

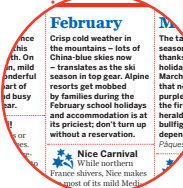
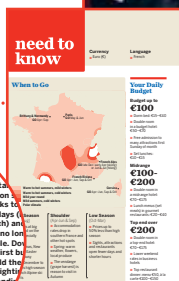
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PLAN YOUR TRIP

YOUR PLANNING TOOL KIT

Photos, itineraries, lists and suggestions
to help you put together your perfect trip

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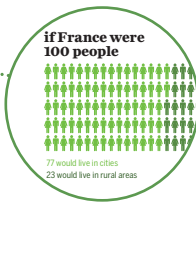
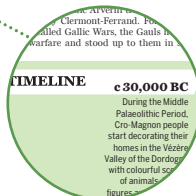
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UNDERSTAND FRANCE

GET MORE FROM YOUR TRIP

Learn about the big picture, so you
can make sense of what you see

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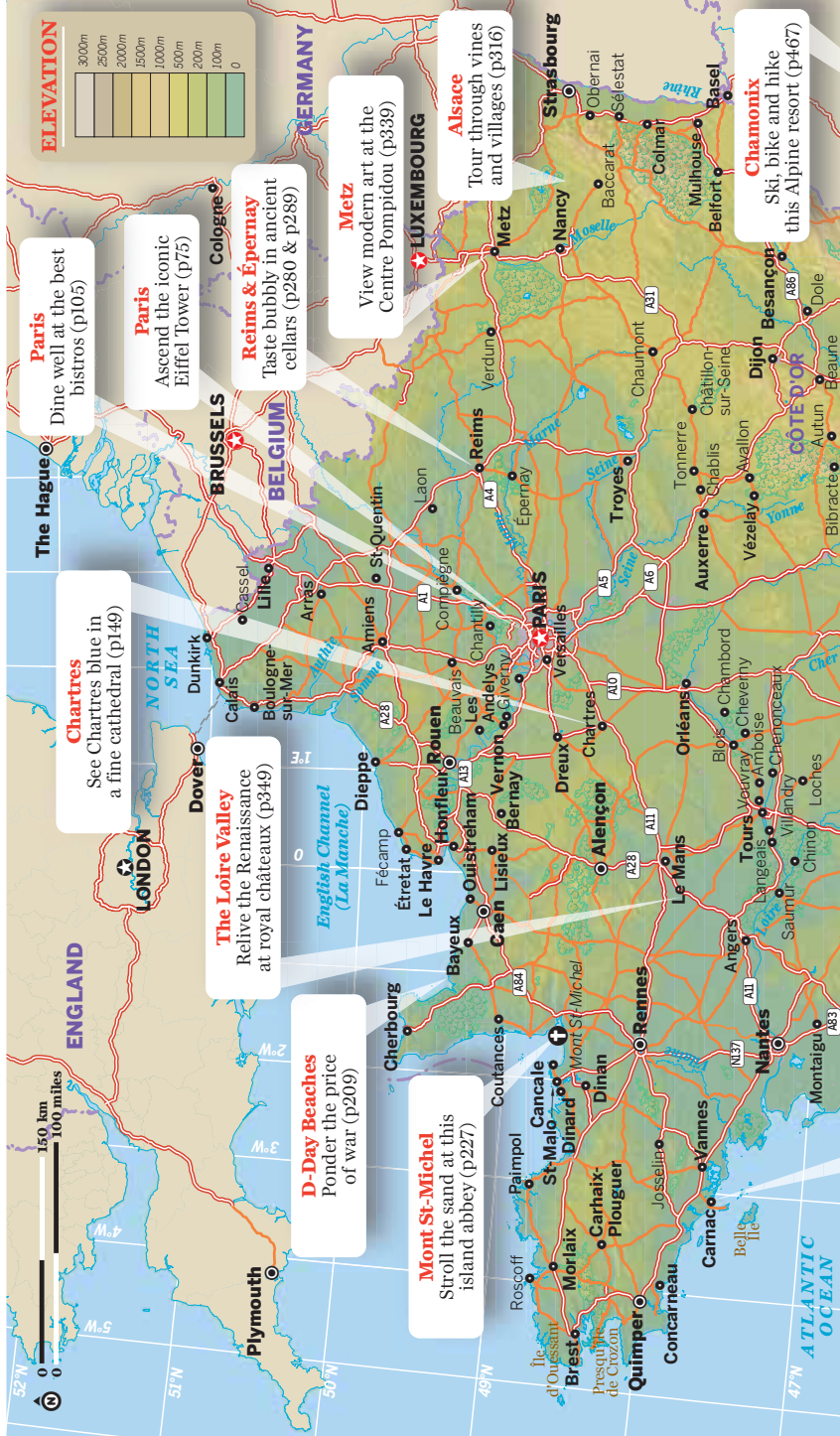
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Kerry Christiani, Steve Fallon, Emilie Filou, Catherine Le Nevez, Tom Masters,
Daniel Robinson, Miles Roddis, John A Vlahides**



Carnac
Cycle past mysterious
megaliths (p263)

Climb Europe's largest sand dune (p630)

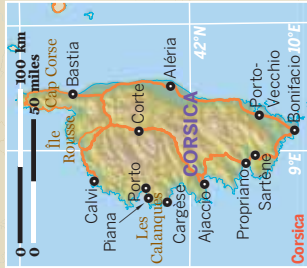
Linger in the spectacular
walled city (p727)

Feast in France's gastronomic capital (p435)

Drive a trio of coastal cliff-hangers (p856)

See the highest aqueduct in the Roman Empire (p712)

Explore medieval milltop villages (p752)

MEDITERRANEAN
SEA

itineraries

Whether you've got five days or 50, these itineraries provide a starting point for the trip of a lifetime. Want more inspiration? Head online to lonelyplanet.com/thorntree to chat with other travellers.



10 Days Essential France

No place screams 'France!' more than **Paris**. Spend two days in the capital, allowing for plenty of time between iconic sights to lounge on café terraces, dine in Parisian bistros and take romantic strolls along the Seine and Canal St-Martin (see Paris in Two Days, p46). Day three, enjoy Renaissance royalty at **Château de Chambord** and **Château de Chenonceau** in the Loire. Or skip this fabled valley, which gives such a fabulous nod to French architecture, and spend two days in Normandy instead, marvelling at **Rouen's** Notre Dame cathedral, the **Bayeux Tapestry**, sea-splashed **Mont St-Michel** and – should modern history be your love – the **D-Day landing beaches**.

Day five venture south through the **Bordeaux** wine region, staying overnight in an ecofriendly *chambre d'hôte* in Bordeaux's old wine-merchant quarter and perhaps enrolling in a wine-tasting course at the Maison du Vin de Bordeaux. Then it's a three-hour drive to the walled city of **Carcassonne**, Roman **Nîmes** and the **Pont du Gard**. Finish on the French Riviera with a casino flutter in Grace Kelly's **Monaco**, a portside aperitif in Brigitte Bardot's **St-Tropez** and a stroll around Matisse's **Nice**.



Two Weeks

The Atlantic to the Med

Step off the boat in **Calais** and be seduced by 40km of cliffs, sand dunes and windy beaches on the spectacular **Côte d'Opale**. Speed southwest, taking in a fish lunch in **Dieppe**, a cathedral stop in **Rouen**, or a picturesque cliffside picnic in **Étretat** en route to your overnight stop: the pretty Normandy seaside resorts of **Honfleur**, **Deauville** or **Trouville**. Spend two days here exploring.

Devote day three to the **D-Day landing beaches** and the fourth day to **Mont St-Michel** and its beautiful bay – hiking barefoot across the sands here is exhilarating. End the week in Brittany with a flop in an old-fashioned beach tent in **Dinard** and a bracing stroll on spectacular headlands around **Camaret-sur-Mer**.

Week two begins with a long drive south to chic **La Rochelle** for its lavish seafood. Spend a night here, continuing the gourmet theme as you wend south through Médoc wine country to **Bordeaux**. Next morning, stop in **Toulouse** and/or **Carcassonne** before hitting the Med. **The Camargue** – a wetland of flamingos, horses and incredible bird life – is a unique patch of coast to explore and Van Gogh thought so too. Follow in his footsteps around **Arles**, breaking for a gastronomic lunch at L'Atelier or La Chassagnette before continuing on to gritty **Marseille**.



Three Weeks Tour de France

Get set in **Strasbourg**, ambling around its cathedral and canal-clad Petite France and dining in a traditional *winstub* (tavern). Then move onto greener climes, picking up the **Route des Vins d'Alsace** (Alsace Wine Route) to tipple your way around the **Massif des Vosges** foothills. But keep a clear head for art nouveau architecture in **Nancy**, where at least one night is obligatory to enjoy romantic place Stanislas lit after dark. End the week in the Champagne cellars of **Épervnay**.

Week two features the pick of Normandy and Brittany: **Bayeux** and its tapestry, the **D-Day landing beaches**, **Mont St-Michel** and **Carnac** in France's Celtic land of legends. Then zoom south for more prehistory in the **Vézère Valley**.

The pace hots up in the third week. From the Dordogne, wiggle through Haut-Languedoc (Upper Languedoc) – through the spectacular **Gorges du Tarn** – to **Avignon** and its vibrant café culture. Slog like a Tour de France cyclist up **Mont Ventoux** then speed north to the majestic city of **Lyon**, from where, should you have another week at hand, a mountain adventure in the **Alps** is a dandy idea.

The last leg takes in wine-rich Burgundy: **Beaune**, **Dijon** and **Vézelay** are the obvious desirable places to stop en route to **Paris**.

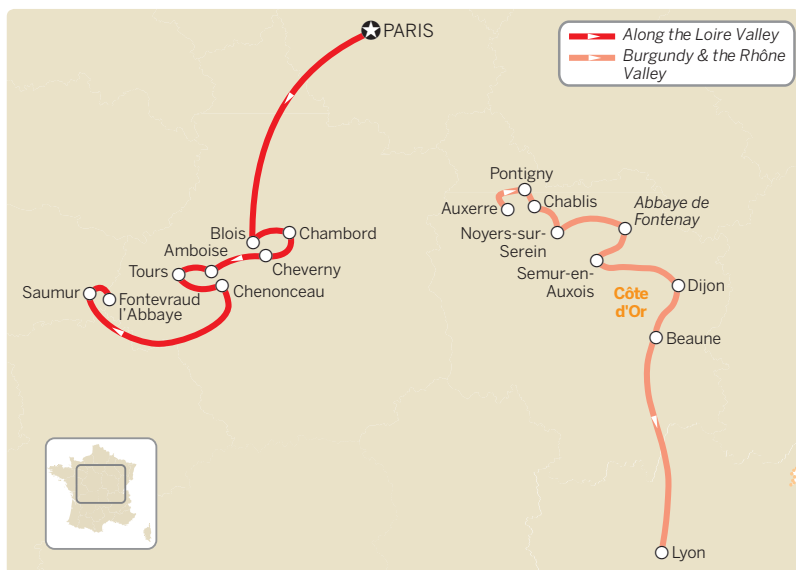


One Week Brittany to Bordeaux

➤ This trip starts fresh off the boat in **St-Malo**, a walled city with sturdy Vauban ramparts that beg exploration at sunset. Linger at least a day in this gritty port. Walk across at low tide to Île du Grand Bé and lap up great views atop a 14th-century tower in pretty St-Servan. Motor along the **Côte d'Émeraude** the next day, stopping in **Dinard** en route to **Roscoff** 200km west – try to spot local seaweed harvesters around **Sillon de Talbert**. Devote day four to discovering Brittany's famous cider in **Argol** on the **Presqu'île de Crozon**, megaliths around **Carnac**, and a turreted medieval castle in **Josselin**. Push south next along the Atlantic coast, stopping in **Nantes** if you like big cities (and riding mechanical elephants), or continuing to the peaceful waterways of Green Venice, aka the **Marais Poitevin**. **Bordeaux** is your final destination for day six, from where a bevy of Bordeaux wine-tasting trips tempt. End the journey on a high atop Europe's highest sand dune, **Dune du Pilat**, near oyster-famed **Arcachon**.

One Week A Week Around Paris

➤ Start in **Paris** (see p46 for more days), from where a journey of magnificent French icons, Renaissance châteaux and sparkling wine unfurls. Day one has to be France's grandest castle, **Château de Versailles**, and its vast gardens. The second day, feast on France's best-preserved medieval basilica and dazzling blue stained glass in **Chartres**, an easy train ride away. Small-town **Chantilly** is a good spot to combine a laid-back lunch with Renaissance château, formal French gardens and – if you snagged tickets in advance – an enchanting equestrian performance. Fourth day, catch the train to elegant **Reims** in the heart of the Champagne region. Scale its cathedral for dazzling views before tucking into the serious business of Champagne tasting. Dedicated bubbly aficionados can hop the next day to **Épernay**, France's other great Champagne city. On day six enjoy a lazy start then catch an afternoon fountain show at less crowded **Château de Vaux-le-Vicomte**, followed by a candlelit tour of the château. End the week with a look at futuristic **La Défense** or, for those with kids, **Disneyland**.



Five Days Along the Loire Valley

From France's soulful capital **Paris** head west to its regal surrounds. First up is the Unesco-hallmarked city of **Blois**, where you can make the most of the limited time you have by hooking up, day two, with an organised châteaux tour: queen of all castles **Château de Chambord** and the charmingly classical **Château de Cheverny**, with its hound-packed kennels, make a great combo. On the third day, continue southwest along France's longest river, the Loire, to **Amboise**, final home of Leonardo da Vinci, and solidly bourgeois **Tours**, from where **Château de Chenonceau**, beautifully strung across the River Cher 34km east, is an easy hop the next morning. End your trip with France's elite riding school in **Saumur** and the movingly simple abbey church **Fontevraud l'Abbaye**. Château de Verrières is a fabulous overnight address in this château-rich neck of the woods.

Five Days Burgundy & Beyond

Red-wine lovers can enjoy the fruits of Burgundy in this itinerary that begins in the Roman river-port of **Auxerre**, 170km southeast of Paris. Explore its ancient abbey, Gothic cathedral and cycle along towpaths in the afternoon. On day two consider an easy bike ride to Burgundy's last surviving example of Cistercian architecture in pretty **Pontigny**, 25km north. Stay overnight or push on to nearby **Chablis**, where bags more bike rides and gentle hikes between Burgundy vineyards await – allow plenty of time here to taste the seven *grands crus* of this well-known winemaking town. Day four, meander south to the picture-postcard village of **Noyers-sur-Serein**, then head east to the breathtaking, Unesco-listed **Abbaye de Fontenay**, before winding up for the night in **Semur-en-Auxois**, 25km south. On the last day discover **Dijon** and its beautiful medieval and Renaissance buildings. From here, should you have more time, take a road trip through the wine-making area of **Côte d'Or** to **Beaune**, or south to **Lyon** in the Rhône Valley.



Five Days The French Alps

Warm up with some gentle old-town ambling, lakeside strolling and swimming (in summer) in fairy-tale **Annecy** (just 45km from Geneva, Switzerland). On day two move on to **Chamonix** at the foot of Mont Blanc, Western Europe's highest peak: ride a cable car to the **Aiguille du Midi** or a train to the **Mer de Glace** glacier, or (in winter) ski the legendary **Vallée Blanche**, off-piste all the way. Yet more unforgettable views of the Mont Blanc massif are cooked up on the ski slopes and hiking trails of **St-Gervais** and **Megève**, chic, picturesque Alpine villages. Let the adrenalin rip or push on via **Chambéry** to the **Parc National de la Vanoise**, where spectacular skiing and hiking in **Les Trois Vallées** easily pleases outdoor junkies. A fitting finale to your Alpine foray is the dizzying and staggeringly beautiful drive through **Parc National des Écrins** to **Briançon**, the loveliest of all the medieval villages in the French Alps and famous for its well-preserved Vauban fortifications.

10 Days The South of France

Hit the country's hot south in **Nice**, star of the coastline that unfurls in an extravagant pageant of belle époque palaces and celebrity sands. Drive along the French Riviera's trio of legendary **corniches** – the coastal views are mind-blowing – and day three take the train to glitzy **Monaco**. Then move on to the fishing port of **St-Tropez**, where millionaire yachts jostle for space with peddling street artists. Rise early the next morning for the Place des Lices market and frolic away the afternoon on the sand at Plage de Pampelonne. Day six is a toss-up between a dramatic drive along the **Corniche des Maures** to **Bormes-les-Mimosas** and the staggering **Route des Crêtes** mountain pass, or a boat trip to the *très belle* **Îles d'Hyères**. Head inland next to **Aix-en-Provence**, a canvas of graceful 19th-century architecture, stylish cafés and hidden squares. Devote your last two days to the wild **Gorges du Verdon**, Europe's largest canyon, two hour's drive northeast, or the gentler **Luberon** with its bounty of photogenic hilltop villages.

how to use this book

These symbols will help you find the listings you want:

- | | | | | | |
|--|------------|--|--------------------|--|---------------------------|
| | Sights | | Festivals & Events | | Entertainment |
| | Activities | | Sleeping | | Shopping |
| | Courses | | Eating | | Information/
Transport |
| | Tours | | Drinking | | |

These symbols give you the vital information for each listing:

- | | | | | | |
|--|-------------------|--|-----------------------|--|-------------|
| | Telephone Numbers | | Wi-Fi Access | | Bus |
| | Opening Hours | | Swimming Pool | | Ferry |
| | Parking | | Vegetarian Selection | | Metro |
| | Nonsmoking | | English-Language Menu | | Subway |
| | Air-Conditioning | | Family-Friendly | | London Tube |
| | Internet Access | | Pet-Friendly | | Tram |
| | | | | | Train |

Reviews are organised by author preference.

Look out for these icons:

- Our author's recommendation
- No payment required
- A green or sustainable option

Our authors have nominated these places as demonstrating a strong commitment to sustainability – for example by supporting local communities and producers, operating in an environmentally friendly way, or supporting conservation projects.

Map Legend

Sights

- Beach
- Buddhist
- Castle
- Christian
- Hindu
- Islamic
- Jewish
- Monument
- Museum/Gallery
- Ruin
- Winery/Vineyard
- Zoo
- Other Sight

Activities, Courses & Tours

- Diving/Snorkelling
- Canoeing/Kayaking
- Skiing
- Surfing
- Swimming/Pool
- Walking
- Windsurfing
- Other Activity/Course/Tour

Sleeping

- Sleeping
- Camping

Eating

- Eating

Drinking

- Drinking
- Cafe

Entertainment

- Entertainment

Shopping

- Shopping

Information

- Post Office
- Tourist Information

Transport

- Airport
- Border Crossing
- Bus
- Cable Car/Funicular
- Cycling
- Ferry
- Metro
- Monorail
- Parking
- S-Bahn
- Taxi
- Train/Railway
- Tram
- Tube Station
- U-Bahn
- Other Transport

Routes

- Tollway
- Freeway
- Primary
- Secondary
- Tertiary
- Lane
- Unsealed Road
- Plaza/Mall
- Steps
- Tunnel
- Pedestrian Overpass
- Walking Tour
- Walking Tour Detour
- Path

Boundaries

- International
- State/Province
- Disputed
- Regional/Suburb
- Marine Park
- Cliff
- Wall

Population

- Capital (National)
- Capital (State/Province)
- City/Large Town
- Town/Village

Geographic

- Hut/Shelter
- Lighthouse
- Lookout
- Mountain/Volcano
- Oasis
- Park
- Pass
- Picnic Area
- Waterfall

Hydrography

- River/Creek
- Intermittent River
- Swamp/Mangrove
- Reef
- Canal
- Water
- Dry/Salt/Intermittent Lake
- Glacier

Areas

- Beach/Desert
- Cemetery (Christian)
- Cemetery (Other)
- Park/Forest
- Sportsground
- Sight (Building)
- Top Sight (Building)



Miles Roddis

Languedoc-Roussillon Living over the Pyrenees in Valencia (Spain) Miles and his wife, Ingrid, visit France for work or simply for fun at least once a year. Among more than 50 Lonely Planet titles that he has written or contributed to are six editions of this guide plus regional guidebooks to Languedoc-Roussillon, Corsica, Brittany and Normandy and – most satisfyingly of all – *Walking in France*.



John A Vlahides

Provence, The French Riviera & Monaco John A Vlahides co-hosts the TV series *Lonely Planet: Roads Less Travelled*, screening on National Geographic Channels International. John worked as a French-English interpreter in Paris, where he also studied cooking with the same chefs who trained Julia Child. He's a former luxury-hotel concierge and member of *Les Clefs d'Or*, the international union of the world's elite concierges. John lives in northern California, and looks forward to returning to Provence during tomato season. For more, see johnvlahides.com and twitter.com/johnvlahides.

Read more about John at:
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**Kerry Christiani**

Alsace & Lorraine, French Alps & the Jura Mountains, Directory A-Z Kerry has been travelling to France since her school days to brush up her *français*, which she studied to MA level. On clear days, she can just about spy the Vosges from her home in the Black Forest, an hour's drive from the French border. For this edition, Kerry overindulged in Alsace, experienced whiteout in Chamonix and was among the first to step foot in the new Centre Pompidou-Metz. Kerry is also the author of Lonely Planet guides to Germany, Switzerland and Austria.

**Jean-Bernard Carillet**

Corsica Paris-based (and Metz-born) journalist and photographer, Jean-Bernard was delighted to research his own turf – it proved to be an exhilarating experience. He has clocked up countless trips to all French regions and written extensively about Provence, the Basque Country, Brittany, Alsace and, of course, Corsica. As an incorrigible Frenchman and foodie, he confesses a pronounced penchant for the robust Corsican cuisine, but regularly burns off the calories by meandering along

hiking trails in central Corsica or diving the Gulf of Porto.

**Steve Fallon**

Around Paris, History Steve, who has worked on every edition of *France* except the first, visited Paris for the first time at age 16 to drink *vin ordinaire* from plastic bottles and learn swear words, but returned five years later to complete a degree at the Sorbonne in proper French (and drink proper wine). Now based in East London, Steve gets over to the 'City of Light' frequently and will be just one Underground stop away when Eurostar trains finally start departing from Stratford.

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**Emilie Filou**

The French Riviera & Monaco Emilie was born in Paris but spent most of her childhood holidays roaming the south of France and the Alps. She left France to travel when she was 18 and never quite made it back. She studied geography at Oxford and took a grand total of three gap years to see more of Africa, Asia and the Pacific. She is now settled in London, where she works as a journalist. She still goes to the Riviera every summer.

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**Catherine Le Nevez**

Lyon & the Rhône Valley; Massif Central; Limousin, the Dordogne & the Lot Catherine's wanderlust kicked in when she road-tripped throughout France from her Parisian base, aged four, and she's been road-tripping across the country at every opportunity since, completing her Doctorate of Creative Arts in Writing, Masters in Professional Writing, and qualifications in Editing and Publishing along the way. Catherine has authored or co-authored over two dozen guidebooks

worldwide, including previous editions of this book, Lonely Planet's *Paris Encounter* and *Provence & the Côte d'Azur*, as well as newspaper and magazine articles.

**Tom Masters**

Normandy, Brittany Tom grew up in England and France to francophone parents who inculcated a love of all things French from childhood. With his parents now residing in Paris and rural Brittany, France's northwestern chunk seemed to be the natural place for Tom to research between obsessive-compulsive crêpe stops. His best experience while researching this guide was getting

caught up in a local wedding in Roscoff and partying with the locals until dawn. You can read more of his work at www.tommasters.net.

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**Daniel Robinson**

Lille, Flanders & the Somme; Champagne; Transport Over the past two decades, Daniel's articles and guidebooks – published in 10 languages – have covered every region of France, but he is particularly fond of the creativity and panache – and foresighted public-transport initiatives – of dynamic northern cities such as Lille and Reims. Brought up in the US and Israel, Daniel holds

degrees from Princeton University and Tel Aviv University. His travel writing appears in the *New York Times* and various magazines.



OUR STORY

A beat-up old car, a few dollars in the pocket and a sense of adventure. In 1972 that's all Tony and Maureen Wheeler needed for the trip of a lifetime – across Europe and Asia overland to Australia. It took several months, and at the end – broke but inspired – they sat at their kitchen table writing and stapling together their first travel guide, *Across Asia on the Cheap*. Within a week they'd sold 1500 copies. Lonely Planet was born.

Today, Lonely Planet has offices in Melbourne, London and Oakland, with more than 600 staff and writers. We share Tony's belief that 'a great guidebook should do three things: inform, educate and amuse'.

OUR WRITERS



Nicola Williams

Coordinating Author, Plan Your Trip, Paris, France Today, The French, Bon Ap  tit, French Wine, The Arts, Architecture Independent travel writer and editorial consultant Nicola Williams has lived in France and written about it for more than a decade. From her hillside house on the southern shore of Lake Geneva, it's a quick and easy hop to the French Alps (call her a ski fiend...), Paris (...art buff), southern France (...foodie). Paris this time around meant stylish apartment living in the heart of St-Germain des Pr  s. Nicola has worked on numerous Lonely Planet titles, including *France, Discover France, Paris, Provence & the C  te d'Azur* and *The Loire*. She blogs at tripalong.wordpress.com and tweets @Tripalong.

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Alexis Averback

The Loire Valley, Burgundy, Provence Alexis Averback first came to France when she was four and now visits every chance she gets. Whether sipping wines in Burgundy, ch  teau-hopping in the Loire or careening through hilltop villages in Provence (she also contributes to Lonely Planet's *Provence & the C  te d'Azur*), she immerses herself in all things French. A travel writer for two decades, Alexis has lived in Antarctica for a year, crossed the Pacific by sailboat and is also a

painter – see her work at www.alexisaverback.com.

Read more about Alexis at:
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Oliver Berry

The Pyrenees, Toulouse Area Oliver's French love affair began at the age of two, and he's since travelled practically every inch of the country while contributing to several editions of Lonely Planet's *France* guide, among other books. Research highlights for this edition included tackling the trails of the Pyrenees, cruising the Canal du Midi, and seeing the sun rise over the Cirque du Troumouse. He currently lives in Cornwall and works as a writer and photographer.

You can see his latest work at www.oliverberry.com.

Read more about Oliver at:
lonelyplanet.com/members/oliverberry



Stuart Butler

Atlantic Coast, French Basque Country, Lyrical Landscapes Stuart's first encounters with southwest France came on family holidays. When he was older he spent every summer surfing off the beaches of the southwest until one day he found himself so hooked on the region that he was unable to leave – he has been there ever since. When not writing for Lonely Planet he hunts for uncharted surf on remote coastlines. The results of these trips appear frequently in international surf media. His website is www.oceansurfpublishations.co.uk.

OVER MORE
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