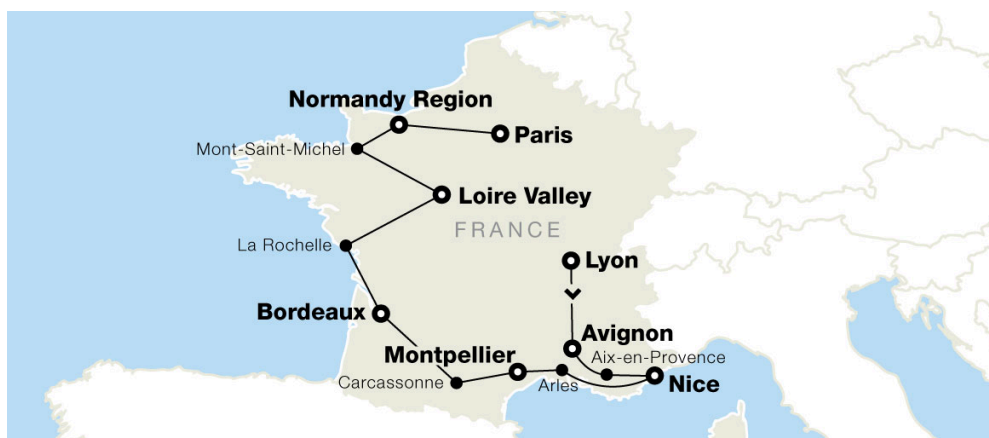




The Grand Tour of France with Laura

16 days | 18 days with Paris extension | Jul 05 2025—Jul 20 2025

France is a country that likes to take its time and truly indulge in living—and we’ve designed our Grand Tour to do the same. From the culinary capital of Lyon, to the lavender-dotted fields of Provence, and up through wine country in Bordeaux and the Loire Valley, you’ll get a hearty taste of this resplendent country. Expect fairy-tale chateaux, lush vineyards, beckoning coastlines, and a magical finale in none other than Paris. (You’ll want to book the extension for even more time in the City of Light, s’il-vous-plait!)



Your tour package includes

- 14 nights in handpicked hotels
- 14 breakfasts
- 1 lunch
- 5 dinners with beer or wine
- 1 tasting
- 14 guided sightseeing tours
- Expert Tour Director & local guides
- Private deluxe motor coach

Included highlights

- Pont du Gard
- Basilica of Notre-Dame de Fourvière
- Arles
- Carcassonne
- Bordeaux
- Château country
- Mont-Saint-Michel
- Eiffel Tower photo stop

Tour pace

On this guided tour, you’ll walk for at least 3 hours daily across moderately uneven terrain, including paved roads, cobblestone streets, and sandy paths, with some hills.

For more information, contact

<https://groups.goaheadtours.com/tours/laurafrance> | 651-332-4774 | laura.lanik@mpls.k12.mn.us

The Grand Tour of France with Laura

16 days | 18 days with Paris extension

Overnight Flight → 1 night

Day 1: Travel day

Board your overnight flight to Lyon today.

Lyon → 2 nights

Day 2: Arrival in Lyon

Included meals: welcome dinner

Welcome to France! Get to know your Tour Director and fellow travelers at tonight's welcome dinner and toast, featuring traditional Lyonnaise cuisine at one of the city's 22 certified bouchons. Rustic, and decidedly cozy, bouchons are a symbol of Lyon's gastronomic identity.

Day 3: Sightseeing tour of Lyon

Included meals: breakfast

Find yourself at the meeting point of the Rhone and Saone rivers, walking through history that dates to Roman times, as a local guide introduces you to France's culinary capital.

- Set out on a walking tour of Lyon's UNESCO-recognized city center, taking in its Gothic and Renaissance architecture as you go. Along the way, you'll pass the Basilica of Notre-Dame de Fourviere. You may have already seen it as you coasted into town, but this hilltop cathedral—built on the site of an old Roman forum—staggers up close.
- Continue through Vieux Lyon, the Old Town and largest Renaissance district in the city, and step inside the Cathedrale Saint-Jean-Baptiste de Lyon. Simply known as “Lyon Cathedral” in English, this Gothic church took 300 years to complete and houses a 14th-century astronomical clock. You might just catch it tolling!
- Explore some of Lyon's many traboules—secret, covered passageways that once helped workers and merchants shuttle between streets. Word has it that it takes a true Lyonnais to locate these hidden paths; luckily, your local guide knows the way.

Enjoy a free afternoon in Lyon, where you can take a few hours to continue snacking your way

through the city's many eateries. Or, add an excursion to the quaint commune of Perouges—and see why it's recognized as one of Les Plus Beaux Villages de France (“the most beautiful villages in France”).

+ Medieval Village of Pérouges

Avignon → 1 night

Day 4: Pont du Gard, transfer to Avignon & sightseeing tour

Included meals: breakfast, dinner

Head to Vers-Pont-du-Gard and explore the area with your Tour Director. It won't be the last French village to charm you with its narrow stone streets and local markets on your trip. Get to know the village's eye-popping attraction, the UNESCO-listed Pont du Gard, a gargantuan Roman aqueduct that spans the Gardon River.

- Pore over artifacts and interactive displays at the Pont du Gard Museum for a deep dive into the Roman engineering techniques that made the building of the aqueduct possible.
- Walk on a trail along the Pont du Gard, taking in views of the flowing river below and the surrounding Mediterranean scrubland.

Next, make your way to Avignon. Sited along the Rhone River, Avignon—the City of Popes—has long sat at the confluence of history and culture. With a local guide leading the way, you'll discover its architectural and artistic legacies (as well as the origins of its reverent nickname).

- Spot the four remaining arches of the Pont Saint-Benezet. Though ruined since the mid-17th century, this stone bridge is a symbol of the city and inspired the children's song “Sur le Pont d'Avignon” (“On the Bridge of Avignon”).
- Enter the opulent Papal Palace, from which Pope Clement V reigned during the 14th century. It's a UNESCO World Heritage Site and one of the most significant medieval Gothic buildings in all of Europe. From its cavernous chambers to its extensive courtyards, the enormous structure boasts fortress-like walls more than 160 feet tall—a surefire way to protect its residents.

- Stroll through the historic Old Town, surrounded by the city's original medieval walls. At its heart, you'll find the Place de l'Horloge, a thriving square home to Avignon's city hall and clock tower.

This evening, sit down for an included dinner with your group, served with beer or wine.

Nice → 2 nights

Day 5: Nice via Aix-en-Provence

Included meals: breakfast, tasting

Travel through the countryside toward the French Riviera, stopping to explore Aix-en-Provence, a Roman-influenced city and hometown of Post-Impressionist artist Paul Cézanne. If you're a fan of the painter, you'll love seeing Mont Sainte-Victoire—a frequent guest in Cézanne's oeuvres—emerge in real life.

- Browse the stalls at one of Aix-en-Provence's beloved markets this morning, where you'll taste local specialties like honey and olives. You can also shop for textiles, and of course, Provence's famous lavender.
- Pass Aix Cathedral, built on the site of the first-century Roman forum, and admire its carved walnut doors and soaring bell tower.
- Enjoy free time to stroll down beautiful boulevards like Cours Mirabeau and admire the architecture, fountains, and canopy of trees.

Continue to Nice to get a head start on tomorrow's seaside sightseeing or add an excursion to the glamorous principality of Monaco to take in its Old Town, Royal Palace, and the chic Monte Carlo Casino.

+ Evening in Monaco

Day 6: Sightseeing tour of Nice

Included meals: breakfast

Nestled between Cannes and the Principality of Monaco on the Cote d'Azur, Nice is part cultural hub, part coastal resort, and entirely fascinating. Fall in love with “La Belle” during a guided tour of the city this morning and see which of its quarters claims your heart.

- Drive along the Promenade des Anglais, a waterfront walkway dear to locals and visitors

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alike. Spot the various highlights called out by your local guide: The distinguished Hotel Negresco, casino-hotel Palais de la Mediterranee, and the iron sculpture “La Chaise” all line the promenade.

- Stop in the upscale Cimiez neighborhood to explore a pair of legendary landmarks. First, enter the second-century Roman amphitheater—one ruin among many that formerly constituted the Roman city of Cemenelum—before moving on to the thriving gardens of the Cimiez Monastery. Monks have found solace in its peaceful surroundings since the 800s, and you can, too. Bask in a blissful moment of calm, then continue on your sightseeing tour.
- Conclude your day with free time in Nice’s Old Town, a labyrinth of narrow streets connecting bustling squares, quaint cafes, and the vibrant Cours Saleya market. (Looking for souvenirs? Here’s your last chance! Pick up tapenades, candied fruit, and other local specialties for the gourmand in your life.)

Enjoy a free afternoon in Nice (a stroll through the Promenade du Paillon is a dreamy spot to while away the hours) or add an excursion to the medieval hilltop village of Saint-Paul-de-Vence. Its ancient city walls hug a picturesque mix of art galleries and cafes.

+ Medieval Saint-Paul-de-Vence

Montpellier → 1 night

Day 7: Montpellier via Arles

Included meals: breakfast

Make your way through the Provencal landscapes that influenced the French master painters, stopping in Arles for a walking tour with your Tour Director in the lead.

Together with your group, you’ll enjoy a stroll along the boulevards and squares that inspired Vincent van Gogh, and see where he painted some of his famous works. The town is also famous for its Roman heritage, and you’ll get to experience it firsthand during a visit to the Arles Arena, a two-story Roman amphitheater. Continue to Montpellier and enjoy a short sightseeing walk through the town’s historic center, led by your Tour Director. There is so much to see and love as you wander its winding alleys lined with shops and hidden courtyards.

Bordeaux → 2 nights

Day 8: Bordeaux via Carcassonne

Included meals: breakfast, lunch

Today, stop in UNESCO-listed Carcassonne, a medieval fortified town. Here, your Tour Director introduces you to the town’s unique history on an orientation tour. Drawbridges, gates, watchtowers, and cobbled streets fill its star attraction, the Cite de Carcassonne. Before sitting down for an included lunch, enjoy free time to explore the citadel on your own. Then, continue to Bordeaux.

Day 9: Sightseeing tour of Bordeaux

Included meals: breakfast, tasting

Meet your local guide for a panoramic tour of Bordeaux, the capital of the Aquitaine region, venerated for its wine and elegant architecture.

- Stop at the Place des Quinconces, one of the largest squares in Europe, filled with statues and bubbling fountains.
- Drive along the Garonne River, stopping at Place de la Bourse. Teeming with 18th-century architecture, the square is also home to a crystalline reflecting pool that creates a surreal mirror effect of the surrounding buildings.
- Pass the Grand Theatre, another masterful example of neoclassical grandeur, and the Grosse Cloche, Bordeaux’s medieval bell tower.
- Wrap up your guided tour by sampling local treats like merveilles (diamond-shaped beignets), canelés (caramelized pastries spiced with rum and vanilla), and bouchons de Bordeaux (almonds and grapes macerated in brandy and wrapped in thin dough). Enjoy a free afternoon in Bordeaux to walk its riverfront or add an excursion to learn more about the makings of the region’s most famous product: wine. You’ll travel to Saint-Emilion to tour a winery and its cellars before enjoying a tasting and dinner.

+ Bordeaux Dinner & Wine Tasting

Loire Valley → 2 nights

Day 10: The Loire Valley via La Rochelle

Included meals: breakfast, dinner

Make your way to the Atlantic port city of La Rochelle, home to a bustling harbor and a pair of medieval towers and explore this slice of coastline with your Tour Director in the lead. Later, arrive in the Loire Valley where you’ll sit down for an included dinner with your group, served with beer or wine.

Day 11: Sightseeing tour of the Loire Valley

Included meals: breakfast

Get to know chateau country, also known as the Loire Valley, on a sightseeing tour. Step inside the extravagant Chateau de Chenonceau, one of the most photographed and visited chateaux in the Loire Valley and often described as the “Ladies’ Chateau” due to the influential women who played a part in its history. After a walk through the chateau’s meticulously manicured gardens, you’ll continue to the town of Amboise for free time after a brief orientation from your Tour Director. You’ll know you’re arriving in Amboise when you see its royal chateau jutting out of a dramatic perch high above the river. Enjoy a free evening in the Loire Valley to unwind and scroll through your photos—or add a few more to your camera roll on an excursion through the Loire Valley to a wine cellar for a tasting and dinner.

+ Loire Valley Dinner & Wine Tasting

Normandy Region → 2 nights

Day 12: Normandy Region via Mont-Saint-Michel

Included meals: breakfast, dinner

Travel north to the historic Normandy coastline, stopping along the way for a guided tour of Mont-Saint-Michel, a tidal island crowned by a UNESCO-listed abbey. The iconic abbey appears to defy gravity and float on water at high tide and is a mesmerizing sight to behold. Enjoy free time to eat lunch and time on your own to admire the striking, 8th-century island Abbey of Mont-Saint-Michel at your own pace. If its steep inclines and 300 steps are not in your wheelhouse, rest assured there is still much to see, do, and eat on the lower main street. Sit down for an included dinner this evening, served with beer or wine.

Day 13: Free day in the Normandy Region

Included meals: breakfast

Spend your free day relaxing or join us for an optional excursion to visit the beaches of D-Day—the largest seaborne invasion in history. You’ll tread the same shores that saw some of the most epic battles of World War II and look firsthand at the war’s enduring memorials at the American Cemetery in Colleville-sur-Mer and at Omaha Beach—the landing site of American troops on D-Day.

+ D-Day Beaches of Normandy

Paris → 2 nights

Day 14: Transfer to Paris

Included meals: breakfast

Travel to Paris and enjoy a free evening exploring your local neighborhood and stocking up on macarons or a fresh baguette at one of the city's boulangeries. Or, add the optional excursion and join us for dinner and a Seine cruise. You'll glide past Paris' iconic monuments illuminated at night as the city sings all around you.

+ Dinner in Paris & Seine River Cruise

Day 15: Sightseeing tour of Paris

Included meals: breakfast, farewell dinner

Ready to be dazzled by the City of Light? With a local guide leading the way, you'll get an overview of its most recognizable landmarks and a feel for the character of its arrondissements. (That's French for "districts" and is how Parisians refer to the city's neighborhoods.)

- Drive down the sycamore-lined Avenue des Champs-Élysées—an icon of France that's lined with majestic monuments, glitzy restaurants, and glamorous storefronts. Continue to its western end and take in the magnificent Arc de Triomphe, originally built to commemorate one of Napoleon's many conquests. A dozen different avenues spoke from this epic arch, making it Paris' symbolic heart.
- Pass the 16th-century Pont Neuf, the oldest stone bridge in Paris, and Notre-Dame Cathedral. Watching over its arrondissement from an island in the Seine River, this French Gothic masterwork is one of the city's enduring sights.
- Make a photo stop at the Eiffel Tower (you know this one!) before viewing the Palais Garnier opera house and the Place de la Concorde, the city's grandest square.
- Pass by the I.M. Pei-designed Louvre Pyramid—the grandiose glass gateway to the world's preeminent art museum. Then, marvel at the Hotel des Invalides: Erected in the 17th century and built to a height of roughly 350 feet, this gold-domed structure is the largest church building in all of Paris and serves as the final resting place of its greatest military leaders.

If you need a break from the buzz of this electric city, seek royal refuge by adding an afternoon outing to the Palace and Gardens of Versailles. You'll encounter gilded walkways, fresco-adorned ceilings, and close to 2,000 acres of immaculate green space—all just a few miles west of Paris. Or, stay in town and use your free time to amble to the Champ-de-Mars and savor a picnic in the shadow of the Eiffel Tower.

Then, celebrate your trip with your group at a farewell dinner this evening, served with beer or wine.

+ Versailles Palace & Gardens

Flight Home

Day 16: Departure

Included meals: breakfast (excluding early morning departures)

Transfer to the airport for your flight home or spend a few more days deepening your love for this City of Love. Now that you've seen its highlights, it's time to dig a little deeper. (Catacombs of Paris, perhaps?)

+ Paris extension

Paris is always a good idea, so extend your trip to keep exploring. Take a couple of days to museum-hop, stroll along the boulevards, crunch into a fresh tradi (short for baguette tradition), and let your expert Tour Director point you toward the *creme de la creme*.

Paris → 2 nights

Day 16: Walking tour of Le Marais

Included meals: breakfast

Begin your day in Paris with a guided walking tour of Le Marais, one of the city's most enchanting neighborhoods, renowned for its rich history, vibrant Jewish community, and thriving cafe and gallery culture.

- Wander through Place des Vosges, one of the oldest planned squares in Paris.
- View the house of Victor Hugo, the famed author of "Les Misérables."
- Marvel at the Church of Saint Paul, this beautiful church showcasing exquisite Baroque architecture.
- Admire the grandeur of Hotel de Ville, a 19th-century building, now the seat of the French government.
- Discover the secret courtyards and narrow alleyways that give Le Marais its unique character.
- Enjoy free time to explore the local cafes, indulge in a delicious lunch, or browse the eclectic shops and galleries. If you opt for lunch, be sure to take your time. Parisians like to enjoy a leisurely meal.

Day 17: Free day in Paris

Included meals: breakfast

Claude Monet once said, "All my money goes

into my garden," and today, you can see the wondrous results of the artist's dedication to his blooms. Add our optional trip to Giverny to your itinerary to visit his home and cherished gardens. To admire a different side of France's artistic pedigree, consider paying a visit to one of Paris's many stellar museums. (Take your pick from the Louvre, the Musée d'Orsay, or the Musée de l'Orangerie.)

Finally, come together as a group one last time for a farewell drink and toast to a trip well spent.
+ Monet & the Landscapes of Giverny

Flight Home

Day 18: Departure

Included meals: breakfast (excluding early morning departures)

Transfer to the airport for your flight home.

For more information, contact

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Customize your experience

Customize your tour by adding excursion options. Excursions offered on the same day will occur at different times, so there's no need to choose. Save \$10 when you book your excursion up to three days before your tour departs.* Excursions requiring advance reservation only list this discounted price. Call or go online to customize your tour: <https://groups.goaheadtours.com/tours/laurafrance> | 651-332-4774

Day 3: Medieval Village of Pérouges

From \$69.00 . Visit the link above for pricing info. (4 hours, departs in the afternoon)

Make your way to the charming village of Pérouges, a favorite among the French for its winding cobblestone streets and medieval architecture. Visit the central Place du Tilleul for a panoramic view of the area and explore the fortress-church of Sainte Marie Madeleine. After taking in the scenery, stop at a local bakery to sample some of the region's sweetest specialties. Taste a galette—a round, flat tart filled with berries—and hypocras, a spiced wine flavored with honey, ginger, and cinnamon.

Day 5: Evening in Monaco

From \$145.00 . Visit the link above for pricing info. (6 hours, departs in the evening)

Spend an evening in Monaco, a tiny principality that's world-renowned for its luxuriousness. Ruled by the Grimaldis, Europe's oldest royal family, Monaco has retained its independence for more than 700 years. Your Tour Director introduces you to the Old Town, which is perched atop the Rock of Monaco. This 203-foot-tall monolith overlooks the Mediterranean Sea and is part of the Monaco-Ville quarter, the oldest of the country's four quarters. While here, you'll stop and view the outside of the Royal Palace. Next, head to the Monte Carlo Casino where you'll have plenty of free time inside the world-famous casino with an included drink. Please note: Travelers under the age of 18 are not permitted to enter the casino. Travelers must abide by dress code restrictions to enter the casino, and passports are required for entrance to the Casino.

Day 6: Medieval Saint-Paul-de-Vence

From \$99.00 . Visit the link above for pricing info. (5 hours, departs in the evening)

Make your way to Saint-Paul-de-Vence, a celebrity haven and one of the oldest villages on the French Riviera. Upon arrival, your Tour Director will introduce you to its rich medieval history and wonderful art scene on a guided tour. Pass Place du Jeu de Boules, Porte de Vence, Place de la Grande Fontaine, and the Collegiate Church before stopping at Maison Bremond 1830 to sample local culinary specialties. Please note: This excursion involves difficult walking on uneven terrain, including cobblestone streets with some hills and stairs. We recommend wearing a comfortable pair of walking shoes.

Day 9: Bordeaux Dinner & Wine Tasting

From \$169.00 . Visit the link above for pricing info. (7 hours, departs in the afternoon, dinner included)

Head outside the city of Bordeaux to the countryside where some of France's best wines are produced. Tour the historic village of Saint-Émilion, known for its namesake monolithic church, unique underground monuments, and centuries-old vineyards. Visit a local winery for a tour of the cellar and to learn about the winemaking process. Then, sip your way through world-

renowned varieties, including prestigious Grand Crus. After your tour and tasting, discuss your favorites over dinner at the vineyard.

Day 11: Loire Valley Dinner & Wine Tasting

From \$109.00 . Visit the link above for pricing info. (5 hours, departs in the evening, dinner included)

Cap off your day in the Loire Valley by taking in views of châteaux and greenery on your way to a local wine cellar. With its central location in the country, this area draws culinary influence from several parts of France, which you'll experience during a wine tasting and dinner at a local restaurant.

Day 13: D-Day Beaches of Normandy

From \$99.00 . Visit the link above for pricing info. (10 hours, departs in the morning)

Dive into World War II history alongside your Tour Director during this excursion to Normandy, where the Allied troops landed in June 1944. First, stop at the American Cemetery in Colleville—the burial place for more than 9,000 American soldiers who lost their lives during the battle of Normandy. Afterward, head to Omaha Beach to walk in the footsteps of the American soldiers who landed here and see the Omaha Beach Memorial. Then, stop at Pointe du Hoc to view the evocative granite monument erected by the French in honor of the American Second Ranger Battalion, who seized the German canons here before they could be used to fire on American troops landing on Omaha Beach. Stop in the seaside town of Arromanches to enjoy free time and pay a visit to Juno Beach and the Bény-sur-Mer Canadian War Cemetery if time permits. Please note: This excursion requires some walking on uneven terrain. The order of inclusions may vary based on departure and season.

Day 14: Dinner in Paris & Seine River Cruise

From \$129.00 . Visit the link above for pricing info. (5 hours, departs in the evening, dinner included)

Take in the nighttime allure of the City of Light on a special evening excursion. The event begins with dinner at a local restaurant. After you dine, board a boat cruise along the Seine. As you coast along the river and under Paris' bridges, you'll behold the illuminated monuments of the city glittering alongside the riverbanks. Please note: The dress code may vary depending on the restaurant for your dinner. Your Tour Director will advise you on what to wear, but shorts and sneakers are likely to be considered inappropriate attire.

Day 15: Versailles Palace & Gardens

From \$139.00 . Visit the link above for pricing info. (5 hours, departure time varies)

The reign of Louis XIV, known as the “Sun King,” set new standards for decadence among the crowned heads of Europe. It took 50 years and 35,000 workers to turn Versailles, once a small hunting lodge, into the most magnificent château in all of France and the envy of royalty worldwide. On this excursion, you'll see the

palace in all its glory as you tour the State Apartments and the glittering Hall of Mirrors. Then, stroll through the lavish gardens to admire their fine statuary, splendid fountains, and colorful flowerbeds. Please note: Versailles Palace is closed on Mondays. The optional excursion may be moved to a different day on tour to accommodate schedules.

Extension excursion options

Day 17: Monet & the Landscapes of Giverny

From \$109.00 . Visit the link above for pricing info. (6 hours, departs in the morning)

The village of Giverny was home to Claude Monet from 1883 until his death in 1926. On a visit to Monet's home and gardens, discover the subtle palette of colors that inspired his Water Lilies series and gave rise to a new way of seeing. Please note: This excursion is seasonal and runs from April through October.

*Optional excursions may be purchased up to three days prior to departure or while on tour. Pre-purchased optional excursions cannot be canceled within three days prior to departure or while on tour. Select optional excursions require advance booking and cannot be purchased or canceled after the advanced reservation deadline. Go Ahead Tours accepts payment by cash, Visa or MasterCard for optional excursions purchased on tour. Additional fees may apply for optional excursions purchased on tour. Excursions require a minimum number of participants to operate. Details and prices are subject to change. Due to seasonal hours of operation and availability, some excursions may not operate. If this occurs, you will be refunded any payments made for that excursion post-tour. Learn more at <https://www.goaheadtours.com/about/terms>.