



The Magical Lot Tour

Tour Overview

Tour Dates: You may begin this tour on any day. See [Schedule](#) for blackout dates and additional tour scheduling considerations.

Location: France's Quercy region. Overnight destinations include Sarlat, Creysse, St. Céré, Rocamadour, and Figeac. The train trip from Paris' Charles de Gaulle Airport to Sarlat requires about 7.5 hours. Because of the time required to make the return trip to Paris' Charles de Gaulle Airport from Figeac, you should plan to layover at least 1 night in Paris on the back-end of your tour. The train trip from Figeac to downtown Paris is 5.5 - 6 hours.

Tour Type: Circuit tour

Terrain: Moderately challenging to challenging. Long, relatively flat or rolling stretches. Two to three long and sometimes steep climbs on Days 4 and 6.

Length: 6 days / 7 nights

Distance: Total: 112 miles / 181 km. Average per day: 28 miles / 45 km.

Highlights:

- The most incredibly beautiful scenery along the Dordogne River on days 1 and 2 -- including the wonderfully charming and friendly villages.
- Rocamadour, the beautiful cliff-hanging village that has hosted pilgrims for one thousand years, and continues to do so.
- A boat ride on the underground river in the *Gouffre de Padirac*.
- The gorgeous town of St. Céré, set amidst mountains and canals.
- The wonderfully preserved medieval quarters of Sarlat & Figeac.

About the Region

France's Quercy region is known for the ancient pilgrimage site of Rocamadour, prehistoric cave dwellings, medieval castles and villages, vineyards, forests and geese farms. Immediately east of Périgord, the ancient and proud land of Quercy continues to have a wild, untamed feel. Though adjacent to Périgord, this region has a completely different feel.

Dominated by *causses* (limestone plateaus), this region has very little surface water. Where surface water does exist -- in the form of rivers -- it continues to carve deep canyons into the porous limestone. The result of this geography: strange forests of deep-digging trees, white cliffs, mighty canyons watched over by perched medieval villages, caves (many having hosted

prehistoric settlements), underground rivers, and vineyards and orchards planted in every available river valley.

Daily Itinerary

Arrive in Sarlat. Spend 2 nights.

Your Diverse Directions representative will meet you at the Sarlat train station upon your arrival, will drive you to your hotel, and will deliver your rental bikes.

Sarlat is practically a living museum of the 15th century, Sarlat's Golden Age. In fact, its entire medieval center has been granted protected status to preserve its historical grandeur. Sarlat's tiny medieval streets are lined with a vast array of wonderful restaurants offering cuisines from around the world, laid back sidewalk cafés, lively bars and exciting galleries, boutiques and shops. Located in a valley amidst the splendor of the rolling hills of the Périgord countryside, a more appealing or wonderful base location could be hardly imagined.

Day 1: Circuit of the Dordogne Valley Castles & the Bastide de Domme - 62 km / 38 miles.

The castles are numerous in this area and there is no better way to see them than to do this 62 km / 38 mile circuit on bike. Your circuit includes visits to the following castles: Château la Malartrie, Castelnaud, Château Feyrac, Château de Beynac, and Château de Marqueyssac. Don't worry about touring all the castles you'll pass. Some are closed to the public altogether and thus can be only appreciated from afar; others only open their extraordinary gardens to the public. However, the interiors of at least three of castles are open to the public.

Along your route you will also pass through the riverside village of la Roque-Gageac which, due to its unique setting, enjoys a subtropical microclimate. If you need to rest awhile, you can hire a boat in la Roque-Gageac for more relaxed touring along the river. Finally, you'll visit the bastide of Domme, one of France's most formidably positioned, fortified medieval towns. We'll take you up the back way to avoid an even more severe climb, but the views from the top are definitely worth the effort.

Day 2: Sarlat to Creysse - 57 km / 35 miles. Spend 1 night.

Today's ride begins in the thickly wooded region known as *Périgord Noir* (Black Dordogne) so named for the shadows cast by all those trees. After an enchanting ride through the dark forest you'll reach the Dordogne River, the course of which you'll follow the remainder of the day. Before crossing into the department of the Lot, you'll have the opportunity to visit at least two castles that continue to keep watch over the river. Beyond Souillac -- with its 12th century abbey dominating its medieval core -- the landscape changes rather dramatically, as the hills of the *Causse de Gramat* become drier and more rugged. And then for miles you'll cycle a road that is narrowly wedged between the towering cliffs and the lazy river. You'll spend the evening in the tiny medieval village of Creysse, in the heart of this splendid scenery.

Day 3: Creysse to St. Céré - 35 km / 22 miles. Spend 1 night.

Today's ride is shorter in distance, but offers so much in sights that you'll want to savor the ride as you follow the Dordogne the entire day to St. Céré. You will pass through the lovely medieval villages of Floirac and Carennac before reaching Castelnaud, the largest fortified medieval castle in France. From Castelnaud, it's just a short ride to St. Céré, one of France's most beautiful villages.

Stop into the St. Céré Tourist Information Office for a copy of the English self-guided walking tour with explanations of the historical sights and then, enjoy strolling the canal-lined streets. If you have the time and are so inclined, climb to the castle of St. Laurent les Tours to see the work of artist Jean Lurcat in this most unusual setting. Or make a visit to the Château de Montal, another beautiful castle just a few kilometers from your hotel. You will fall in love with St. Céré's setting, on the border of Cantal, a mountainous, thinly populated and little visited corner of France.

Day 4: St. Céré to Rocamadour - 34 km / 21 miles. Spend 2 nights.

Today's ride is short, but try to get an early start as there is much to see on this gorgeous ride atop the *causee*. Early in your ride you'll pass through the beautiful village of Autoire, which is nestled in the last valley you'll see for a while. From Autoire, you'll climb to the top of the *causee* as you follow a cascading stream and enjoy stupendous views of the region. Not far beyond the end of your climb, you'll reach the village of Padirac and then, the Gouffre de Padirac. A visit to this natural wonder is highly recommended; after all, how often do you have the opportunity to take a boat ride on a subterranean river?

Following your visit, you'll continue your ride along the *causee*, with several ups-and-downs to Rocamadour. Built right into the cliff face, the village rises from the river to the top of the *causee*. Rocamadour has been a holy pilgrimage sight for ten centuries and a stopover on the way to Santiago de Compostella, Spain's most famous pilgrimage destination. Today you can use an elevator to whisk yourself between the levels of the village. Pilgrims in the Middle Ages didn't have it so good; many actually made the ascent on their knees in penance, paying homage at each of the Stations of the Cross en route. There is still something sacred in the air here that invites you to imagine a time when thousands of pilgrims arrived without the benefit of paved roads or even bicycles.

Upon your arrival, there'll be no need to worry about having spent so much time at the Gouffre because you'll have tomorrow to enjoy Rocamadour's sights, including the Forêt des Singes (the Forest of Monkeys), a 50-acre cageless refuge for 130 Barbary Macaques. As if on safari, you're able to observe these wonderfully social beings up close as they go about their daily lives. They're very curious and will be watching you too. While in Rocamadour you must treat yourself to *cabécou*, a locally produced goat cheese; it's awesome.

Day 5: Free Day in Rocamadour.

Day 6: Rocamadour to Figeac - 54 km / 34 miles. Spend 1 night.

Today's route takes you across the lonely *Causse de Gramat* through tiny villages and past lots of meadows of grazing sheep to the lovely town of Figeac. Amidst the solitude of your day's ride, you'll have the opportunity to visit the *Parc Animalier*, a "cageless" zoo sheltering only animals native to the region, as well as the 16th century Château d'Assier.

Figeac is the largest town in this part of the Lot region. With a beautifully restored medieval core and a pretty location on the Célé River, you will have lots to explore. All of Figeac's historic sites are described in a detail, easy-to-follow self-guided walking tour of the old city available from the Tourist Information Office. Published in English, this publication provides a great introduction to the city.

Rental bikes will be picked up at your hotel in the late afternoon.

Tour Price: US \$975.00 per person

- **Children's Price** - Children 16 years or younger traveling with 2 adults: \$450.00 per child.
- **Tour Deposit:** \$250.00 per adult and \$150.00 per child. Deposits are charged when tour materials are sent and hotel availability has been confirmed.
- **Discounts** are available for parties of 5 or more adults.

The tour price includes:

- Tour Documentation: Route instructions, map, Pre-trip Preparation Guide, On-Road Quick Reference Guide, and Sights Guide.
- Bike Rental for 6 Days: Excellent quality 27-speed hybrid or 30-speed road / racing bike with handlebar bag, map carrier, cyclometer, water bottle cage, rear rack, lock, repair kit, and helmet. Optional pedal cages.
- Delivery and Pick-up of your Rental Bike
- Daily Baggage Transfers
- English-Speaking Support Staff
- Reservation of your Accommodations
- Shipping and Handling Charges for US customers, unless expedited shipping is required.
- Basic SAG Support: If you choose not to cycle on one or more days due to weather, illness, etc., AND you notify your Diverse Directions support representative in advance so that you and your bikes can be transported along with your luggage, no additional charges will apply.

The tour price does NOT include:

- **Hotels:** Because you are free to select from a wide range of hotels -- from charming and basic 2-star to 4-star luxury (where available) -- the cost of your hotel accommodations is not bundled into the tour package price. See our Accommodations Options page for the price ranges of each category of hotel. A list of accommodations options for this tour, with website links, is available upon request.
- **Meals:** You are free to determine your own budget for meals. A wide variety of options are available -- from creating a picnic from provisions obtained at a boulangerie / patisserie, to dining at bistros and restaurants, or taking meals at your hotel (where available.) Please note that breakfasts are NOT included in France hotel rates. However, hotels with restaurants often offer a demi-pension option, which includes the cost of your room, breakfast, and dinner at a reasonable price.
- Transportation from your home to Sarlat and from Figeac to your home.
- Personal expenses
- Insurance
- **Postage Charges for non-US customers:** The postage required to send your tour materials by US Postal Service Priority Mail will be added to tour orders made from outside the US. This charge averages \$20.00 for delivery within 6 - 10 business days.
- **Expedited Shipping (all nations):** If the shipment of tour materials must be expedited, the express mail charges will be added to the tour package price

For Diverse Directions' payment terms, cancellation policy, and all terms & conditions, please see [Terms & Conditions](#).