

Tour
Information



Carcassonne with Kate Mosse





Travel

Passports

Please ensure your 10-year British Passport is not out of date and is valid for a full three months beyond the duration of your visit. EU, Andorra, Liechtenstein, Monaco, San Marino or Switzerland valid national identification cards are also acceptable for travel to France.

Visas

British and EU passport holders are not required to have a visa.

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 a return train ticket. 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.

TGV 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.

Transfers

On arrival in Narbonne, transfer by coach to your hotel in Carcassonne, The Donjon (1-hour drive).

Special Requests

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



Accommodation

Hotel Donjon, Carcassonne

This 4-star Best Western Hotel Le Donjon is part of the heritage of the medieval citadel of Carcassonne. Located in the heart of the city and surrounded by the city's ancient ramparts, this hotel offers a high standard of accommodation and service. Facilities here include comfortable rooms with private bath/shower, TV, telephone, safe and wi-fi. A bar, an adjacent brasserie and a tranquil enclosed garden.

For more information visit their website
<http://www.cite-hotels.com/best-western-donjon/?lang=en>



Food

Typical dishes include *Cassoulet* (casserole of haricot beans, mutton, pork or sausages and preserved goose), *Confit de Canard* (pieces of duck preserved in the bird's natural fat for extra taste), *tapenade* (luscious paste made with olives, olive oil, anchovies, capers and garlic). Truffles, asparagus, wild mushrooms and oysters are local products you will see on menus. In Sète enjoy the traditional fish stew, *Bourride*, made with fresh monkfish and served with a garlic mayonnaise.

Crème Catalane (baked custard with a thin and crisp caramel coating) and *Clafoutis* (flan like dessert made with local grown apricots, cherries and peaches) are traditional Languedoc Roussillon desserts.

Almost all restaurants offer two types of meals: *a 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. With 400'000 acres under vines in the region, Languedoc Roussillon is responsible for about a third of France's total wine production. As early as the 1st century AD, in his *Natural History*, Pliny the Elder mentions wine production in this area, the roman province of Gallia Narbonensis. Languedoc Roussillon mainly produces red wines, such as *Corbières*, *Côtes du Roussillon* and *Coteaux du Languedoc*. The sparkling *Crémant de Limoux* and the sweet *Muscat* are well appreciated white wines.

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.

Meals included in the price of your holiday are:

Breakfast – daily

Lunch – on day 3

Dinner – on day 2



Destination

The area known as Languedoc today covers just a small part of the much larger area of France that was known in the Middle Ages as the pays de Langue d'oc. A name given to a whole family of French dialects spoken in the southern half of France. In mediaeval times, France was divided linguistically into two main areas, the northern half where people spoke languages that have evolved to produce modern French; and the southern half of the country where they spoke languages somewhere between northern French and Spanish, known as Occitanian French, or langues d'oc. People from the north had difficulty understanding people from the south, and vice versa. The dividing line between the two areas ran from the Charentes in the west to Geneva in the east.

Places of interest included in the tour:

Carcassonne

The citadel of Carcassonne is a perfectly restored medieval town. Crowning a steep bank overlooking the River Aude, it offers a fairytale skyline of turrets and ramparts. The walled city, some parts of which date back to the 5th century, was extensively restored in 1853. Highlights of the fortified old town include the *Château Comtal* and the *Basilica of St-Nazaire* which houses the famous Siege Stone, the *Musée Lapidaire* and the *Porte Narbonnaise*, the gateway to the old city, which is almost like stepping back in time.

For more information about Carcassonne, visit:
<http://www.tourism-carcassonne.co.uk/>

Rennes le Chateau and Rennes les Bains

Rennes-le-Château is a small French hilltop village is known internationally, and receives many visitors each year, because of various conspiracy theories, about an alleged buried treasure discovered by its 19th-century priest Bérenger Saunière, the precise nature of which is disputed by those who believe in its existence. Mountains frame both ends of the region—the Cevennes to the northeast and the Pyrenees to the south. The area is known for its scenery, with jagged ridges, deep river canyons and rocky limestone plateaus, with large caves underneath. In Rennes les Bains bathers have enjoyed the natural hot spring waters for thousands of years - they are still used today as a cure for rheumatism and certain skin problems. Today, it is a

modern thermal spa with the latest equipment. Due to a microbe found in the piping of the old baths they have been closed and a new hospital built which gets its water from another source. This event has led some to rename Rennes-les-Bains, Rennes-sans-Bains.

For more information about Rennes le Chateau, visit:
<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rennes-le-Ch%C3%A2teau>
For more information about Rennes les Bains, visit:
<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rennes-les-Bains>

Mirepoix & Montsegur Castle

The highlight of this ancient bastide town is the central square - the Place des Couverts - which is surrounded by medieval houses and arcades (the covered walkways in front of the shops). The square is beautiful and very colourful as the timber-framed houses are painted in a variety of pastel shades. Take some time to admire the woodwork involved in these houses - some of the carpentry and decorative features have fascinating details. The Château de Montségur is probably the best known of all Cathar Castles. It is famous as the last Cathar stronghold, which fell after a 10-month siege in 1244. A field below the hilltop castle is reputed to be the site where over 200 Cathars were burned alive, having refused to renounce their faith. A building on this site sheltered a community of Cathar women at the end of the twelfth century. Early in the thirteenth, Raymond de Pereille the co-seigneur and Chatelain, was asked to make it defensible, anticipating the problems to come.

For more information about Mirepoix, visit:
<https://www.francethisway.com/places/mirepoix.php>
For more information about the Montsegur Castle, visit:
<http://www.catharcastles.info/montsegur.php>

Narbonne

The charming town of Narbonne is bisected by the 17th century *Canal du Midi*, with the restored medieval quarter to the north, where most of the sights are to be found. These include the impressive 13th century *Cathédrale Saint-Just et Saint-Pasteur*, the *Archbishops' Palace* and "horreum," an intriguing underground warren of granaries and grain chutes dating from the 1st century BC when Narbonne was the capital of the largest Roman province in Gaul.

For more information about Narbonne, visit:

<http://www.narbonne-tourism.co.uk/>

Beziers

Béziers became a Roman colony in 36 BC and formed an important staging post on the Domitian Way, the chariot road which traversed the whole of Languedoc on its way from Rome to Cadiz in southern Spain, developing into an important trade route. Indeed, commerce has been the life blood of Béziers for centuries, particularly in wine: the amphora, a container for carrying wine in a ship's hold, was invented by the town's winegrowers. During the thirteenth century the town witnessed one of the worst massacres in the region – 20,000 people were put to death during the crusade against the Cathars, many of whom had sought refuge in Béziers' churches: Cathars and Catholics alike were slaughtered indiscriminately on the orders of a papal legate who believed God would recognise his own. Cathédrale St-Nazaire, the main sight in Béziers. A Romanesque cathedral dates from the thirteenth century and occupies one of the best sites in town: from the concourse in front of the cathedral there are terrific views out over the surrounding vineyards and towards the foothills of the Massif Central to the north.

For more information about Beziers, visit:

<http://www.creme-de-languedoc.com/Languedoc/city-guides/beziers.php>

Toulouse

Toulouse, capital of France's southern Occitanie region, is bisected by the Garonne River and sits near the Spanish border. It's known as La Ville Rose ('The Pink City') due to the terra-cotta bricks used in many of its buildings. Its 17th-century Canal du Midi links the Garonne to the Mediterranean Sea, and can be travelled by boat, bike or on foot. From the 14th to the 16th century, Toulouse became a very wealthy city, based on an industry that later on vanished entirely; the production of "pastel", or in English woad. Known since prehistoric times, pastel was a highly prized and expensive pigment, capable of producing brilliant blues; and until it was replaced by imported indigo, which was cheaper and easier to produce, the cultivation and transformation of pastel was a boom industry of international importance in and around the city of Toulouse. With the decline of the pastel industry, Toulouse's fortunes declined. It still remained a regional capital however being the largest city for at

least 200 miles in any direction, with the exception of its eternal rival in southwest France, Bordeaux.

For more information about Toulouse, visit:

<https://about-france.com/cities/toulouse.htm>

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.

Kate Mosse, *Sepulchre*

The story is based in two time periods, 1891 and present day, and follows two female protagonists.

Your speaker

Kate Mosse is an international bestselling author with sales of more than five million copies in 38 languages. Her fiction includes the novels *Labyrinth* (2005), *Sepulchre* (2007), *The Winter Ghosts* (2009), *Citadel* (2012), and *The Taxidermist's Daughter* (2014), as well as an acclaimed



collection of short stories, *The Mistletoe Bride & Other Haunting Tales* (2013). Kate was awarded an OBE in the Queen's Birthday Honours List for services to literature. Kate divides her time between Sussex and Carcassonne, the hilltop town in southern France that has featured as a vivid backdrop to several of her novels.

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 Languedoc Roussillon 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 are eating at a restaurant, check prior to the meal that your card will be an acceptable form of payment. Even in cities, it is advisable to carry a supply of cash with you at all times.

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 close 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 – You should be able to use your mobile phone in France, depending on your operator and contract.

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. We would like to reiterate that tipping is an entirely optional payment and this information is given purely to answer any questions you may have about it.



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

To be covered under your Travel Insurance Policy, if you become ill, it is essential that you contact a local doctor and also 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)

The EHIC replaced the old E111 in 2006. Valid in all EEA countries, the card lets you get state healthcare at a reduced cost or sometimes for free. It will cover you for treatment that is needed to allow you to continue your stay until your planned return. It also covers the treatment of pre-existing medical conditions.

Please note that the EHIC **is not** an alternative to travel insurance. It will not cover any private medical healthcare or costs such as being flown back to the UK, or lost or stolen property. Therefore, it is important to have both an EHIC and a valid private travel insurance policy. It is also important to note that each country's healthcare system is slightly different, so the EHIC might not cover everything that would be generally free on the NHS.

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

For more information about the EHIC please visit:

<https://www.ehic.org.uk>



Emergencies

Should an emergency arise, please call our offices on:

00 44 20 7251 0045

Outside office hours (Mon-Fri 0900-1700), telephone our emergency staff on:

00 44 7899 796542 or

00 44 7831 133079

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

If you find that you are in need of 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

Travel Editions

3 Young's Buildings, London EC1V 9DB

Tel: 0207 251 0045

Email: tours@traveleditions.co.uk www.traveleditions.co.uk

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