



Pre-Departure Information

MEDIEVAL FRANCE: THE LOT VALLEY



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WELCOME!

We're delighted to welcome you on this adventure! This booklet is designed to guide you in the practical details for preparing for your trip. As you read, if any questions come to mind, feel free to give us a call or send us an email—we're here to help.

PLEASE SEND US

- Trip Application:** Complete, sign, and return your Trip Application form as soon as possible if you have not already done so.
- Medical Form:** Complete, sign, and return your Medical Form as soon as possible if you have not already done so.
- Air Schedule:** Please forward a copy of your email confirmation, which shows your exact flight arrival and departure times. Refer to the Arrival & Departure section of the Detailed Itinerary for instructions. Please feel free to review your proposed schedule with Wilderness Travel before purchasing your tickets if you have any questions about the timing of your arrival and departure flights or would like to confirm we have the required minimum number of participants to operate the trip.

PLEASE CAREFULLY REVIEW

- Travel Documents & Medical Information:** Carefully review the Travel Documents and Medical Information sections of this booklet to familiarize yourself with Passport and Visa entry requirements for your destination, as well as any recommended inoculations.
- Optional Travel Insurance:** Review the Trip Cancellation & Transfer Fee Schedule included in the Detailed Itinerary. We recommend that all trip members purchase Travel Insurance.
- Final Documents:** Approximately three weeks before your trip, we will send you final departure documents, including hotel and local contact information and rendezvous instructions.

QUESTIONS?

Call: 1-800-368-2794, go to our **website** (www.wildernesstravel.com) or e-mail us at: info@wildernesstravel.com.

Travel Information

PASSPORT

A valid passport is required for your trip. Be sure to check the expiration date. Your passport must be valid for three months after your date of exit from France. In addition, we recommend your passport have at least two completely blank visa pages for every country you will be visiting. It is very important that the blank pages say “Visas” at the top. The last few pages of your passport, which say “Amendments and Endorsements,” and the final page of your passport, which may not have a page number, are not considered to be legitimate visa pages. The service of adding pages for visas was discontinued as of January 1, 2016. You can request a new passport through **US Passport Services Office** (<http://travel.state.gov/passport>) or use a visa service agency, which can take care of your passport renewal and expedite the process, if needed. We recommend **Passport Visas Express** (<http://www.passportvisasexpress.com/?affId=2120>). Be sure to allow sufficient time to acquire this before your trip.

It is a good idea to carry photocopies of your passport’s photo page and any acquired visa pages for your trip (if applicable) in case your passport is lost or as an additional piece of identification, as well as two extra passport photos.

VISAS

US citizens do not need a visa for countries visited on this trip. If you are a citizen of any country other than the US, check with a local consulate for entry requirements.

MONEY

The Euro is the official currency of France. The most convenient way to obtain Euros is to use your debit card at ATMs in France. If you plan to get cash this way, it’s wise to get a list of ATM locations in advance online or from your bank. Traveler’s checks are not recommended as they can be difficult and time-consuming to cash. Your Trip Leader will advise you where and when money can be changed. Major credit cards are accepted in most shops in cities and larger towns.

To use an ATM internationally, you must have a four-digit PIN. If you plan to use your credit cards, inform your credit card company before your departure that you will be using the card abroad.

You will need to budget spending money for gratuities, any meals not included in the trip itinerary, international and domestic airport departure taxes, and personal items such as beverages.

TIPPING

Tipping is completely discretionary, but over the years, clients have asked us for tipping guidelines to reward guides for outstanding service. A range of reference would be \$75-100 USD per trip member for each Trip Leader and \$40-50 USD for the driver, which can be given in USD or Euros. The Trip Leader takes care of gratuities for luggage handling, waiters at restaurants, and local guides who may be with the group for only a short time.

SPECIAL DIETS

We will do our best to accommodate special dietary needs, however, please keep in mind that certain cultural differences or limitations due to logistics can make it extremely difficult and at times impossible to accommodate dietary restrictions. Please inform us at least eight weeks before your trip if you have a restricted diet. It is important to bring a flexible attitude and supplemental snacks.

COMMUNICATIONS

Telephone

The international dialing code for France is 33. Please contact your cell phone company for specific instructions for international use.

Email & Internet Access

Internet access is available at most of our hotels, but connections may be spotty or unreliable.

ELECTRICITY

France has 220-volt current. Plugs usually have two or three prongs. You will need to bring a voltage converter and plug adapter for appliance use in hotels.

Medical Information

The following recommendations should be used as a guideline only; consult your physician for medical advice. It is vital that you let Wilderness Travel know of any medical problems, allergies, or physical limitations you may have. Please fill out and return the personal medical questionnaire, and feel free to consult us if you have any questions about your ability to undertake this particular trip.

Wilderness Travel is not a medical facility and has no expertise or responsibility regarding what medications or inoculations you and your physician decide are necessary for your safe participation in the trip.

Traveler's health information is available from the **Centers for Disease Control**. (<http://www.cdc.gov/travel/index.htm>)
Medical travel products are available from **Travel Health Medicine** (<http://www.travmed.com>) and from **Magellan's Travel Supplies**. (<http://www.magellans.com>)

INOCULATIONS

No inoculations are required. However, it is easy to get a small cut, so a tetanus booster is strongly recommended (good for 10 years). If you take prescription medicines, be sure to bring enough for the duration of your trip.

STAYING HEALTHY

You can reduce your risk of getting a cold on the trip by washing your hands often and not touching your face with unwashed hands. If you arrive on the trip with a cold or feel the symptoms of a cold, avoid close contact with others and move away from people before coughing or sneezing. The CDC recommends coughing or sneezing into a tissue or into the crook of your elbow or upper sleeve, not your hands.

Helpful Information

PHOTOGRAPHY

Camera Recommendations

With the many advances in digital technology, a simple compact digital camera or even your smartphone is capable of taking pictures suitable for the needs of most people. For higher quality images and the ability to use long lenses for closer wildlife pictures, a DSLR camera is well worthwhile, though heavier. Most digital cameras and phones have good video options, but you may want to consider a GoPro for a lightweight, waterproof option. Always practice ahead of time with new equipment and bring your manual with you. Camera equipment is available for rent from **Borrow Lenses** (<https://www.borrowlenses.com/discount/wildernesstravel>), with a 10% discount offered to Wilderness Travel clients. This is an especially good idea for renting large zoom lenses that you may need for just one trip.

Camera Accessories

We recommend bringing at least two large capacity memory cards or a small digital storage unit (or tablet) to back up your photos, freeing space on your memory cards. Don't forget to bring a battery charger and a backup battery so one is always charged and ready to use. For trips where you may be away from power sources for multiple days, consider looking into a solar-powered battery charger or buying additional backup batteries, and check that you have the appropriate adapter for the electrical outlets in your destination.

Sharing Your Images

We would love for you to share photos from your trip, and with your permission, may even use your photos in our marketing materials or on our photo blog. We request that you send us a small sample of your best images. Please email your photos to wtphotoblog@gmail.com or tag us **@WildernessTravel** on social media.

Photography Etiquette

When taking pictures of local people, be aware of cultural considerations. Approaching people with a warm smile and using polite gestures or simple phrases to ask permission to photograph them usually works well. It is always recommended to engage people in conversation before asking to photograph them, but if people do not wish to have their photo taken, please honor their requests. We urge travelers to avoid giving money in exchange for photo opportunities, which makes it harder for future travelers to have a meaningful personal interaction with local people. Please always heed your Trip Leader's guidelines for what is appropriate.

BEING A CONSIDERATE TRAVELER

Please show respect for the cultures we are visiting by observing local customs concerning appropriate dress, particularly in sacred places. Your Trip Leader is always available to answer any questions that you may have regarding this. If it is necessary to use a cell phone during the trip, please do so privately. Smoking is rarely an issue these days, but if you do smoke, please do so only away from the group.

Packing List

THE ESSENTIALS

- Air tickets (or E-tickets)
- Passport
- One other picture ID, such as a driver's license
- Expense money

WT GEAR STORE

To help you prepare for your next WT adventure, we've put together a great collection of top brands including Patagonia, Outdoor Research, Eagle Creek, and more at our **WT Gear Store** (<http://wildernesstravel.newheadings.com>).

LUGGAGE

- Soft-sided suitcase, with a small padlock (must be unlocked for air travel).
- Daypack, large enough for a jacket or rain gear, water bottle, camera, and other items you want on the trail.
- (Optional) Small roll-up duffel to carry home purchases.

NOTES ON CLOTHING

Bring clothes you find most comfortable for hiking. Although it will be warm enough for shorts on many days, bring some lightweight long pants for cooler weather and protection from tall grasses. Dressing in layers is the best way to stay comfortable. We ask that you pack everything in one piece of luggage as this simplifies transportation of luggage en route. Suits and dresses are not necessary, but we recommend bringing one or two pairs of nicer clothes for the evenings that we enjoy meals at finer restaurants.

Although airline service to Europe is generally reliable, it is best to wear or carry your hiking boots with you on your flights in the event that your luggage is lost or delayed. Likewise, don't pack valuables, such as travel documents, camera gear, or prescription medicines in your checked luggage.

CLOTHING

The clothing list below is provided as a guideline only.

- Lightweight rain gear, such as a Gore-Tex rain/wind shell jacket with hood, and Gore-Tex rain/wind pants
- Fleece jacket or nylon windbreaker
- Light fleece sweater or sweatshirt
- Long-sleeved shirt. Quick-drying “travel” fabrics like nylon are recommended.
- T-shirts or short-sleeved shirts
- Hiking pants. Lightweight cotton or synthetic hiking pants are a practical choice. Jeans are not recommended because they can be hot and they take a long time to dry if they get wet.
- Hiking shorts. Quick-drying fabrics are recommended.
- Shade hat with a wide brim—preferably a waterproof one you can use as a rain hat as well
- Sturdy walking shoes or lightweight hiking boots
- Texas or running shoes for sightseeing in towns
- Hiking socks. Some people like thick Thorlo-type socks with padded toes and heels, or an outer sock and synthetic liner sock.
- Underwear/sleepwear. Synthetics dry faster.
- Bathing suit (for hotel pools)
- One or two pairs of nicer clothes for the evenings that we enjoy meals at finer restaurants

EQUIPMENT

- Reusable water bottle, 1 qt. capacity.
- Good quality sunglasses with case.
- Money belt or neck pouch. Always carry your passport, credit cards, and cash with you in a money belt or neck pouch tucked down inside your shirt or blouse.

PERSONAL FIRST AID SUPPLIES

Every trip member must bring a small kit for personal use. Your own experience will influence your choices.

- Sunscreen SPF 30 or higher and lip balm with sunscreen. We recommend mineral-based sunscreens with zinc oxide or titanium dioxide because they do not contain harsh chemicals that are harmful to the environment. Brands such as Honest Company, Badger, and Alba Botanica are found in most sporting goods stores and drugstores.
- Aspirin, ibuprofen, or Tylenol for muscle pain or headaches, Tylenol PM for sleep
- Blister kit. Look for the long-lasting gel-type bandages that you can apply directly on blisters, such as Band-Aid Advanced Healing Bandages or Curad Gel Multi-Day Bandages. “Liquid band-aids,” such as New-Skin, are useful because they dry rapidly to form a tough protective cover over a blister.
- Prescription medications properly labeled
- Spare contact lenses or spare prescription glasses

OPTIONAL ITEMS

- Voltage converter and plug adapter for appliance use in hotels. Europe has 220-volt current. Plugs usually have two or three prongs.
- Collapsible walking stick or trekking poles
- Camera, spare batteries and memory cards
- Bandannas (many uses)
- Lightweight binoculars
- Reading/writing material
- Travel clock
- Small umbrella
- Laundry soap for hand-washing clothes
- Washcloth, if you like to use one (most European hotels do not provide them)

Reading List

ESSENTIAL READING

Midi Pyrenees Map 525

Michelin Travel Publications

2014

A nicely detailed (1:200,000), frequently updated regional map of the central Pyrenees, centered on Toulouse.

The Road from the Past, Traveling through History in France

Ina Caro

1996, 339 PAGES

Time travel through France by way of its finest castles, chateaux, cathedrals and monasteries. This unusual travelogue is an invaluable companion for traveling in Paris, southern France, the Dordogne and the Loire Valley, combining personal observation with large doses of well-presented history.

The Road to Santiago

Kathryn Harrison

2003, 176 PAGES

The novelist's personal and meditative account of journeys along the Route of St. James, from St-Jean-Pied-de-Port in France to Santiago de Compostela.

The Cave Painters

Gregory Curtis

2007, 288 PAGES

In this tale of art, paleontology and discovery, Curtis introduces the masterworks of cave art in France and Spain, visiting Altamira, Lascaux, Les Trois-Freres, Cosquer, Chauvet and others.

ALSO RECOMMENDED

Birds of Europe

Lars Svensson

2010, 416 PAGES

Featuring 3,500 glorious paintings by Killian Mullarney and Dan Zetterstrom, the second edition of this exquisite guide features updated text and maps.

The Cathedral Builders of the Middle Ages

Alain Erlande-Brandenburg

2010, 175 PAGES

This pocket-size encyclopedia of the art, architecture and culture of the Middle Ages features hundreds of drawings, color illustrations and a brief chronology.

The Way of St James, France: Le Puy to the Pyrenees

Alison Raju

2013, 224 PAGES

A practical guide to walking GR 65, the Via Podiensis, from Le Puy in central France to Saint-Jean-Pied-de-Port in the Pyrenees.

The Food of France

Waverly Root

1992, 450 PAGES

An evocative and beautifully written survey of French food. First published in 1958 and revised in the mid-1970s, the book covers the important regions of French cuisine by dividing them into domains of Butter (northern France), Fat (Alsace) and Oil (the south).

A Traveller's History of France

Robert Cole

2008, 256 PAGES

This fast-moving survey covers the conquests of ancient Gaul through the heady days of revolution to modern times.

Families of the Vine, Seasons Among the Winemakers of Southwest France

Michael S. Sanders

2006, 265 PAGES

A delightful, informative portrait of a venerable winemaking family in southwest France -- and the stylish, savory wines of Clos Triguedina -- by an American chef who lived in the region.

Cave of Forgotten Dreams

Werner Herzog

2011

Herzog was granted unprecedented access to Chauvet, home to cave paintings believed to be the oldest human artwork ever found, for this contemplative documentary.

Adventures on the Wine Route, A Wine Buyer's Tour of France

Kermit Lynch

1990, 271 PAGES

A delightful and warmly anecdotal book highly recommended for anyone touring the wine regions of France. Lynch brings the domains and appellations of French wine to full-blown life and his portraits of the grand personalities who make the wine are priceless.

The Pilgrimage, A Contemporary Quest for Ancient Wisdom

Paulo Coelho

1995, 272 PAGES

The Portuguese author's experiences along the historic Road to Santiago.

Eyewitness Guide Dordogne

Eyewitness Guides

2014, 320 PAGES

This outstanding guide to exploring Southwest France features hundreds of color illustrations, local and regional maps and site diagrams.

Little Saint

Hannah Green

2001, 300 PAGES

A reverential account of the traditions and lore of Conques in south-central France, interweaving folklore with historical documents and the author's own encounters with modern villagers.

Lascaux: Movement, Space, and Time

Norbert Aujoulat

2005, 208 PAGES

A striking tour of the magnificent prehistoric cave of Lascaux, with 100 stunning full-page color photographs, maps and explanatory diagrams.

Pilgrimage to the End of the World, The Road to Santiago de Compostela

Conrad Rudolph

2004, 144 PAGES

An engaging, literary account of 11 weeks of travels from Le Puy along the way of St. James, 1,000 miles all told.

Travels with My Donkey

Tim Moore

2006, 328 PAGES

In this wickedly comic account of grand adventures on the 500-mile pilgrimage to Santiago de Compostela with a French-speaking donkey, Moore salts his anecdotes of fellow travelers and grand adventures with an account of the history and culture of the medieval Way of St. James.

The Lost Upland, Stories of Southwest France

W.S. Merwin

2005, 320 PAGES

Three richly evocative stories of life in a Dordogne village by the Pulitzer Prize-winning Merwin, one of our finest living poets. Originally published in 1992, the book is steeped in history, food and personality.

Revised: February 20, 2020

The Rough Guide to the Dordogne and the Lot

Rough Guides

2017, 328 PAGES

A guide to the most rewarding sites.