

14 DAYS

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## A GOURMAND'S TOUR OF FRANCE

Long hailed as a culinary haven, France, home to the famed Michelin Guide, is an epicure's ideal destination. From decadent dinner cruises on the Seine to champagne and caviar tastings by the Mediterranean, this 14-day tour gives you a glimpse of Gallic gastronomy at its best. BY PAYAL UTTAM



DUPLEX TERRACE EIFFEL SUITE / HÔTEL PLAZA ATHÉNÉE



SEINE-FUL SPLENDOR / DON JUAN II



ROYAL SUITE / HÔTEL ROYAL BARRIÈRE



PAYS D'AUGE CALVADOS / MANOIR D'APREVAL

## 1 BONJOUR PARIS

With more than 70 Michelin-starred restaurants, you'll be spoiled for choice in the French capital. **Hôtel Plaza Athénée** is the grande dame of Parisian hotels and a favorite among foodies. Check into your **Duplex Terrace Eiffel Suite**, which comes with a private gym, sauna and terrace with a spectacular view of the Eiffel Tower (from about US\$13,249 a night). Hit the ground running with an exclusive tour of the hotel's legendary wine cellar. Boasting 35,000 bottles, it includes the likes of Château Latour, Château Margaux and Petrus. Your guide from **Quintessentially Travel** has arranged for a tasting of ten wines paired with various cheeses and a surprise bottle compliments of sommelier Gerard Margeon. There's no need to leave the property for dinner. Three-Michelin-starred **Alain Ducasse au Plaza Athénée** is one of the best tables in the city.

*Quintessentially Travel: Hong Kong Sales Manager Siam Sattayaphan, 852-3752-2062; [siam@quintessentiallytravel.com](mailto:siam@quintessentiallytravel.com); [www.quintessentiallytravel.com](http://www.quintessentiallytravel.com)*

## 2 REIMS ESCAPE

A private helicopter awaits in the morning to whisk you off to the historic city of Reims, also known as the champagne capital. Your Quintessentially guide will escort you to the esteemed **House of Krug Champagne**. Enjoy a private tour and meeting with a Krug family member before lunch at **L'Assiette Champenoise**, a two-Michelin-star restaurant in the verdant suburbs of Reims. Ask chef Arnaud Lallement to whip up something special from his *menu saison* (seasonal menu). Return by helicopter to your hotel in Paris. In the evening, a guide from **Abercrombie & Kent** has arranged for a dinner cruise on the Seine aboard the luxurious yacht **Don Juan II**. Celebrated chef Guy Krenzer, awarded "Meilleur Ouvrier de France," will serve an elaborate four-course meal as you take in the views of Paris by night.

*Abercrombie & Kent: Marketing Director Vivienne Wu, 86-10-8801-7719; [vwu@aktravel.com](mailto:vwu@aktravel.com); [www.abercrombiekent.com](http://www.abercrombiekent.com)*

## 3 NORTH TO NORMANDY

Arrive in the seaside resort of Deauville. A place to see and be seen, the town has been fondly nicknamed the Parisian Riviera. You will be staying at the most decadent room at the **Hôtel Royal Barrière**: The 1,076-square-foot **Royal Suite** comes with a cozy lounge, marble bathroom and private garden (from about US\$7,340 a night). After you freshen up, your Abercrombie & Kent guide will escort you to a VIP tasting at **Manoir d'Apreval**, a family-run distillery that produces the region's finest calvados, a delicious apple brandy. Savor a special selection of cider, calvados and cheese. Dinner tonight is at chef Alexandre Bourdas's restaurant **Sa.Qua.Na** in Honfleur. This two-Michelin-starred chef has a reputation that precedes himself. Known for his creative twist on French classics, you can expect fusion dishes like *tonkatsu*-style veal with grated radish, leaves of red shiso and oyster cream.

*Hôtel Royal Barrière: Reservations, 33-2-31-98-66-33; [www.lucienbarriere.com](http://www.lucienbarriere.com)*

## 14 DAYS

### 4 MONASTIC MOMENTS

Begin your day with a gourmet food walk through a traditional Norman market in Saint-Pierre-sur-Dives. Your guide will lead you through the stalls of the ancient market hall where you can sample regional favorites like camembert, *livarot* and fresh cider. Save room for lunch at neighborhood bistro **Les Plaisirs des Mets** before driving to the Benedictine abbey of **Mont Saint-Michel** for the afternoon. A UNESCO World Heritage site, this Gothic-style monastery sits atop a dramatic islet surrounded by sand flats. For dinner, sample progressive Normandy cuisine at **Côté Resto**.

*Côté Resto: Manager Gilbert Petit, 44-2-31-89-31-33; gilbert.petit3@gmail.com; www.cote-restohonfleur.com*

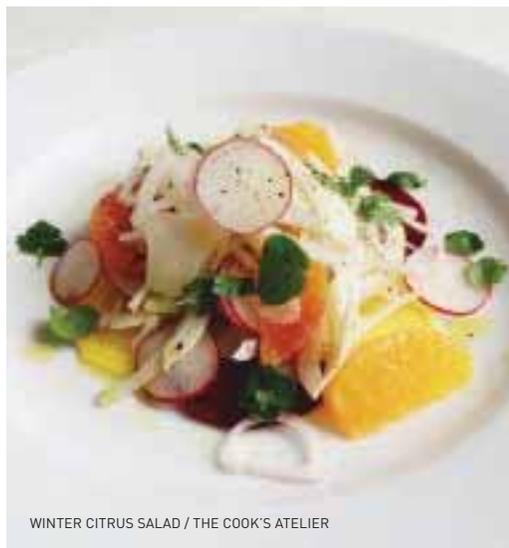


ON THE LOIRE RIVER / CHÂTEAU DE CHENONCEAU

### 6 ON TO ONZAIN

This morning French Wine Explorers have arranged for a private visit to the celebrated **Caves Duhard** estate. Venture into the cavernous 16th-century cellars and enjoy a tasting of young and aged wines paired with regional delicacies like foie gras, *pâté de campagne* and goat cheese. After lunch at the stylish **Olivier Arlot** restaurant, take a lazy canoe ride down the Loire. Dinner will be at the **Domaine des Hauts de Loire**, a former 19th-century hunting lodge in Onzain. Treat yourself to the *menu dégustation*, featuring Aquitaine caviar with scampi blancmange.

*Domaine des Hauts de Loire: General Manager Pierre Alain Bonnigal, 33-2-54-20-72-57; hauts-loire@relaischateaux.com; www.relaischateaux.com*



WINTER CITRUS SALAD / THE COOK'S ATELIER

### 8 BORDEAUX FOR TRUFFLES

Today, head into the woods for a truffle hunting expedition with Michelin-starred chef Emmanuel Hebrard and truffle expert Alain Gauthiot. Return to the hotel with your spoils and enjoy a truffle-inspired lunch. Fly to Bordeaux in the afternoon. The **Grand Hotel de Bordeaux & Spa** will host you for three days. The **Royal Suite's** 1,076-square-foot terrace comes with a Jacuzzi and sprawling views of the city (about US\$6,689 a night). Tonight, Pascal Nibaudeau, the Michelin-starred executive chef at **Le Pressoir d'Argent**, will lead a private cooking class followed by a three-course dinner paired with a medley of wines. *Grand Hotel de Bordeaux: Head Concierge Gregory Vacca, 33-05-57-30-43-00; gregory.vacca@ghbordeaux.com; www.ghbordeaux.com*



ROOFTOP VISTA / HOSTELLERIE DE PLAISANCE

### 5 THE LOVELY LOIRE

Head south to Tours in the Loire Valley, one of France's most exciting wine regions, and check into **Les Hautes Roches**, an 18th-century manor house partially set in a cliff face. Your deluxe room has the best view of the Loire River (about US\$399 a night). A guide from luxury tour operator **French Wine Explorers** will take you to **Château de Chenonceau**. Dine inside the castle at **L'Orangerie** before exploring the grounds. A hot-air balloon will be parked outside to take you on a ride over the valley. Lucky for you, back at the hotel, Michelin-star chef Didier Edon is one of the best in the region.

*Les Hautes Roches: Chef Didier Edon, 33-2-47-52-88-88; hautetroches@relaischateaux.com; www.leshautesroches.com*

### 7 BETTER IN BURGUNDY

Next stop, Burgundy. Your **Loizerolle Suite** at the **Abbaye de la Bussière** has majestic, cathedral-like interiors (from about US\$529 a night). An Abercrombie & Kent guide will escort you to a cooking class at **The Cook's Atelier** in Beaune. Begin with a glass of *crémant* before trying your hand at a Burgundian classic like beef bourguignon. Next, head to the prestigious **Domaine Faiveley** family estate in Nuits-Saint-Georges for a private tasting. Dinner is at Michelin-starred chef Patrick Bertron's **Relais Bernard Loiseau**.

*Abbaye de la Bussière: Co-owner Clive Cummings, 33-3-80-49-02-29; info@abbaye-dela-bussiere.com; www.abbaye-dela-bussiere.com*

### 9 BACK IN TIME

The hotel's wine concierge has planned the perfect day trip to the medieval village of Saint-Émilion. Oenophiles flock here for merlot and cabernet franc from the oldest *terroir* in Bordeaux. Start with a grand cru tasting at the stunning **Château De Ferrand**. Built during Louis XIV's reign, the estate boasts several of the region's top vintages. Lunch is at the family-owned restaurant **Logis de la Cadène**. Expect hearty seafood dishes like pan-fried prawns with basil sauce. Dinner will be at the much talked about **Hostellerie de Plaisance**.

*Hostellerie de Plaisance: General Manager Philippe Etchebest, 33-5-57-55-07-55; contact@hostellerie-deplaisance.com; www.hostellerie-plaisance.com*

**10 BORDEAUX FINALE**  
 After a massage at the **Bains de Léa Nuxe Spa**, head to **Château Cordeillan-Bages**, a 17th-century château-turned-hotel. Located outside Pauillac, the hotel's restaurant is nestled in one of Bordeaux's most revered vineyards. Chef Jean-Luc Rocha serves playful dishes like *gambas* with Earl Grey tea and peach infused with rare peppers. Later, your guide from luxury tour consultancy **Hip Holiday** will arrange for a VIP tasting and tour of the **Château Palmer** in the Médoc, followed by dinner at **Le Saint-James**. With chef Nicolas Magie at the helm, you are guaranteed a *haute gastronomique* experience.

*Hip Holiday: Assistant Marketing Manager Rae Chan, 852-2973-0606; rae.chan@hipholiday.com.hk; www.hipholiday.com.hk*



SUN-KISSED DINING ROOM / LE SAINT-JAMES

**12 SAINTS, STARS AND STOVES**  
 Spend the morning in the charming town of Saint-Rémy-de-Provence, where Vincent Van Gogh painted his *Starry Night*. Lunch is at the one-Michelin-starred **La Maison Jaune**. Before heading back to Avignon, don't miss a visit to the former monastery of **Saint-Paul-de-Mausole** where Van Gogh spent his final moments. This evening you will be treated to an exclusive cooking class at the hotel **La Mirande**'s culinary school **La Marmiton**. Their 19th-century kitchen has played host to the most legendary chefs of Provence. Finish the night by gathering around the woodblock table for a family-style meal with the chef.

*La Mirande: General Manager Martin Stein, 33-4-90-14-20-20; mirande@la-mirande.fr; www.la-mirande.fr*



LA MARMITON / LA MIRANDE

**14 A SWEET ADIEU**  
 Your last stop is Saint-Tropez. A Provençal fishing village turned playground for the world's elite, the area is known for its beaches and boutiques. Lunch is at the hottest address in town, **Restaurant Colette** at the new **Hotel Sezz Saint-Tropez**. Chef Patrick Cuissard is the mastermind behind the Mediterranean-inspired menu. Enjoy one final indulgence before flying home—a visit to **La Tarte Tropézienne**. Named after the French Riviera's most famous desert, the local patisserie is a must for the perfect *tropézienne* made from orange blossom-infused brioche layered with a luscious vanilla mousseline.

*Hotel Sezz Saint Tropez: General Manager Ani Kojayan, 33-4-94-55-31-55; anik@hotelsezz.com; www.hotelsezz-sainttropez.com*



SWEET STRAWBERRIES / RESTAURANT COLETTE

**11 PICTURE-PERFECT PROVENCE**  
 Touch down in Avignon in sun-drenched Provence and head to the luxurious **Le Prieuré** hotel, a former 14th-century convent. Your suite comes with a private terrace (from about US\$599 a night). Stop for a quick lunch at the traditional bistro **La Fourchette**. Today's highlight is a visit to **Château la Nerthe**, one of the oldest wine estates of the Châteauneuf-du-Pape region. Taste the area's best reds with a classic regional blend of grenache, syrah and mourvedre. Back at the hotel restaurant, you can look forward to chef Fabien Fage's specialties like Baeza family pigeon with fresh sage.  
*Le Prieuré: General Manager Alexandre Fauier, 33-04-90-15-90-15; leprieure@relaischateaux.com; www.leprieure.com*

**13 SEE THE SEA**  
 After a final meal on the terrace of **Christian Etienne** in Avignon, fly to Nice on the French Riviera. Check into your **Prestige Suite** at **Château de la Chèvre d'Or** (from US\$1,899 a night). Nestled in the cliffside village of Eze, this boutique property has hosted the likes of Elizabeth Taylor and Humphrey Bogart. Start the day with a caviar and champagne tasting at the hotel's **Bar du Château**. While away the afternoon by the infinity pool before sunset drinks and dinner at the hotel's two-Michelin-star restaurant **La Chèvre d'Or**.  
*Château de La Chèvre d'Or: General Manager Thierry Naidu, 33-4-92-10-66-66; manager@chevredor.com; www.chevredor.com*



SEA-VIEW DINING / CHÂTEAU DE LA CHÈVRE D'OR