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Chateau de Chantilly

Photos by Circa Tours

## *Paris and the South of France*

Paris - Avignon - Nice  
(13 days - 11 nights)

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# SAMPLE ITINERARY

This is an example of a possible itinerary. It can be resized, reorganized and customized to fit your interests, budget and schedule. It can also be combined with other tours.

## HIGHLIGHTS (13 days - 11 nights)

DAY	ACTIVITIES	NIGHT
1	Leave U.S.	
2	Arrive in <b>Paris</b> . Private airport transfer. Afternoon at leisure	Paris
3	Half-day panoramic tour of Paris. Afternoon at leisure	Paris
4	Day trip to <b>Giverny</b> and <b>Auvers sur Oise</b>	Paris
5	Day trip to the <b>Loire Valley</b>	Paris
6	Day trip to <b>Chantilly</b> and the Living Horse Museum	Paris
7	Day trip to <b>Versailles</b> and <b>Fontainebleau</b>	Paris
8	High-speed train to <b>Avignon</b> . Afternoon at leisure	Avignon
9	Day trip in <b>Provence</b>	Avignon
10	Train to <b>Nice</b> . Half-day art tour	Nice
11	Private day trip of the <b>French Riviera</b>	Nice
12	Explore Nice at leisure (hop-on/off bus)	Nice
13	Private airport transfer. Return to U.S.	

## ITINERARY (for more options, see our “France Highlights”)

**Day 1** - Leave the U.S.

**Day 2** - Arrive in **Paris**. Start your vacation with an airport pickup and check-in at your hotel. Have a leisurely lunch and relax this afternoon or begin exploring the city on your own.

**Day 3** - Start your discovery of Paris with a half-day panoramic tour of the city. On this tour you will view famous Paris monuments: Place de la Concorde, le Louvre, the Seine River and its bridges, French Academy, Isle de la Cite with the Palace of Justice and Notre-Dame Cathedral (stop and free time), Hôtel de Ville (City Hall), the Latin Quarter with the Sorbonne and the Pantheon, Arc de Triomphe, Champs-Élysées, the Eiffel Tower (stop to take pictures), Invalides with the dome of Napoleon’s tomb and the Opera House. Walking tour in Montmartre on your own. Afternoon at leisure. See our “France Highlights” for suggestions.

**Day 4** - Next is a full-day visit to Claude Monet's house, an icon of Impressionism. On this **Giverny** tour, you will discover the famous Japanese bridge, the lily pond and the colorful world of the master of Impressionism. The “Musée des Impressionnistes” nearby is not to be missed.



Then on to **Auvers sur Oise** for a guided tour of the village where **Vincent Van Gogh** lived the last hundred days of his life and where he painted some of his most famous paintings. Visit of Auberge Ravoux to see the bedroom where he died.

**Day 5** - The Renaissance castles of France are as plentiful as they are beautiful and the Loire Valley, where they abound, is but a short trip from Paris. Start this “Renaissance day” with a tour of the royal castle of **Amboise**, which was the preferred residence of the royal court during the 15th century. Then, about a mile away, visit the **Clos Lucé**, where Leonardo da Vinci lived until his death in 1519. Models of machines he designed are on display inside the castle and on the grounds.





This enchanting morning is followed by lunch at the restaurant "L'Orangerie" at the Chenonceau castle. Typical menu of assorted market products: chicken with crawfish sauce, cheese, baked Alaska "Chenonceau" and wine from the surrounding Touraine region. Afternoon visit of flamboyant **Chenonceau** castle built over the scenic River Cher in pure traditional Renaissance style. On the way back to Paris, stop in **Chambord** for a panoramic view of the castle.

**Day 6** - Today's visit is to another Renaissance-style chateau, **Chantilly**, formerly owned by Le Grand Condé, a cousin of Louis XIV, and originally built in the 16th century. Although most of it was destroyed during the French Revolution, it was rebuilt in the 1870s. Its boasts a substantial museum displaying the second most important collection of paintings and drawings in France. The gardens around it are similar to those at Versailles but on a smaller scale. Enjoy lunch at "La Capitainerie du Château de Chantilly" restaurant. Chantilly is also famous for its race track next to the castle. So, after lunch, visit the Great Stables with its remarkable **Living Horse Museum** and attend an equestrian show with riders performing in traditional costumes.

**Day 7** - A trip to **Versailles** and **Fontainebleau** will complete your tour of the most popular castles in France. Enjoy a morning visit of the Palace of Versailles, a grandiose reminder of the power of King Louis XIV, known as the Sun King. The impressive classical architecture and the extravagant decorations of the State Apartments (Hall of Mirrors and Queen's apartments) vividly reveal to opulent lifestyle of the French court and its most famous monarchs, including Marie-Antoinette. Free time to stroll around the famous French gardens after the visit.

Afternoon visit of the Fontainebleau Palace, another lavish Renaissance style building and a favorite residence of many French Kings as well as Napoleon. Guided visit of the palace and free time to enjoy the beautiful gardens. Drive through the quaint village of **Barbizon**, known for the mid-1900s realist "School of Barbizon" and its most famous painter, Jean-Francois Millet.



**Day 8** - Hop on the smooth riding high-speed train to **Provence** this morning. Relax and enjoy the scenery as you cross the regions of Ile de France, Burgundy, Beaujolais and Rhone/Alpes on your way to Avignon. The afternoon is yours to explore the historic city, the Palais des Papes, the famous Pont d'Avignon, etc.

**Day 9** - Discover the highlights of **Provence** today : Ancient Roman architecture at the Pont du Gard aqueduct and the coliseum of **Arles**, where Vincent van Gogh lived for a short time; perched villages of the Alpilles (**les Baux de Provence** and **St Remy**) and the **Luberon** (Gordes and Roussillon), classified as some of the "most beautiful villages of France"; the quaint, medieval village of Fontaine de Vaucluse with its amazing river gushing out of the ground; and the beautiful lavender fields at flowering time (July/August). A day of excursions through the ages and some of the most picturesque scenery anywhere.

**Day 10** - Leave quaint Provence behind and on to "glitzy" **French Riviera** by train this morning. This afternoon, visit three of the best tourist destinations on the Riviera: The **Villa Ephrussi de Rothschild** located on the idyllic Cap Ferrat peninsula. Enjoy a leisurely stroll around the villa's exquisitely colored gardens. In Nice, on Cimiez Hill, drive by the residential neighborhood where Queen Victoria used to stay during the winter. On to the **Chagall Museum** which displays some of the artist's best paintings inspired by scenes from the Old Testament. Then visit the nearby **Matisse Museum**, with the world's largest collection of the master's works housed in a beautiful 17th-century Mediterranean villa.



**Day 11** - You have a private chauffeur all to yourself today and you can choose any visits you want within the time frame, from Cannes to the Italian border - including Monaco. Here are some suggestions:

One of the biggest reasons for visiting the French Riviera is modern art,

and there is lots of it everywhere: museums, galleries, outdoor sculptures, you name it. Another reason is the Mediterranean ambiance and “joie de vivre” - a mixture of scenery, architecture, ancient villages, food, beach life, music, etc. Here’s a list of things to see when you get there.

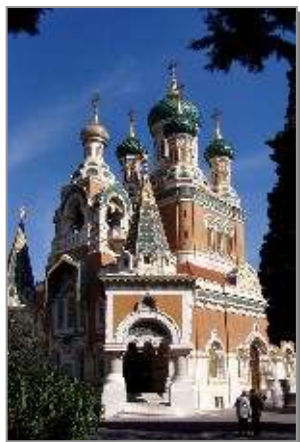


- **Nice - Musée des Beaux Arts.** Art from the 17<sup>th</sup> to 20<sup>th</sup> century with works by Jules Cheret, Raoul Dufy, Kees van Dongen, Eugene Boudin, Auguste Rodin among others plus ceramics by Picasso, displayed in a sumptuous neo-classical villa.
- **Nice - Musée d'Art Moderne.** Avant-garde works by Andy Warhol, Nikki de Saint Phalle, Jean Tinguely, Yves Klein, Christo and other modern artists in an ultra modern setting.
- **Nice - Matisse Museum.** The world’s largest collection of the master’s works housed in a beautiful 17<sup>th</sup>-century Mediterranean villa.
- **Nice - Chagall's Biblical Museum.** The museum was built specifically for this copious collection of Chagall’s brightly colored paintings inspired by scenes from the Old Testament.
- **Nice - The tramway stations,** a dozen or so of them decorated with whimsical modern murals and sculptures from living artists (some of these works are best seen at night).
- **St Paul-de-Vence - Maeght Foundation** (Jose Luis Sert, architect). Modern art by nearly every major artist of the 20<sup>th</sup> century: Sculptures by Miro, Giacometti, Calder and others are scattered all around the shaded lawns and gardens. Equally impressive collection on the inside: Chagall, Braque, Fernand Leger, etc.
- **Antibes - Picasso Museum,** located in the Chateau Grimaldi where the artist worked in 1946. Over 200 of his works are shown there: paintings, ceramics, tiles, vases, plates, etc.
- **Biot - Fernand Leger Museum** featuring a works by the early 20<sup>th</sup>-century artist, including a sizeable collection of paintings, mosaics, stained-glass windows and more.
- **Menton - Jean Cocteau Museum,** just before the Italian border. This seaside museum located in a 17<sup>th</sup>-century fortress highlights Cocteau’s many talents: artist, dramatist, poet, and filmmaker.
- **La Napoule/Cannes - Henry Clews Museum.** Unusual art by a lesser-known turn-of-the-century American artist (Rodin was an acquaintance of his). Beautiful gardens with fountains and topiary surrounding an austere seaside fortress.
- **Cagnes-sur-Mer - Renoir's House/Museum.** The artist lived there from 1907 to 1919. The villa displays a handful of his works and his studio can be visited (no abstract art here but well worth the visit)



Chapels decorated by famous artists:

- **Vence - Matisse's Chapel of the Rosary** (Le Corbusier, architect). Quintessential late Matisse. A modest chapel with some of his most simplified designs.
- **Vallauris - Picasso's War and Peace Chapel and Museum.** Murals depicting war on one side and peace on the other. The subject and style are reminiscent of his famous Guernica painting.
- **Villefranche - Jean Cocteau's Chapelle St Pierre.** A 17<sup>th</sup>-century chapel decorated with elegant frescoes.
- **Le Cannet/Cannes - Tobiasse's Chapelle St Sauveur.** Brightly colorful murals using a different kind of modern-day bas-reliefs painted with absolutely stunning results.
- **Menton - Jean Cocteau’s Wedding Room.** More elegant frescoes by the French artist.



Other places of interest not related to art:

- **Nice - Russian Orthodox Cathedral.** Built in early 20<sup>th</sup> century by Czar Nicholas II, complete with onion domes, gilded icons and colorful frescoes. Unusual for the area but an amazing building.
- **Nice - Promenade des Anglais.** A four-mile beach-side boulevard lined with grand hotels and other fine buildings.

- **Old Nice** with colorful Belle Epoque buildings, ornate baroque churches, narrow streets, a flower market and alluring shops.
- **Cap Ferrat - The villa of Baroness Ephrussi de Rothschild.** An extravagant pastel-pink palazzo with opulent interiors and nine gorgeous gardens (French, Spanish, Florentine, roses, rare trees, exotic...) all decorated with fountains (some musical), ponds, statuary and shaded paths.
- **Cap Ferrat - Villa Kerilos.** A perfect replica of an ancient Greek villa from the island of Delos.
- **Grasse - "Perfumeries"** (Fragonard, Gallimard and Molinard). These functioning production facilities are open for visits (and smell tests), as is the nearby International Perfume Museum owned by the city of Grasse.
- **Monaco - The Exotic Gardens** with thousands of cacti and succulents growing on a steep cliff-side garden with magnificent views of the Mediterranean. Watch the changing of the guard at the Prince's Palace (every day at 11:55 am). Other visits in Monaco: the Monte-Carlo Casino designed by Charles Garnier, the architect of the Neo-Baroque Opera Garnier in Paris; and the Musee Oceanographique et Aquarium.
- **La Turbie,** high above Monaco. Ancient village and monument to Augustus Caesar with views of the Mediterranean.
- **Eze.** A touristy but very pretty village with exotic gardens and a castle on top of a promontory overlooking the Mediterranean (on a clear day you can see Corsica).
- **Vallauris.** Pottery shops and artists at work.
- **Biot.** Glass works and glass blowers at work.
- **Cannes.** The old town.
- **La Mortola, Italy - The Hanbury Gardens** (only a few miles over the border). Tranquil and luscious gardens with views of the Mediterranean and over 5,800 species of ornamental plants.



**Day 12** - Explore Nice at leisure today. Enjoy fantastic views of the city from the top deck of a hop-on-hop-off bus. Get off as often as you please at any of the 11 stops. Discover Nice at your own pace: the "Promenade des Anglais", Cimiez monastery, the Mont Boron, etc. and perhaps do some shopping.

**Day 13** - Private airport transfer. Return to U.S.

Hello, my name is **Pierre Mainguené**. I personally handcrafted this itinerary.



I am the co-founder and president of Circa Tours. I was born and raised in Brittany, France so, as a native European, I love everything about the "old country" especially France, Spain and Portugal, the three countries we specialize in. I love their history (and there is lots of it), their art (same thing), their cuisine (especially in France, Catalonia and the Basque Country), their wine (everywhere), their lifestyle and the endless diversity of the local cultures.

In dozens of trips I have taken to Europe, I have traveled to nearly every corner of those countries, and I continue my journey of discovery every year. I am a Travel-Institute certified France and Spain Specialist, and I am also recognized by the Tourist Office of Portugal as a certified Portugal Specialist.

My goal is to create the best possible trip for you. I am always ready to listen to your wishes (however creative) and feedback, and I will always enjoy sharing my experiences with you.

That's me, by the way, in front of a Joaquin Sorolla painting in Madrid. And, the following are some comments made by a few of our clients:

- “Our trip was fantastic! We had such a wonderful time! All went well including getting our train tickets to Seville changed the day of the strike. Our guides were nothing less than phenomenal! We can't thank you and your staff enough for putting together a trip that was worthy of our 30th anniversary celebration!” M.B., Massachusetts
- “Pierre. Thank you for your services. I really enjoyed dealing with you. You are so knowledgeable, pleasant and professional. I certainly will recommend you to friends.” J.L., Colorado
- “It was not a good trip - it was a GREAT trip! Truly everything was fabulous, ran smoothly, and worked well. The guides were excellent, the itinerary perfect. We enjoyed Spain very much and will ask you for assistance on our next journey to southern Europe!” J.K., California
- “Circa Tours did a good job. They worked very closely with us in putting the program together. We were very pleased with how efficient everything ran. The information we received from Circa Tours was done up very well, which allowed us to just pull the appropriate paperwork and be on our way. The tours were very well done. The guides we had with the local travel providers did a very good job of explaining the areas we toured. Pierre at Circa Tours made sure we saw a bit of everything.” D.T., Florida
- “We are all home, safe and sound - very tired, but in a hazy daze of love for France. Thank you and Carolyn SO much for arranging such an amazing trip for all of us. Throughout the trip, my sisters, mom and myself could be heard saying such things as, “THANK YOU, PIERRE”...or, “thank goodness for Pierre!!!” Martine was an excellent guide, by the way...very good, nice, thorough and professional. We wouldn't have been able to do HALF of what we did (and certainly not with nearly as much carefree enjoyment) with out her. Thank you and Carolyn for all of you expertise and care in helping us and doing all of the hard work for us! Thank you! Thank you!!!” K.B., Iowa