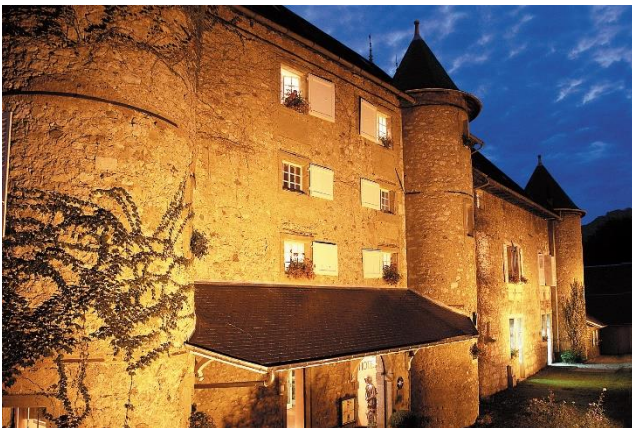




Tour Information



Christmas in the Savoie





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Please ensure your 10 year British Passport is not out of date and is valid for a full three months beyond the duration of your visit.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.

. 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, transfer by coach to Challes-les-Eaux (approx. 1.5 hours) and the Château des Comtes de Challes Hotel.

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

Château des Comtes de Challes, Chambéry

The Château des Comtes de Challes, located in the pretty village of Challes-les-Eaux about 6km from Chambéry, is an impressive and charming hotel, owned and run by the Trèves family since 2002, which exudes a lovely atmosphere from its setting within two hectares of peaceful grounds. This friendly three-star hotel, housed in an atmospheric 15th century fortified house offers a very high level of comfort and services. Facilities include restaurant, bar, delightful grounds, heated outdoor pool, a private chapel, and charming, well-appointed rooms with private bath/shower, TV, telephone, wi-fi and minibar. A safe is available at the reception. Rooms at the Château des Comtes de Challes do not include coffee/tea making facilities, so we recommend bringing a travel kettle if required.

Ask the charismatic manager, Florian Trèves, for a tour of his extensive wine cellars - he has vintages worth up to €1800!

For more information visit their website:

<http://www.chateaudescomtesdechalles.com/>



Food

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 alpine region of Savoie makes an important contribution to this selection. *Tomme de Savoie*, *Beaufort*, *Abondance*, *Reblochon*, *Bleu de Sassenage*, and the goat's *Picodon d'Ardeche* are enjoyed with bread and fruit, or used as an ingredient of one of the many cheese-based dishes of the area. Try a *Fondue Savoyarde*, a *Raclette* (potatoes with melted cheese and cured meats), or a *Tartiflette* (potatoes, bacon, onions topped with Reblochon cheese). Fresh lake fish such as trout or perch are popular around Lake Annecy. Traditional local dishes in Lyon include *Rosette lyonnaise* (cured saucisson), *andouillette* (sausage of coarsely cut tripe), *coq au vin*, and *salade lyonnaise* (lettuce with bacon, croûtons and a poached egg).

Traditional desserts include *Tarte aux Myrtilles* (bilberry tart), *Marrons glacés* (chestnuts candied in sugar syrup), and *Gateau aux noix* (walnut cake, a

speciality in Grenoble). Coffee is always served after the meal and will be black, in a small cup, unless a *café au lait* (or *crème*) is requested.

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. The Savoie vineyards extend over 2,000 hectares and mainly produce white wine, among which the AOC quality label *Vins de Savoie* and *Roussette de Savoie*. Two of the best known wine producing regions of France, *Beaujolais* and *Côtes-du-Rhône* are located in the area, so you will be spoilt for choice with excellent 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.

Try the local liqueurs – the famous *Chartreuse*, originally produced by the monks of the Chartreuse monastery, and *génépi*, also a herb based liqueur.

Meals included in the price of your holiday are:

Breakfast – daily

Dinner – daily (set menu with special festive menus on Christmas Eve and Christmas Day)



Destination

One of France's most distinctive and beautiful areas, the mountainous Savoie region is a place of wild, rugged landscapes, fragrant evergreen forests and sparkling lakes. Still resonant in the charming towns is the area's past as part of the historic region of Savoy – they are vibrant, culturally-rich and, on occasion, distinctly Italianate.

Places of interest included in the tour:

Challes-les-Eaux

A spa and resort town close to Chambéry, Challes-les-Eaux sits in a picturesque spot on the edge of the Bauges and Chartreuse mountains. The town promotes well-being and so outdoor activities such as hiking are a big attraction, and there is also the spa built around a source of sulphur-rich water.

Chartreuse & Grenoble

The Chartreuse massif is a glorious region of mountains, pine forests, valleys and pastures – a breath-taking view at every turn. The name is perhaps best known from the Carthusian monastery, whose monks produced the renowned liqueur, which is still produced in the town of Voiron, according to the recipe given to the monks by François Annibal d'Estrées in 1605. It is said that only two monks at a time know the recipe of the herbal mixture used to create the liqueur.

Grenoble is a vivacious place nestled amongst the peaks of the Belledonne, Chartreuse and Vercors mountains and is, surprisingly, France's lowest city. Home to the 1968 Winter Olympics, it is a thriving university city with a buzzing arts scene whilst at its centre you'll find a tightly packed maze of modern and medieval buildings. Highlights include the cable car to the *Fort de la Bastille*, the lively *Place St-André* in the heart of the medieval city, the 13th century *Church of St-André* and several museums.

For more information about Grenoble, please visit:

<http://www.grenoble-tourisme.com/en/>

Aix-les-Bains and Abbaye d'Hautecombe

Aix-les-Bains is a gracious spa town on Lac du Bourget, whose waters have been renowned for their healing qualities since the Romans. The elegant Belle-Époque buildings, that sprung up in the late 1800s, are best enjoyed at a relaxed pace.

The nearby *Abbaye d'Hautecombe* is a former Cistercian then Benedictine monastery that contains the mausoleum of the House of Savoy.

For more information about Aix-les-Bains, please visit:

www.aixlesbains.com

Chambéry,

Chambéry has guarded the mountain passes that lead to Italy for centuries. Originally just a château built by the Count of Savoie in 1232, the town grew around it and became an important commercial and cultural centre – there is plenty of majestic Italianate architecture from this golden age to admire. Highlights here include its much-loved and extravagant *Fontaine des Éléphants*, the *Château* of the Dukes of Savoy dating back to the 14th century and a 17th century country house, *Les Charmettes*, once home to the philosopher Rousseau.

For more information about Chambéry, please visit:

<http://www.chambery-tourism.com/>

Lyon

Dramatically sited on the banks of the Rhône and Saone rivers, France's second city, Lyon, has long been a vital gateway between north and south. Rich from industry that spans back to the 16th century, Lyon is a charming city, renowned as the gastronomic centre of the country with a wealth of excellent restaurants from humble bistros to Michelin-starred centres of gastronomy and is bordered by the two important wine regions of *Beaujolais* and *Côtes-du-Rhône*. Sights here date back to Roman times with two theatres which still stage events (and an excellent Gallo-Roman museum). The old town is an atmospheric warren of cobbled streets, covered walkways and Renaissance palaces, perfect for a leisurely promenade. The main sights include the *Basilique de Notre-Dame de Fourvière*, the *Cathédrale St Jean*, the 15th century *Hotel de Gadagne* that houses two museums (Museum of Lyon history and Museum of puppets) and the *Chemin du Rosaire*, a beautiful path that leads down from Fourvière offering spectacular views of the city. A centre for the production and weaving of silk since the Renaissance, Lyon also houses a splendid textile museum.

For more information about Lyon, please visit:

<http://www.en.lyon-france.com/>

Annecy & Lake Annecy

One of the largest lakes in France and the cleanest in Europe, Lake Annecy is surrounded by glorious mountain scenery and stunning towns and villages. One of the most attractive and popular towns in the French Alps, Annecy sits on the banks of the *Lac d'Annecy* surrounded by breath-taking alpine scenery. Its small medieval quarter is laced with canals, flower-covered bridges and arcaded streets. Perfect for leisurely and relaxing browsing, there are nonetheless some major sights - the formidable 12th Century *Palais de l'Isle* and the turreted *Château d'Annecy*.

For more information about Annecy please visit, please visit:

<http://en.lac-annecy.com/>

Christmas

It is traditional in France for families to have their main Christmas dinner on Christmas Eve. Most shops will be closed on Christmas Day although there will be a limited selection of bars and restaurants open. Your tour manager will have details of opening times and Christmas services.

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.

Travel books to read

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.

Bernard Levin, *From the Camargue to the Alps: A Walk Across France in Hannibal's footsteps*.

As the title suggests, English journalist Bernard Levin follows the Carthaginian military commander's path across France to Italy, describing history, landscape and culture on his way.

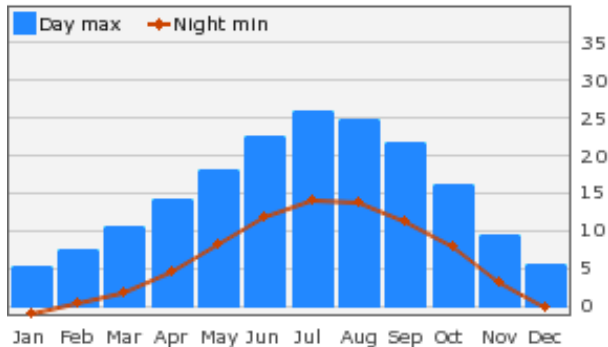
Charles Richard Weld, *Auvergne, Piedmont and Savoy: A Summer Ramble, 1850*.

The historian Charles Richard Weld wrote a series of "Vacation Tours", of which the account of his travels to the Savoie.



The Basics

Climate – The weather in Savoie at this time of year is likely to be cold and there is the chance of the snow. 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 – Lyon has a wide variety of shops. Smaller towns will have quaint boutiques and beautiful markets.

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

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 Youngs Buildings, London, EC1V 9DB

Tel: 020 7251 0045

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

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