



Join us for a marvelous tour through some of the most scenic and memorable regions of western France. We'll visit sites which tell of the greatest struggle of the last century in the battle for a free world. We'll savor culinary delights and wines. We'll enjoy quaint inns and restaurants and experience immersions in French culture that set this travel experience apart from all the rest. Best of all, we'll be led by David Harper who has customized this itinerary and will provide us a trip you'll never forget.

Tell your friends about the Wonders of Western France, reserve your spot today and then mark your 2017 calendar. You'll be glad you did!

Itinerary

September 6–16, 2017

Wednesday, September 6th– We depart the US for Paris, France

Thursday, September 7th – Upon arrival in Paris, David will assist us in boarding our first class coach for a transfer to the **Loire Valley area**. En route we'll make a stop at spectacular **Chenonceau Castle** before checking into our hotel in Saumur on the Loire River. Chenonceau's construction and history was intrinsically linked with noblewomen and we can find out more about them at the wax museum on the premises. In the evening, we'll be served a welcome drink and a welcome dinner of regional specialties. Overnight Hotel Mercure, Saumur. *Focus of the day: The Loire Region.*

Friday, September 8th– After breakfast, we'll visit **Chateau d'Ussé**, one of the Loire's great castles and known as the inspiration for Charles Perrault's Cinderella fairytale. In the afternoon, we'll visit a **mushroom farm in caves** before touring a **champagne method sparkling wine producer**, followed by tasting. After free time in Saumur, we'll be served dinner in a typical French bistro in town. Overnight Saumur. *Focus of the day: The Kings of France and their Loire Valley chateaux*



Chateau d'Ussé'



Troglodyte farming community in Rochemenier

Saturday, September 9th– After breakfast, we check out of our hotel and transfer to nearby Rochemenier, a former **troglodyte farming community**. Caves, cut into the tufa cliffs beside the Loire and other limestone-rich areas of Anjou, were, and sometimes still are, used as dovecotes, chapels, farms, wine cellars and even homes. These so-called 'troglodyte' dwellings are extremely old, with some dating back to the 12th century, and have hardly changed over the years. Here we'll tour underground stables, barns, houses and a simple rock chapel. Late morning, we travel on to one of the wonders of the world, the **megalithic stone alignments of Carnac**. We'll be awed by the thousands of standing

stones located at Carnac, representing the most extraordinary group of *menhirs* in the world. These alignments include about 3,000 megaliths, some dating back about 6,500 years, and were probably connected to religious beliefs and rites. The area still harbors an aura of mystery and one can almost feel a lingering presence of unfathomed human intelligence and unexplained engineering achievement. Our two-night base in Brittany is at Hotel de l'Océan just outside the charming seaside resort of **Concarneau**. Dinner at the hotel. Overnight Concarneau.

Focus of the day: France's early history

Sunday September 10th– After breakfast, we head north to the unique **village of Locronan**, its streets lined with blue-grey granite houses. This scenic location – popular with French filmmakers – became an important place of pilgrimage to St. Ronan, an Irish monk who arrived here as a missionary in the 7th century. Locronan also became the sailcloth supplier for the rest of Europe from the 15th century onward; the village church, dedicated to St. Ronan, has retained its Renaissance atmosphere. Late morning we'll drive into the historically rich town of **Quimper**. Here we'll have free time to take in the atmosphere of the colorful covered produce market and the charming old town center with its stunning cathedral. After free time for lunch, we'll return to Concarneau to discover its attractive and bustling 'Ville Close' (walled town). The **Ville Close**, set on a tiny islet of the estuary, is only accessible via a bridge leading into the outer defenses. After crossing an inner moat, we'll gain access to this impregnable town with its narrow, stone-paved streets and old crooked houses. Plenty of shopping opportunities await us here, as well as two manufactures of local specialties: chocolates, meringues and gateaux Bretons. This evening we'll savor regional specialties at our hotel Overnight Concarneau.

Focus of the day: Agriculture, arts & crafts, food & drink in Brittany

Monday, September 11– After breakfast, we check out of the hotel to travel northward to the **Mont St. Michel**. Iconic in its fame, this solitary rock at the land's end is crowned by a monumental abbey. A pilgrimage sight for 1,000 years, its church at the summit is a unique architectural masterpiece and offers stupendous views for miles around. Mont Saint Michel has the highest tides in continental Europe with a difference in water level of 50ft. When the tide is out, nearly 100 sq miles of sandy bay are revealed. As we continue north we'll stop for a tour and tasting of Normandy's famous apple cider and calvados (apple brandy). Early evening, we check into our hotel in Normandy's delightful Calvados Region, our base for the next three nights. Dinner of French specialties at the hotel. Overnight Hotel Mercure, Port de Plaisance, Caen.

Focus of the day: The Celtic heritage along the Atlantic coast



Mont St. Michel, and 8th Century Monastery



Ferme De L' Hermittere in Calvados

Tuesday, September 12th - After breakfast, we spend the morning visiting the Caen Peace Memorial. This award-winning museum provides us with an excellent overview of WWII and the D-Day landings. In the afternoon we'll visit Omaha Beach and the US cemetery at Coleville that also offers informative insight into the history of the D-Day landings and the Battle of Normandy. We'll also visit the Arromanches museum that explains the daring construction of the artificial harbors that were put in place and used for weeks for the landing of vehicles, supplies and soldiers. A dinner of Norman dishes will be enjoyed in town. Overnight Hotel Mercure Port de Plaisance, Caen.

Focus of the day: The D-Day Landings and the "Greatest Battle Ever Fought".



The Caen Peace Memorial in Caen, France

Wednesday, September 13th - After breakfast, we drive out to Ste Mère l'Eglise and its Airborne Museum, then to **Utah Beach** and the D-Day Landing Museum of Ste Marie-du-Mont. In the afternoon we continue to the impressive battle site of **Pointe du Hoc** and where American casualties during the epoch landings were the highest. This manicured graveyard is the final resting place for close to 10,000 US soldiers who sacrificed their lives in the fight for freedom. Our last visit on the D-Day coastline will be at the well-preserved German gun emplacements seen in the film classic *The Longest Day*. A dinner of French specialties will be served at the hotel. Overnight Hotel Mercure, Port de Plaisance, Bayeux.

Focus of the day: The Airborne Divisions' Role in D-Day.



The Airborn Museum at St. Mere L'Englise

Thursday, September 14th - After breakfast, we bid farewell to the Calvados region and leave early to drive east to **Giverny**. The renowned artist **Claude Monet** chose this quiet part of the Norman countryside as his residence and place of work. Diverting a stream and employing six full-time gardeners, Monet created a garden of beauty around his home, a source of inspiration for numerous paintings, many considered to be his best. Our visit to Giverny will give us an opportunity to have a bite to eat before continuing on to Paris.

Driving through Paris, we'll take in some of the sights of this incomparable city. After checking into Hotel Mercure Paris Monmartre in the city, we'll be served dinner near the hotel. Overnight Paris. *Focus of the day: Monet's world, as well as an overview of Paris.*



Monet's Gardens IN Giverny



Eiffel Tower, Paris

Friday, September 15th - After breakfast we have a leisure day in Paris. Sightseeing and shopping suggestions will be made. Our farewell dinner will be served near the hotel. Overnight Mercure Paris Monmartre, Paris.

Saturday, September 16th - After breakfast, we transfer to Charles de Gaulle Airport and our return flight home to the USA.

The Backroads of Western France

Brittany, Normandy and Fairytale Loire
September 6 – 16, 2017

PRICE: \$3,975.00 (per person based on double occupancy)
Single occupancy supplement: \$550.00

Our tour is based on a minimum of 25 participants. In the event that this number is not reached the tour may be cancelled and all monies refunded.

Included Tour Features:

- 9 nights in superior and first class hotels
- 10 days of private coach service incl. driver, tolls, parking, fuel
- 10 days of tour manager / guide service (David)
- 9 buffet-style breakfasts
- 9 three-course dinners of regional specialties
- Roundtrip airfare from Minneapolis/St. Paul
- Admission to all paying attractions
- Local guides where applicable
- Gratuities for local guides
- Gratuities for restaurant staff at included dinners
- Luggage service at hotels
- Bed tax

Not included: Beverages with dinners and Gratuities for driver and guide

General Information

Reservations: A deposit of \$250.00 per person is required to secure a place on our tour. This deposit is fully refundable until June 1, 2017.

Insurance: We strongly suggest that you consider the purchase of travel insurance. Coverage includes trip cancellation for covered occurrences, medical, baggage, emergency evacuation and more. Pre-existing medical conditions are covered per terms of the contract. Please ask for details. The price of insurance is **\$259.00 per person and must be paid at time of deposit and is non-refundable once paid.**

Final payment: Final payment is due by July 6, 2017. We will invoice you for the balance.

Cancellation Schedule:

From receipt of deposit to June 1, 2017 – No fee
From June 2 to July 6, 2017 – \$250 per person
From July 6 and later – No refund

Smoking: We kindly request no smoking when and wherever the group is traveling together.

IMPORTANT: You must possess a valid U.S. passport. The passport must be valid for a minimum of 6 months from your return to the U.S. to the conclusion of the tour on September 16, 2017.

Responsibility: *This tour is operated by Higgins Travel & Cruise Center, Ltd. DBA Higgins Travel Leaders at 2514 Golf Road., Eau Claire, WI 54701 and Tailor Made Europe / David and Christine Harper, C/O 101 Churn Road, Bozeman, MT 59715. Higgins' and Harper will act only as agent for tour members in arranging transportation, accommodations, sightseeing and admissions. We reserve the right at our sole discretion to make changes to the itinerary and are not responsible to any person for expense, loss of time or money or other circumstance that result from such a change. Rates are quoted upon tariffs and exchange rates current at time of printing and are subject to change at any time. Should the exchange rate change significantly, the price of the tour may be adjusted. Also, if fuel surcharges are imposed, the price of the tour may be adjusted. We may decline or accept any person as a tour member at any time. Higgins' and Harper will not be responsible for any loss or damage to personal property or for injuries or damages incurred by a tour member. Higgins' and Harper may cancel the tour, should it become necessary, and refund all monies, thus releasing Higgins Travel Leaders and Tailor Made Europe from any further obligation. We require a minimum of 18 participants to operate this tour.*

For More Information, Please Contact

Joan Lorenz
Higgins Travel Leaders
(715) 834-2686 ~ joan@higginstravel.com

Registration Form

The Backroads of Western France

September 6 – 16, 2017

Passport Name(s) 1. _____
2. _____

(On the lines above, please print your name EXACTLY as it appears on your passport.)

Address _____

City/Town _____ State _____ Zip Code _____

Home Phone (____) _____ Cell Phone (____) _____

Email _____

Passport # 1 _____ Expiration Date _____ Birth Date _____

Passport # 2 _____ Expiration Date _____ Birth Date _____

Please include a photo copy of the inside photo page of each passport with your application.

Any special occasion _____

(For example a birthday or anniversary while we are traveling.)

Price: \$3,975.00 per person based on double occupancy. **Single supplement:** \$550.00

Payment: A \$250 per person deposit is due to secure a place on our tour. Due to the group nature of our tour, payment must be paid by personal check. Please make checks payable to Higgins Travel and mail to 2514 Golf Road, Eau Claire, WI 54701. Final payment will be due July 6, 2017. We will send you an invoice.

Insurance: *Insurance is recommended but optional, and must be paid with your initial deposit.* The insurance becomes non-refundable once paid. Information about this insurance coverage will be provided to all participants. Insurance price is \$259.00 per person.

I/We Accept Insurance _____ I/We Decline Insurance _____

In case of an emergency, please contact:

Name _____

Relationship _____ Phone or Email _____

Higgins Travel Leaders
2514 Golf Road Eau Claire, WI 54701