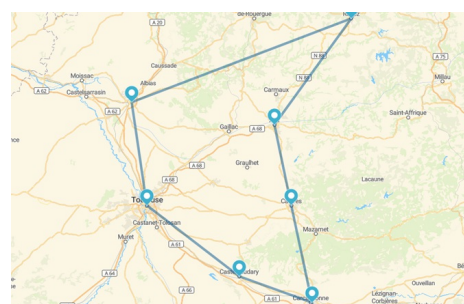




France, 5 Days · Tailor-made by car

Painters and Medieval Treasures Route

Want to join us on the "Painters and Medieval Treasures" tour? The sun-kissed southwest of France is one of the artistic focal points of the country. This exciting itinerary submerges the traveller into a unique, almost magical atmosphere, dotted with beautiful cities such as Toulouse, Carcassonne and Albi; stunning medieval treasures; spectacular towns such as Castelnaudary, Castres and Cordes-sur-Ciel; grandiose fortifications and fairytale castles; breathtaking landscapes; renowned art galleries; mythical vineyards and the River Tarn, which provides the backbone to a fascinating region peppered with natural, historical and cultural attractions. An inspiring journey that will give you an insight into one of the most beautiful regions in France from different point of view. Take your time to explore the places where some of the most important figures in the art world lived and drew inspiration from. Follow the trail of Goya in Castres; of Toulouse-Lautrec in Albi; of Pierre Soulages in Rodez; and of Jean-Auguste-Dominique Ingres and Antoine Bourdelle in Mountaban. The tour meanders through sun-kissed landscapes of breathtaking beauty, scenes of fabled legends and major historical events. You'll travel through lands with a delicate tone of pastel, a beautiful blue dye which in the Middle Ages came to symbolise royalty and Marian purity. This very pastel present in the paintings of romantics and artists today permeates all forms of arts, decoration, textiles and cosmetics... making this tour a real delight for the senses.



CULTURAL

Departure date: Departures from July 2026 till July 2027

From: Dublin, Shannon, Cork

Travel details

● DAY 1 · CITY OF ORIGIN - TOULOUSE

Flight departure from the city of origin to Toulouse and rental car pick-up. Your adventure on French soil begins here! La Ville Rose (Pink City) captivates travellers with an exceptional historical and artistic heritage, a vibrant lifestyle, delicious cuisine and an incredible cultural agenda, on a par with all major European cities. Capital of the Occitanie Pyrénées Méditerranée region, Toulouse simply oozes joie de vivre in its streets, cafés, daily markets, terraces, restaurants (3 with Michelin stars), boutiques and twenty-plus museums... Birthplace of Concorde and the Ariane rocket, and homeland of Airbus, the city perfectly combines its business side with a laid-back university atmosphere. Place du Capitole, the Saint-Sernin basilica (part of the UNESCO-listed Camino de Santiago), the cloister of the Jacobins, the mansions built in the Renaissance, the A380 production line and the Space City are just some of the must-sees. And if you want to see the city skyline from the water, take a boat along the Garonne or the Canal du Midi, a UNESCO World Heritage Site. Overnight stay in Toulouse.

● DAY 2 · TOULOUSE - CASTELNAUDARY - CARCASSONNE

After enjoying the charms of Toulouse, we'll set off to the ancient city of Carcassonne. Located an hour's drive away, it is a UNESCO World Heritage Site. Ahead is a road dotted with beautiful villages such as Castelnaudary and a delectable Mediterranean environment, source of inspiration for artists and romantics who came from all corners of the world. In the distance we'll make out the profile of the fortified city of Carcassonne! Its walled enclosure is a true work of art. The image from the road is simply amazing. Perfectly preserved, this medieval citadel entices the traveller with its ancient history, rich heritage and one of the most complete walled cities in the whole of Europe. Strolling through its arches, its cobbled streets, its walls and its towers, you'll feel like a character from the Middle Ages. On the west side of the fortification is the castle built in the twelfth century by the Trencavel viscounts. It is a true "fortress within a fortress", which now houses the interesting Lapidary Museum, where you'll see important vestiges of the city and the region. In the main vault of the castle, the central part of which is painted with lapis lazuli, you can admire a beautiful medieval fresco. In the morning, you can visit the Medieval City. In the afternoon, head over to the Bastide Saint Louis, the city centre, a 20-minute walk from the Medieval City. Here you'll find a market with typical produce, a host of shops, palaces and the bustling Place Carnot, surrounded by restaurants and bars. If you have time, head to the Fine Arts Museum, which has free admission and a permanent exhibition on Carcassonne-born painter Jacques Gamelin. Our recommendation: enjoy the typical cassoulet accompanied by a good Minervois or Corbières red wine. Overnight stay in Carcassonne.

● DAY 3 · CARCASSONNE - CASTRES - ALBI

Our leisurely drive through the south of France gives us a great insight into one of the most artistic and beautiful corners of Europe. The road leads us through spectacular landscapes impregnated with colours that seem to have been plucked from a painter's palette. We'll cross the Black Mountain and, after an hour and a quarter underway, we'll arrive in Castres. Here you'll see the beautiful houses on the riverbank and the Musée Goya. Created in 1840, this magnificent museum is located in the old Bishop's Palace of Castres, today the Hôtel de Ville, whose plans were drafted by Jules Hardouin-Mansart, one of the architects of Versailles. Here you'll find the second largest collection of Spanish art in France after the Louvre, as well as works by Velázquez, Murillo, Ribera, Cano and other Golden Age painters. Onward journey of around 45 minutes to the artistic city of Albi. Here awaits a true highlight of the tour: the Musée Toulouse-Lautrec, one of the great contemporary museums in France. Enjoy the most important collection in the world devoted to this atypical artist, consisting of more than one thousand works, including paintings, drawings and posters, which will give you a deeper insight into his life and career. Further time to explore this medieval town and discovering such beautiful landmarks as the Cathedral Sainte-Cécile and the impressive Episcopal Palace of Berbie. Declared a World Heritage Site by UNESCO, Albi offers travellers a magical atmosphere. If you have time, we suggest a short trip to Cordes-sur-Ciel (30-minute drive), one of France's most charismatic locations and where the Office of Tourism organises themed tours to discover the artistic and architectural wealth of this medieval town. Overnight stay in Albi.

● DAY 4 · ALBI - RODEZ - MONTAUBAN - TOULOUSE

After enjoying the charms of Albi, we'll head off to Rodez, a beautiful village surrounded by the Rouergue valleys and located an hour's drive away. Here we'll discover the fabulous Musée Soulages, which houses the largest collection dedicated to Pierre Soulages, one of the most popular and sought-after contemporary French painters. During your stay in the city, we recommend a visit to the Cathedral of Rodez and the Musée Fenaille. If you have time, pop over to the Abbey of Sainte-Foy, in the pretty village of Conques, one of the most important French Romanesque monuments and whose new stained glass windows were designed by the maestro Soulages. The "Painters and Medieval Treasures" tour meanders through landscapes of breathtaking beauty. Our next stop will be Montauban, a city marked by art and history. This was the birthplace of the painter Jean-Auguste-Dominique Ingres, the great master of French classicism and portrait painting. Today, much of his work is exhibited at the renowned Museum Ingres. The museum is also dedicated to Antoine Bourdelle, pupil of Rodin and another famous local figure. Then back to Toulouse, where we'll enjoy its vibrant nightlife, its wide range of entertainment proposals and its famed restaurants. Overnight stay in Toulouse.

● DAY 5 · TOULOUSE - CITY OF ORIGIN

Arrival at the airport with enough time to drop off your rental car and flight back to the city of origin.

Arrival. End of the trip and our services.

Your trip includes

Your trip includes

- ✓ Return flight.
- ✓ Stay in selected hotel in Toulouse.
- ✓ Selected meal plan in Toulouse.
- ✓ Stay in selected hotel in Carcassonne.
- ✓ Selected meal plan in Carcassonne.
- ✓ Stay in selected hotel in Albi.
- ✓ Selected meal plan in Albi.
- ✓ Rent-a-car.

Your trip doesn't include

- ✗ Accommodation taxes in France direct payment in facility.
- ✗ Possible toll charges.
- ✗ Insolvency protection.

Destinations Visited

Toulouse



Castelnaudary



Carcassonne



Castres



Albi



Rodez



Montauban



Important remarks

- Triple rooms in Europe are generally rooms with twin beds or a double, in which a folding bed is installed to accommodate the third person. Due to the inconvenience this causes, we advise against using this option as far as possible.
- Check-in time at the hotel on the day of arrival depends on each establishment, but in no case will it be before 3:00 p.m., unless otherwise indicated.
- The proposed excursions and tours for each day are purely suggestions, as you can tailor the trip to suit your times, tastes and needs.
- A credit card is considered a guarantee, so sometimes you will need one for check-in at hotels.
- Hotels usually have cots available. Otherwise, babies will have to share a bed with an adult.
- To pick up your rental car, you'll need a credit (not debit) card in the name of the person who made the booking, who must also be the named driver of the vehicle.
- Consult the necessary documentation to enter the destinations visited and for transit in the countries where air stopovers are made.