

# Southern France & Northern Spain

## From the Mountains to the Sea — a Gourmet and Cultural Experience

19<sup>th</sup> September — 5<sup>th</sup> October 2019



Cordes-sur-Ciel

Stretching from the 'Pink City' of Toulouse to the remarkable Albi and some of the most beautiful hilltop villages in France. We'll travel down to Sete, the 'Venice of France' and up into the mountains to the citadels of the Cathars before heading over the border into Catalonia and on to Barcelona.

The pace will be leisurely, we'll go off the beaten track, meet some locals and enjoy fabulous food and wine.

We'll explore the legends and citadels of the Cathars, learn the art of French and Catalan cooking with some leading chefs, taste a wide variety of locally produced cheeses, wines and oils and even take a stroll along the Camino trail.

### Highlights

- Walking tour of the 'Pink City', Toulouse
- Cooking Class at l'Ateliers des Chefs
- Cathedral of Saint Cecile and Toulouse Lautrec museum in Albi
- The vineyards of Gaillac
- Cordes sur Ciel – one of the most significant medieval French towns
- Hotel Sambucy and its beautiful gardens
- A guided tour of the Viaduct of Millau
- Gourmet walking tour of Sete 'the Venice of France'
- Cathar Castles of Peyrepertuse & Queribus
- Tastings at Roquefort and Farm of Frayssinet
- Cocktail making at Maison de Noilly Prat
- Gaudi's masterpiece La Sagrada Familia
- Chateau L'Hospitalet – European Winery of the Year
- Banyuls & Limoux Estates
- Saint-Guilhem-le-Desert an exquisite village and Abbey
- A stroll along the Camino
- Cadaques and the Cap de Creus in northern Spain
- The Ceret Museum – home to works by Picasso, Chagall, Matisse and Miro

### Day 1 Toulouse -Albi

Guests will meet at Hotel Pere Leon, Toulouse and be introduced to our local English-speaking guide who will lead us on a walking tour of the main sites, monuments and town-houses of this 'Pink City' so named due to its russet tiles and brickwork coloured red-orange.

### Day 2 Albi

After breakfast we'll head to l'Ateliers of Chefs where we'll learn some of the tricks of French cooking before enjoying the fruits of our labour.

This afternoon we'll transfer to the magnificent town of Albi on the banks of the Tarn.

### Day 3 Albi

This morning a walking tour of the city and its market. A World Heritage Site listed by UNESCO, the bishop's city claims to be the largest surviving brick- built complex on earth. Here, we'll also find the famous Toulouse Lautrec museum.

Our walk will be followed by lunch with an afternoon and evening at leisure to continue your exploration of this city and its remarkable history or enjoy a leisurely wander along the banks of the Tarn.

### Day 4 Albi: Gaillac, Cordes-sur-Ciel

Today we're heading out to Gaillac and a visit to its busy market before discovering the local wines which are the reason for Gaillac's fame particularly its reds and rose wines. We'll combine a buffet lunch with some wine tasting before heading to Cordes-sur-Ciel one of the most significant medieval towns in France and a major site of European heritage.

### Day 5: Viaduct of Millau

A wonder of engineering this morning as we head out to Millau and a guided tour of the Viaduct of Millau, tallest in the world. This fabulous structure lies across one of the most beautiful areas of countryside in southern France.

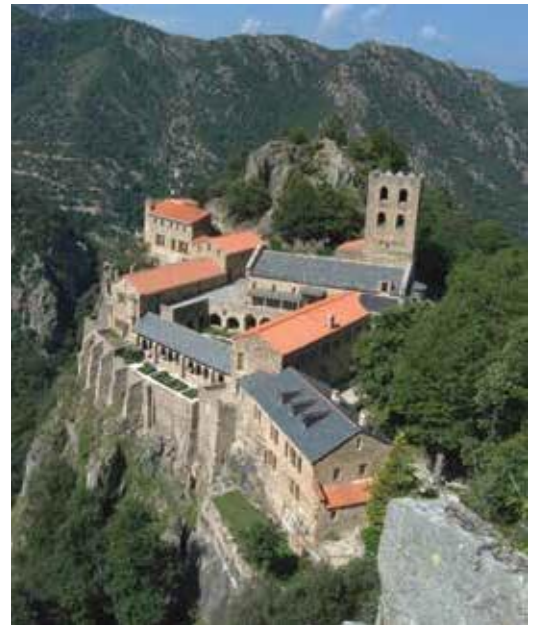
We'll follow this with a private visit to Hotel of Sambucy with its beautiful gardens.

Next, we'll discover the secrets of the 'king of cheeses', Roquefort in the village of the same name. These cheeses are made using unpasteurised sheep's milk and then matured in natural cave cellars.

 4 nights - *Hostellerie Saint Antoine, Albi*



Collioure



Abbey of Saint-Martin-du-Canigou

#### Day 6: Albi-Sete

Today to St- Guilhem-le-Desert, one of France's Most Beautiful Villages and the UNESCO listed abbey which forms part of the Saint-James of Compostela route in France. After lunch we'll experience just a taste of the famous Camino with a 2-hour guided walk. From there we'll head directly to our hotel on the coast in Sete. Dinner tonight will be in a local restaurant.

#### Day 7: -Sete

Walking tour of Sete with its extensive system of canals known as the 'Venice of France'. After lunch we'll head to the quaint port of Marseillan where we'll become experts at the art of cocktail making with the Cellar Master at Maison Noilly Prat



This evening is at leisure.

◇ 2 nights - Grand Hotel de Sete

#### Day 8: Pyrenees, Pezenas

After breakfast and check out we'll head to the Pyrenees. En-route visit Pezenas, known as the Art and History city.

Lunch will be at the European Winery of the Year in the heart of the Massif de la Clape followed by a visit to the Abbey of Fontfroide, the most lavish and best - preserved Cistercian Abbey in France. The site includes a magnificent 3,000- foot Rose Garden and a succession of Italian style terraced gardens.

Late afternoon we'll check into our hotel in the heart of Collioure.

#### Day 9: Collioure, Banyuls, Ceret

After breakfast we'll explore Collioure. We'll have time to explore the weekly market in nearby Elne before heading to the fishing village of Banyuls,

This afternoon we'll visit the Ceret

Museum of modern art; representing the 20th century's great artists including Picasso, Braques, Chagall, Matisse and Miro.

Dinner tonight is in a fine local restaurant a short walk from our hotel.

#### Day 10: Collioure

Free day to further explore this very pretty town, loved by artists through the ages.

#### Day 11: Cap Creus, Cadaques

We'll cross the border into Spain for a walking tour in Cap Creus nature reserve. Enjoy tapas for lunch in a traditional Catalan restaurant. Walk off lunch as we explore Cadaques, a traditional village with steep cobbled streets & white-washed houses, surrounded by olive groves and Salvador Dali's home/museum.

#### Day 12: In the footsteps of the Cathars

If you are not familiar with the Cathars, you'll be amazed at their history, legends and extraordinary citadels. Our first stop is the Peyrepertuse Castle, a huge fortress on the top of a great promontory.

Then to Queribus Castle, an ancient royal fortress standing on an impressive rock and host to many persecuted Cathars. From its polygonal tower there are extensive views over the Pyrenees, the Mediterranean Sea.

◇ 5 nights – Hotel La Casa Pairal, Collioure

#### Day 13

We head for the most emblematic site of the Catalan region – the Abbey of Saint-Martin-du-Canigou. Since the 11th century, this Benedictine abbey has quietly watched over the valley.

Later we'll take the famous Little Yellow Train of the Pyrenees as it hugs the sides of the deep valley of the Tet and winds between forests, chasms and streams. Dinner tonight will be in our hotel.

#### Day 14: Cerdagne region -Eastern Pyrenees

Today we'll be exploring the Cerdagne

region of the Eastern Pyrenees, starting with a walking tour to Lac des Bouillouses, one of the most beautiful natural reserves in the Pyrenees. Lunch will be at a local farm and include wine tasting.

◇ 2 nights - Auberge les Ecoreuil

#### Day 15: Barcelona

Checking out we'll head to Barcelona for a walking tour including the largest art nouveau site in the world including, of course, Gaudi's masterpiece the Sagrada Familia.

#### Day 16: Barcelona

We'll start our day with a food tasting tour of the famous La Boqueria which equally attracts Michelin Star chefs and grandmothers looking for ingredients for classic Catalan cuisine. Afternoon free before we meet for our farewell dinner.

#### Day 17: Barcelona

Breakfast at the hotel and a group transfer to Barcelona Airport.

◇ 2 nights – Hotel Petit Palace

### Inclusions

- Small group – maximum 10 guests
- Meet & greet at Hotel Pere Leon Toulouse
- Return transfers to Barcelona Airport
- 16- nights accommodation in 3 and 4 star small private hotels
- 16 breakfasts, 11 lunches and 9 dinners
- English speaking guide
- Air-conditioned minibus for all transfers and excursions.

### Dates & Prices

17 days/16 nights

**19<sup>th</sup> Sept – 5<sup>th</sup> Oct 2019**

Tour Price: AUD 12,500 per person

Reductions available for twin share

Not included: Air fares