



## Wine, Castles, & Cave Paintings Tour Itinerary

### Tour Overview

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

**Location:** The Périgord Region of France. Overnight destinations include St. Emilion, Bergerac, Limeuil, Montignac, and Sarlat. The train trip from Paris' Charles de Gaulle Airport to Libourne requires about 4 hours. Because of the time required to make the return trip to Paris' Charles de Gaulle Airport from Sarlat (7+ hours), you should plan to layover at least 1 night in Paris on the back-end of your tour.

**Tour Type:** Circuit tour.

**Terrain:** Easy to challenging. Long, relatively flat and rolling stretches are the norm. Three long, challenging climbs on Day 3. Of course, following each climb, you'll be rewarded with breathtaking vistas and an exhilarating descent.

**Length:** 7 days / 8 nights

**Distance:** Total: 157 miles / 254 km. Average per day: 31 miles / 50 km.

### Highlights:

- St. Emilion, a 1200 year old stone village set amidst the world's most exclusive vineyards.
- Magnificent medieval castles (English guided tours available) set along the scenic shores of the Dordogne River.
- The Troglodytic cliff dwellings and subtropical vegetation of La Roque-Gageac.
- Phenomenal sites of prehistory including the Grotte du Font de Gaume and Lascaux II caves, home of some of the world's finest prehistoric cave paintings; and Les Eyzies with its much-renowned museum, cave, and cliff-dwellings.
- Visits to seven villages officially classified as among the most beautiful in France.
- The unspoiled beauty of the Valley of the Vézère.
- Enjoy free wine tasting opportunities nearly everywhere along your route.
- Sarlat, perhaps the most extraordinarily restored medieval village in Europe.
- Delight over some of France's finest wines and tastiest cheeses and *fois gras*!

## **About the Region**

The region of Périgord is known for its numerous castles, magnificently preserved medieval villages, vineyards, prehistoric cave dwellings, and tranquil river valleys. Located about 300 miles southwest of Paris and about 70 miles east of Bordeaux, Périgord is signature France! The unspoiled, rolling landscape in this region is so heavily forested that it is known as Black Périgord, black for the darkness created by the large tracks of thick forests.

Its long history is everywhere in evidence -- from its medieval villages with their looming castles, largely unchanged after 500 years, to the prehistoric cave dwellings with their 55,000 year old murals -- present day Périgord is rich with reminders of just how long man has found this region to be Eden. The Dordogne River, long the embattled border between France and England, continues to separate the castles of the once rival nations. But you won't find hostilities now. Instead you'll enjoy tranquil cycling along the quiet, scenic roads that connect the splendidly preserved 15th century villages.

## **Daily Itinerary**

### **Arrive in St. Emilion. Spend 2 nights.**

Arrive in St. Emilion at the time of your choosing. No activities are scheduled for this day.

### **Day 1: Free Day in St. Emilion.**

You have the entire day to explore this gem of a town, to savor its rich ambiance, and to recover from jet lag. You are sure to be awestruck by the beauty of this medieval village's unique setting, which is rather like a sunken amphitheater surrounded by some of the world's most exclusive vineyards. The narrow streets descend steeply past medieval stone buildings that change color with the time of day and the weather. As beautiful as this ancient stone is on a cloud-smattered day, against the clear deep blue southern France sky the light on these stones is breathtaking.

### **Day 2: Bike from St. Emilion to Bergerac - 67 km / 42 miles. Spend 1 night.**

Your rental bike(s) will be delivered following breakfast. Your first day of cycling begins in the vineyards and takes you into the actual *Département* of the Dordogne. You reach the Dordogne River within the first hour of your ride and then continue following its course throughout the day. Enjoy peaceful traffic-free cycling through small villages until you arrive at Bergerac. Bergerac is a sizeable town with a beautifully restored medieval section where you will be staying amidst the half-timbered 14th century houses. Following your ride, enjoy the afternoon exploring this extremely friendly city on foot. You also have the option to visit the castle at nearby Monbazillac.

### **Day 3: Bike from Bergerac to Limeuil - 46 km / 29 miles. Spend 1 night.**

If you thought yesterday's ride was just too indescribably beautiful, you're in for a surprise today. The riverside cycling just gets better and better. And then there's almost 10 kilometers of cycling on the paved towpath of the old Dordogne Canal where you're cycling between the river and canal until you reach the lovely bastide (fortified medieval village) of Lalinde. You'll want to stop here, both to enjoy the village and to rest up before tackling the *cingles*.

The *cingles*, French for buckles, are loops in the river which you will view from two tremendous vantage points along today's route: the *Cingle de Trémolat* and the *Cingle de Limeuil*. The climbs are long, but definitely manageable; and you'll feel most accomplished as you're admiring the stunning vistas. After your first climb you can stop for a snack in the lovely village of Trémolat before beginning your next climbs. After you complete the third (and shortest) climb, you'll descend dramatically into Limeuil. Located at the confluence of the Dordogne and Vézère Rivers, this gorgeous village rises high above the valley with outstanding views of the two rivers. This evening is all about kicking back and enjoying the *joie-de-vivre* that is France.

**Day 4: Limeuil to Montignac- 40 km / 25 miles. Spend 2 nights.**

From Limeuil you'll leave the banks of the Dordogne and begin following the Vézère River. We've kept this day's mileage fairly low to ensure you'll have plenty of time and energy to enjoy the many sights on your way to Montignac. If you're interested in things prehistoric, you'll want to spend some time in Les Ezyies, where you can visit the Museum of Prehistory, a prehistoric cave shelter, and the Grotte de Font-de-Gaume, site of some of France's most famous prehistoric cave paintings.

After leaving Les Ezyies, you'll enjoy particularly dramatic scenery along the cliff-studded banks of the Vézère River. These cliffs are full of caves that have been used as homes for millennia; many of these cave dwellings are open to the public. La-Roque-St-Christophe is particularly magnificent and is set in truly one of the most beautiful spots in all of nature. Just beyond La-Roque-St-Christophe you'll pass through yet another of France's most beautiful villages, Saint-Léon-sur-Vézère. Here you'll want to enjoy a wine and cheese break along the pristine riverfront.

Your cycling day ends in Montignac, home of Lascaux II, the painstakingly created reproduction of France's most important source of cave art. Lascaux II was created when it was discovered that the breath of humans was damaging the paintings of the original. Today, it is open only to scientists, but to continue sharing this awesome human treasure with the public, the French created a world-renowned replica. Montignac is a charming town, beautifully set, and with a wealth of services.

**Day 5: Free Day in Montignac.**

Visit Lascaux, the Château de Losse, and/or any of the sights you missed yesterday. Or perhaps you'll just want to relax by the river and enjoy being a spectator for a while.

**Day 6: Montignac to Sarlat - 45 km / 28 miles. Spend 2 nights.**

From Montignac you make a challenging climb out of the river valley to visit a series of medieval villages -- St.-Armand-de-Coly, Coly, and St. Geniès -- which can be explored at your leisure. Beyond St. Geniès, you'll enjoy pastoral riding that becomes more wooded as you near Sarlat.

Sarlat's entire medieval core has been designated protected status. Wander the medieval streets of this living museum and consider taking one of the published walks on the hillsides surrounding Sarlat. The Tourist Information Office will provide you materials needed to do a self-guided tour walking tour of the old town as well as hillside walks, in English.

**Day 7: 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 53 km / 33 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.

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

## **Tour Price: US \$1025.00 per person**

- **Children's Price** - Children 16 years or younger traveling with 2 adults: \$475.00 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 Saint Emilion and from Sarlat 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](#).