedesdomes.fr/>

Clermont-Ferrand

Clermont-Ferrand, the regional capital, sits amid wooded volcanoes and is an attractive, bustling commercial centre with thriving restaurants, cafés, bars and plenty of boutiques and galleries. One of the oldest cities in France, mentioned in Strabo's *Geography*, and the starting point of the first crusade, Clermont-Ferrand has a rich and interesting history.

Originally two separate cities, Clermont and Montferrand were united in 1630, but each part still retains a distinct character. In the Clermont section of the city sights include *the Place St Pierre* with its daily food market, the *Fontaine d'Amboise*, which leads via the pedestrianised *Rue du Port* to the Romanesque church of *Notre Dame-du-Port* and the *Gothic Cathedral* dating from the 13th Century. The Montferrand part is typified by ancient *Rue Kleber*, lined with fine houses, known as "hôtels particuliers" built by prosperous merchants from the 13th to 17th centuries.

For more information about Clermont-Ferrand:
<http://clermontferrandtourism.com/>

Orcival & Saint-Nectaire

The pretty town of Orcival is dominated by its superb early 12th century *basilica*, said to be the best Romanesque church in the region.

Also noted for its Romanesque church, as well as its cheese, is Saint-Nectaire. Externally, this beautiful church has soaring, elegant proportions and vividly carved stonework; within, the treasury includes a gold bust of St Baudime and a wooden *Notre-Dame-du-Mont-Cornadore*, both marvels of 12th Century workmanship.

Besse-en-Chandesse

With its lovely old houses and fortifications, Besse-en-Chandesse is a picturesque and charming mountain village set in beautiful surroundings. Sights here include the 12th century *church*, the quaint cobbled *Rue de la Boucherie*, lined with grey cottages made of lava stone including the 15th century *Queen Margot's House* that is now home to a small ski museum and a 16th century town gate.

Le Mont-Dore

The former spa town of Le Mont-Dore sits close to the source of the Dordogne River at the foot of the region's highest mountain. The thermal springs here were known to the Romans but were particularly busy in the 19th century.

Le Puy-en-Velay

Located in the bowl of a volcanic cone, the extraordinary town of Le Puy-en-Velay teeters on a series of rock outcrops and giant basalt pillars. The terracotta roofs of the town are watched over by three religious landmarks perched on top of natural volcanic pillars – the *Romanesque Cathedral*, *Saint Michel d'Aiguilhe Chapel* and a statue of the *Virgin Mary*. Seen from a distance, the ensemble is one of the most dramatic sights in France.

An important centre of pilgrimage since the middle ages – it is said Charlemagne visited twice – it is the starting point of the Way of Saint James. The perilously positioned *Chapelle St-Michel d'Aiguilhe* was built in 962 by the Bishop of Puy, Gothescalk, on his return from a pilgrimage to Santiago, asserting Le Puy as a centre of pilgrimage. Pilgrims assembled at the *Notre Dame Cathedral*, famed for its black Madonna and “fever stone” before heading for Santiago. Another highlight is the colossal red statue of *Notre Dame de France*, built on the pinnacle of the *Rocher Corneille* in 1860 and cast from 213 cannons captured at Sebastopol during the Crimean War.

Le Puy is also known for its lace and lentils, and boasts the excellent *Crozatier lace museum*.

For more information about Le Puy-en-Velay:
<http://www.ot-lepuyenvelay.fr/>

Brioude

A small bustling town situated on a terrace overlooking the lush Allier plain, Brioude is famed for its 1060 church, the *Basilique St-Julien*, the largest Romanesque church in the Auvergne.

Thiers

Thiers is dramatically sited on a ravine over a sharp bend in the river Durolle, splitting it into a high and low town and has a wealth of wonderfully preserved half-timbered houses in the old quarter of the high town. The town is famed as a centre for the manufacture of knives and cutlery.

For more information about Thiers:
<http://www.thiers-tourisme.fr/en/home.html>

Vichy

Most famous as the head of the French state during Nazi occupation in WWII, Vichy was chosen thanks to its 500 hotels which could be requisitioned for government offices - the current *Aletti Palace Hotel*, for example, housed the War Ministry. These were in existence thanks to the town's reputation as a spa resort and its superb turn of the century spa buildings and parks are now protected as an integral part of France's architectural heritage. Highlights include the *Parc des Sources*, *Grand Casino*, *Covered Arcades*, several grand hotels, the elaborate chalets and villas of the *Avenue Etats-Unis* and the *Parcs d'Allier*.

For more information about Vichy:
<http://www.vichy-tourisme.com/>

Reading Suggestions

Graham Robb, *The Discovery of France*.

A general introduction to French culture, landscape and history, it also features an excellent insight into the distinctive character of France's regions.

Charles Richard Weld, *Auvergne, Piedmont and Savoy: A Summer Ramble*, 1850.

The historian Charles Richard Weld wrote a series of “Vacation Tours”, of which the account of his travels to the Auvergne.

Herbert de Kantzow, *Summer Days in Auvergne*, 1875.

A 19th century visitor's account of his time in the Auvergne.

S. C Aston, *Peirol: Troubadour of Auvergne*.

A study of the famous late 12th and early 13th century Auvergnat troubadour Peirol.

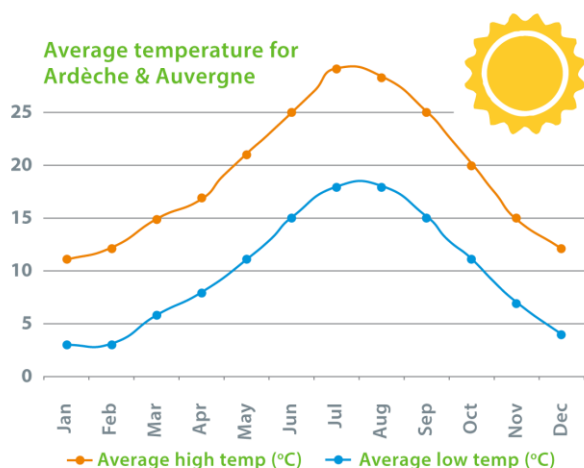
Tour Manager

Your tour manager will be on hand throughout the tour to ensure that everything operated according to plan. If you have any problems or questions, please see him or her immediately – it is often possible to resolve complaints or problems very quickly on the spot and do everything to help you enjoy your holiday.



The Basics

Climate – The weather in the Auvergne at this time of year is likely to be pleasant, but there is the chance of the odd shower. Our best advice is to come prepared.



Time – GMT +2 hours (Summer time Apr-Oct); GMT + 1 (Standard time Nov-Mar).

Language – French.

Religion – Roman Catholic.

National holidays – New Year's day (01 Jan); Easter Monday; Labour day (01 May); Victory in Europe day (08 May); Ascension day; Whit Sunday; Whit Monday; National day (14 Jul); Assumption of Mary (15 Aug); All Saints' day (01 Nov); Armistice day (11 Nov); Christmas day (25 Dec).

Currency – Euro. €1 = 100 cents. Notes are in denominations of €500, 200, 100, 50, 20, 10 and 5. Coins are in denominations of €2 and 1, and 50, 20, 10, 5, 2 and 1 cents.

Banks – Cashpoints compatible with international banking networks are located in all towns and cities, as well as airports, major train stations and other spots. They usually offer an attractive exchange rate. Those banks that still exchange foreign currencies into local money will always charge a transaction fee, so withdrawing money from an ATM usually represents the most logical means of obtaining euros.

Credit cards – American Express, Diners Club, MasterCard and Visa are widely accepted across the country. If you're eating at a restaurant, check prior to the meal that your card will be an acceptable form of payment. Even in cities, it's advisable to

carry a supply of cash with you at all times. Varying amounts of commission can be charged.

Electricity – 220 volt, two-pin continental plug.

Drinking water – Tap water is safe to drink. (Although you'll find a huge amount of bottled water for sale too)

Shops and museums – Department stores are open 0900-1830 Monday to Saturday. Most shops are closed between 1200-1430. Some food shops (particularly bakers) are open Sunday mornings, in which case they will probably close Monday. Many shops close all day or half-day Monday. Please note that most museums are closed on Mondays.

Clothes & Shoes – You may like to bring a warm sweater for cool evenings. Light rain wear for the occasional storm and good grip/flat walking shoes are recommended.

Camera – bring plenty of memory cards/film and any spare camera batteries as these are not always available. Please check with your guide before photographing people.

Bath plugs – The hotel has plugs for basins, but it is useful to carry a 'universal' one with you.

Telephones/mobiles – The guarantee of free mobile phone roaming throughout the EU, Iceland, Liechtenstein and Norway has ended. Check with your phone operator to find out about any roaming charges that might be applied after 1st January 2021. A new law means that you are protected from getting mobile data charges above £45 without you knowing. Once you reach £45, you need to opt in to spend more so that you can continue using the internet while you are abroad. Your phone operator will tell how you can do this.

Tipping – To keep our tours affordable, we do not increase the tour price by adding in tips. However, in the tourism industry, there is a certain level of expectation that when receiving a good service, one does award with a tip. Tour Managers, Representatives, Guides and Drivers appreciate a tip at the end of their involvement with the tour, but this is entirely at your discretion. We believe in allowing you to tip according to your level of satisfaction with their services, but for your guidance about £2-3 per person per day for the tour manager is the norm.



Health

Doctor/Dentist/Chemist

Please talk to your tour manager if you are feeling unwell and they will organise for you to see a doctor.

Keep receipts for insurance claims.



Hospital

Your tour manager/hotel reception will arrange hospital transport.

Keep receipts for insurance claims.

General Health Advice

We suggest you take a good supply of your own individual medicines with you and always keep some in your hand luggage in case you get delayed or your luggage goes astray. General-purpose supplies for bites, stings, or scratches, and your usual medication for headaches, or stomach upsets are always recommended. Oral re-hydration sachets are excellent for topping up salt and glucose levels.

Visit the NHS Fit For Travel website for more generally information specific to the country you are visiting – www.fitfortravel.nhs.uk

Sun Protection

Always ensure you take sufficient sun protection and moisturiser. A sun hat and sunglasses are also advisable.

Inoculations

You should check with your own doctor and take their advice as to which inoculations are required for the country you are visiting, as only they know your medical history and recommendations are liable to change at short notice.



Insurance

We strongly recommend that you take out an appropriate travel insurance policy when you travel abroad.

To be covered under your Travel Insurance Policy, if you become ill, it is essential that you contact a local doctor and telephone the emergency number of your insurance company. You will **NOT** be covered for any claim unless this procedure is carried out. Your insurance company will then decide on the best course of medical attention.

European Health Insurance Card (EHIC)

Before you travel, make sure you have got a valid European Health Insurance Card (EHIC) or UK Global Health Insurance Card (GHIC) or travel insurance with health cover.

You may not have access to free emergency medical treatment and could be charged for your healthcare if you do not have an EHIC or GHIC when visiting an EU country, or travel insurance with full healthcare cover when visiting Switzerland, Norway, Iceland or Liechtenstein. If you have an EHIC it will still be valid while it remains in date. Your European Health Insurance Card (EHIC) or Global Health Insurance Card (GHIC) will be valid if you are travelling to an EU country.

For further information about the GHIC please visit: <https://www.ehic.org.uk>



Should an emergency arise, please call our offices on:

00 44 20 7251 0045 (Mon-Fri 0900-1700)

Outside the above office hours telephone our emergency staff on:

00 44 7841 023807

PLEASE USE THESE NUMBERS ONLY IN THE EVENT OF A GENUINE EMERGENCY.

If you find that you need consular assistance during your holiday:

British Consulate Marseille

24 avenue du Prado

13006 Marseille

France

+33 (0)4 91 15 72 10

Marseilleconsular.marseille@fco.gov.uk

Mon, Wed and Fri: 0900 to 1230. Outside these hours a consular Emergency Service is in operation and can be contacted on +33 (0)4 91 15 72 10

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