

FRANCE

OFF THE BEATEN PATH

World Leader in Small



Group Travel in France

ACTIVE CULTURAL & CULINARY ADVENTURES IN THE
Loire Valley

Off the Beaten Path celebrates 31 years in 2025 offering guided, small group luxury walking and gourmet foodie tours to France.

WEBSITE - <https://www.traveloffthebeatenpath.com>

Embark on our most historically rich tour, the guided, small group Loire Valley Castles and Gourmet Tour, a true gem thanks to our long-standing presence in the Loire Valley region and our exclusive local relationships with the region's most highly recognized professionals. Our personal connections with the Loire Valley's renowned Michelin-star and Master Chefs, wine-makers, and specialty artisans, who are also personal friends, make this tour a truly distinctive and privileged experience. We cherish our local Loire Valley friends and the partnerships we've built over the years. Discover the Loire together with us through our eyes, warmly welcomed to the homes, professional kitchens, and workshops of our friends. Step back in time each day of our Loire Valley Tour, enjoying racy stories of obsession, love, lust, and deception. You will truly feel like you are strolling through the pages of a storybook. Our specialist guides recount sketchy stories, the dirty dish, gossip of the kings, queens, and their courts, and factual events of French history uniquely and entertainingly.



Experience the intimate charm of the back roads of Loire Valley, France, with us during this 6 day/5 night, active, small group tour. This region of France offers an enriching opportunity to discover both spectacular Medieval and Renaissance history and to make many great memories meeting and spending time with our local French friends. Our daily visits, activities, and excursions unveil magical and sometimes mythical and gruesome stories of everything that was happening behind closed doors at the French royal court and in society. By the end of the tour, you will be wholly transformed and have a new appreciation for these historical periods and the characters who animated them. Our years of connections and insider access to the region's people, places, and events have earned us an exceptional reputation as authorities on everything cultural in the Loire Valley. We use our "savoir-faire" to ensure you experience the best of the region, its castles, history, and people in a fun and memorable small group environment. Through our combination of active, cultural, and personalized authentic local French experiences, you will feel like you just spent a week with a beautiful group of friends rather than having been on a tour.

EXPERIENCE INSPIRING ITINERARIES, EXCEPTIONAL QUALITY, AND EXCELLENT VALUE!

And, Off the Beaten Path France Tours are Recommended by Best Selling Author PJ Adams as her Tour of Choice to Discover the Loire Valley Region!!

Traveling on a group tour to France is a fabulous choice for a European vacation experience whether you are a first time traveler to France or a seasoned traveler to the country.

 **TRUSTPILOT**  - FRANCE OFF THE BEATEN PATH IS PARTNERED WITH TRUSTPILOT, an independent review platform to collect “independent” traveler reviews about our tours of Provence, Loire Valley, Bordeaux, Champagne, as well as our Specialty and Limited Edition Tours!

Read candid “independent” tour reviews! [TRUSTPILOT TOUR REVIEWS](#)

- Our sole focus and specialty is and always has been dedicated to small group travel in France – **WE KNOW FRANCE BEST!**
- In 2025, we celebrate 31 YEARS EXPERIENCE leading tours exclusively in France.
- Our exclusive relationships with every one of our vendors in France makes these tours truly the trip of a lifetime!
- The most popular small group tours in France, we include “insider” experiences that other tour companies cannot offer.
- Our tours sell out year after year thanks to our exclusive benefits, exceptional quality, and excellent value.
- We are proud to be named travelers #1 choice for group travel for two decades!

Book one of our small group tours today to discover for yourself why our exclusive France tours have been named **TRAVELERS #1**

CHOICE FOR GROUP TRAVEL FOR TWO DECADES!

WEBSITE - <https://www.traveloffthebeatenpath.com>

Loire Valley Castles & Gourmet Foodie Tour



BY OFF THE BEATEN PATH, LLC

**** THE ITNERARY SHORT VERSION ****
6 DAYS/5 NIGHTS

HOTEL ACCOMMODATIONS : 4-STAR HOTEL PAVILLON DES LYS

DAY 1: GROUP PICK-UP, HOTEL CHECK-IN, LOIRE RIVER FLOAT, COCKTAILS & DINNER ON A PRIVATE ISLAND ON LOIRE RIVER - D

Meet at Saint Pierre des Corps rail station (Tours, France) at 2:00 PM for transfer to our hotel. Check-in at our 4-star Hotel – Le Pavillon des Lys in historic Amboise for the 6 day/5 night – (NO HOTEL HOPPING – We Stay in 1 Boutique Hotel Owned by Local Friends for the Entire Tour). Travelers take a TGV (high speed) train from either Paris Charles de Gaulle Airport or Gare de Montparnasse in downtown Paris to reach the Saint Pierre des Corps rail station.

LATE AFTERNOON: Winding our way along the Loire River, our next stop of the day is the port of Chaumont-sur-Loire where we'll meet up with local friend Aurelien along the banks of the Loire River. Aurelien welcomes us aboard his traditional wooden, flat bottom boat, called a "toue," for a **float down the Loire River** taking in the beautiful landscapes, wildlife and unparalleled views of the castles sprinkled along the river banks. We'll float peacefully along our route enjoying a welcome "aperitif" and orientation to the week's activities before arriving to a private island on the river for a magical privately hosted dinner. Afterwards we continue down river arriving in Amboise village with a beautiful view of the Royal Castle of Amboise at sunset.

DINNER: Privately hosted dinner together prepared by one of our favorite chefs of the region on a private island on the Loire River.

DAY #2 – CHENONCEAU CASTLE & GARDENS, COOKING CLASS WITH FRIEND DAMIEN, WINE & CHEESE TASTING, GOURMET DINNER TOGETHER – B, D

BREAKFAST.

MORNING: We depart to the **Castle and Gardens of Chenonceau**. A castle shaped by women, this castle represents the greatest accomplishments of royal women during the French Renaissance. Enjoy untold stories of the most powerful and influential women at the French court, Queens and their love affairs, royal seduction, secret world of favorites and mistresses, the first ever fireworks display in France, extravagant parties and deception, and how royal debt led to the negotiation of a marriage to save the castle from being confiscated by the French state.

LUNCH: Independently in Amboise.

COOKING CLASS

Hands-on cooking class and demonstration with friend, Michelin-star Chef Damien G. in his professional kitchen. Damien is a Michelin star chef with experience that has taken him on culinary adventures around the world. After having traveled extensively to places such as Cyprus and Moscow, he returned to his native Loire Valley to share his culinary experience and knowledge. Cooking class is both hands-on and a demonstration of recipes. No Experience Necessary!

WINE & CHEESE TASTING

CULTURAL EXPERIENCE – A “Tour de France” French wine and cheese tasting wraps up our cooking class experience. Learn very important details about the history and production of cheese in France. We’ll taste a variety of cheeses accompanied by regional wines.

The **FOCUS** is on discovering favorite recipes of this beautiful region and indulging in the French wine and cheese tasting and learning more about French cheeses with our Chef. This activity is designed for all interest levels from the beginner to the more experienced. Following class, we toast the evening with a cocktail followed by a gourmet dinner together of recipes prepared and demonstrated in class.

DINNER: Following class, we toast the evening with a cocktail followed by a gourmet dinner together of recipes prepared in class.

DAY #3 – MORNING: CHAMBORD CASTLE & GARDENS, AMBOISE VILLAGE, FREE TIME AND CLOS LUCE, HOSTED GOURMET PICNIC – B, D

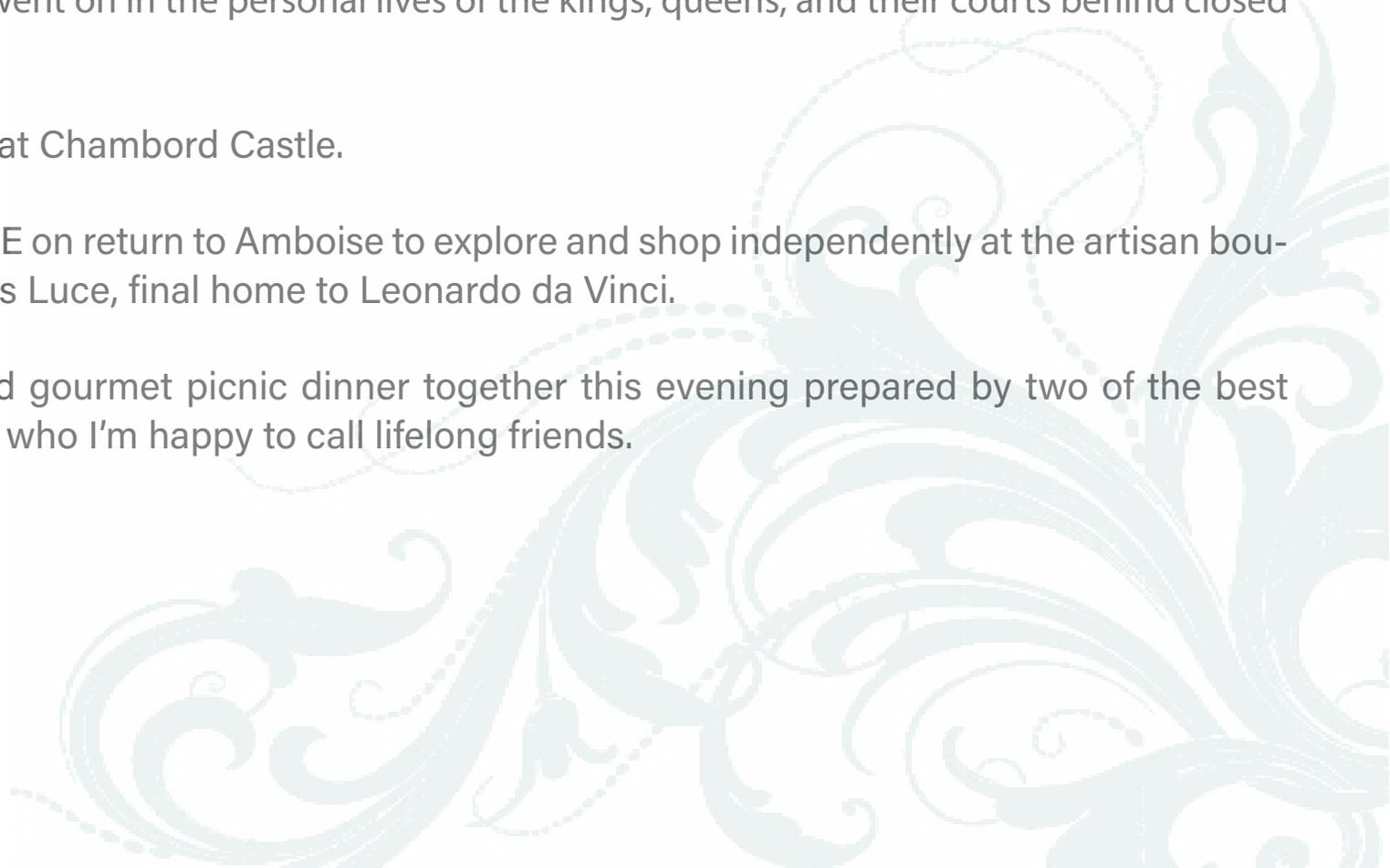
BREAKFAST.

MORNING - CHAMBORD CASTLE & GARDENS - We depart to Chambord Castle. There will be an introduction to the history of Chambord Castle and the region as it existed during the reign and presence in the Loire of the House of Valois and early Bourbon kings. We share stories about two of France's most influential Kings, Francis I and Louis XIV, their royal lifestyles, and personal guests at the castle, as well as steamy stories of what went on in the personal lives of the kings, queens, and their courts behind closed doors.

LUNCH: Independently at Chambord Castle.

AFTERNOON: FREE TIME on return to Amboise to explore and shop independently at the artisan boutiques and/or visit Le Clos Luce, final home to Leonardo da Vinci.

DINNER: Privately hosted gourmet picnic dinner together this evening prepared by two of the best loved Chefs of the region who I'm happy to call lifelong friends.



DAY #4 – VIP WINERY TOUR, TASTING & DISCOVERY AT FRIENDS FRED & LOUISA’S WINERY, PRIVATELY HOSTED WINE TASTING LUNCH AT HOME, ROYAL CASTLE OF AMBOISE – B, L

BREAKFAST.

MORNING: WINERY TOUR, TASTING & PRIVATELY HOSTED LUNCH AT HOME: An exclusive invitation to tour our friends Fred and Louisa’s winery where we’ll go behind the scenes to learn about Touraine wines and the labor of love this couple has poured into their passion for wine-making. Enjoy tasting their world-renowned wines in addition to some new to market wines they’ve begun producing.

To top off this exclusive experience, we partake of a traditional French aperitif (cocktail) in the sitting room of their family home, an 18th-century chateau, followed by a privately hosted lunch in the family dining room. Fred’s family has been in the wine-making business since the 15th century. Having spent his childhood learning the wine trade, from growing to vineyard management to production and delivery to market, local wine producer, friend Fred and his wife Louisa welcome us to their family winery and home as personal friends for this exclusive behind the scenes experience.

AFTERNOON: AMBOISE CASTLE & GARDENS Amboise played a strategic role during the reign of the Valois Kings and their occupation in the Loire Valley during the Medieval and Renaissance periods. Nothing is more spectacular than to both journey through history accompanied by sketchy stories of the private lives of the French Kings, Queens and their courts during our visit, and to discover that there was so much more to royal life than military campaigns and political allegiances.

Royal Amboise Castle Our day begins at the fairy tale, Royal Castle of Amboise, a spectacular masterpiece where you’ll hear tales of love, heartbreak, vengeance, gore, and power struggles. The castle reflects all of the refinements of Gothic and Renaissance architecture and embodies the qualities of a traditional French royal chateau. Following our visit, make the most of your time by taking a short stroll through Amboise to visit the famous Clos Luce, former home of Leonardo da Vinci who lived the last years of his life here as guest of French King Francis I.

DINNER - INDEPENDENTLY IN AMBOISE. Guides will offer recommendations. Stroll through the village, enjoy cocktails at sunset overlooking the Loire River and dinner at one of the many favorite places in the village.

DAY #5 – MORNING: MORNING: ROYAL BLOIS CASTLE & TOWN, COOKING AT HOME CULINARY CLASS WITH FAMILY FRIENDS CHRISTOPHE & ANGELIQUE, FAREWELL DINNER AT OUR CHEFS' FAMILY HOME – B, D

BREAKFAST.

BLOIS CASTLE - MORNING: Guided tour of BLOIS CASTLE followed by time to explore the castle and historic town at leisure. We'll share stories about some of the most note worthy events of French history: the dreadful death of two Queens, two marriages that would forever change the future of France, important accomplishments by the French monarchy, an assassination, 2 sisters, details of daily life during the Renaissance, more royal obsessions and decrees, and quirky facts about royal marriage and death.

LUNCH: Independently in Blois.

COOKING CLASS AT HOME - EVENING: Fun, hands-on evening preparing dinner with our friends, Master Chef Angelique and "Meilleur Ouvrier de France" (MOF) and Master Chef Christophe at their family home. Tonight we cook with two of France's highest rated Chefs. Christophe worked alongside his friend, celebrity Chef Alain Ducasse on the development of Ducasse's new worldwide culinary project and "Ecole de Cuisine" concept, and is also Vice President of the Meilleur Ouvrier de France culinary competition. Christophe's wife, Angelique, is a Professeur de Cuisine in the Val de Loire region. Both are passionate about the culinary arts, and have received top awards from and along with Paul Bocuse, Alain Ducasse and Joel Robuchon. Christophe is currently featured on gourmet television in France, as one of the Loire Valley's most highly recognized Chefs.

During our dinner preparation: We will prepare a gourmet aperitif and dinner of local Loire Valley recipes together over a glass of wine and social time sharing what French life is truly like at home. Our Loire Valley Tour guests will have the great pleasure of partaking in an "aperitif dinatoire", as we call it in French, of the gourmet goodies prepared together. You will also learn how to prepare the award winning, regional "Tarte Tatin" dessert with Christophe. *No Experience Necessary!* This evening is designed to appeal to all interest levels from the beginner to the more experienced, and if cooking isn't your thing, enjoy local wine as we chat the evening away with our French friends.

DINNER - Cooking class, drinks and dinner at Christophe and Angelique's home is a fabulous way to celebrate a fun week together in the Loire Valley!

Loire Valley Itinerary – DAY #6 - B

BREAKFAST.

10:00 AM - Group transfer to the Saint Pierre des Corps rail station (Tours, France). If you have made your own departure arrangements and are not departing with the group or need an earlier or later departure, please be sure to inform your guide in advance.

(B) = BREAKFAST INCLUDED, (L) = LUNCH INCLUDED, (D) = DINNER INCLUDED



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FOR ADDITIONAL INFORMATION, VISIT OUR WEBSITE:

<https://www.traveloffthebeatenpath.com>

- Off the Beaten Path, LLC is an American owned and operated company licensed and bonded to protect your vacation investment.
- Off the Beaten Path, LLC holds a website identity assurance warranty of \$100,000. Travelers are insured for up to \$100,000 per tour reservation booking when relying on the information provided by GeoTrust IdAuthority (Equifax Secure Certificate Authority) on our website.

OFF THE BEATEN PATH, LLC

EMAIL: franceotbp@gmail.com

Telephone: 1.717.683.2827

Reservation Office & Mailing Address: 749 Grandview Rd., York, PA 17403, USA

Branch Offices in Bordeaux & Saint Remy-de-Provence

Loire Valley Tour PRICE INCLUDES:

- Fully Guided sightseeing, walks, excursions, and cultural visits throughout the tour by professional Off the Beaten Path, LLC (OTBP) Company Tour Guides. OTBP Guides are UNESCO award winners, contributors to Loire Valley Travel Guidebooks, and are accomplished authors. OTBP Tour guides are professional France history and Loire Valley-specific history specialists who make learning the tidbits, gossip, anecdotes and stories of France fun and memorable throughout the tour.
- 5 nights — **NO HOTEL HOPPING!** — at 4-Star boutique Hotel Le Pavillon des Lys in historical Amboise, and is owned and operated by our personal friends Guillaume & Julia.
- **10 Meals Included** – 5 breakfasts, 1 lunch, 1 Hosted Foodie Aperitif dinatoire, 3 dinners.
- All premium wines and non-alcoholic beverages at group meals!
- All entry/participation fees for all castle tours, activities, and excursions detailed in the itinerary.
- Roundtrip transfers on Day 1 and Day 6 of the tour : Day 1 – Transfer provided from St. Pierre des Corps TGV rail station at 3 pm. Day 6 – 10 am Transfer provided to St. Pierre des Corps TGV rail station.
- Bottled water provided daily.
- All ground transportation throughout the tour.
- **-COMFORT ZONE-** Designed for the interests of and to appeal to BOTH WALKERS & NON-WALKERS alike — this is a leisure walking tour.

NOT INCLUDED IN THE PRICE – International airfare to/from France, roundtrip train fare to/from the starting/ending point for the tour, 3 lunches, 1 dinner, gratuities to guides, professional driver, hotel staff, personal purchases.

AUTHENTIC LOIRE VALLEY EXPERIENCES! Spend 6 days experiencing the Loire Valley like family friends going beyond tourist hotspots to meet and spend time with some of France's best loved and highly recognized artisans, chefs, and winery owners who are our family friends, and welcome you to their workshops, kitchens, and family homes for authentic and fun French experiences unlike any other!

FRANCE

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World Leader in Small  *Group Travel in France*

2025 - LOIRE VALLEY TOUR DATES AND PRICES

2025 TOUR DATES - PRICE - [CLICK HERE TO REVIEW THE ****2025**** TOUR SCHEDULE!](#)



Hotel PAVILLON DES LYS

Pavillon des Lys has been voted one of the BEST 4-star boutique hotels in the Loire Valley! Each of the nine beautifully appointed rooms of this 4-star boutique hotel are decorated in it's own unique style. As this is a historic building that has been transformed into a boutique hotel, no two rooms are alike in size, decor or furnishings. Rooms are spacious and vary in style and design. Each room at our Loire Valley tour hotel includes a large king/queen size bed or two twin beds and private en-suite bathroom with all modern amenities (shower/tub, toilet, toiletries, hair dryer, etc.). Some rooms offer a view of the Castle of Amboise. The hotel is not equipped with an elevator.

DAILY BREAKFAST: Enjoy a traditional French breakfast each morning either in the dining room or on the garden terrace before we head out for a day of fun excursions and activities. The hotel breakfast features all of the traditional French goodies including croissants, pain au chocolat (chocolate croissants), fresh baguette breads, fresh fruit salad, yoghurts, a variety of cereals to choose from, plus a selection of French cheeses, fresh fruit juices, and hot beverages such as coffee, tea and hot chocolate. French breakfast differs greatly from the style of breakfast in your home country — there are no pancakes or omelettes, etc in a French breakfast, and France does not have breakfast restaurants.

The Pavillon des Lys is located in the historic center of the Royal town of Amboise — in the heart of the Touraine, known best as the Loire Valley. Its location in the town center, right next to Amboise Castle and the Clos Lucé Manor, which was the the last residence of Leonardo da Vinci, makes the hotel the perfect and ideal selection for our 6-day tour in the Loire Valley. Guests can step out the door of the hotel into the town's cobblestone streets to explore Amboise and discover the town's artisan shops and cafes during leisure time. The owners of our Loire Valley Tour hotel welcome Off the Beaten Path guests, as distinguished friends to their hotel.

There is NEVER ANY HOTEL HOPPING on any Off the Beaten Path Tours. All Tours are home-based, meaning we stay at 1 hotel for the entire tour.

All accommodations on Off the Beaten Path, LLC small group tours offer a charming and historical environment in combination with complete and comprehensive modern amenities and services, and are centrally located to the activities and excursions scheduled for each of our tours. All accommodations on Off the Beaten Path tours of France include large comfortable beds (queen or king size) and fully-equipped, private, en-suite bathrooms.



ACTIVITY RATING: 95% Easy, 5% Moderate.

TOUR BEGINS: Day 1 - Transfer provided from Saint Pierre des Corps rail station to our hotel in Amboise at 2 pm.

TOUR ENDS: Day 6 - Transfer provided from our hotel to Saint Pierre des Corps rail station for 10 am.

Walking Ratings FOR LOIRE VALLEY TOURS

Always enjoyable walking on Off the Beaten Path Tours - Nomatter which of our active, small group tours you join, you can expect to know, in advance, the level of difficulty of the walks scheduled during each tour. We also provide flexible options daily for non-walkers.

EVERY OFF THE BEATEN PATH TOUR VACATION IS DESIGNED TO MEET A WIDE VARIETY OF GUEST FITNESS LEVELS.

EACH WALK IS CATEGORIZED USING THE SYSTEM BELOW.

EASY: Relatively flat terrain. Well-kept paths. Fine for even occasional walkers.

- Average walk distance: 2–5 miles
- Average walking time: Up to 3 hours

EASY TO MODERATE: Ideal for those who walk for a morning or afternoon on a regular basis. Footing may be a variety of surfaces --mostly vineyard and country trails. No extended ascents or descents.

- Average walk distance: 4–6 miles
- Average walking time: Up to 4 hours

MODERATE: Suitable for experienced walkers who are comfortable with ascents and descents (but no scrambling!). Uneven terrain possible. Vineyard, country and gravel trails.

- Average daily distance: 5-8 miles
- Average walking time: up to 4-5 hours

LOIRE VALLEY TOURS ARE RATED AS FOLLOWS:

- **ALL TOUR GUESTS** - ALL TOUR GUESTS – There is extensive leisure walking daily on this tour. Guests need to be able to walk from our drop off points to castles, through castles during visits, as well as manage standing for short periods of time during visits and story telling at the castles. Guests need to also be able to manage steps and uneven sidewalk terrain throughout the tour at castles and in villages. There are no elevators or escalators available to our groups at the chateaux (castles). This tour is not suitable for anyone with mobility issues.
- **TOUR RATING** - Tour Rating = EASY. Tour involves only daily leisure walking at castles and in villages.

NOT JUST A TOUR: IT'S AN **AUTHENTIC** OFF THE BEATEN PATH *French Experience...*

Unrivaled expertise within France sets Off the Beaten Path, LLC apart from non-France based and multi-destination tour companies. Off the Beaten Path, LLC (OTBP) is American owned and operated. In 2025, the company celebrates 31 years delivering small, engaging group, walking, gourmet foodie, wine and cultural tours exclusively in France. OTBP active, small group France tours offer travelers the very BEST, and most inspiring and exclusive itineraries filled with cultural “insider” experiences to discover Provence, Loire Valley, Bordeaux, Champagne, Normandy, and Dordogne, France.

Enjoy exceptional quality and excellent value on an OTBP small group tour today! Travelers and publications rate Off the Beaten Path Tours the BEST active, small group tours in France thanks to the unparalleled “insider” experiences featured in each tour itinerary. The company’s renowned “insider” relationships with regional French chefs, artisans, and cultural industry professionals put Off the Beaten Path far ahead of the competition when it comes to creating one-of-a-kind itineraries to experience the very BEST of France! Whether you’re a seasoned small group tour traveler, or new to the small group tour scene, Off the Beaten Path tours offer fun, enriching, interactive, local, and authentic French experiences and activities for everyone.

More than just a tour, Off the Beaten Path, transforms the entire guest experience into a personalized and exclusive “unparalleled” active, cultural affair that far exceeds guest expectations! We connect guests with lifelong, French friends who rank among France’s top-rated chefs, specialty artisans, artists, wine producers, hotel & castle owners, and entertainers! Expert Professional English speaking guides who live in France, inspiring itineraries, deluxe historical hotel accommodations, sumptuous French meals, classified regional wines, and comfortable transportation in private, spacious, professionally driven vehicles are immutable standards on every Off the Beaten Path Tour. Each tour itinerary is comprised of a variety of engaging activities and enriching experiences for guests to authentically discover the heart and soul of each region. Participate in cooking classes with our friends who are celebrity Master, Meilleur Ouvrier de France, and Michelin-star chefs who look forward to your arrival, and make you feel welcome in their family homes, professional kitchens, and workshops as a group of friends.

Shop at weekly village markets where OTBP tour guides introduce you to our French friends who are olive oil and wine producers, artists, cheese-makers, herb and spice vendors, craftsmen, perfumery and linen artisans, and designers. Walk the same countryside and vineyard trails that regional French residents do with their families. Enjoy the slow road scenery that comes with walking local country trails through vineyards, flower fields of lavender, poppies, and sunflowers, olive and fruit orchards, and small historic villages. Tour castles, pre-historic caves, and other historical monuments and sites with our knowledgeable, professional UNESCO award-winning guides. Learn the juicy, fun untold stories of French history! Dine in the same gourmet restaurants and bistros, as local French do — where the chefs are our personal friends and set aside a table uniquely to welcome you as their exclusive guests. Built-in leisure time provides guests with opportunities to pursue independent interests and activities or to break away from the group for some quiet or personal time.

Every OTBP tour offers daily options with varying levels of activeness. You always have the flexibility of deciding how each day unfolds. OTBP tour guides sit down with the group every day to discuss the activities, excursions, walks, local events, and options of the day. With so many options available during each tour, we ensure you the flexibility to be as active as you choose (more walking, less walking, shopping time, cultural discovery, people watching, photography, etc.), and to also enjoy leisure time to pursue independent interests, all while enjoying the perks of traveling in a small group. Our tour guides take care and manage the daily logistics and details while you, our guest, spend your time on the critical stuff — having fun, relaxing and enjoying your vacation your way! The idea behind each OTBP tour is to appeal to the discerning traveler of all ages and backgrounds who seeks something new and different, and who wants to reach out and discover something inspiring.

