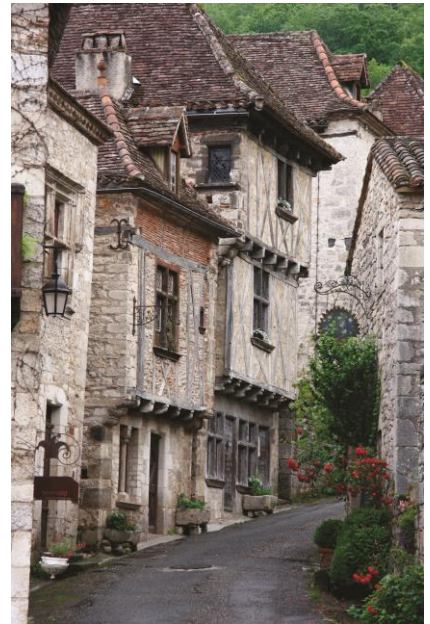


Tour
Information



Lot, Tarn and Haute- Garonne by Rail





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Please ensure your 10 year British Passport is not out of date and is valid for a full three months beyond the duration of your visit.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

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 Montauban, transfer by coach to Mercure Montauban 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

Mercure Montauban

Housed in a charming 18th century building the four-star Mercure Montauban is located right in the heart of the town centre opposite the cathedral. Facilities at the hotel include a restaurant, Bourdelle, and bar to relax in after a day's touring. Bedrooms are traditional decorated with en-suite bathroom with bath or shower, TV, telephone, wifi, minibar, air-conditioning and hairdryer.

For more information please visit their website:
<http://www.accorhotels.com>



Food

The rich and hearty cuisine of the South-west France is based on both local gourmet products, such as mountain cheese, truffles and red peppers, and traditional country dishes with chicken, duck and goose. *Foie gras*, *magret de canard* (duck breast) and *gésiers* (tender duck gizzards) – often served as a salad – are very popular. Other typical dishes include *cassoulet*, *garbure* (cabbage and ham stew), and *aligot* (cheese and potato puree), served with *Toulouse sausage* or roast pork.

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 Midi-Pyrénées makes an important contribution to this selection, with its *Rocamadour*, *Bleu des Causses*, *Laguiole*, and of course the famous *Roquefort*, considered the “King of cheeses” by the philosopher Diderot.

The best known dessert of the area is *Pastis gascon*, also called *croustade* or *tourtière*, an apple of plum tart, made with very thin pastry. In Toulouse try their crystallised violets and local cake, *Fenetra* (almond and apricot cake).

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 regions in France, viticulture has been present in south-west France for over 2000 years. The variety of grapes grown in the area is impressive and is able to offer a large diversity of wines, the most renowned being the AOCs *Gaillac*, *Fronton*, *Cahors*, *Bergerac*, *Côtes du Marmandais* and *Côtes de Duras*.

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.

The local liqueur is the well-known brandy *Armagnac*.

Meals included in the price of your holiday are:

Breakfast – daily

Dinner – two dinners (set menu) at the restaurant in the Mercure Montauban hotel.



Destination

This tour explores three little known and fascinating regions. The departments of the Lot, Tarn and Haute-Garonne are not easily classified but constitute a wonderful combination of scenic and historic sights. Travel from the limestone cliffs and delightful medieval hilltop villages of the Lot Valley to the majesty of Toulouse with its impressive cathedrals and to history-rich Cahors, Agen and Moissac. With its dramatic, unspoilt countryside and real French local character, this is a wonderful and rewarding area to discover.

During your trip you will visit:

Montauban

Our base for this tour is the laidback city of Montauban, on the banks of the River Tarn, was originally a bastide built by the Count of Toulouse in 1144. The lovely old city centre with its pink-brick houses is a delight to wander. Sights here include the 17th and 18th century arcaded main square, stark *Cathédrale Notre-Dame* and the *Musée Ingrès*.

For more information about Montauban:

<http://www.montauban-tourisme.com/>

Auvillar

A stop on the pilgrimage route to Santiago de Compostela, one of the loveliest hilltop villages in France, Auvillar sits on the banks of the Garonne and offers stunning views of the river. It boasts some outstanding monuments, including an unusual *circular corn exchange*, a triangular *marketplace* lined with half-timbered arcades, a 17th century *clock tower* and the *Church of Saint Peter*.

Lauzerte

The bastide of Lauzerte was founded in the 12th century by the Count of Toulouse. Voted one of the “Plus Beaux Villages de France”, its cobbled main square, stone built and half-timbered houses are delightful, as is the *Pilgrim’s Garden*.

For more information about Lauzerte:

<http://www.lauzerte-tourisme.fr/web/21-home.php>

Moissac

The pretty abbey town of Moissac nestles amongst vineyards of sweet Chasselas grapes. It is best known for its magnificent Romanesque abbey church of St-Pierre – the cloisters and porch are considered masterpieces of Romanesque sculpture. The church and cloisters date from the 11th, built on the site of a 7th century church, and have survived many wars including the siege and sacking on the town in 1212 by Simon de Montfort.

For more information about Moissac:

<http://en.tourisme-moissac.com/>

Cordes & Albi

Occupying a glorious site sitting on a rocky outcrop above the River Cérou, quaint *Cordes*, a 13th century fortified town, offers lovely views over the valley. Within the ramparts of the town you will find some excellent examples of 13th and 14th century Gothic architecture lining the steep cobbled streets.

Birthplace of Toulouse-Lautrec, the rose-red town of *Albi* is constructed almost entirely from the clay bricks dug from the river bed of the Tarn. The stunning 13th century Gothic *Cathedral of St Cécile* dominates the skyline – it is thought to be one of the largest brick buildings in the world. Another main sight of this gorgeous medieval town is the impressive 13th century *Palais de la Berbie*, former Bishop’s palace, which now houses the *Musée Toulouse-Lautrec* that contains a comprehensive collection of the artist’s work.

For more information about Albi:

<http://www.albi-tourisme.fr/us/>

Toulouse

Toulouse was once the home to the resplendent court of the count of Toulouse who controlled much of southern France and it continues to be the most important town in southwest France today. Toulouse is the 4th largest city in France and a major aerospace and university centre (Concorde and the Airbus were both developed here). The superb rose-red old town, which the French say is “pink at dawn, red at noon, mauve at dusk”, is compact and easy to explore - the two churches St-Sernin and Les Jacobins plus some Renaissance townhouses are architectural gems.

For more information about Toulouse:

<http://www.toulouse-visit.com/>

Cahors

For such a small town squeezed into a loop of the River Lot, Cahors has a long and turbulent history – passing through Gallic, Roman, Moorish and English hands is just the start of it. Dating back 2,000 years, Cahors is famed for its truffles and its rich wine, which has been produced since Roman times. The best known sight here is the 14th century *Pont Valentré* – a beautifully well-preserved example of a medieval bridge. Other highlights include the *Cathedral Saint-Etienne* and the ornate 16th century *Maison de Roaldès*.

For more information about Cahors:

<http://www.holidays-cahors.co.uk/>

The Lot Valley & Saint-Cirq-Lapopie

Flanked by spectacular limestone cliffs, the Lot Valley features medieval villages and castles, narrow gorges and rushing waterfalls. Probably the prettiest village of all is *Saint-Cirq-Lapopie*, sitting on its high bluff over the river. A member of “Les Plus Beaux Villages de France”, and voted the most beautiful village in France in 2012, the stone and half-timbered houses tumble over the cliff side. Head up the steep path to where the town’s chateau once stood, for wonderful views over the river valley. Don’t miss the 15th century church.

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.

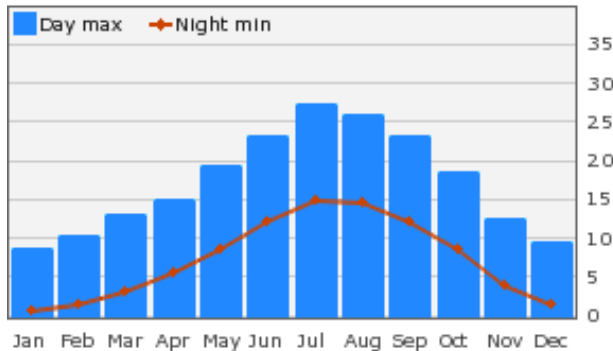
Tour manager

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 Lot, Tarn and Haute-Garonne region 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.

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 flat/grip 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 20 7431 8201 or

00 44 7899 796542 or

00 44 7831 133079 or

00 44 1235 850720

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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