



CREDIT RIVER PROBUS CLUB
AND TOUR DESIGN PRESENTS

“The Most Beautiful Villages” of Southwest France

Aquitaine and Midi-Pyrenees

MAY 01 – 14, 2020 (14 DAYS)



Midi Pyrenees

We have developed an itinerary that will feature 18 of these villages, some in the mountains, some by the sea but all with very interesting components. We explore the Southwest area of France and the diverse regions of Aquitaine and the Midi-Pyrenes. We will visit an interesting blend of larger centres and small villages. We are talking about places that look like you are stepping into a French fairy tale. This image of France is what we often dream about but have never really gotten to see.

We will explore this fairy tale.



ITINERARY

DAY 1 / MAY 01, 2020 DEPART TORONTO

We meet at Pearson International airport for our Air France flight to Pau via Paris.

Tentative flight schedule: Air France

May 01 / AF 351 / Toronto – Paris / depart 6:25pm / arrive 7:55am on May 02

May 02 / AF7534 / Paris – Pau / depart 12:40pm / arrive 2:10pm

Note: We do not want to have to change airports in Paris, and this is the only flight to Pau from Charles De Gaulle Airport

DAY 2 / MAY 02, 2020 PAU, BAYONNE, BIARRITZ (D)

The region of Aquitaine is large and offers a wide variety of opportunities for sightseeing. Situated in the south-west corner of France, Aquitaine reaches Spain at its southern frontier. The Atlantic Ocean runs along the west coast of the region and the Pyrenees Mountains are to the east. We travel from Pau to Bayonne. Orientation tour of Bayonne upon arrival. Bayonne is a relatively stress free city, filled with narrow Basque houses, each with colourful beams and shutters. The most picturesque area is next to the Nive River, where the views are reminiscent of a Basque styled Amsterdam. Both sides along the water are lined with bars and restaurants and make for great places to stop and take in the most beautiful views of the city. One final stop today is in the famous beach resort of Biarritz, Escale Oceania Biarritz Hotel, which is also our accommodation for the next three nights. Also located here is the famous Biarritz Hotel du Palais, the former summer home of Napoleon III and Empress Eugénie that has been transformed into a palatial beachfront hotel.

Overnight for the next 3 nights in Biarritz. Dinner with wine included at the hotel this evening.

Accommodation: Escale Oceania Biarritz Hotel or similar (3 nights)



Biarritz Grande

DAY 3 / MAY 03, 2020 VISIT NAVARRENX, BASTIDE CLAIRENCE AND BIARRITZ (B, L/A)

Our tour today features two of the “Most Beautiful Villages of France” Navarrenx and Bastide Clarence.

After breakfast, we have a short drive to Navarrenx, situated in the beautiful Béarn region. Bastides or fortified towns and villages are laid out in a grid pattern, found all across the South West of France of which Navarrenx is a fine example. It is home to many artisans, potters and painters. Real ale drinkers should be sure to stop off at the Shakespeare Brasserie. This micro-brewery produces real English ale brewed using authentic ingredients. The House of Cigar is housed, together with the Tourist Office, in the Barracks which date back to 1537. Here you will learn all you need to know about the production of a Navarre cigar. Lunch on your own today with 15 Euro allowance from Tour Design. Visit Bastide Clarence, which was founded in 1314 by Louis I King of Navarre and future King of France because he needed an outlet onto the sea. White facades striped with green or red remind visitors that here they are in Basque country. The village is charming and easy to amble around. Enjoy lunch on your own here. Most of the shops in the town are owned by local artisans, generally producing good quality rather than tourist quality goods. If you are looking for some unusual presents this is a good place to shop. An unusual sight is the Jewish Cemetery. Upon return to Biarritz enjoy a guided walking tour including the “Virgin Rock”

We return to Biarritz for overnight. Dinner on your own this evening.

DAY 4 / MAY 04, 2020 VISITS TO SARE, AINHOA AND SAINT JEAN PIED DE PORT (B,D)

After breakfast we will visit three of the “Most Beautiful Villages of France. We will visit Sare, a village nestled at the foot of the legendary mountains of Axuria and La Rhune. Here see the Basque House and ride the “Petit train de la Rhune”, on a rack railway to the top of La Rhune, sitting on the border between France and Spain. As far as the eye can see, it takes in the peaks of the Pyrenees and follows the Basque coast bordering the Atlantic Ocean from San Sebastián to Biarritz and on to the beaches of Les Landes.

Then on to Ainhoa, a walled village in the Basque country located on the pilgrims’ route to Santiago de Compostela. It boasts typical red and white-fronted houses along its only street. On our walk through the village you will see Notre Dame de l’Assomption (14C church) and Maison du Patrimoine (Heritage center). Lunch on your own today. On to visit Saint Jean Pied de Port. Nestling between the Basque hillsides and the Spanish border, on the bank of the River Nive, this scene has been the inspiration to artists such as Louise Dewis. It was an ancient stronghold of the Navarre Kingdom (824-1620) and still today remains an active crossroad for international commerce. Here you see the citadel, its ramparts and the Gothic Church of Notre-Dame.

Overnight in Biarritz. Dinner included today at hotel or local restaurant.



Saint Jean Pied de Port

DAY 5 / MAY 05, 2020

BAYONNE TO BORDEAUX (B,L/A)

Bordeaux, listed by UNESCO as a world heritage site, is a port city that lies on the Garonne River. The city is the wine industry capital of the world and is known to host some of the most popular wine fairs. After Paris, Bordeaux is known to have the highest number of historical landmarks.

Although a big city in terms of geographical area, most of the tourist attractions are in the center of the city. For orientation, we have a coach tour today. We will visit the Grand Theatre. Decorated in sumptuous blue, white and gold – the colours of royalty – the Grand-Théâtre, an 18th-century architectural masterpiece by Victor Louis, is now the stage for the Bordeaux National Opera.

Many of its neoclassical style buildings have been restored to their former glory. There are some wonderful pedestrian areas that are fun to walk. Some of the popular attractions include the Les Quais, the Aquitaine Bridge, Victory Arch, Gambetta Square, Quinconces Square, Musée D'Art Contemporain, Musée D'Aquitaine, and Musée National des Douanes as well as many ancient churches. There are wine stores at almost every corner where you can pick up a few rare bottles and legendary vintages.

We spend three nights in Bordeaux. There will be free time for lunch with 15 Euro allowance from Tour Design. Dinner on your own this evening.

Accommodation: Quality Bordeaux Centre Hotel or similar (2 nights)



Bordeaux

DAY 6 / MAY 06, 2020

DUNE DU PILAT, ARCACHON, AND ILE AUX OISEAUX (B,D)

We drive to the Dune du Pilat, the highest dune in Europe. This is a unique landscape with an incredible panoramic view over the ocean, forest and Arcachon Bay but also and more importantly, a living, natural space that is now protected and cared for by a special organization in France.

We move now to the sleepy village of Arcachon. Most of the popularity of this village is due to the vision of the enterprising Pereire brothers, who divided the residential sections of the resort into a four-season's theme and created a fashionable resort. Of the four seasons, it was the Ville d'Hiver with its elaborate faux-Moorish casino – modelled on the Alhambra in Granada and the Great Mosque of Cordoba – that captured the imagination of regular visitors such as Debussy, Alexandre Dumas, Chopin, Napoleon III and Toulouse-Lautrec.

Lunch on your own in the village.

Here we find the Bassin at the estuary of the river Eyre, one of the principal rivers of Gascony. The Bassin is renowned for its oyster farms, the fourth-largest producers in France. The basin includes 10 sleepy villages that arc their way leisurely around the 35km stretch of ocean beaches, from Arcachon in the south to Cap Ferret in the north.

The basin itself is open to the mercy of the Atlantic but, with its lake-like shape, forms a protective ring from the ravages of the sea. In the centre of this ring is the Ile aux Oiseaux, the Bassin's only island and now a protected bird sanctuary. Its dainty dimensions are home to seabirds, oysters and the picturesque "cabanes tschanquees", little wooden huts on stilts. Cruise to Ile aux Oiseaux, to see the Cabanes Tchaquees.

We return to Bordeaux for the night. Dinner at hotel or local restaurant nearby.



Arcachon

DAY 7 / MAY 07, 2020

BORDEAUX, SAINT-EMILION, BERGERAC (B,L)

We travel away from the sea today and make our first stop at Saint-Émilion, a town 35 kilometres east of Bordeaux. It is best known (indeed renowned the world over) for the vineyards which surround the town, Saint-Émilion being one of the four Bordeaux red wine regions. We drive in a little train through the vineyards. Also included is a visit to a wine cellar featuring wine tasting and lunch is included today.

The history of the town dates back almost 2000 years when the Romans planted vineyards here as early as the 2nd century AD, while Saint-Émilion itself dates from the 8th century when a Breton Monk called Emilion came to settle here in a hermitage carved into the rock. The town is entered by way of one of the seven gates that are part of the original medieval fortifications. Inside the walls you will discover steep narrow streets with beautiful buildings, and several more open squares, each more attractive than the one before.

We move on to Bergerac, the largest town in the region. The highlight of a trip to Bergerac is the old town - the area immediately north of the river. This part of the town has some lovely streets and squares to explore, and a variety of boutique type shops. You may choose to visit the Maison de Vins de Bergerac in the heart of the old town. It is a beautiful old cloister dating back to the 12th century. If you are a wine enthusiast there is an exhibition showing the history of Bergerac wines and its 13 appellations. Also of interest is the National Tobacco Museum, based here in Bergerac.

We spend the night in Bergerac. Dinner on your own this evening.

Accommodation: Inter-Hotel de Bordeaux Hotel or similar (1 night)



Saint Emilion

DAY 8 / MAY 08, 2020

MONTIGNAC, LASCAUX 4 CAVE, ST. AMAND DE COLY, SARLAT (B,D)

This village of Montignac on the Vézère River is most famous for being home to the Lascaux Caves. The original cave has hundreds of prehistoric animals painted across its walls and ceiling. It turned out to be one of the world's best examples of prehistoric art. The Lascaux cave became a popular tourist site after World War II but it had to be sealed off to the public in 1963 to prevent damage to the paintings.

Now the French government has spent \$64 million building a near perfect replica to recreate the original cave.

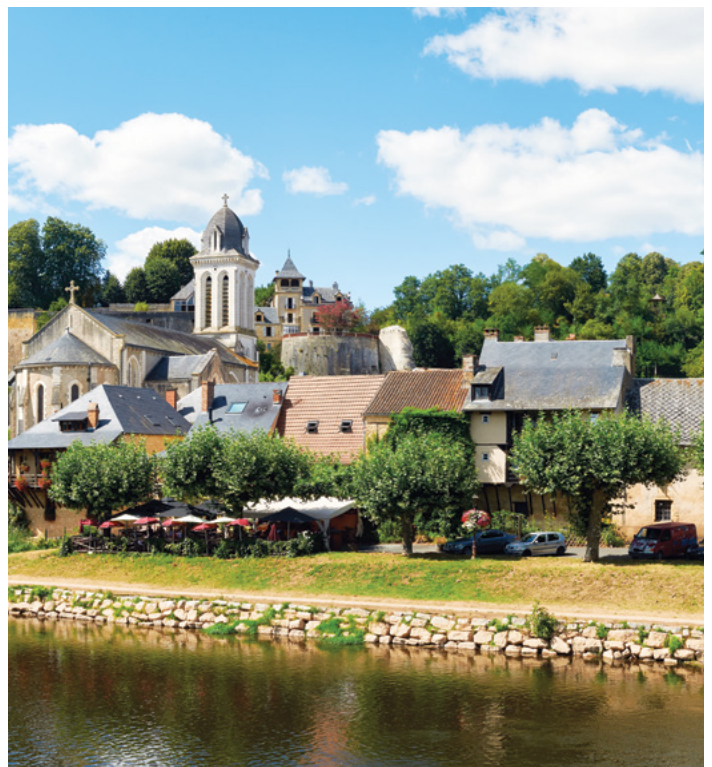
We visit this facility this morning. We continue on to visit the town of St. Amand de Coly, one of the "Most Beautiful Villages of France".

Nestled at the intersection of three wooded valleys, the abbey at Saint Amand-de-Coly watches over houses that are typical of the region. The splendid 100 foot tall bell-tower, its huge Gothic arch and its triple-arched door have a simple strength about them that is sustained inside the building. Around the church, we find old tobacco drying barns as well as walnut groves, drying and cracking of walnuts and oil presses.

Our destination is the town of Sarlat, the most famous town in the region and one of the most renowned and visited in France. The old town, dating from both medieval and renaissance times is a pleasure to visit, especially during the spring and autumn, and particularly early in the morning.

Dinner included this evening at our hotel or local restaurant nearby. We spend 4 nights here.

Accommodation: Grand Hotel de Selves or similar (4 nights)



Montignac

DAY 9 / MAY 09, 2020

SARLAT MARKET, LA ROQUE GAGEAC, DOMME

(B,L)

The Saturday Sarlat market is one of the best markets in all of France! The Place de la Liberte is filled with produce and food vendors, and the Rue de la Republique is a mix of food and miscellaneous merchandise. If you love food, this is definitely the place to be on Saturday morning! The streets of Sarlat are filled with vendors selling foie gras, walnuts, wine, cheese, cepe mushrooms, every kind of bread and pastry you can imagine, herbs, spices, incredible fruits and vegetables, and, depending on the season, possibly even truffles!

After time to enjoy Sarlat, we continue on to visit La Roque Gageac, located at the foot of a cliff, the creamy stone houses with their "lauze" stone slab or brown-tiled roofs are mirrored in the waters of the River Dordogne where the famous "Gabares" boats are laden with goods for trade. These are traditional flat-bottomed boats used for transporting goods along the Dordogne since the Middle Ages. We will board one of these boats for a cruise offering a relaxing way to enjoy the sight of some of the many Dordogne chateaux and villages from the perspective of the river. Various sights and wildlife are pointed out to you as we meander slowly down the river as well as the history of the Gabares themselves.

Lunch at a local restaurant is included today.

Our last visit is to Domme is perched on the edge of breathtakingly high cliff that allows you to enjoy a remarkable view of the Dordogne valley. This creamy-stoned fortified village boasts some great architecture in the Templar's Tower and the Church of Notre Dame de l'Assumption. It was here that the King of France in the 14th century, suppressed the Christian military organization the Knights Templar. Some knights of neighbouring commands were confined in the bastide of Domme. Their prison, the Porte des Tours, commemorates those years of captivity. Engraved in the stone are messages bearing witness to both their distress and their faith.

Overnight Sarlat. Dinner on your own this evening.



La Roque

DAY 10 / MAY 10, 2020

BEYNAC-ET-CAZENAC, BELVES, MONPAZIER, CASTLENAUD LA CHAPPELLE (B,L/A)

Today we visit this beautiful region of France and discover the chateaux, beautiful medieval towns and villages, unspoiled countryside and prehistoric caves – just some of the many reasons why the region attracts visitors.

Curled at the foot of an imposing castle, Beynac-et-Cazenac is a beautiful spot enhanced by both the river and the food of the region. The natural defensive site of Beynac became the seat of one of the four baronies of Perigord. It was once besieged by Richard the Lion Heart, demolished, rebuilt, captured and recaptured by the armies of both the English and the French Kings. The impressive castle towers over the villages stone slab-roofed houses with golden facades. Here you can see the history of the region told by tapestry.

Belvès is a medieval town perched on a rocky spur above the Nauze Valley in Périgord Noir. It boasts 7 bell towers and although it endured invasions and wars, it has miraculously managed to preserve superb relics of its built heritage. Here there are cave dwellings and an Organistrum Museum with Hurdy Gurdies.

Lunch allowance of 15 Euro provided today by Tour Design.

Monpazier is labelled a "Grand site national", it has no less than 32 listed buildings and is regarded as the prime example of a "bastide" among the 300 in south-western France. Monpazier has had countless awards to salute, but also to protect, the outstanding heritage of this fortified village that was founded by Edward I of England in 1284.

Castlenaud-la-Chapelle overhangs the confluence between Dordogne and Céou rivers in an exceptional landscape opposite the beautiful villages of Beynac-et-Cazenac and La Roque-Gageac. Well known for its two castles – the medieval castle superbly restored with its Museum of War in Middle Age and the Milandes castle, former property of Joséphine Baker –, the village itself and its typical Périgord architecture is also worth discovering.

Overnight in Sarlat. Dinner on your own this evening.



Beynac et Cazenac

DAY 11 / MAY 11, 2020

GOUFFRE DE PADIRAC, ROCAMADOUR (B,L)

The Gouffre de Padirac is an incredible cave system containing an underground river, gorge and a huge cavern. Underground lakes and pools and stalactite formations all add to its appeal but somehow it is the sheer size of the caverns that is really incredible. It is the most visited cave system in the whole of France and the number one tourist attraction of the Midi-Pyrenees region.

The cave system is 103 meters below ground and can be accessed via a lift or a staircase. Once in the system you are taken by a boat through the galleries and on to the large cavern. The boat is punted by a guide who will tell you about the formation of the cave system. At the edge of the main cavern you leave the boat and begin the walking tour into the heart of the cathedral-like space that is the 'Grand Dome'. This cavern is incredible, with the river flowing along the bottom. A majestic rock enclosed space opens up above you with stalactite formations.

We then head to Rocamadour. Each year the small village of Rocamadour (population of 600) received more than a million visitors. Why so popular? Firstly because Rocamadour is an important pilgrimage destination, and has been for 1000 years. Built on the site of a shrine to a Madonna, the shrine became famous for its healing powers, and soon became a stop on the pilgrimage path to Santiago de Compostela. The second reason is because of the beautiful and dramatic setting of the village, climbing up a cliff side.

Rocamadour is one of the Grand Sites of France. It was also voted 'the favourite village of the French 2016' by viewers of a French television channel. It is also a UNESCO World Heritage. It gives its name to Rocamadour, a small goat's milk cheese that was awarded AOC status in 1996.

Return to Sarlat. Lunch at local restaurant included today. Dinner on your own this evening.

DAY 12 / MAY 12, 2020

SAINT CIRQ LAPOPIE, TOULOUSE (B,L/A)

Today we head into the mountains to visit the medieval city of Saint Cirq Lapopie. This small town welcomes more than 400,000 visitors yearly as it was voted in 2015, the most interesting of the "Beautiful Villages of France". Saint-Cirq-Lapopie is perched on a cliff overlooking the valley and is a masterpiece of medieval architecture. Overlooked by the fortified church, the houses with their sloping, brown-tiled roofs are a harmonious sight lining the picturesque alleyways. This spot has attracted both artists and writers such as André Breton who used to take up residence in the village in summer. Here you marvel at the workshops, paintings and sculptures of artists still present in the village today.

Time to have lunch with 15 Euro allowance provided by Tour Design.

We continue south to Toulouse, the 4th largest city in France behind Paris, Lyon and Marseille. We enjoy a city tour upon arrival. While Toulouse is not the biggest city, it's a spectacular tourist destination with two UNESCO heritage sites, the Canal du Midi and the Basilica of St. Sernin, the biggest Romanesque building in Europe. Our tour today shows us this city in contrasts. Here is the Academie des Jeux Floraux, the oldest literary society in the western world, as well as the Galerie du Chateau d'eau, the world's first photography museum. Walk the Garonne, before visiting France's most beautiful pipe organ at the Saint-Sernin Basilica. Yet for all its medieval architecture, Toulouse is a modern city, home to the European aerospace industry, as well as bars and restaurants in bustling Place du Capitole.

We spend 2 nights here. Dinner on your own this evening.

Accommodation: Best Western Athénée or similar (2 nights)



Saint Cirq Lapopie

DAY 13 / MAY 13, 2020

CARCASSONNE (B, Farewell Dinner)

You have the morning free today to just relax or to wander around the city to accomplish some last minute shopping.

In the afternoon, we have a guided tour of Carcassonne, a city imbued with the spirit of the past, boasting 2500 years of history and is privileged to have two UNESCO World Heritage sites: the Canal du Midi, classified in 1996, and the Medieval City in 1997. The medieval city situated on the right bank of the Aude, is a fortified city unlike any other in Europe, on account of its massive fortifications dominating the surrounding countryside and its state of preservation. Its history is marked by 2000 years of conquest and by the imprint of Catharism and the Crusades. The Canal du Midi is the work of Pierre-Paul Riquet and excavated in the 17th century to link the Atlantic and the Mediterranean. The Canal, formerly used for transporting goods and people, is today frequented by numerous boaters and tourists.

We enjoy our farewell dinner in this enchanting place. Then return to Toulouse for the night.

DAY 14 / MAY 14, 2020

FLIGHT HOME (B)

We will have breakfast at the hotel before we transfer to the airport for our flight home via Paris.

Tentative flight schedule: Air France

May 14 / AF 7521 / Toulouse – Paris / depart 10:35am / arrive 12:05pm

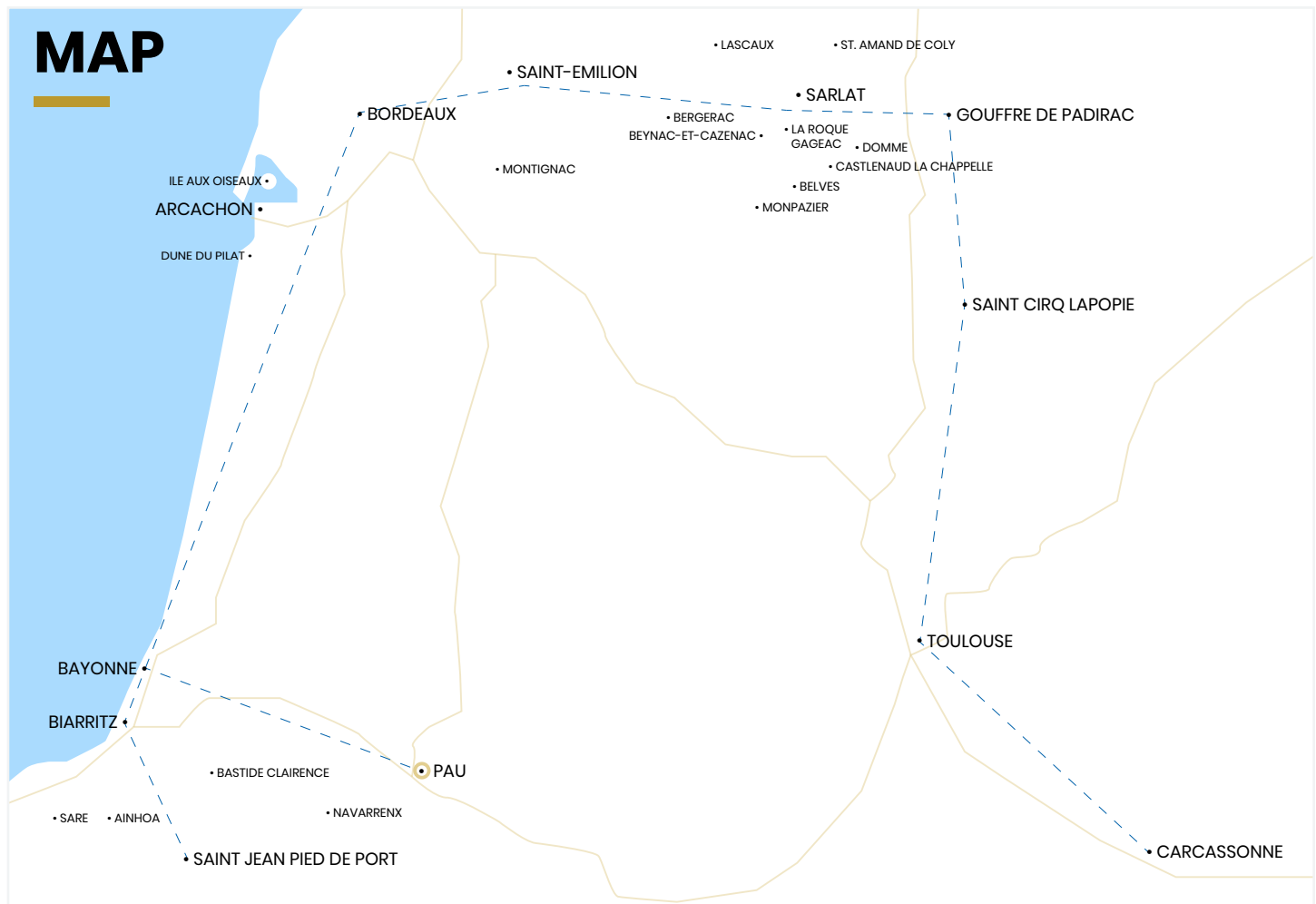
May 14 / AF 356 / Paris – Toronto / depart 1:50pm / arrive 4:10pm

END OF TOUR

B–breakfast, L–lunch, L/A–lunch allowance, D–dinner



Carcassonne



PRICING & TERMS

PACKAGE RATE (CAD\$, PER PERSON):

CAD\$5,595 per person based on double occupancy
CAD\$1,380 per person for single supplement

INCLUSIONS:

- Roundtrip flights from Toronto to Pau and Toulouse to Toronto
- 12 nights accommodation at hotels as per itinerary
- 12 breakfasts, 3 lunches, and 5 dinners as per itinerary
- 4 lunch allowances provided by Tour Design as per itinerary
- Tours and transfers as per itinerary
- English speaking local manager for the whole duration of the program
- Porterage at hotel wherever available (1 piece of luggage per person)
- All gratuities for local guides, drivers, and included meals

EXCLUSIONS:

- Airport departure taxes and fuel surcharges. Currently \$750 per person
- Roundtrip home to Toronto Airport and return limousine transfers
- Meals not included in the itinerary
- Optional travel insurance

AIR CREDIT:

If you wish to arrange your own air from Toronto to Pau and Toulouse to Toronto, an air credit of CAD\$550 per person will be deducted from the tour cost. And above mentioned airport taxes and fuel surcharges will not be applicable.

Please contact us for air deviation, premium economy or business class upgrade surcharges.

SPECIAL NOTE:

- Names provided at time of booking MUST exactly match your passport
- You must have a passport valid for at least 6 months after your return date
- If you wish to purchase optional travel insurance with us, it MUST be purchase prior to final payment date. Please contact us for a quotation.

DEPOSIT AND PAYMENT:

At time of booking:	\$500 per person
Second deposit:	\$1,000 per person due October 25, 2019
Final payment:	remaining balance due January 24, 2020

CANCELLATION TERMS:

Between time of booking & Oct 24, 2019:	\$500 per person
Between Oct 24, 2019 & Jan 23, 2020:	\$1,500 per person
Between Jan 24, 2019 & date of departure:	100% of total cost

PROGRAM DESIGNED IN CONJUNCTION WITH RICK PALMER FROM THE CREDIT RIVER PROBUS CLUB.

Email: rick.palmer@rogers.com or call 905-828-7314.

To book this program, please complete the Booking Form and email, mail or fax to Tour Design.

Photo Credit: Dutourdumonde Photography, Kevin Eaves, Elena Dijour, LucVi, Trabantos, FreeProd33, Apgestoso, Canadastock, Belt944, Boris Stroujko, Rolf E. Staerk



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