



**Monet Gardens, Giverney**



**Chateau de Vaux le Vicomte**

### **Sunday, October 6 Paris**

Arrive at Charles de Galle Airport and meet your private driver in the Arrivals Hall to transfer to the Hotel Brighton, located in the oldest neighborhood of Paris, the 1<sup>st</sup> arrondissement. Settle in to your room and then take a stroll through the Tuileries Gardens, the oldest park in Paris with a history that dates back to the 17<sup>th</sup> century, just steps from your hotel. In the evening, soak up the magic of Paris on a gourmet dinner cruise, floating past the city's famed monuments lit up in the evening sky. (D) **Hotel Brighton** (4 nights) [www.paris-hotel-brighton.com/en](http://www.paris-hotel-brighton.com/en)

### **Monday, October 7 Paris**

In the morning, meet your private guide for a half-day walking tour of the historical heart of Paris, from Notre Dame Cathedral on the Ile de la Cite to the Champs Elysee, considered one of the world's most beautiful avenues. Along the way, visit historical sights in this oldest neighborhood of Paris, founded by the Romans. Included in this walking tour is a stop at the Orangerie Museum, located in the Tuileries Gardens. Drenched by natural light, this museum is the closest you'll come to stepping into an Impressionist painting. The Monet collection prepares you for your tour to Giverney tomorrow. At the end of the walking tour, follow the Champs Elysee to the Arche de Triumphe, stopping for lunch at an outdoor café. Enjoy the afternoon at your leisure. You can walk across the bridge and visit the Musee d'Orsay, a fabulous museum dedicated to impressionist artists. (B)

### **Tuesday, October 8 Paris – Giverney – Paris**

After an early breakfast, meet your driver and guide for the hour drive to Giverney, home of France's most renowned impressionist painter, Claude Monet. Wander in and out of brilliant flower beds, gentle ponds, and shady arbors that inspired this master. Monet was not just a brilliant painter, but also a gifted gardener. By the end of his life, the garden was just as much a work of art as the paintings. Wander the village of Giverney, a sight in itself, with flowery lanes home to a few souvenir shops, art galleries and cafés. Have lunch or a snack before returning to Paris to spend the rest of the day relaxing, exploring, or visiting sights such as the Eiffel Tower. (B)

### **Wednesday, October 9 Paris – Vaux Le Vicomte – Paris**

This morning, meet your driver for the 45-minute drive to Vaux Le Vicomte, a castle that is the epitome of 17<sup>th</sup> century elegance and was the inspiration for Versailles. The chateau has been restored to its original splendor, filled with splendid tapestries, carpets, and art objects. The gardens are almost as spectacular as the chateau. The carefully calculated geometry of the flowerbeds and alleyways makes this a study in harmony. Enjoy a prepared picnic lunch in the garden before returning to Paris in the afternoon. (B, L)



**Orleans**



**Loire Valley**

#### **Thursday, October 10 Paris – Orleans – Amboise**

Depart Paris for the lovely Loire Valley, long a refuge for France's royalty and home to a thousand castles and palaces. Today, the Valley is carpeted with fertile vineyards and gardens, crisscrossed by rivers and laced with rolling hills. On the way to your chateau for 3 nights, stop at the city of Orléans of Joan of Arc fame. Take a self-guided tour of the historical center and enjoy lunch at an outdoor café or a traditional restaurant. After visiting Orléans, continue on to the Chateau de Perreux, a genuine private castle turned into a boutique hotel and your home for the next three nights. Enjoy the rural peacefulness of the chateau located within 1 mile of the characteristic village of Amboise. Settle into your charming room and stroll the chateau's expansive gardens. In the evening, join your friends for dinner in the chateau's highly rated restaurant. (B, D)

**Chateau de Perreux** (3 nights) [www.chateaudeperreux.fr](http://www.chateaudeperreux.fr)

#### **Friday, October 11 Amboise**

This morning, enjoy a leisurely breakfast before joining your guide and driver for a half-day guided tour of Amboise, a real Renaissance town on the banks of the Loire River in the center of extensive vineyards. Begin at the rocky spur above the town to explore the Chateau d'Amboise, a medieval chateau rebuilt in 1492, the first in France to reflect the Italian Renaissance. Next, visit the Chateau du Clos Luce, where Leonardo da Vinci lived the last three years of his life as engineer, architect, and painter to France's Renaissance king, Francois I. At the end of the tour, enjoy a leisurely lunch along the Loire River. Spend the rest of the day at your leisure, shopping in Amboise, taking a walk along the river and vineyards, relaxing at the hotel. In the evening, enjoy an elegant castle dining experience with a Michelin star at nearby Chateau de Pray. (B, D)

#### **Saturday, October 12 Amboise**

Rise early this morning for an optional, unforgettable hot air balloon ride over the Loire Valley (45/90 minutes; \$200/\$300 pp). Sail serenely over chateaux, canals, vineyards, Romanesque churches, and villages. Balloons don't go over 3,000 feet and usually fly much lower than that, so you get a bird's-eye view of the Loire Valley's sublime landscapes. In the afternoon, visit the Marc Bredif Winery in the nearby town of Vouray, famous for its sparkling wines. At this winery, you'll find a top-quality selection of Vouray wines and red wines from Chinon and Bourgueil. Tour the 10<sup>th</sup> century cellars dug into the hillside, and enjoy tastings paired with local food products. (B, L)



**Cognac**



**St. Emili3n**

### **Sunday, October 13 Amboise – Cognac – St. Emili3n**

This morning, depart the Loire Valley for another famed wine region, the Dordogne Valley in the Bordeaux region. On the way, stop at the village of Cognac for some informal tastings of “the drink of the gods”. Wander the cobblestone streets of this medieval village and visit the Musee des Artes de Cognac in the town center, a museum that takes you through the history of the cognac trade. Enjoy a casual lunch before continuing on your journey to St. Emili3n. Surrounded by vineyards, the village of St. Emili3n sits on a ridge overlooking the Dordogne Valley. After settling into your room, stroll the hotel’s tranquil gardens and vineyards. Wander the quaint cobblestone streets and admire the scenic vistas while choosing a restaurant for dinner. Or, dine at the hotel’s highly rated restaurant. (B)

**Hotel Au Logis des Remparts** (3 nights) [www.logisdesremparts.com](http://www.logisdesremparts.com)

### **Monday, October 14 St. Emili3n**

In the late morning, meet your guide for a tour of St. Emili3n and the surrounding vineyards. Stroll the ancient alleyways lined with centuries-old limestone buildings, half-timbered homes from the Renaissance era, and pleasant cobblestoned plazas. They’ve been making wine in St. Emili3n for more than 1,800 years – making it the oldest wine producer in the Bordeaux region. Blending cabernet franc and merlot grapes, St. Emili3n wines are the most robust in Bordeaux. Enjoy a local wine tasting experience, ending with lunch at your choice of one of the appealing caf3s lining the picture-perfect square, Place du Marche. In the evening, meet your friends for a special dinner in the village. (B, D)

### **Tuesday, October 15 St. Emili3n – Dordogne River Valley – St. Emili3n**

Spend the day following the Dordogne Scenic Loop with your private driver and guide. The joys of the Dordogne Valley include rock-sculpted villages, formidable castles, fertile farms, magnificent vistas, and a renowned local cuisine. La Roque-Gageac, a one-street town stretching along the Dordogne River is an essential stop and a strong contender for the “cutest town in France”. After enjoying a traditional lunch in the village, take a 1-hour, round-trip boat ride on the Dordogne River from La Roque to Chateau de Castelnaud and return. The wooden boat is modeled after boats called *gabarres*, originally built here to take prized oak barrels filled with local wine down to Bordeaux. Return to St. Emili3n in the late afternoon to leisurely enjoy the remainder of the day. (B, L)



**Rocher de la Vierge, Biarritz**



**San Sebastián**

### **Wednesday, October 16 St. Emilion – Biarritz – San Sebastián**

Depart St. Emilion for San Sebastián, Spain Basque Country. Enroute, stop in Biarritz, a fashionable seaside resort in France Basque Country. Once a whaling center and fishing village, Biarritz was discovered by royalty in the 19<sup>th</sup> century and transformed into a resort for vacationing royalty from all over Europe. Stroll the beach, have lunch at a seaside café, and visit the Rocher de la Vierge (Rock of the Virgin). The walk out onto the edge of the Rock, with crashing surf on both sides, is the most dramatic in Biarritz. Continue on to San Sebastián and check into your sea view room at the Lasala Plaza Hotel, located on the Bay of Biscay in the historical center of the city. The evening is at your leisure to stroll the neighborhood and sample pinxtos, Basque tapas. (B)

**Lasala Plaza Hotel** (4 nights) [www.lasalaplazahotel.com](http://www.lasalaplazahotel.com)

### **Thursday, October 17 San Sebastián**

In the late morning, meet your private guide for a half-day tour of the city's historical highlights, beginning at the top of Mount Igueldo, where you'll find the most amazing views of the city, and ending with a tutorial on ordering and eating pinxtos. In between, you'll visit the main hallmarks of the city: the beaches, the palace built for royal summers at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the French-influenced modernist buildings, and the Old Town – the gastronomic epicenter of San Sebastian and the many traditional pinxtos bars. The remainder of the day are at your leisure. (B, L)

### **Friday, October 18 San Sebastián – Bilbao – San Sebastián**

After a leisurely breakfast, meet your private driver and guide for a full-day tour exploring the Basque Country beyond San Sebastian. The first stop is the 10<sup>th</sup> century hermitage of San Juan de Gaztleugabe where you will climb up to the hermitage. Upon arrival in Bilbao, stroll through the old town and along the riverbank to view the striking Guggenheim Museum. You will visit the Guggenheim Museum with audio guides, followed by a traditional Basque lunch and an historical stroll through Bilbao's Old Town's 7 streets. Return to San Sebastián in the late afternoon. (B, L)

### **Saturday, October 19 San Sebastián**

The day is at your leisure to relax on the beach, shop for souvenirs, or visit a nearby quaint Basque fishing village. In the evening, join your friends for a special dinner at one of San Sebastian's famed Michelin-starred restaurants. (B, D)

### **Sunday, October 20 San Sebastian – Bilbao – USA**

Depart San Sebastian for the airport in Bilbao for your flight home. Or, continue your journey by taking a short flight to Madrid.

## 14 night / 15-day tour: \$5,950 per person

### Includes:

accommodations in 4\*+ hotels, daily breakfast + additional meals as stated in itinerary,  
All transfers, guides, gratuities, and entry fees as stated in the itinerary

### Not included:

gratuities for hotel baggage handlers and housekeepers;  
Meals, gratuities, transfers, and entry fees for optional activities not included in the itinerary  
International airfare, Pre- or Post-Tour extensions

## *Tour Extensions*

### *Paris Pre-Tour*

Hotel Brighton (\$200/person/night)

Arrive in Paris 3 – 5 days early. Customize a personal tour. The following are suggested activities:

- Full-day trip to the Normandy Beaches and Museum
- Guided visit to a local market and cooking class
- Guided or self-guided tour of the Louvres Museum
- Ascend the Eiffel Tower
- Have a picnic lunch in the park or the Tower's restaurant
- Daytime cruise of the Seine River
- Visit a neighborhood not on the itinerary for a self-guided tour
- Dine at traditional Parisian restaurants
- Browse the shops and lounge at an outdoor café



### *Madrid Post-Tour*

Hotel Paseo del Prado (\$200/person/night)

Take a short flight from San Sebastian to Madrid for 3 – 5 days. The following are suggested activities:

- Guided or self-guided tours of the Prado Museum
- Tour of Royal Madrid: the Royal Palace, Plaza Mayor, etc.
- Visit a family winery for a full-day experience touring the vineyards, tastings, and lunch
- Full-day trip to the historical city of Toledo
- Evening Tapas “crawl”

