



THE PROBUS CLUBS OF MISSISSAUGA
AND TOUR DESIGN PRESENT



"THE MOST BEAUTIFUL VILLAGES" OF SOUTHWEST FRANCE

Aquitaine and Midi-Pyrenees

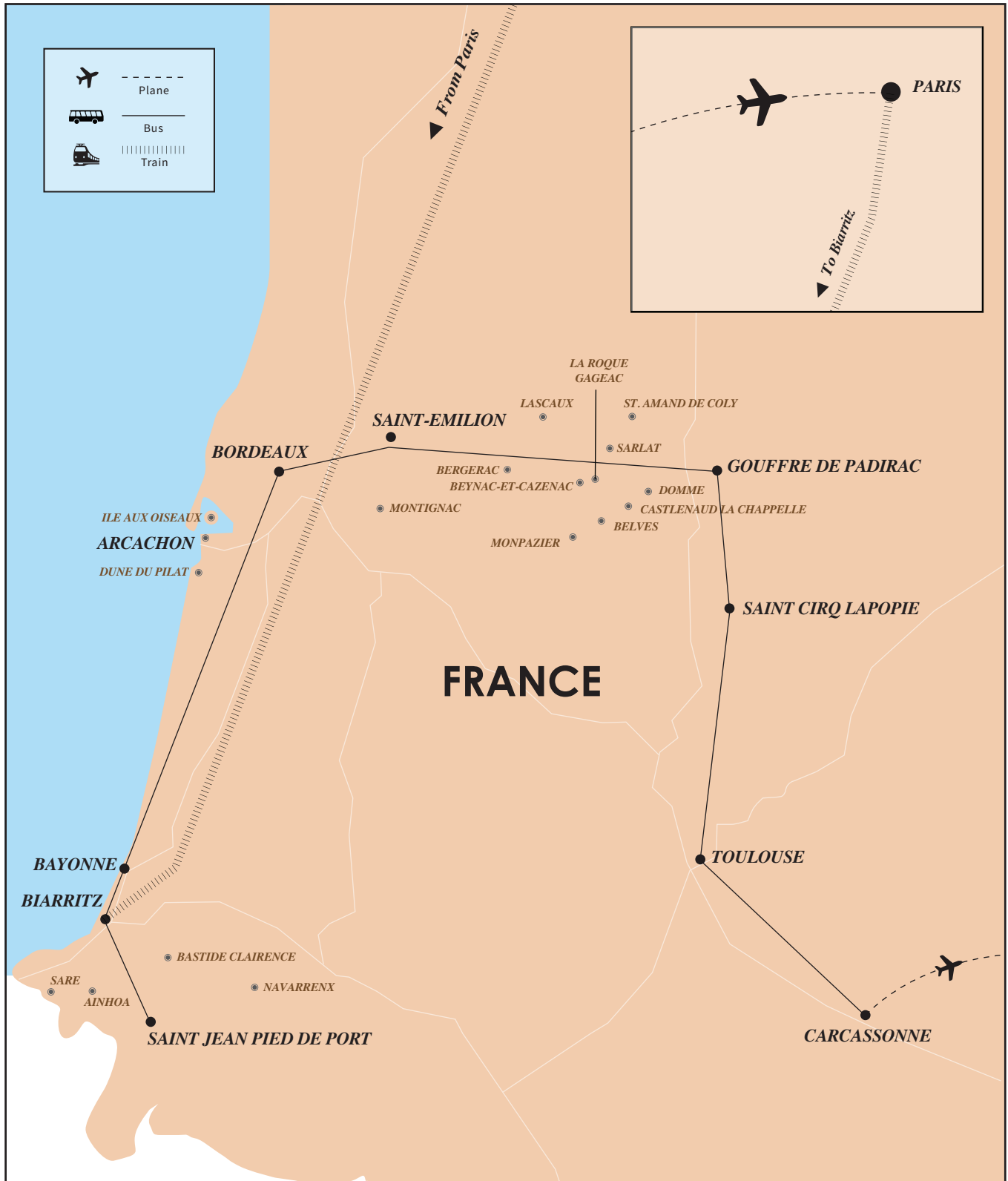
MAY 02 – 15, 2024 (14 DAYS)



We have developed an itinerary that will feature 16 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.

Saint Cirq Lapopie

TOUR MAP



ITINERARY

DAY 1 / THURSDAY, MAY 02 FLIGHT TO FRANCE

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

Transportation: Air France

DAY 2 / FRIDAY, MAY 03 PARIS TO BIARRITZ (LB)

Upon arrival at the airport, connect to local high speed train to Biarritz right from the airport terminal.

Transportation: TGV train (1st Class service, includes boxed lunch onboard)

NOTE: your luggage will be transported separately via luggage truck from Paris airport to our hotel in Biarritz.

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.

Biarritz, an elegant seaside town on southwestern France's Basque coast, has been a popular resort since European royalty began visiting in the 1800s.

Upon arrival at the Biarritz train station, transfer to your hotel in Biarritz, where you stay for the next 2 nights. Dinner on your own this evening.

Accommodation: Hotel Litteraire Jules Verne or similar (2 nights)



DAY 3 / SATURDAY, MAY 04 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.

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 remains today an active crossroad for international commerce. Here you see the citadel, its ramparts and the Gothic Church of Notre-Dame.

Overnight in Biarritz, Welcome Dinner with wine or beer included at the hotel this evening.

DAY 4 / SUNDAY, MAY 05

BIARRITZ TO BAYONNE TO BORDEAUX (B, D)

After breakfast we enjoy a free morning and checkout of the hotel before noon. We then depart Biarritz and head to Bayonne en route to Bordeaux.

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.

After a short city tour enjoy free time for lunch on your own.

Early afternoon, we transfer to our next hub of the trip, Bordeaux.

We spend four nights in Bordeaux. Dinner at hotel or local restaurant within walking distance. Overnight in Bordeaux.
Accommodation: Quality Hotel Bordeaux Centre or similar (4 nights)

DAY 5 / MONDAY, MAY 06

BORDEAUX CITY TOUR (B, L)

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.

After breakfast we depart for a morning tour of the city. This morning, you will stop and see many city highlights such as the Place de la Bourse and The Water Mirror, the St. Andre Cathedral, the Grand Theatre, Grosse Cloche de Bordeaux, the Stone Bridge, Monument aux Girondins, La Cite du Vin, and much more.

Lunch on a scenic Bordeaux River Cruise Boat, enjoy the Estuary Menu with preferred window seating included while you watch the sights go by.

After the cruise, transfer back to your hotel, the remainder of the day and dinner is at your leisure.



DAY 6 / TUESDAY, MAY 07

DUNE DU PILAT, ARCACHON, 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 deaux", little wooden huts on stilts. Cruise to Ile aux Oiseaux, to see the Cabanes Tchaquees.

We return to Bordeaux, dinner at the hotel or a local restaurant nearby. Overnight in Bordeaux.

DAY 7 / WEDNESDAY, MAY 08

BORDEAUX TO SAINT – EMILION, RIVER CRUISE AND WINERY VISIT (B, L)

Relax and enjoy some free time in the morning today. Maybe stroll through the streets and see many of Bordeaux's neoclassical style buildings have been restored to their former glory. There are some wonderful pedestrian and shopping areas that are fun to walk. Some of the popular attractions include the Les Quais, the Aquitaine Bridge, Victory Arch, Gambetta Square, Quinconces Square, Musee D'Art Contemporain, Musee D'Aquitaine, and Musee 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.

Late in the morning, we leave our hotel and coach to Saint-Emilion, a town 35 kilometres east of Bordeaux. It is best known (indeed renowned the world over) for the vineyards which surround the town, Saint-Emilion being one of the four Bordeaux red wine regions. We will visit Chateau Larmande for a guided visit of the wine cellar, featuring wine tasting and lunch at the Chateau.

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 return to Bordeaux by coach, dinner on your own tonight. Overnight in Bordeaux.



DAY 8 / THURSDAY, MAY 09

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

We depart Bordeaux and travel to the village of Montignac on the Vézère River, 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. 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 final 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. We spend 3 nights here.

Accommodation: Hotel Plaza Madeleine or similar (3 nights)



DAY 9 / FRIDAY, MAY 10
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.

Lunch included today at local restaurant in Rocamadour.

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.

Dinner on your own tonight. Overnight in Sarlat.

DAY 10 / SATURDAY, MAY 11
SARLAT MARKET, LA ROQUE GAGEAC,
BEYNAC-ET-CAZENAC (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 well as the history of the Gabares boats explained as we meander slowly down the river.

Lunch is included at a local restaurant.

After lunch we visit Beynac-et-Cazenac and 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.

Dinner on your own tonight. Overnight in Sarlat.



DAY 11 / SUNDAY, MAY 12

SAINT CIRQ LAPOPIE, TOULOUSE (B, D)

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 will marvel at the workshops, paintings and sculptures of artists still present in the village today.

Free time for lunch here before we continue south to Toulouse, the 4th largest city in France behind Paris, Lyon and Marseille. Upon arrival in Toulouse, we transfer to our hotel for check in.

Dinner at hotel or local restaurant within walking distance.

Accommodation: Hotel Mercure Toulouse Centre Wilson Capitole or similar (3 nights)



Saint Cirq Lapopie

DAY 12 / MONDAY, MAY 13

TOULOUSE (B, L)

Today we enjoy a city tour of Toulouse. 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.

Lunch at local restaurant before transferring back to your hotel. Remainder of the day at your leisure. Overnight in Toulouse.



Canal Du Midi

DAY 13 / TUESDAY, MAY 14

CARCASSONNE (B, FAREWELL DINNER)

Leave late in the morning and head to Carcassonne.

Enjoy 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.

Transfer back to Toulouse after the tour.

Tonight, enjoy a special Cabaret Dinner with wine or beer included at "La Kalinka"!

DAY 14 / WEDNESDAY, MAY 15

FLIGHT HOME (B)

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

Transportation: Air France

*****END OF TOUR*****

B – Breakfast / L – Lunch / LB – Boxed Lunch / D – Dinner

PRICING & TERMS

PACKAGE RATE (CAD\$, per person):

CAD\$7,720 per person base on double occupancy

CAD\$1,950 per person for single supplement

*Limited space for single occupancy, please check with us for availability

INCLUSIONS:

- Roundtrip flights from Toronto to Paris and Toulouse to Toronto
- Roundtrip home to Toronto Airport and return limousine transfers (within GTA area)
- 12 nights accommodation at hotels as per itinerary
- Meals included as per itinerary
- Tours and transfers as per itinerary
- Local train from Paris to Biarritz in first class
- Porterage at hotels wherever available (1 piece of luggage per person)
- All gratuities for local guides, drivers, and included meals
- Escorted by an experience Tour Design staff

EXCLUSIONS:

- Airport departure taxes and fuel surcharges. Currently \$910 per person, subject to change until time of final payment
- Meals not included in the itinerary
- Optional travel insurance

AIR CREDIT:

If you wish to arrange your own air from Toronto to Paris and Toulouse to Toronto, an air credit of CAD\$500 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:

- Please note that advance seat selection for flights on our group tours is not permitted, as per the conditions of our contract with airlines
- Names provided at time of booking MUST match exactly 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: \$1,000 per person

Second deposit: \$1,000 per person due October 27, 2023

Final payment: remaining balance due January 26, 2024

CANCELLATION TERMS:

Between time of booking & Oct 26, 2023: \$1,000 per person

Between Oct 27, 2023 & Jan 25, 2024: \$2,000 per person

Between Jan 26, 2024 & date of departure: 100% of total cost

PROGRAM DESIGNED IN CONJUNCTION WITH RICK PALMER & DEANE PONECH:

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

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



TOUR DESIGN

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