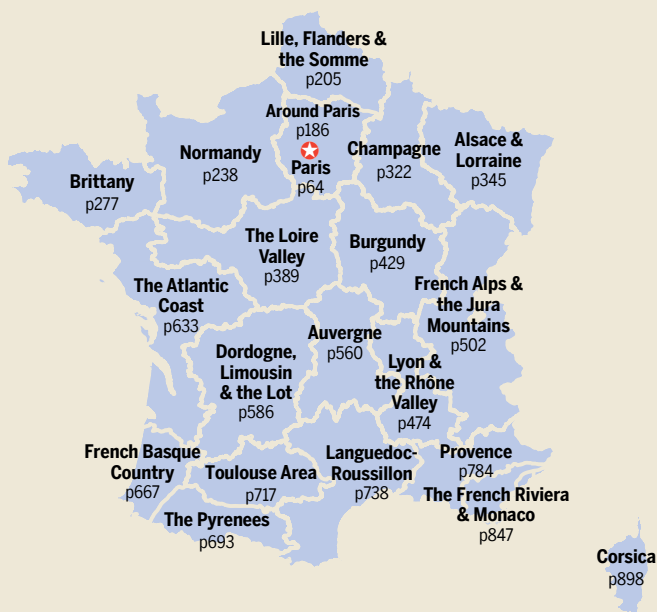




France



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Itineraries



Essential France

For a taste of quintessential France, follow this 10-day 'best of' itinerary.

No place screams 'France!' more than **Paris**. Spend two days in the capital, allowing time for cafe lounging, bistro lunches and waterside strolls along the Seine and Canal St-Martin. On day three, enjoy Renaissance royalty at **Château de Chambord** and **Château de Chenonceau** in the Loire Valley. Or spend two days in Normandy, marvelling at **Rouen's** Notre Dame cathedral, the **Bayeux** tapestry, sea-splashed **Mont St-Michel** and – should modern history be your passion – the **D-Day** landing beaches.

Day five, zoom south for world-class cave art in the **Vézère Valley**. Key sites are around the towns of Les Eyzies-de-Tayac-Sireuil and Montignac. Or base yourself in Sarlat-la-Canéda, showcasing some of France's best medieval architecture and a fabulous food market. Day seven, experience 12 hours in **Bordeaux**, not missing wine tasting in its stunning La Cité du Vin and its sparkling new seafaring Musée de la Mer et de la Marine. Next day, drive three hours to walled **Carcassonne**, Roman **Nîmes** and the **Pont du Gard**. Finish on the French Riviera with a casino flutter in Grace Kelly's **Monaco**, a port-side aperitif in Brigitte Bardot's **St-Tropez** and a stroll through Henri Matisse's **Nice**.



The Channel to the Med

France has 3427km of coastline, handsomely spread along the Atlantic and the Mediterranean, and a trip from coast to coast uncovers a wealth of dramatically contrasting seascapes, port cities and quaint coastal villages.

Step off the boat in **Calais** and be seduced by cliffs, sand dunes and windy beaches on the spectacular **Côte d'Opale**. Speed southwest, taking in a fish lunch in **Dieppe**, a sensational cathedral visit in **Rouen** or a picturesque cliffside picnic in **Étretat** en route to your overnight stop: your choice of the pretty Normandy seaside resorts of **Honfleur**, **Trouville-sur-Mer** or **Deauville**. Spend two days here: a boat trip beneath the Pont de Normandie, shopping for fresh fish and seafood at Trouville-sur-Mer's waterfront fishmonger, and hobnobbing with Parisians on Deauville's star-studded boardwalk are essentials.

Devote day three to Normandy's D-Day landing beaches. Start with Le Mémorial – Un Musée pour la Paix in **Caen**, the best museum devoted to the Battle of Normandy, then follow a westward arc along the beach-laced coast, taking in caisson-strewn sands at **Arromanches-les-Bains**, gun installations at **Longues-sur-Mer** and the 7km-long stretch of 'bloody **Omaha**'. Come dusk, rejuvenate spent emotions over fresh scallops and *calvados* (apple-flavoured brandy). Or, skip the beaches and go for the stunning representation of 11th-century warfare embroidered across 70m of tapestry in **Bayeux**.

Day four and iconic **Mont St-Michel** beckons – 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**.

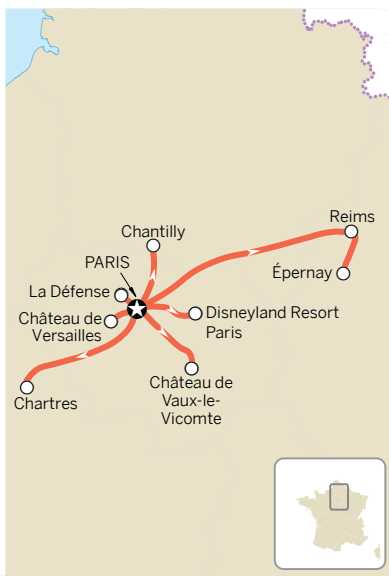
Week two begins with a long drive south to chic **La Rochelle** for a lavish seafood feast. Spend a night here, continuing the gourmet theme as you wend your way south through Médoc wine country to **Bordeaux**. Next morning, stop in La Ville Rose, **Toulouse**, through which runs the undisputed queen of canals, Canal du Midi, and/or **Carcassonne** before hitting the Med. The Camargue – a wetland of flamingos, horses and incredible birdlife – is a unique patch of coast to explore and Van Gogh thought so too. Follow in his footsteps around **Arles**, before continuing onto the ancient, enigmatic and totally fascinating port city of **Marseille**.



1 WEEK Brittany to Bordeaux

For an exhilarating dose of Breton culture, Atlantic sea air and outstanding wine full of southern sun, there is no finer trip.

It starts fresh off the boat in **St-Malo**, a walled city with sturdy Vauban ram-parts that beg exploration at sunset. 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 picturesque seaside town **Dinard** en route to captivating Breton port **Roscoff**, 200km west. Devote day four to discovering Brittany's famous cider and megaliths around **Carnac**, the enchanting medieval town of **Vannes** overlooking the glittering island-studded Golfe du Morbihan, and the turreted medieval castle in **Josselin**. Push south 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 atop Europe's highest sand dune, **Dune du Pilat**, near oyster-famed **Arcachon**.



1 WEEK A Week around Paris

What makes capital city **Paris** even more wonderful is the extraordinarily green and nonurban journey of Renaissance châteaux and sparkling wine that unfurls within an hour of the city.

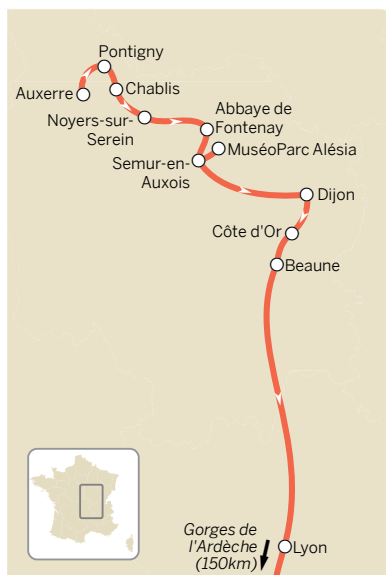
Day one has to be France's grandest castle, **Château de Versailles**, and its vast gardens. Second day, feast on France's best-preserved medieval basilica and the dazzling blue stained glass in **Chartres**, an easy train ride away. Small-town **Chantilly** is a good spot to combine a laid-back lunch with a Renaissance château, formal French gardens and – if you snagged tickets in advance – an enchanting equestrian performance. On the 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 **Château de Vaux-le-Vicomte**, followed by a candlelit tour of the chateau. End the week with a look at futuristic **La Défense** or, for those with kids, **Disneyland Resort Paris**.

5
DAYS

Along the Loire Valley

For five days of aristocratic pomp and architectural splendour within spitting distance of transport hub **Paris**, there is no finer destination than the château-studded Loire Valley – a Unesco World Heritage destination.

Make your first base the regal city of **Blois**, from where you can take an organised château tour: queen of all castles **Château de Chambord** and the charmingly classical **Château de Cheverny** make a great combo. Day three, follow France's longest river southwest to **Amboise**, final home of Leonardo da Vinci. If wine is a love, build some *dégustation* (tasting) of local **Vouvray** wines in vineyards into your itinerary on the way to solidly bourgeois **Tours**, an easy hop from Amboise. From here **Château de Chenonceau** is beautifully strung across the River Cher 34km east. End your trip with France's elite riding school in **Saumur** and the movingly simple abbey church **Abbaye Royale de Fontevraud** – or push on northwest to **Angers** with its massive black-stone fortress and Apocalypse tapestry. Château de Verrières in Saumur is a befitting overnight address in this château-rich neck of the woods.

6
DAYS

Burgundy & Beyond

Red-wine lovers can enjoy the fruits of Burgundy with this delightful motoring tour.

Begin in the Roman river port of **Auxerre**, 170km southeast of Paris. Explore its ancient abbey and Gothic cathedral, and cycle along towpaths. On day two consider an easy bike ride to pretty **Pontigny**, 25km north. Stay overnight or push on to **Chablis**, where bags more bike rides and gentle hikes between Burgundy vineyards await – allow ample 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. **MuséoParc Alésia**, where Julius Caesar defeated Gaulish chief Vercingétorix in 52 BC, is not far from here and makes for a fascinating day out. 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 winemaking area of **Côte d'Or** to **Beaune**, or south to **Lyon** in the Rhône Valley and beyond to the rugged **Gorges de l'Ardèche**.



10 DAYS The South of France

For sun, sea and celebrity action, hit France's hot south.

Start in **Nice**, star of the coastline that unfurls in a pageant of belle époque palaces and iconic sands. Drive along the Riviera's trio of legendary **corniches** – coastal views are mind-blowing – and on day three train it to glitzy **Monaco**. Motor southwest next, breaking for a stroll and a few snaps on the red-rock **Corniche de l'Estérel** en route to fishing port **St-Tropez**, where million-dollar yachts jostle for space with street artists. Rise early next morning for the place des Lices market and spend the afternoon on sandy Plage de Pampelonne. Day six is a toss-up between a dramatic drive along the **Corniche des Maures** to **Bormes-les-Mimosas** 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 cafes and squares. From Aix, it's a hop and a skip to **Ventabren**, where lunch or dinner alfresco at La Table de Ventabren is what eating in Provence is all about. Devote your last two days to the wild **Gorges du Verdon**, Europe's largest canyon, two hours' drive northeast, or gentle **Luberon** with its hilltop villages.



5 DAYS Summer in the Alps

A trip to the French Alps often translates as one week of skiing in one place. Yet take time to explore the region after the snow has melted – summer is best – and you'll be pleasantly surprised.

Warm up with old-town ambling, lake-side strolling and warm-weather swimming in fairy-tale **Annecy**, a beautiful medieval town just 45km from Geneva, Switzerland. Day two, shift to **Chamonix** at the foot of Mont Blanc, Europe's highest peak: ride a cable car up to the **Aiguille du Midi** or, if the sky is not crystal-clear, ride a cog railway up to the **Mer de Glace** glacier. Yet more unforgettable views of Mont Blanc seduce along hiking trails in the chic, picturesque Alpine villages of **St-Gervais** and **Megève**. Let the adrenalin rip, or push on via the ancient Savoyard stronghold of **Chambéry** to the **Parc National de la Vanoise**, where spectacular mountain biking in **Les Trois Vallées** will please the most jaded outdoor junkie. A fitting finale to your Alpine foray is the stunning drive through the **Parc National des Écrins** to **Briançon**, perhaps the loveliest of all the medieval villages in the French Alps, famous for its Vauban fortifications.

Behind the Scenes

SEND US YOUR FEEDBACK

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Map Legend

Sights

- Beach
- Bird Sanctuary
- Buddhist
- Castle/Palace
- Christian
- Confucian
- Hindu
- Islamic
- Jain
- Jewish
- Monument
- Museum/Gallery/Historic Building
- Ruin
- Shinto
- Sikh
- Taoist
- Winery/Vineyard
- Zoo/Wildlife Sanctuary
- Other Sight

Activities, Courses & Tours

- Bodysurfing
- Diving
- Canoeing/Kayaking
- Course/Tour
- Sento Hot Baths/Onsen
- Skiing
- Snorkelling
- Surfing
- Swimming/Pool
- Walking
- Windsurfing
- Other Activity

Sleeping

- Sleeping
- Camping
- Hut/Shelter

Eating

- Eating

Drinking & Nightlife

- Drinking & Nightlife
- Cafe

Entertainment

- Entertainment

Shopping

- Shopping

Information

- Bank
- Embassy/Consulate
- Hospital/Medical
- Internet
- Police
- Post Office
- Telephone
- Toilet
- Tourist Information
- Other Information

Geographic

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

Population

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

Transport

- Airport
- Border crossing
- Bus
- Cable car/Funicular
- Cycling
- Ferry
- Metro station
- Monorail
- Parking
- Petrol station
- S-Bahn/Subway station
- Taxi
- T-bane/Tunnelbana station
- Train station/Railway
- Tram
- Tube station
- U-Bahn/Underground station
- Other Transport

Routes

- Tollway
- Freeway
- Primary
- Secondary
- Tertiary
- Lane
- Unsealed road
- Road under construction
- Plaza/Mall
- Steps
- Tunnel
- Pedestrian overpass
- Walking Tour
- Walking Tour detour
- Path/Walking Trail

Boundaries

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

Hydrography

- River, Creek
- Intermittent River
- Canal
- Water
- Dry/Salt/Intermittent Lake
- Reef

Areas

- Airport/Runway
- Beach/Desert
- Cemetery (Christian)
- Cemetery (Other)
- Glacier
- Mudflat
- Park/Forest
- Sight (Building)
- Sportsground
- Swamp/Mangrove

Note: Not all symbols displayed above appear on the maps in this book



Christopher Pitts

Paris; The Dordogne, Limousin & the Lot Born in the year of the Tiger, Chris's first expedition in life ended in failure when he tried to dig from Pennsylvania to China at the age of six. Hardened by reality but still infinitely curious about the other side of the world, he went on to study Chinese in university, living for several years in Kunming, Taiwan and Shanghai. A chance encounter in an elevator led to a Paris relocation, where he lived with his wife and two children

for over a decade before the lure of Colorado's sunny skies and outdoor adventure proved too great to resist.



Daniel Robinson

The Loire Valley Over the past 25 years, Daniel has worked on dozens of Lonely Planet projects, including the first editions of *Cambodia* and *Paris* (co-authored with Tony Wheeler) and 12 of the 13 editions of *France*, researched in rain, sleet, snow and, when he's lucky the kind of glorious sunlight that inspired the post-impressionists. His latest projects include *Israel & the Palestinian Territories* and *Borneo*, both as coordinating author, as well as *Germany* and *Southeast Asia on a Shoestring*.

Daniel's travel writing has appeared in *National Geographic Traveler*, the *New York Times* and the *Los Angeles Times*, and has been translated into 10 foreign languages.



Regis St Louis

Lyon & the Rhône Valley, The Pyrenees Regis grew up in a small town in the American Midwest – the kind of place that fuels big dreams of travel – and he developed an early fascination with foreign dialects and world cultures. He spent his formative years learning Russian and a handful of Romance languages, which served him well on journeys across much of the globe. Regis has contributed to more than 50 Lonely Planet titles, covering destinations across six continents.

His travels have taken him from the mountains of Kamchatka to remote island villages in Melanesia, and to many grand urban landscapes. When not on the road, he lives in New Orleans. Follow him on www.instagram.com/regisstlouis.



Greg Ward

Corsica Since whetting his appetite for travel by following the hippy trail to India, and later living in northern Spain, Greg Ward has written guides to destinations all over the world. As well as covering the USA from the Southwest to Hawaii, he has ranged on recent assignments from Corsica to the Cotswolds, and Japan to Corfu. See his website, www.gregward.info, for his favourite photos and memories.

**Kerry Christiani**

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**Gregor Clark**

Burgundy, Provence, French Riviera & Monaco Gregor Clark is a US-based writer whose love of foreign languages and curiosity about what's around the next bend have taken him to dozens of countries on five continents. Chronic wanderlust has also led him to visit all 50 states and most Canadian provinces on countless road trips through his native North America. Since 2000, Gregor has regularly contributed to Lonely Planet guides, with a focus on Europe and the Americas. Titles include *Italy, France, Brazil, Costa Rica, Argentina, Portugal, Switzerland, Mexico, South America on a Shoestring, Montreal & Quebec City, France's Best Trips, New England's Best Trips*, cycling guides to Italy and California and coffee-table pictorials such as *Food Trails*, the *USA Book* and the *Lonely Planet Guide to the Middle of Nowhere*.

**Damian Harper**

Normandy, Brittany Damian has been writing for Lonely Planet for over two decades, contributing to titles as diverse as *China, Beijing, Shanghai, Vietnam, Thailand, Ireland, London, Mallorca, Malaysia, Singapore & Brunei, Hong Kong, China's Southwest and Great Britain*. A seasoned guidebook writer, Damian has penned articles for numerous newspapers and magazines, including the *Guardian* and the *Daily Telegraph*, and currently makes Surrey, England, his home. A self-taught trumpet novice, his other hobbies include collecting modern first editions, photography and Taekwondo. Follow Damian on Instagram ([damian.harper](https://www.instagram.com/damian.harper)).

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**Catherine Le Nevez**

Paris Catherine's wanderlust kicked in when she roadtripped across Europe from her Parisian base, aged four, and she's been hitting the road at every opportunity since, travelling to around 60 countries and completing her Doctorate of Creative Arts in Writing, Masters in Professional Writing, and postgrad qualifications in Editing and Publishing along the way. Over the past dozen-plus years she's written scores of Lonely Planet guides and articles covering Paris, France, Europe and far beyond. Her work has also appeared in numerous online and print publications. Topping Catherine's list of travel tips is to travel without any expectations.

**Hugh McNaughtan**

Provence, French Riviera A former English lecturer, Hugh swapped grant applications for visa applications, and turned his love of travel into a full-time thing. Having done a bit of restaurant-reviewing in his home town (Melbourne) he's now eaten his way across four continents. He's never happier than when on the road with his two daughters. Except perhaps on the cricket field.



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 Franklin, London, Melbourne, Oakland, Dublin, Beijing and Delhi, 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

Paris, Atlantic Coast Border-hopping is way of life for British writer, runner, foodie, art aficionado and mum-of-three Nicola Williams who has lived in a French village on the southern side of Lake Geneva for more than a decade. Nicola has authored more than 50 guidebooks for Lonely Planet, and covers France as a destination expert for the *Telegraph*. She also writes for the *Independent*, *Guardian*, *Lonely Planet* magazine, *French Magazine*, *Cool Camping France* and others. Catch her on the road on Twitter and Instagram at @tripalong. Nicola also wrote the Plan Your Trip, Understand and Survival Guide chapters of this book.



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French Basque Country Alexis Averbuck has travelled and lived all over the world, from Sri Lanka to Ecuador, Zanzibar and Antarctica. In recent years she's been living on the Greek island of Hydra and exploring her adopted homeland; sampling oysters in Brittany and careening through hill-top villages in Provence; and adventuring along Iceland's surreal lava fields, sparkling fjords and glacier tongues. A travel writer for over two decades, Alexis has lived in Antarctica for a year, crossed

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Planet guidebooks, both in English and in French.

OVER MORE
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