As one of the world’s leading tour operators, In 2016, Off the Beaten Path celebrates 22 years leading small group tours exclusively in France.

Website - https://www.traveloffthebeatenpath.com

One of our most historically rich tours, our guided, small group Loire Valley Castles and Gourmet Foodie Tour far surpasses the offerings of other non-France based and multi-destination tour companies thanks to our long standing presence in the Loire Valley region and our established local relationships with the region’s most highly recognized professionals. Our specialty is small group tour travel in France, and we concentrate on ensuring that our focus on travel exclusively in France remains our priority! We have established relationships with professionals in the Loire Valley who are not only renowned Michelin-star and Master Chefs and specialty artisans, but who are also our personal family friends. Our local Loire Valley friends cherish our relationships that have been built on years of friendship discovering the Loire together through each others’ eyes and heritage, and they warmly and welcomingly open their homes, workshops and professional kitchens to you, our Loire Valley Tour guests. Each day of our Loire Valley Tour, as we take you on a journey into the late Middle Ages and Renaissance periods, you will truly feel like you are stepping back into a magical period of time. Our specialist guides recount daily stories, gossip and factual tidbits about events of these periods and local history to enhance your discovery of the castles of the Loire Valley.

France is our sole focus and Specialty, and we know it BEST! We ONLY offer exclusive, small group luxury tour travel in France, and have been leading tours in Loire Valley, France for 20+ years.

Come travel the back roads of Loire Valley, France with us during this 6 day/5 night, active, small group tour through the Center region of France (“Le Centre” in French) to discover both spectacular French Mediaeval and Renaissance history during this award winning Loire Valley castles and gourmet foodie adventure, and to make a many great memories meeting and spending time with our local friends. Step back in time when the Valois and Bourbon families ruled the Kingdom of France to learn about French Kings, Queens and their courts, and all the drama that accompanied them through these fascinating historical periods in a fun and fact filled experience. We embark on daily visits, activities and excursions that unveil magical and sometimes mythical and gruesome stories, that by the end the tour, you will be completely transformed and have a new appreciation for these historical periods and the characters who animated them. Our years of connections and insider access to people, places and events of the region have earned us a solid and excellent reputation as authorities on everything cultural in the Loire Valley. And, we use our “savoir faire” to ensure you experience the very best of the Loire Valley, 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 wonderful 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. And, traveling on an Off the Beaten Path small group, cultural walking and foodie tour provides exceptional and privileged insider experiences at unparalleled value that multi-destination and non-France based tour companies cannot match!

- Our sole focus and specialty is and always has been dedicated to small group travel in France – we know France Best!
- We have well over 20 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 non-France based and multi-destination tour companies cannot match.
- 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
A Ward Winning OFF THE BEATEN PATH TOURS
VOTED BEST ACTIVE, SMALL GROUP TOURS IN FRANCE FOR DISCERNING TRAVELERS BY: CONDE NAST, NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC, FORBES, CNN TRAVELLER, USA TODAY, THE NEW YORK TIMES and TRAVEL & LEISURE!

WHO IS THIS TOUR DESIGNED FOR? No experience necessary...Off the Beaten Path Loire Valley Tours are designed for travelers interested in a small group tour that includes a variety of engaging activities (cooking classes, castle tours, wine and cheese tasting), cultural discovery, leisure time, light walking, professional and knowledgeable tour guides, deluxe castle accommodations and sumptuous gourmet Michelin-star meals. It’s vacation and Off the Beaten Path tours are all about having fun, enjoying new experiences and being active!

GUEST TESTIMONIALS:

“Thank you for a wonderful and memorable first experience in France. We loved the Chefs, especially Christophe and Angelique and Damien’s cheese tasting! Next time, we’re looking forward to joining you in Provence!” Mike and Jen Williams, Atlanta, GA (Loire Valley Tour)

“Just a short note to say thanks for everything you did on the tour, we really enjoyed ourselves again. We feel very fortunate to have “discovered” your tours, they are definitely the best group tours we have ever been on. We had a great time, it was especially neat to spend so much time with Christophe & Angelique.” Bill & Laurie Crimando, Grosse Pointe Woods, MI (Have been on 3 OTBP Tours)
Loire Valley TOUR PRICE INCLUDES:

- This exclusive small group, Loire Valley Tour is both owner-led, and led by professional Off the Beaten Path, LLC Company Tour Guides selected by Christy. Our guides are history, culinary and wine specialists and UNESCO Heritage Award Winners. They are professional France history and Loire Valley-specific history specialists who make learning the tidbits, gossip, and stories of France fun and memorable throughout the tour.
- 5 Nights, 4-star boutique Hotel Accommodations (NO Hotel Hopping) at Pavillon Des Lys -- Voted one of the BEST luxury boutique hotels in the Loire Valley!
- 8 Meals - 5 Buffet Breakfasts, 3 Gourmet Dinners (combination of Michelin-star restaurants and cooking classes with our friends who are also Master, Meilleur Ouvrier de France, and Michelin-star Chefs)
- All restaurants and bistros on this tour are Michelin-star and/or have been featured/recommended by top “foodie” magazines and/or fellow Michelin-star Chefs. We dine in both gourmet restaurants and our favorite hide-a-ways cherished by the locals.
- Regional classified wines included at all group meals.
- Guided Tours, Independent visits and leisure time at Chambord Castle, Chenonceau Castle, Blois Castle, Amboise Castle, Villandry Castle, and Azay-le-Rideau Castle.
- FIRST CHEF: A special welcome dinner prepared by one of our favorite local Chefs Frédérique B.
- Visit and Shop at the Weekly Village Markets in Amboise and/or Blois.
- Bottled Water and Snacks provided throughout the trip.

2 COOKING CLASSES WITH 3 DIFFERENT MICHELIN-STAR/MASTER CHEFS...
- SECOND CHEF: Hands-on Cooking Class and Demonstration Accompanied by a Wine & Cheese Tasting during class with Michelin-star Chef and friend Damien.
- THIRD CHEF (A husband & wife team): Evening hands-on cooking class at the home with our friends and award winning Chefs, Christophe and Angelique Q.
DAY 1:  **GROUP PICK-UP, HOTEL CHECK-IN, DINNER: GOURMET WELCOME DINNER - D**

Your OTBP Guide(s) will meet you at the St. Pierre des Corps TGV train station, Tours, France. See “Additional Information” section for complete details on pick-up times and train schedules.

**WELCOME DINNER:** Gourmet dinner prepared by our favorite Chefs at his restaurant which is also recommended by our local friends, Michelin-star Chefs.

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**DAY 2: EARLY MORNING AT LEISURE, TOUR CHAMBORD CASTLE, COOKING CLASS, WINE & CHEESE TASTING & DINNER WITH MICHELIN-STAR CHEF, OUR FRIEND, DAMIEN G. - B, D**

**Breakfast.** Morning at Leisure. Explore the local village or walk up to Clos Luce to visit the former home of Leonardo da Vinci.

**Chambord Castle** Tour -- independent visit after an introduction to the history and stories of the castle. It is thought to have been the architectural masterpiece of Leonardo da Vinci, yet has never been proven. 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 stories of Louis XIII’s brother, Gaston d’Orleans.

**Lunch:** Independently at Chambord.
**Cooking Class**

Late Afternoon and **Dinner** includes a hands-on cooking class and culinary demonstration with Master Chef Damien. 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 has returned to his native Loire Valley to share his culinary experience and knowledge at his family restaurant; adding a new and tasteful twist to regional recipes using local, seasonal ingredients.

**Wine & Cheese Tasting**

Chef Damien will prepare and we will taste some local recipes plus indulge in a regional Touraine wine and cheese tasting. This cooking class is both hands-on and a demonstration of recipes. 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. Participate as much or as little as you like. Following class, we toast the evening with a cocktail followed by a gourmet dinner together of recipes prepared in class.
DAY 3: MORNING: VILLANDRY CASTLE & GARDENS, AZAY-LE-RIDEAU CASTLE, DINNER ON YOUR IN AMBOISE - B

BREAKFAST.

AZAY-LE-RIDEAU CASTLE  Our day begins at the fairy tale, moated castle of Azay-le-Rideau Castle, a spectacular masterpiece built during the early years of Francis I’s reign. The castle reflects all of the refinements of Renaissance architecture and embodies the qualities of a traditional French chateau with its high roofs, tall watchturrets, long rows of windows and dormer-windows and majestic Italian structure.

LUNCH: Independently in Azay-le-Rideau village.

VILLANDRY CASTLE and its Renaissance Gardens. Winding our way along the Vienne & Loire Rivers, our next stop of the day is at Villandry Castle and its Renaissance Gardens. Learn about the numerous owners of the castle and how after the castle’s gardens were left in ruin for centuries, one man discovered a very important document in order to re-create the original Francis I Renaissance gardens. The unique Renaissance gardens of Villandry are among the most fascinating gardens of France.

DINNER INDEPENDENTLY Independently in Amboise village. 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 4: MORNING: AMBOISE MARKET & VILLAGE, AMBOISE CASTLE TOUR, AFTERNOON: CHENONCEAU CASTLE & GARDENS TOUR, DINNER ON YOUR IN AMBOISE - B

BREAKFAST.

AMBOISE MARKET This morning prior to our visit at the royal castle of Amboise, there will be time to explore Amboise’s weekly open market. Again, from local artisan products to French linens, fresh cut flowers, paintings, clothes, food, artwork and locally made jewelry, the market brings an unparalleled livelihood to Amboise, and offers a wonderful opportunity to experience local culture at its busiest time of the week. Time to explore and shop independently at the market.

AMBOISE ROYAL CASTLE Tour after the market followed by time to explore at LEISURE. Today’s visit includes stories of royal accidents, more stories of some of France’s most important historical events, an attempted kidnapping, as well as royal love affairs and the death of royal guest, Leonardo da Vinci.

LUNCH: Independently in Amboise Village.

CHENONCEAU CASTLE Afternoon Tour of the Castle and Gardens of Chenonceau, a castle shaped by women, this castle represents the greatest accomplishments of royal women during the Middle Ages and French Renaissance. Enjoy stories of Queens and their courts, royal love affairs, the first ever fire works display in France, parties and deception and how royal debt nearly led this castle to be confiscated by the French state.

DINNER INDEPENDENTLY -- Ask your guide for the best places in Amboise to enjoy local fare.
DAY 5: Morning: Blois Market & Historic Town, Afternoon: Blois Castle Tour & Leisure Time, Early Evening & Dinner: Fun Culinary Class at Home with Friends, Award Winning Chefs, Christophe & Angelique Q. - B, D

**Breakfast:**

**Blois Market**

This morning prior to our visit of the historic town of Blois and its royal castle, we'll introduce you to the French tradition of shopping at the weekly open market. From local artisan products to French linens, paintings, clothes, food, wines, artwork and locally made jewelry, the market brings an unparalleled livelihood to villages and towns of the region. Guided visit of the market followed by time to explore and shop independently.

**Lunch:** Independently in Blois.

**Blois Castle**

Afternoon guided tour followed by time to explore the castle and historic town at leisure. We’ll share stories about some of the most notable events of French history: a Queen’s death, two marriages that would forever change the future of France, important accomplishments by the French monarchy, an assassination, details of the rigors of daily life during the Renaissance and quirky facts about royal marriages and deaths.
Early Evening and **Dinner** -- Fun, hands-on cooking class with our friends, Master Chef Angelique and Meilleur Ouvrier de France Master Chef Christophe Q. at their home in the countryside near Chau- mont-sur-Loire. Tonight we cook with two of France’s highest rated Master Chefs. Christophe is Director of the Val de Loire Culinary Arts school, currently on leave from the school to work with his friend and colleague Alain Ducasse on the development of Ducasse’s new worldwide culinary project and “Ecole de Cuisine” concept in Paris. 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 and talented Chefs.

We will prepare a three course dinner of local recipes together. Guests will have the great pleasure of partaking in an “aperitif dinatoire”, as we call it in French, of the recipes prepared under the guidance of Angelique prior to dinner. Guests will also learn how to prepare the award winning, regional “Tarte Tatin” dessert with Christophe. The cooking class is designed to appeal to all interest levels from the beginner to the more experienced. Following cooking class, we toast to a wonderful evening with our Chefs with cocktails on their garden terrace followed by a gourmet dinner together of the recipes prepared during cooking class.

**GOURMET 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!

**DAY 6: TOUR CONCLUSION - B**

**Breakfast.** Trip concludes today with 10 AM arrival to the TGV Rail Station. Earlier and later departures can be arranged. Please contact us for details.

**(B) = Breakfast Included, (L) = Lunch Included, (D) = Dinner Included**
Loire Valley TOUR PRICE INCLUDES:

- This exclusive small group, Loire Valley Tour is both owner-led, as well as being led by professional Off the Beaten Path, LLC Company Tour Guides. Our guides are history, culinary and wine specialists. They are also UNESCO Heritage Award Winners, published authors, photographers and regular contributors to numerous print tour guides about France. Our Tour guides are professional France history and Loire Valley-specific history specialists who make learning the tidbits, gossip, and ludic stories of France fun and memorable throughout the tour.
- 5 Nights, 4-star boutique hotel accommodations -- at hotel Pavillon Des Lys in historic Amboise -- (NO Hotel Hopping)
- Enjoy fun and fact filled guided tours, independent visits and leisure time at Loire Valley castles of Chambord, Chenonceau, Blois, Amboise, Villandry, and Azay-le-Rideau.
- Participate in two (2) private, hands-on cooking classes and demonstrations with three (3) different Chefs - our culinary friends; award winning, celebrity Master, Meilleur Ouvrier de France, and Michelin-Star Chefs.
- 8 Meals: 5 breakfasts, 3 dinners (mix of cooking classes, Michelin-star restaurants).
- ALL of our Chefs during this exclusive castles and culinary tour are good friends with one another. Each will share his/her individual specialties and favorite regional recipes with us in cooking class. Each cooking class offers a unique look inside the professional and personal lives of each of our Chefs, and how distinctly different their culinary styles are from each other. We’ll prepare three course meals during each class, indulge in tasting wonderful local sparkling wines from the region, and tasting the sumptuous recipes we’ve prepared together in class.
- Regional classified wines included at all group meals--Indulge in tasting classified Touraine wines from Chinon, Amboise, Mesland, Bourgeuil, and Sancerre.
- We also offer a value-added services and other charming surprises on our tours including complimentary use of an Ipad mini (with both 4G and wifi access) and a surprise regional gift on our Provence Tours, complimentary Champagne & chocolates and surprise gift in your room on our Loire Valley and Bordeaux Tours, and a surprise gift on Champagne Tours.
- FIRST CHEF: A special welcome dinner prepared by one of our favorite Michelin-star Chefs of the region, Frédérique B.
- Two (2) cooking classes with three (3) different Michelin-Star/Master Chefs
- SECOND CHEF: Cooking Class and Cooking Demonstration with our friend, Michelin-star Chef Damien G.
- THIRD CHEF (A husband & wife team): Cooking Class with celebrity Master Chefs, our friends Angelique and Christophe (works with Alain Ducasse) at their home
- Participate in a fun “Tour de France” Cheese and Wine Tasting with our friend, a Michelin-star Chef.
- Shop at the weekly market in Blois and/or Amboise.
- Bottled water and snacks provided throughout the trip.
- All ground transportation throughout the tour via luxury 18 seater Mercedes Sprinters.
- This exclusive Loire Valley Tour is limited to 12-14 guests per Tour date.
- COMFORT ZONE – Designed for the interests of and to appeal to both the Active and Occasional Walker.
2016 - Loire Valley Tour Dates and Prices

Tour Price - Click here to check our website for current Tour Prices!

2016 - LOIRE VALLEY TOUR DATES

- May 24-29
- May 31-June 5
- June 22-27 – 4
- June 28-July 3
- June 5-10
- September 7-12
- September 13-18
- September 20-25
- October 4-9

* Once you book your tour, your price is guaranteed and will NOT increase.
ACTIVITY RATING: 90% Easy, 10% Moderate

TOUR BEGINS: Group pick-up time on Day #1 is at 4 PM at the St. Pierre des Corps TGV rail Station, Tours, France.

TOUR ENDS: Group drop-off on DAY #6 at 10 AM at St. Pierre des Corps TGV rail Station, Tours, France.

GUEST TESTIMONIALS:

“I had a taste of every piece of heaven that I wanted and expected in the Loire Valley! Loved it all! Great variety, great fun!! Can’t wait for the next adventure with you!!” Natalie Spiro, San Diego, CA (Loire Valley Tour)

“I really enjoyed the hot air ballooning, loved the history and all the chateaux were great and interesting. I liked the combination of history, food and wine that this trip offered and the good value of the trip itself.” Lisa Jarrold, Brisbane, Australia (Loire Valley Tour)

“My favorites were Angelique’s cooking class, Damien’s wine and extensive cheese tasting and the hot air ballooning. Don’t change a thing, it was all wonderful, loved it! I had a memorable week, thanks for everything!” Odette Pagan, Brisbane, Australia (Loire Valley Tour)
Oui...What we do...what we guarantee our guests...

We guarantee some very specific services that we believe you, as our guest, deserve.

- **We also offer value-added services and other charming surprises** on our tours including complimentary use of (1) Ipad minis (with both 4G and wifi access) and (2) digital point and shoot cameras PLUS enjoy a surprise regional gift on our Provence Tours, complimentary champagne & chocolates and a surprise gift in your room on our Loire Valley and Bordeaux Tours, and a surprise gift on Champagne Tours.

- **We ensure a “small group” remains just that - a “small group”!**
  The group size on each of our tours is a maximum 12-16 guests. Many of our trips sell out completely meaning group size is 16 guests (and 12 guests for tours limited to 12 guests maximum per departure), and some trips average 12-14 guests. Our experience has been that limiting our group size to 16 guests per tour creates the ideal ambiance for guests to easily mingle and get to know each other, yet still maintain their independence. We also limit our group size in order to preserve each guest’s personalized experience, and ensure our famous quality customer service.

- **We include all beverages (both alcoholic & non-alcoholic) in our Provence tour prices!**
  We always include a welcome cocktail on day 1 of each tour, plus some additional group meals may include a pre-dinner cocktail in addition to the premium, classified and “Grand Cru” wines included at all groups meals during each of our tours. Of course, guests are always free to opt out of any included group meal to try a restaurant, cafe or other dining option on their own or simply to enjoy a private dining experience.

- **We always provide guests the best rooms at every hotel!**
  We always reserve the VERY BEST for our guests! Plus there is NEVER any hotel hopping on our tours. We select one exclusive, luxurious, historical establishment for the entire 5 nights of each tour (3 nights on Champagne Tours, 4 nights on Dordogne Tours).

- **Our scheduled walks are always guided!**
  We always guide our walks!! Our guides are experienced, and have walked our trails repeatedly each season - even in the off season. They are knowledgeable about what each trail has to offer. Our guides accompany every walk on every tour where optional and scheduled walks are included. And our guides remain with the group during the entirety of each walk. We believe your walks with us should always be fun, interesting and a time to sit back and enjoy the views along the trail while someone else takes charge and shows you the way! We have specially designed all of our trails exclusively to share with our guests.

- **We will always provide van support for our walks!**
  In addition to providing guides who accompany each walk on our tours, we always provide a support van whose driver’s sole responsibility is to meet the group at designated points throughout each walk to provide more refreshments and snacks, collect any purchases made during visits along our trails, and provide a ride to any guest who needs a break.
Always enjoyable walking on Off the Beaten Path Tours - No matter 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:**
- This tour involves only daily leisure walking which is suitable for most travelers.
- This trip is not suitable for travelers with severe or impairing knee or back problems.
- Travelers need to be able to walk up steps - sometimes several flights of steps - no elevators are available.
- Travelers need to be able to stand for extended periods of time during castle tours & cooking classes, as seating is not always available.
ADDITIONAL Loire Valley TOUR INFORMATION

• UNRIVALED EXPERTISE WITHIN FRANCE AND THE BEST TOUR GUIDES:
All Off the Beaten Path guides are Americans with dual nationality (American-French citizenship), are multilingual and reside in France. They also bring a wealth of local information and history to enrich each guest’s experience and have been selected for their comprehensive understanding of French culture. You will find that Off the Beaten Path guides are wonderful traveling companions, whose knowledge and sense of fun and positive attitude make each day a wonderful experience.

• WHERE DO WE RENDEZVOUS ON DAY 1 OF THE LOIRE VALLEY TOUR?
Your OTBP Guide(s) will meet you at the St. Pierre des Corps TGV train station, Tours, France at 4 pm.
Complete meeting time and location information is detailed in your tour information package that we send you 30 days prior to the start date of your tour.

• WHERE DOES THE LOIRE VALLEY TOUR FINISH?
We depart the hotel in the morning in order to arrive at 10 AM at the St. Pierre des Corps TGV train station in Tours, France.

• WHAT IS NOT INCLUDED ON MY LOIRE VALLEY TOUR?
Airfare to and from the trip, Train fare to and from St. Pierre des Corps rail station in Tours, France, lunches, two dinners, gratuities to tour guides and professional driver, and any personal purchases.

• DO I NEED TO BE AN ATHLETE TO PARTICIPATE IN THE LOIRE VALLEY TOUR?
No. However, France is a country of walkers. Our Loire Valley Tour is designed for active travelers and includes extensive leisure walking daily. Travelers need to be able to walk and stand for extended periods of time while listening to commentary/history about the castles during visits. This tour is not suitable for travelers with serious back or knee problems. It is not possible to drop-off or pick-up guests at the entry of castles before or after visits, and therefore guests must be able to walk short distances from the vans to the sites, as well as be able to also enjoy exploring historical villages, towns and corresponding markets on foot. We enjoy the “slow road” taking in the beautiful scenery of the castles and local villages daily, and our tours are focused on actively discovering this magnificent region.
• **HOW SHOULD I GO ABOUT MAKING MY TRAVEL PLANS?**
Off the Beaten Path is a full service tour operator and it is our pleasure to assist you with all aspects of upcoming travel plans. Whether you are looking for a suggestion for a hotel in Paris or assistance with your rail tickets, simply contact us at contact@traveloffthebeatenpath.com or call us at 1.877.846.2831 for assistance.

• **IS WINE INCLUDED AT MEALS? WHAT KIND OF WINES ARE INCLUDED AT MEALS?**
Yes, wine is included at all scheduled meals together. We expertly match premium wines from the region we’re visiting with each dish. Meals offer an excellent opportunity to try wines from appellations not available to guests at home, and to introduce guests to some select wines worth a favorable mention or that are exceptionally appreciated by the locals.

• **WHAT IS THE WEATHER GOING TO BE LIKE IN THE LOIRE VALLEY?**
April through October, day time temperatures in the Loire Valley range from the 70’s- to mid-80’s Fahrenheit with evenings being slightly cooler. Typically it is sunny, but be prepared with the proper rain gear.

• **WHAT TRAVEL DOCUMENTS WILL I NEED FOR MY TOUR?**
All travelers to France are required to have a valid passport. Please make 2 copies of your passport and personal identification before you depart. Keep one set of copies with you in a separate location from your travel documents, and leave the other set of copies with a contact at home before you depart. If you are not a U.S. citizen, please check with your consulate general for entry requirements.

• **WHO ARE THE LOIRE VALLEY TOURS DESIGNED FOR?**
OTBP’s Loire Valley Tours are designed for discerning travelers of all ages and backgrounds, from the seasoned traveler and independent traveler to the first time traveler to France. Join any one of the our tours as a solo traveler, a couple, a small group of friends or family, or bring your entire travel club, affinity group, women’s organization or wine society. No culinary, history or other type of experience is necessary. Join us for the vacation of a lifetime to discover the Best of the Loire Valley, as an insider, and make new friends along the way.
• **ARE ALL OFF THE BEATEN PATH TOURS IN ENGLISH?**
Yes. All tours are conducted in English and designed for an English speaking clientele. The majority of OTBP Guests come from the U.S.A., Australia, Canada, New Zealand, and England. Guests have also come from the Caribbean, Singapore, the Philippines, South Africa, and Israel.

• **DO I NEED TO BE AN EXPERT TO TAKE YOUR LOIRE VALLEY TOUR?**
Not at all. The idea is to learn about French culture, traditions, wine, daily life, artisan lives and culinary practices in a fun and relaxing environment. Our tours offer great learning opportunities for everyone. Off the Beaten Path guides are very skilled at adapting their discussions to the general level of knowledge of the group, providing good introductory information for novices, and more advanced discussions for those who have more experience or a specialty interest. It’s vacation and our tours are all about having fun, enjoying new experiences and being active!

• **HOW ARE THE LOIRE VALLEY TOURS STRUCTURED?**
Having 20 years experience in the tour industry, specifically with small group touring, we have found that our guests are generally more interested in active experiences, culture, people to people experiences and guided tours of museums and sites. Our guests like to visit private homes, and pursue their hobbies when they travel. Our guests enjoy being able to shop locally for items, such as, collectibles, art and local products. Our guests tend to do more homework and want a meatier trip, but also want to enjoy down time or leisure time to explore independently. All of our trips are designed based on these factors. Each trip offers organized activities and excursions daily combined with periods of leisure time each day. Our tours encourage individual approach and pursuit of your interests, as well as introducing you to new experiences and people during each trip.

• **HOW SHOULD I PACK? HOW SHOULD I EXPECT TO DRESS DURING THE TOUR?**
Please limit your luggage to one medium-sized suitcase and one carry-on. Try not to over pack; you will not wear all your clothing! A suggested packing list will be enclosed in your tour information package. Pack comfortable light weight, casual clothing. It’s vacation and we want our guests to feel and be as comfortable as possible during our daily activities and excursions. Our dinners together include a mix of Michelin star and casual bistro style restaurants. For men we suggest a business casual ensemble (no tie or jacket necessary unless it’s your personal preference) and for women we recommend a casual dress for dinners.
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 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.
"The choice of castles was excellent. Cooking classes, dinners and markets were fun and interesting, and we LOVED the hot air ballooning, it was so much fun. Really enjoyed our guide! THANKS FOR A MEMORABLE TIME!"
Ralph and Stephanie Sorley, Boston, MA (Loire Valley Tour)

"Loved ALL of it! The pace, variety, quality, sequence of events. Many thanks, YOU RUN A VERY PROFESSIONAL AND HIGH QUALITY TOUR. You have exceeded all of my expectations. It has been a memorable trip!"
Amanda Croker, Brisbane, Australia (Loire Valley Tour)

"THE TRIP GETS A 5 OUT OF 5! My favorite thing was the extensive cheese and wine tasting with Damien. Thanks to our guide for making this trip so exceptional!"
Marti Hyland, Arlington, VA (Loire Valley Tour)

"Thanks for a spectacular trip in such a beautiful region! We had great dinner conversations. It was very comfortable traveling around in your minivans. The hospitality of such famous chefs was outstanding. GREAT JOB!! Already been to Bordeaux, but after our wonderful Loire experience with you WE NEED TO LOOK AT DATES TO COME ON ONE OF YOUR PROVENCE TOURS NEXT!!"
Don Drapeau and Betty Folliard, Minneapolis, MN (Loire Valley Tour)
One of the most flattering questions that we have ever received, as a tour company, came from our guest Dennis Gelner. Dennis and his wife Pat traveled on 2 back to back tours with us.

Dennis' question one afternoon was,

"WHERE DID YOU LEARN TO EXCEED EXPECTATIONS? IT JUST KEEPS GETTING BETTER AND BETTER EVERY DAY!"

Thanks Dennis for such a flattering question and Pat's and your ever so flattering trip comments! We love receiving feedback and hearing about how guests have enjoyed their tour(s). Whether joining one of our Provence Tours, Loire Valley Tours or Bordeaux Tours, our dedication and focus to providing the best ever authentic France travel experiences during each of our small group tours is paramount!

WE STRIVE TO EXCEED GUEST EXPECTATIONS EVERY TRIP!!
Unrivaled expertise within France sets Off the Beaten Path, LLC a part from non-France based and multi-destination tour companies. Off the Beaten Path is American owned and operated, and in 2016, celebrates 22 years of delivering engaging small group, walking and foodie, cultural tours exclusively in France. Each of our France tours offers travelers the very BEST and most inspiring itineraries and experience to discover the French countryside of Provence, Loire Valley and Bordeaux unlike any other tour company can. OUR SPECIALTY AND SOLE FOCUS IS SMALL GROUP, ACTIVE TRAVEL EXCLUSIVELY IN FRANCE! OUR ONLY TOUR DESTINATION IS FRANCE, AND WE DO IT BEST! Come enjoy exceptional quality and excellent value on one of our small group tours today! Travelers and publications alike rate Off the Beaten Path Tours the BEST active, small group tours in France. Whether you’re a seasoned small group tour traveler or new to the small group tour scene, Off the Beaten Path tours offer daily, fun, enriching and interactive local French experiences and activities for everyone –experiences and activities that are not available to the public-- while also including leisure time to pursue independent interests.

Expert Professional American guides who live in France, inspiring itineraries, deluxe historical hotel accommodations, sumptuous French meals and comfortable transportation in private, spacious, professionally driven Mercedes Sprinters 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 you to authentically discover the heart and soul of each region. You’ll participate in cooking classes with our friends who are celebrity Master and Michelin-star chefs who look forward to your arrival, and make you feel welcome in their homes and workshops as a group of friends. Shop at weekly village markets where we’ll introduce you to our favorite olive oil and wine producers, artists, cheese-makers, herb and spice vendors, craftsmen and designers. Walk the same countryside and vineyard trails as local French do with their families, and enjoy the slow road scenery that comes with walking the back 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 with our knowledgeable, professional Guides. Dine in the same gourmet restaurants and bistro, as local French do, where the chefs are our personal friends, and set aside a special table uniquely to welcome you. Plus, built in leisure time provides you opportunities to pursue independent interests and activities or to just break away from the group for some quiet time.

Every tour offers daily options with varying levels of activeness to choose from, so you always have the flexibility of deciding how you would like your day to unfold. Your Guide sits down with your group every day to discuss the activities, 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 want (more walking, less walking, shopping time, cultural discovery, etc.) and to be able to pursue your independent interests all while still enjoying the perks of traveling in a small group and participating in scheduled excursions and activities -- meaning we take care and manage the daily logistics and details while you spend your time on the important stuff -- having fun, relaxing and enjoying your vacation your way. The idea behind each Off the Beaten Path, small group 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. Whether travelers join a regularly scheduled, small group tour to Provence, the Loire Valley or Bordeaux wine country, or participate in a private, custom designed tour to one of these regions or another region of France, we ensure that each itinerary is inspiring, and that each traveler's experience is unique and personalized. You’ll find Testimonials of guest satisfaction on both the guest Testimonial page of our website and sprinkled throughout our website.
An American raised in the countryside just outside of Philadelphia, PA, Christy Destremau’s story begins over 20 years ago when she settled in Provence, France, and married her French beau in a traditional Provence wedding ceremony. Equipped with an extensive education, multiple degrees and a background in French history, language and international relations, plus a clear understanding of French culture and traditions, Christy launched Off the Beaten Path, LLC in response to encouragement from family and friends, who admired both her passion for and knowledge of this historically and culturally rich country. As a long term resident of France, Christy Destremau is multi-lingual, holds dual nationality (American-French citizenship) and after living many years in Provence, now currently splits her time between the US and her home near Nantes, France. Christy’s extensive network of professional and personal connections in France is the key to her successfully having created itineraries that constantly set her small group tours well above and a part from other tour travel offered by both tour companies based outside of France and multi-destination tour companies. Christy recognizes that no one can specialize in everything, and she has actively chosen to specialize exclusively in small group travel and small group touring within her adopted country of France!

When Christy launched Off the Beaten Path, LLC, she made a conscious decision and commitment to focus her time, energy, talent and “savoir-faire” on specializing exclusively on what she knows best --active, small group walking, wine, cultural and gourmet food tour travel in France--. Though many industry professionals have tried to recruit her to broaden Off the Beaten Path’s tour offerings into other countries, Christy has remained steadfast and committed to delivering to travelers what she does and loves best --delivering the most personalized itineraries of the very best experiences that her adopted country of France has to offer, and sharing those experiences with like minded, active travelers who want to experience “authentic France” in a small intimate group, led by guides who understand both French and Anglophone culture, and who can create the perfect blend and balance between both cultures to ensure a memorable experience to travelers every time. Christy’s Off the Beaten Path tour itineraries are comprised of the BEST active, small group tour experiences available in the small group tour industry! Her commitment to ensuring exceptional and personalized itineraries, unparalleled customer service and unsurpassed value has propelled Off the Beaten Path, LLC to the head of the tour industry --repeatedly being voted and awarded multiple professional accolades by nearly every top tier travel industry organization, as well as numerous travel magazines and journals worldwide.

Christy is also a published photographer having been featured in National Geographic, and spends her off season time traveling around France photographing the countryside. All photos published on this website, both slideshow photos and page content photos are compliments of Christy, and reflect her passion for France, the French, and having fun sharing “all that France has to offer” with her tour travel guests. Many of Christy’s France and regional specific landscape and foodie images can be seen featured on other tour and travel industry websites, as well as in print. Christy also dedicates a great deal of her off season to meeting with her professional and personal French friends to develop new ideas, and to prepare new excursions and activities for each season. She is considered a France destination expert and leading authority on French history, traditions and culture, and has authored and edited travel articles about France for prominent travel magazines worldwide. Christy is currently working on an insider’s guide to the best cafes, brasseries and restaurants in France that includes a section featuring her “all-time” favorite French Chefs -- some of whom are very dear friends.

In addition to leading many tours herself, Christy has selected a handful of tour guides to work alongside her. Like Christy, all Off the Beaten Path guides are Americans with dual nationality (American-French citizenship), are multi-lingual and reside in France. They also bring a wealth of local information and history to enrich each guest’s individual experience, and have personally been selected by Christy for their comprehensive understanding of French and Anglophone culture. Many have been elected to some of the most prestigious tourism offices in France, and some have also been awarded UNESCO accolades for their cultural work in France. Most of our guides are also contributing authors to prominent guidebooks including Rick Steves Provence Guide Book and many more. The key ingredient to a successful tour is the guide, and our guides have been recognized for their talent, knowledge and professionalism. You will find that Christy and her team of guides are wonderful traveling companions, whose knowledge and sense of fun and positive attitude make each tour day a wonderful experience.
CANCELLATION POLICY:

121+ days (from the first day of the trip): $500 Tour deposit. Alternative to cancellation — TRANSFER OF DEPOSIT: Guest may transfer from one trip to another up to 121 days before trip departure without penalty (excludes travel agent bookings, and custom designed and private tours). This credit can only be rolled over once and Guest incurs no other penalty.

91-120 days: 25% of the total Tour price

61-90 days: 50% of the total Tour price

0-60 days: 100% of the total Tour price

Though trip cancellation/interruption insurance is not required to participate in Off the Beaten Path tours, it is highly recommend that travelers purchase trip insurance to cover the unexpected.
FOR ADDITIONAL INFORMATION, VISIT OUR WEBSITE:
https://www.traveloffthebeatenpath.com

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

• 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.

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