

*Full Itinerary*

## FESTIVE FRANCE - CHÂTEAUX & CHRISTMAS MARKETS.



TALK TO OUR WELL TRAVELLED TEAM OF EXPERTS

0844 3350 197

Monday to Friday 09:00 - 18:00  
GMT



### JOURNEY SNAPSHOT

**ACTIVITY LEVEL:**

Level 2

**DESTINATION:**

Festive France - Châteaux & Christmas Markets

**FLIGHT INFORMATION:**

Arrive into Paris Charles de Gaulle Airport [CDG] on Day 1 and depart on Day 8

**PICKUP LOCATION:**

Paris Charles de Gaulle Airport [CDG]

**DURATION:**

8 days/7 nights

## OVERVIEW

Choose your own departure date for your group.

Feel festive as you discover France's highlights at this most magical time of year. Enjoy sightseeing, discover sumptuous châteaux, enjoy the ambience and local produce on offer at France's Christmas markets and enjoy a nighttime dinner cruise on the River Seine.

## ITINERARY SUMMARY

**DAY 1** - Welcome to Paris

**DAY 2** - Paris at Christmastime

**DAY 3** - Château de Vaux-le-Vicomte Celebrates Christmas

**DAY 4** - Orléans to the Loire Valley

**DAY 5** - Château de Chenonceau and Tours

**DAY 6** - Château d'Azay-le-Rideau and Wine Tasting

**DAY 7** - Chartres to Paris and Seine Dinner Cruise

**DAY 8** - À bientôt France!

## FULL ITINERARY

### DAY 1 - WELCOME TO PARIS

Welcome to Paris, the capital city of France and one that needs little introduction. Famously known as the 'City of Lights', as you arrive you will see Paris glisten and glow decked out with its Christmas lights! We will meet you from your flight and transfer you to the hotel where your Tour Director will meet with you and your fellow travellers. Your Christmastime adventure France has begun!

**Included meals:** Dinner

**Accommodation:** Paris

### DAY 2 - PARIS AT CHRISTMASTIME

The Eiffel Tower, Champs-Elysees, Louvre, Notre Dame... even for the most seasoned traveller, these iconic sights are still fascinating to see in reality. A panoramic guided tour of Paris will reveal the history and facts behind the famous names and sights.

The afternoon and evening are at leisure for you to get into Paris' Christmas spirit. See the storefronts decorated with fantastic displays, none more so than at Galleries Lafayette, the mesmerizing windows and interior decoration and the glass dome of the department store being a photo destination in its own right. The many Christmas markets dotted around the city are best discovered as the sun goes down and the Christmas lights come on. The most famous is on the Champs-Elysees, between Place de la Concorde and the Arc de Triomphe. The avenue is beautifully illuminated, as quaint wooden chalets line the streets. Selling handicrafts and souvenirs, you can also sample a range of local and regional produce. Sip on mulled wine or beers from France's eastern regions, enjoy a plate of raclette, wolf down a tasty, freshly made crêpe or indulge your sweet tooth with the many sweets, pastries and biscuits on offer.

**Included meals:** Breakfast

**Accommodation:** Paris

### DAY 3 - CHÂTEAU DE VAUX-LE-VICOMTE CELEBRATES CHRISTMAS

Lying 50km outside of central Paris is the Château de Vaux-le-Vicomte. Designed by renowned architect Le Notre, Vaux-le-Vicomte was used as a basis for his more famous chateau, Versailles and visitors will note many similarities. In fact, many scenes from the recent Versailles television show were filmed there. Today it is one of the largest chateaux still in private hands, the owners living in the château. For the last 15 years, during Advent, the chateau has been beautifully bedecked for Christmas. Though the decorations are vintage themed in fitting with the setting, each year the theme changes. You'll get the chance to discover the chateau's interior and spectacular gardens before returning to Paris. Return to Paris for some free time to explore further before dinner together.

**Included meals:** Breakfast and Dinner

**Accommodation:** Paris

### DAY 4 - ORLÉANS TO THE LOIRE VALLEY

After breakfast, we depart Paris and make our way south to the Loire Valley. En route, we stop in the charming town of Orléans. Lying on the banks of the River Loire at its northern most and closest point to Paris, Orléans boasts a history dating back over 2000 years and has played an important part in French history. Enjoy time at leisure to discover Orléans, where you will also find quaint Christmas markets filling the town's three main squares.

We continue downstream to Tours into the heart of the Loire Valley. This university town is the largest in the central valley region and nowadays the gateway to explore the region's châteaux and vineyards.

We'll check into our hotel in Tours and enjoy dinner as a group.

**Included meals:** Breakfast and Dinner

**Accommodation:** Tours

### DAY 5 - CHÂTEAU DE CHENONCEAU AND TOURS

Known for the beauty of its natural setting and its rich historical heritage, the Loire Valley has been classed as a UNESCO World Heritage Site for many years. The many Châteaux of the Loire Valley constitute one of the region's best-known treasures. The Château de Chenonceau is probably the most famous and certainly the most photographed of them all. Looking like something straight out of a fairy-tale, it is actually built over a river, its arches and façade reflecting in the waters beneath and sits amongst beautiful gardens and an extensive estate parkland. An

estate on the current location is mentioned as far back as the 11th century whilst the current château dates from the 1500s. It is famous for being ruled by many prominent women through the ages, most notably Catherine de Medici, who as Queen of France, spent vast sums of money on the château and on spectacular night-time parties, including the first ever fireworks display seen in France. As well as being a royal residence, a military hospital and passage to the 'free zone' in WW2, the château has had an colourful past.

In the afternoon, we will return to Tours. A brief orientation tour of the town will show the highlights, including the Cathedral, before allowing you free time to explore and visit the Christmas markets, again selling many different souvenirs, handicrafts, presents and local produce. For the adventurous, why not put your skates on and head to the ice rink?

**Included meals:** Breakfast

**Accommodation:** Tours

## DAY 6 - CHÂTEAU D'AZAY-LE-RIDEAU AND WINE TASTING

Built on an island in the River Indre, the Château d'Azay-le-Rideau was constructed during the reign of Francis I. A blend of French tradition and Italian decor, it is an icon of the 16thC Loire Valley new style of château building and is considered one of the foremost examples of French Renaissance architecture. Owned by the French State since 1905, the Château and Gardens have undergone extensive restoration over the last 5 years. Over the Christmas period, the Château is a joy to discover, the rooms decorated each year with a different theme.

As well as known worldwide for its stunning chateaux, the Loire Valley is one of France's largest wine-producing areas.

In the Upper Loire, you are most likely to find the Sauvignon blanc dominated areas of Sancerre and Pouilly-Fumé, whereas in the Middle Loire, Chenin blanc is the favourite tittle. Wine aficionados will no doubt be familiar with the names of some of the towns of the valley - Saumur, Chinon and Vouvray amongst others. We will get a chance to sample the wine, learn about the local production methods and the chance to buy some to take home with you.

**Included meals:** Breakfast and Dinner

**Accommodation:** Tours

## DAY 7 - CHARTRES TO PARIS AND SEINE DINNER CRUISE

After breakfast, we retrace our steps back north to Paris. En route, we will again stop to discover one of the region's most important towns - Chartres. Famous for its cathedral which dates back to 1192. Much of the historic centre was bombed in WW2 but the cathedral was thankfully saved as an American general defied orders given to bomb it.

We continue back up to Paris. This evening, it is time to round off our festive tour of France in style and see Paris from another angle. We head down to the mighty River Seine for a dinner cruise. Dine as we sail along past the Eiffel Tower, the Assemblée Nationale, under Pont Neuf passing the illuminated buildings and monuments, creating a beautiful night-time scene.

**Included meals:** Breakfast and Dinner

**Accommodation:** Paris

## DAY 8 - À BIENTÔT FRANCE!

Sadly, it's time to bid 'Au revoir et à bientôt' to Paris as we check out and make our way back to the airport to start our journey home.

**Included meals:** Breakfast

## WHAT'S INCLUDED

- ATOL Protection
- For UK guests, return economy flights to/from LHR are included in the cost of the journey. For US/International guests, international flights are not included - please arrange your own international flights.
- Meet & Greet at the airport on arrival
- 7 nights accommodation as detailed in the itinerary
- Transportation throughout in an air-conditioned deluxe vehicle
- Meals as detailed in the itinerary
- All activities, visits and excursions as detailed in the itinerary
- English speaking tour guides where applicable.
- Porterage/baggage handling in/out of hotels
- Services of a Big Journey Company Tour Director throughout (subject to minimum numbers)

## WHAT'S NOT INCLUDED

- Transfers on arrival or departure, to/from the airport(s), outside of the tour dates
- Additional food/beverage unless otherwise included in the programme
- Personal expenses
- Personal Travel & Medical Insurance
- Visas (if required)
- Optional excursions
- Gratuities
- Any personal items and anything not mentioned under included in price above
- Any COVID tests or related entry & exit requirements

## IMPORTANT INFORMATION

- Please let The Big Journey Company know prior to travelling if you have any medical needs or take any medication that we need to be made aware of to ensure that you have a safe and pleasant tour.
- Visas are not currently required for entry to France for US, UK & Canadian citizens. For other passport holders please check before travel if you require a visa.
- Check in is after 2-3pm and check out is before 10am unless otherwise specified in the itinerary.
- Cancellation 90 – 0 days prior to departure cancellation fee is 100%. It is your responsibility to ensure the correct travel insurance in place to protect you against the need to cancel your holiday. Deposits are non-refundable and final payments are due 14 weeks prior to departure.
- Further terms and conditions apply and will be provided upon request or at the time of booking. The Big Journey Company reserves the right to withdraw any offer prior to accepting a reservation request. This does not affect your statutory rights. This offer is subject to availability and space is limited.

## BOOK YOUR JOURNEY

*Choose from the list of dates below*

*Call to Book*

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