



Normandy-Loire 2012

■ May 13- 25

- Comfortable hotels and charming inns – all with private bath
- The gardens, studio and home of Claude Monet in Giverny
- Old Bayeux, and its most famous sight, the Bayeux Tapestry
- Transportation in van or mini-bus • Outstanding cuisine
- D-Day beaches & monuments • Magnificent Chartres Cathedral
- Belle Epoque resorts of Deauville and Trouville • Outdoor markets
- Fresh seafood – some of the best in France • Stunning coastal scenery
- Abbey of Mont St. Michel • local cheeses, cider & calvados
- Cathedrals, castles, markets, cafés, art, fine dining, exceptional wines

Tour cost – \$3,895* per person sharing for land arrangements (airfare not included) • Singles add \$550

Day 1 – Sunday, May 13

Our tour begins at 9:30 a.m. at the Novotel Hotel, **Charles de Gaulle Airport, Paris**. After a 90-minute drive, we arrive at our exciting first destination – the fabled house and garden of **Claude Monet at Giverny**. After a tour of this living museum, including the studio of the artist who invented Impressionism, we have **LUNCH** at a lively inn in the village. Later, we continue to beautiful **Honfleur**, our home for the next three nights. Near day's end, a walking tour orients us to the narrow, winding streets of the Old Town and the Old Port, followed by a **WELCOME COCKTAIL. OVERNIGHT – HONFLEUR**

Day 2 – Monday, May 14

Today we visit the fascinating city of **Rouen**, capital of Normandy, exploring the lively Old City, bristling with spires and bell towers, and adorned with hundreds of half-timbered houses. See the square where **Joan of Arc** was martyred. Late in the day we return to Honfleur for free time. **OVERNIGHT – HONFLEUR**

Day 3 – Tuesday, May 15

We travel to two of France's most famous Belle Epoque resorts, **Deauville** and **Trouville**, to experience life along the *planches* – wooden boardwalks facing the sea. For **LUNCH**, we enjoy super-fresh seafood at the Art Deco **Brasserie les Vapeurs**. As we head back to Honfleur, there may be time to swing by one of the many farms selling fresh cider and *calvados* (apple brandy). **OVERNIGHT – HONFLEUR**

Day 4 – Wednesday, May 16

Today we enter **D-Day** country, driving through the green landscape of Normandy. Before lunch, marvel at the **Memorial at Caen**, a widely known monument to peace. In **Bayeux**, we view the tapestry woven to commemorate the victory of **William the Conqueror** over England in 1066. In the afternoon we check into our comfortable, *centre-ville* hotel. Here, after free time, we enjoy **DINNER. OVERNIGHT – BAYEUX**

Day 5 – Thursday, May 17

Our visits today encompass the **D-Day** region, very close to Bayeux. We will do as many as time allows, including museum visits; **Omaha Beach**, where American troops landed on D-Day; the **American Cemetery**, final resting place for more than 9,300 U.S. soldiers; the moving monument to the **Fifth Engineers Special Brigade**; the nearby German cemetery, a somber place in stark contrast to the cemeteries of the Allies; and other monuments to this day that changed the world – June 6, 1944. We return to Bayeux in time for **DINNER. OVERNIGHT – BAYEUX**

Day 6 – Friday, May 18

We head west today through *Basse* (lower) *Normandie*. First up: **Villedieu-les-Poêles**, where we stop for lunch and to tour one of the town's foundries, manufacturer of church bells that ring the world over. Then, via **Avranches**, the launching point for the July 1944 offensive by troops under **Gen. George Patton**, a decisive event in World War II, we head to the mainland overlooking the fabled monastery village of **Mont**

St.-Michel. DINNER. OVERNIGHT – MONT ST. MICHEL

Day 7 – Saturday, May 19

We spend most of the day on Mont St. Michel, a magical place. This morning we visit its **Abbey**, one of the world's wonders. Our tour is timed to avoid the worst of the crowds. Climb to the crown of the rock that supports the abbey, then wander through the vaulted rooms of this atmospheric fortress-palace. After lunch, you may enjoy free time, or if you wish come along on an optional day trip to the pretty town of **Fougères**, surrounded by walls and protected by a castle. **DINNER** this evening. **OVERNIGHT – MONT ST. MICHEL**

Day 8 – Sunday, May 20

Leaving Mont St. Michel, we drive east, to the **Loire Valley**. Arriving near mid-day at the pretty medieval town of **Amboise**, we explore pretty Amboise and have lunch. In the afternoon, come along to visit the **Château d'Amboise**, an imposing fortress overlooking the town and river. Here, you'll be dazzled by the sumptuous rooms, expansive views and the tiny chapel that holds the remains of **Leonardo da Vinci**. Late in the day, after checking into our comfortable hotel, we enjoy free time. **OVERNIGHT – AMBOISE**

Day 9 – Monday, May 21

This morning we visit the last home of Leonardo da Vinci, **Clos Lucé**. The artist's masterpiece, the **Mona Lisa**, arrived in France in a saddlebag, when Leonardo moved to Amboise from Italy. After a picnic lunch, we visit **Chambord**, the Loire Valley's most impressive château – 440 rooms and 365 chimneys set in a vast meadow surrounded by the ancient forest of Chambord, hunting preserve of kings. Following our visit, we travel a short distance to the old town of **Blois**. Here we can view the **Château of Blois** and its spiral staircase, designed by Leonardo da Vinci. **DINNER** tonight. **OVERNIGHT – AMBOISE**

Day 10 – Tuesday, May 22

From Amboise, we make the short drive to the town of **Chenonceaux**, and visit one of the Loire's most beautiful châteaux. **Chenonceau** castle, cantilevered across the **Cher River**, will dazzle you. It's called the **Château of the Ladies**, because it was fought over by two women romantically involved with **King Henry II**. (After his death in 1599, his queen, **Catherine de' Medici**, seized the castle and ousted her rival, **Diane de Poitiers**.) Later, let's explore the heart of the most important town of the Loire, **Tours**. It's a half-timbered wonderland. **OVERNIGHT – AMBOISE**

Day 11 – Wednesday, May 23

Two of the most beautiful châteaux of the Loire are on our itinerary today – **Azay-le-Rideau**, surrounded by water and guarded by swans, and **Villandry**, whose ornamental and vegetable gardens are renowned throughout the world. Our **LUNCH** today is a very special meal at the Michelin-starred **Auberge du XII Siecle**, in **Saché**. We return to Amboise in time to enjoy its lively streets, small pedestrian area and the views of the Loire River from its banks. Relax and enjoy yourself this evening, or do some last-minute shopping in preparation for our return to the Paris area tomorrow. **OVERNIGHT – AMBOISE**

Day 12 – Thursday, May 24

From the Loire Valley we journey back toward **Paris**, but there's still one adventure along the way – medieval **Chartres**, boasting perhaps France's most beautiful gothic cathedral. Following a visit to this magnificent church, and a ramble around the old, half-timbered heart of Chartres, we continue toward the rolling countryside north of Paris. Here, near day's end, we check into the comfortable **Relais d'Aumale**, a former hunting lodge near the forest of **Chantilly**, and gather for a festive **AU REVOIR DINNER**. **OVERNIGHT – AUMALE**

Getaway day – Friday, May 25

This morning we make the short drive to **Charles de Gaulle Airport** for our flight home.

Notes

PRICE – \$3,895* per person sharing a room. Single supplement of \$550.

MEALS – All tours include breakfast daily and nine other meals (lunches and dinners), as indicated in **BOLD CAPS** in the itinerary.

OUR LODGINGS

Hotel l'Ecrin, Honfleur
Churchill Hotel, Bayeux
Hotel Mercure, Mont-St.-Michel
Hotel Vinci, Amboise
Relais d'Aumale, Chantilly

HOTELS AND RESTAURANTS – Subject to change according to availability.

* **TOUR PRICE** – Price of \$3,895 is an estimate only as fluctuations in foreign currency rates may make a surcharge necessary. Call us for details. Price quoted is for land arrangements only – airfare not included.