

Journeys of the Spirit — discover your inner essence —

French Revelation



8 - 24 May 2018

Immerse yourself in French culture, language and landscapes on an extraordinary journey through some of the most stunning regions, cities, towns and villages of France ~ from Lyon to Toulouse, through the Rhone Valley and along the Chemin de Saint Jacques to the magical town of Rocamadour, perched high above the Dordogne Valley.

DAY 1: 08th MAY: LYON (D)

Arrival in Lyon, known as the gastronomic capital of the country, a sophisticated city with outstanding museums, a dynamic cultural life, a beautiful fusion of the traditional with the modern, thriving universities and elegant boulevards.

Spend one night in the **Okko Hotel**, which offers contemporary accommodation in an historic building.

Your first **dinner** together is in a fabulous restaurant within walking distance of your hotel.

DAY 2: 09th MAY: LYON (B/L)

After breakfast in the hotel, we begin with a walking tour which includes a visit to the **Basilica of Notre-Dame de Fourvière** and the **Roman Theatre**, built across the Fourvière hill some 2000 years ago and offering a panoramic view of the city.

Descend the hill on foot and enter the area known as **Vieux Lyon**, one of Europe's most extensive Renaissance heritage areas with its pastel buildings, narrow cobbled streets, the Saint Jean Cathedral and the network of passageways known as 'Traboules'.

Today we have **lunch in a typical Bouchon Lyonnais**.

This afternoon you are free to explore Lyon. Here are a few suggestions:
The Museum of Fine Arts (Entrance: 12€ per person) showcases France's finest collection of sculptures and paintings outside of Paris with works by Rodin, Rubens, Rembrandt, Monet, Matisse and Picasso.

Le Musée des Tissus (Entrance: 10€ per person) traces 2000 years of Western and Eastern textile history, and presents fabrics, carpets, tapestries and costumes.

Le Musée Lumière, housed in an elegant former mansion, tracks the origins of modern cinema and the work of the famous Lumière brothers.

Later today we will transfer to Tain-l'Hermitage (1h15 - 90km)

Settle into your country house **Hotel Villeon**, where you will stay for 2 nights. Dinner at leisure

DAY 3: 10th MAY: CAVE TAIN-L'HERMITAGE & VALRHONA (B/L)

After breakfast we drive to **Cave Tain l'Hermitage** for a guided walk along the Hermitage hill, an introduction to the appellations, terroirs and grape varieties, a **tour of the cellars** and a **private tasting**.

Located between Valence and Lyon, Cave de Tain lies at the foot of the Hermitage hillside in the heart of the historic northern Rhône vineyards. The Cave produces and markets 5 "cru" wines and single varietal Vins de Pays from over 1000 hectares of vines making it the leading producer of "cru" wines in the northern Rhône Valley.

We continue to the **Valrhona Chocolate** showrooms to experience one of the finest chocolatiers in France. Discover and taste the chocolate used since 1922 by the best chefs and artisans. For lunch we will enjoy a very unique experience, only available here. Two courses with drinks included.

Time at leisure to rest at the hotel and enjoy the gardens. Dinner at leisure.
Overnight at **Hotel Villeon**, Tain-l'Hermitage

DAY 4: 11th MAY: LE PUY-EN-VELAY (B/D)



After breakfast we make our way to the beautiful and peaceful city of **Le Puy-en-Velay**, (2h30 – 103 km) the starting point of the Via Podiensis, the oldest French route on the Chemin de Saint Jacques - Way of St James' pilgrimage.

We meet our local guide for a two-hour walking tour to discover the World Heritage listed Cathédrale Notre-Dame-de-l'Annonciation and the Chapelle St-Michel d'Aiguilhe, Le Puy's oldest chapel, first established in the 10th century, teetering atop an 85m high volcanic plug reached by climbing 268 craggy

stairs. Stepping through its exquisite doorway into the cave-like interior is a near mystical experience – the chapel follows the natural contours of the rock and the unusual carvings and 12th-century frescos create an other worldly atmosphere.

Time to explore this wonderful city. Perhaps discover the secrets of the **Verveine du Velay Pagès** and taste the liqueurs (Entrance: 8,40€ per person) at the distillery you discovered during our walking tour?

Or visit **le Musée du Camino** (Entrance: 5€ per person) which retraces the story of the Camino de Santiago.

Settle into the lovely **Moulin de Barette**, where you will stay for 2 nights. **Dinner** at your hotel is included.

DAY 5: 12th MAY: HAUTE-LOIRE (B/D)

After breakfast, our driver Claude will take us to **La Chaise Dieu** (40km- 45min)

Enjoy a visit of the **Abbey Chaise Dieu**, a Benedictine Abbey renowned for its Gothic architecture, its macabre dance, its curious Salle des Echos, and the historic **Choir Tapestries**.

On the way back to Le Puy-en-Velay, explore the **Forteresse de Polignac**. Dramatically perched on a volcanic dome this 11th-century castle, ringed by a continuous wall dotted with lookout towers and a 32m high rectangular keep, was built by the powerful Polignac family, who once controlled access to the city from the north.

Back to your hotel for time at your leisure. **Dinner** and overnight at your hotel, **Moulin de Barette**.

DAY 6: 13th MAY: PUY-EN-VELAY to AUMONT AUBRAC (B/D)

After a leisurely breakfast we transfer to Aumont Aubrac (2h – 85 km)

Aumont Aubrac was formed around a priory on the Via Agrippa between Le Puy and Conques.

On arriving you have free time to explore this charming town, which includes 6th and 7th century houses and an old Benedictine priory dating back to 1061.

Settle into the beautiful **Hotel Logis chez Camillou**, Aumont Aubrac, your home for the next two nights. **Dinner** tonight is at your hotel.

DAY 7: 14th MAY: AUMONT AUBRAC – We begin our chemin... (B)

“A journey of a thousand miles begins with a single step” ~ Lao Tzu

After breakfast, Claude will drive us to begin our Chemin de Saint Jacques from **Saint Alban** (25 min – 20km). We will walk with our wonderful local guide from **Saint Alban to Aumont Aubrac ~ 14.6km**.

On our drive back to our hotel we spend time at the relaxing and **healing thermal spa** at **La Chaldette**, located on the banks of the Bes.

Overnight at **Hotel Logis chez Camillou**. Dinner at leisure.

DAY 8: 15th MAY: CHEMIN TO RIEUTORT D’AUBRAC (B/D)

After breakfast we walk from **Aumont Aubrac to Rieutort d’Aubrac 20.1 km** with our guide.

From Aumont-Aubrac in the Land of Peyre, meaning stone earth, our Chemin path crosses beautiful groves of trees, leading into expansive pastures as far as the eye can see and punctuated with thatched roof burons, the traditional Auvergne shepherd's huts that are unique to this area. These lands are also the home of the famous Laguiole knife.



At the end of our walk we transfer to **Saint-Chely d'Aubrac** (40 min – 23 km)

This village is home to several elements of architectural heritage from the 14th century to the present day, the UNESCO World Heritage Pèlerins (Pilgrims) bridge, the church with its double gallery and 14th century altarpiece, the washhouses, half-timbered houses and more.

Settle into the **Logis Hotel les Coudercous**, Saint-Chely d'Aubrac your accommodation for 2 nights.

Dinner tonight is at your hotel.

*“On voyage pour changer, non de lieu, mais d'idées” ~ Hippolyte Taine
“We travel to change, not to change a place but to change ideas”*

DAY 9: 16th MAY: NASBINALS to SAINT CHELY D'AUBRAC (B/D)

After breakfast we are transferred to **Nasbinals** to begin our walk today to **Saint Chely d'Aubrac – 17km**. Today we will reach the highest point on our journey as we walk this UNESCO world heritage listed section of the Via Podiensis and descend slowly to the beautiful Lot valley. Once in Saint Chély you can discover a 16th century Calvary on an old bridge spanning the Boralde river.

Free time this afternoon, with the option to visit the **Museum by Coutellerie de Laguiole** (transfer 26km – 40min). Discover the history of the world renowned Laguiole knife, recognized by its bee symbol, and witness a blacksmith at work. Local legend says that Napoleon's Imperial Seal was offered to the city in recognition of the bravery of the local men. While the first **Laguiole knife** created had no decoration, the motif for the bee, synonymous with superb craftsmanship and also the technical term for the springhead of the knife, seems to appear from 1880.

Dinner at your hotel & overnight at **Logis Hotel les Coudercous**

DAY 10: 17th MAY: SAINT CHELY D'AUBRAC – SAINT CÔME D'OLT (B/D)

After breakfast, we are joined by our local guide to walk from **Saint Chely d'Aubrac to St Côme d'Olt – 15.9 km**.

We depart from the region of the Boraldes and travel from the lower Lot valley to Saint-Côme-d'Olt, one of the most beautiful villages in France, past the remains of numerous bridges that have supported the passage of Camino pilgrims.

This afternoon you can walk at your leisure through **Saint-Côme-d'Olt**, nestling in the Lot valley. The circular street surrounding the centre and its ramparts give Saint-Côme d'Olt a unique architectural quality. The medieval heart of the village has three fortified entrance gateways. The manor of the Sires de Calmont was built in the 12th century, while the château de Castelnau, dates from the 13th century and today houses the **Mairie** (Town Hall) as well as the **Chapelle des Pénitents**, formerly a hospice for pilgrims and now an exhibition room.



Settle in to your **Hotel du Lion d'or**, Saint-Côme-d'Olt, which will be your home for the next 3 nights.

Dinner tonight is at your hotel.

As you are now past the half-way point of your walk, take the time to reflect on all that you have experienced so far. As you continue this sacred journey remember to be mindful and present, to savour each moment, to embrace each day with a smile, a warm heart and an open mind, to connect with your spirit.



DAY 11: 18th MAY: SAINT CÔME D'OLT – ESTAING (B/D)

After a leisurely breakfast we walk the **18 km** from **Saint Côme d'Olt to Estaing** along the banks of the tranquil Lot River and past the Chateau de Calmont before reaching **Espalion**, a village surrounded by hillsides and terraces of vines & fruit trees.

We finish our walk at **Estaing**, with time to enjoy another of the most beautiful villages of France. We have a **tasting** at **Maison de la Vigne** and discover local delicacies and the history of the region.

Claude will take you back to your hotel. **Dinner** is in a local restaurant. Overnight at the **Hotel du Lion d'or**



DAY 12: 19th MAY: ESTAING – GOLINHAC (B/D)

After breakfast we drive to **Estaing** to begin our walk to **Golinhac – 16km.**

Enjoy a gentle meander along the banks of the enchanting Lot before climbing Le Chemin des Croix. Discover its mid-gothic half-Romanesque church from the 11th and 16th centuries, and its stone cross, which carries a small carved pilgrim.

This afternoon perhaps wander (flâner) through **Entraygues-sur-Truyère** where you can admire its old houses & its castle at the confluence of the Lot and the Truyère. Completed in 1290, the castle was built with defence towers, huge doors with a drawbridge on each side and was surrounded completely by a moat.

Dinner tonight is in another local restaurant. Overnight at the **Hotel du lion d'or.**

DAY 13: 20th MAY: GOLINHAC – CONQUES (B/D)

After breakfast we transfer for **our final day of walking** from **Golinhac to Conques – 20.6 km.**

*We journey through **Espeyrac** where legend claims that in 960, a blind pilgrim regained sight by invoking the patroness of Conques. Stretching along the hillside above the verdant gorges of the Ouche, the small city of Conques is one of the emblematic sites of the road to Compostela. From its pointed roofs rise the three towers of the **Romanesque Abbey Sainte-Foy**, now a UNESCO World Heritage site. The **Abbey of Conques** was one of medieval France's most visited pilgrimage shrines and contains the relics of St. Foy, a 12 year old girl said to possess a mysterious energy that has contributed to the occurrence of miracles.*



A celebratory and deeply spiritual ending to our French Camino. A time to reflect on the journey so far and all that has been revealed along The Way, both inside and out.

Settle into the wonderful **Hotel Sainte Foy**, a charming converted 17th century building opposite the abbey. **Dinner** tonight is in house.

DAY 14: 21th MAY: FIGEAC – ROCAMADOUR (B/D)

Enjoy a leisurely breakfast before Claude drives us to **Figeac** for a gentle walk through this lovely village. The inscriptions on the stones of the houses gives an insight into the people who live here. All around are charming villages, each with their own story and history: **Cardaillac**, listed as one of France's most beautiful villages; **Faycelles**, high above the Lot valley; **Marcilhac-Sur-Célé**, with its medieval abbey; **Cajarc**, where contemporary art plays an important part; **Capdenac-Le-Haut**, with its Roman spring; **Capdenac-Gare**, a reminder of the importance of the railway; **Lacapelle-Marival**, with its landmark castle.

We continue to **Rocamadour**. With the dramatic silhouette of its steeples and pale stone chapels clinging to its 150m vertical cliffside beneath the ramparts of a 14th-century château, we will enjoy the magically evocative feeling as we explore this ancient pilgrimage site. Rocamadour offers an unforgettable experience and a fitting completion to our French Revelation.



We have plenty of time to explore this wonderful village. Our home for the next two nights is the **Hotel les Esclargies**. **Dinner included** in a local restaurant within walking distance of our hotel.

DAY 15: 22th MAY: ROCAMADOUR (B)

A leisurely breakfast enjoyed in your hotel grounds.

A day to enjoy whatever your heart desires. This extraordinary village includes the **Chapelle Notre Dame**, home to the black Madonna, the **Grand Escalier** (over 200 steps once climbed by pilgrims on their knees), and the **Hospitalet**, with its views of the old town. Built on the site of a shrine to a Madonna, the site became famous for its healing powers and soon became a stop on the pilgrimage path to **Santiago de Compostela**. Situated high on a cliff, Rocamadour offers stunning views over the Dordogne Valley.

Dinner at leisure. Overnight at **Hotel les Esclargies**

DAY 16: 23rd MAY: SAINT CIRQ LAPOPIE & TOULOUSE (B)

After breakfast prepare for a delightful drive up into the Lot valley to **Saint-Cirq-Lapopie**, yet another of the most beautiful villages of France. This village clings onto the cliff overlooking the Lot River. The cobbled streets are lined with very beautiful stone and timber houses dating from the 13th century.

We make our way to **Toulouse** and settle into our hotel **La Villa du Taur** for our last night together. Our **farewell dinner** is a gourmet experience at *Dîner en Liberté* within your hotel.

DAY 17: 24th MAY: La fin de notre voyage

After breakfast it is time to say au revoir, taking with you all that has been revealed and all that you have seen, learned and experienced over the last 17 days.



Note: Whilst every effort is made to adhere to this itinerary, please keep in mind that the nature of this journey is organic and we are in a remote & rural part of France. There may be changes to this itinerary - from the inns we use, to the places we visit & due to circumstances outside our control like weather, road conditions and last minute changes to government policy.

*Journeys of the Spirit will do everything possible to ensure a memorable and exciting trip for you whatever situation presents itself, however it is highly recommended to take your lead from the locals and let go and let the magic of the Chemin de Saint Jacques take over...
We thank you in advance for your flexibility and your open mind. Bon Chemin !*

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