

Grand Circle Cruise Line[®]

THE LEADER IN VALUE AND WORLDWIDE DISCOVERY SINCE 1958

Your Grand Circle Travel Planning Guide



Holiday Spirit Along the Seine 2026

Grand Circle Cruise Line®

347 Congress Street, Boston, MA 02210

Dear Traveler,

I am thrilled that you are considering exploring the world with Grand Circle Cruise Line. There are so many wonderful destinations to discover, and the itinerary described inside is a perfect way to fulfill a travel dream.

When you cruise with us, you can expect an award-winning experience aboard our privately owned river ship. In addition to the convenience of unpacking just once, you will also enjoy the warm hospitality provided by our friendly, English-speaking crew, coupled with camaraderie of your fellow American travelers.

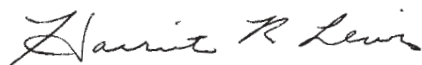
In addition, up to four **expert, local Program Directors** will accompany you from the beginning of your trip to the end. Assigned to a group of 38 travelers on average, these passionate leaders are ready and eager to share their homeland and insights as only a local can. Whether it is recommending their favorite restaurant, connecting travelers with people and culture, or providing the best ways to enhance your leisure time, your Program Director will be available to take care of all the details and ensure that you have a fun and carefree travel experience. You can also rely on the seasoned team at our regional office, who are ready to help 24/7 in case any unexpected circumstances arise.

Throughout your journey, you will experience Exclusive Discovery Series events designed to connect you with local people and culture. From sharing traditional fare and lively conversation during Home-Hosted Visits, to discussing Controversial Topics impacting everyday life, you will gain an intimate understanding of your destination, not just a superficial view. And if you choose to travel solo, you will enjoy all these cultural experiences at an unmatched value, with our low-cost Single Supplements—just one of the reasons we continue to be the leader in solo travel.

Plus, you can put your own personal stamp on your trip, like the **87% of our travelers who customize their experience**. Perhaps you will choose to see more of your destination by adding an optional trip extension to your itinerary. You can also arrive a few days early to explore independently and get acclimated, customize your air itinerary, and more.

I hope you find this Travel Planning Guide helpful. If you have any further questions, do not hesitate to contact one of our Travel Counselors at **1-800-221-2610**.

Warm regards,



Harriet R. Lewis
Chair
Grand Circle Cruise Line

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Vernon, France

Holiday Spirit Along the Seine

France: Paris, Vernon, Rouen, Mantes-la-Jolie

9 days starting from \$3,095

including airfare

Single Supplement: **\$795**

For departure dates & prices, visit

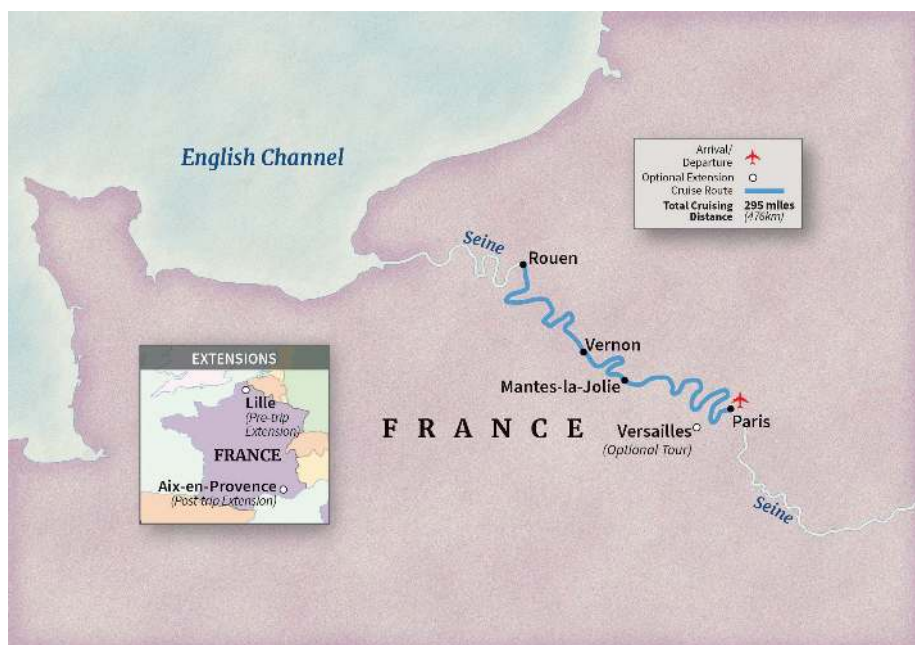
www.gct.com/snr2026pricing

Delight in the warmth of the holidays in France, beginning and ending in Paris, which is truly the “City of Light” at this time of year. Spend **7 nights aboard the privately owned 120-passenger M/S Bizet**, disembarking to explore the cities along the Seine, each one alive with the bustling magic of the season.

IT'S INCLUDED

- International airfare, airport transfers, government taxes, fees, and airline fuel surcharges, unless you choose to make your own air arrangements
- **Accommodations** for 7 nights aboard a private river ship in an outside cabin
- **20 meals:** 7 breakfasts, 6 lunches, and 7 dinners—plus all onboard house beer, wine, and soft drinks
- **4 included tours** with personal headsets and **6 Exclusive Discovery Series events**—French gourmet cuisine discovery • Home-Hosted Visit • Private concert at Rouen’s Notre Dame Cathedral • French cooking lesson • Onboard choral performance • *Monet & His Work* conversation
- **Local Program Directors, a Grand Circle Cruise Line exclusive:** These dedicated experts are with you and your group of 38-45 travelers from beginning to end to provide insider’s knowledge and a local perspective
- **Gratuities** for local guides and motorcoach drivers
- **All port charges**
- **Baggage handling** for 1 piece of luggage per person, including tips
- **5% Frequent Traveler Credit** toward your next trip

Prices are accurate as of the date of this publishing and are subject to change.



ITINERARY SUMMARY

1 • Depart the U.S.

2 • Arrive Paris, France • Embark ship

Embark ship
Port Paris

3 • Paris

4 • Paris • Vernon

Port Vernon

5 • Rouen

Port Rouen

6 • Rouen • Mantes-la-Jolie

Port Mantes La Jolie

7 • Mantes-la-Jolie • Paris

Port Paris

8 • Paris

9 • Return to U.S.

Disembark ship

WHAT TO EXPECT

① ② ③ ④ ⑤ Moderately Easy

Group Size

- This trip has a group size of 38-45 travelers with our local Program Director exclusive to Grand Circle

Pacing

- 9 days, with 7 nights aboard the M/S Bizet

Physical requirements

- Not accessible for travelers using wheelchairs or scooters
- Travelers using walkers, crutches, or other mobility aids must travel with a companion who can assist them throughout the trip
- You must be able to walk 1-3 miles unassisted and participate in 2-3 hours of physical activities each day, including stairs
- We reserve the right for our Program Directors to modify participation, or in some circumstances send travelers home if their limitations are impacting the group's experience

Climate

- Daytime temperatures range from 41-51°F during cruising season

- Rain, ice, snow, and wind are possible during the holiday season

Terrain

- Travel over uneven walking surfaces, including steep and unpaved paths, hills, stairs, and cobblestones, which can be slippery in wet or colder conditions

Transportation

- Travel by 45-passenger coach and 120-passenger river ship

River Cruising

- Throughout the Holiday River Cruise season, weather conditions and tides affect European river depths; water levels may require adjustments to your itinerary

Cuisine

- Meals will be a mix of local specialties and familiar American standards
- Meals onboard feature a variety of entrée options, including vegetarian

MAXIMIZE YOUR DISCOVERIES & VALUE

OPTIONAL EXTENSIONS

all with FREE Single Supplements

Flemish Charms of Lille, France

PRE-TRIP: 3 nights from **\$1,195**

Aix-en-Provence, France

POST-TRIP: 3 nights from **\$1,395**

NEW! ARRIVE EARLY

We recommend that you relax after a long flight or explore more in depth before your trip. Prices shown include accommodations and private airport transfer.

- Arrive early in **Lille** before your *France* pre-trip extension from **\$510** per room, per night

Holiday Spirit Along the Seine

YOUR DETAILED ITINERARY

BEGIN YOUR TRIP WITH AN OPTIONAL PRE-TRIP EXTENSION

3 nights in *Flemish Charms of Lille, France*

Day 1 Depart U.S.

Day 2 Arrive Lille, France • Welcome Drink

Day 3 Explore Lille

Day 4 Lille • Optional Bruges, Belgium tour

Day 5 Begin main trip

Day 1 Depart U.S.

Depart today on your flight to Paris, France.

Day 2 Arrive Paris, France • Embark ship

- Destination: Paris
- Included Meals: Dinner
- Accommodations: M/S Bizet

Morning/Afternoon: Arrive this morning or afternoon in Paris. You are met at the airport and transferred to your ship, the M/S Bizet.

After you embark, settle into your comfortable cabin and get acquainted with your Program Director and your fellow travelers, including those who began their discoveries early on our pre-trip extension to the *Flemish Charms of Lille, France*.

Late this afternoon, celebrate your arrival in France with a Welcome Drink onboard in the ship's lounge.

Dinner: Onboard in the ship's dining room.

Evening: You have the freedom to spend the rest of your evening as you wish. Perhaps you'll enjoy a nightcap at the bar or relax in the lounge as we sail to our next destination.

Day 3 Vernon • Christmas carols performance • French gourmet cuisine discovery • Welcome Dinner

- Destination: Vernon
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner
- Accommodations: M/S Bizet

Breakfast: Onboard in the ship's dining room.

Morning: After breakfast, attend a briefing about the ship and meet the crew. Your Program Director will answer any questions you may have.

Afterwards, disembark to explore Vernon. With only 25,000 residents, Vernon retains the Old World charm that has endured since it was founded as a royal town in the ninth century. Set off on a discovery walk of the city with your Program Director before having a bit of time to stroll around this lovely town on your own.

Lunch: Onboard in the ship's dining room.

Afternoon: After lunch, you'll be treated to a festive performance of French and classic Christmas carols, sung by a local children's choir from Vernon. Then, you'll enjoy a presentation onboard about French food during an **Exclusive Discovery Series** event. From cheese to *foie gras*, you'll learn about some of the country's most beloved and delectable treasures.

Dinner: Onboard in the ship's dining room.

Evening: Enjoy a nightcap onboard as the ship's lounge is transformed into a French *guinguette*, a traditional French bar and oftentimes dance hall.

Day 4 Rouen • Private concert

- Destination: Rouen
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner
- Accommodations: M/S *Bizet*

Breakfast: Onboard in the ship's dining room.

Morning: Disembark in Rouen for a walking tour with a local guide. Rouen is an important French commercial port city with a distinguished history dating to pre-Roman times. But it is more "infamous" as the city where Joan of Arc was imprisoned, tried for heresy, and burned at the stake in 1431. Here, you'll stroll through the Old Quarter, with its hundreds of timber-framed houses, and you'll also visit a small *chocolatier* for a tasty sample.

Afterwards, you're free to make your own discoveries.

Lunch: At a local restaurant.

Afternoon: After lunch, gather at Rouen's Notre Dame Cathedral—a Gothic architectural treasure so inspirational to Monet—for an **Exclusive Discovery Series** event. For at least six centuries, Choir Masters have trained students in liturgical music, some going on

to become world-renowned conductors and composers. You'll revel in an inspiring private concert here.

Return to the ship after the performance. You'll then have the opportunity to take part in a lively discussion about holiday traditions in France, and discover how folk customs and religious practices evolved together.

Dinner: Onboard in the ship's dining room.

Evening: The ship will remain docked in Rouen tonight. You may spend the evening as you wish—perhaps returning to town for one last walk, or enjoying a nightcap at the ship's bar.

Day 5 Rouen • Home-Hosted Visit • Mantes-la-Jolie

- Destination: Rouen
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner
- Accommodations: M/S *Bizet*

Activity Note: Due to holiday schedules, the Home-Hosted Visit will be subject to change for our departure over Christmas.

Breakfast: Onboard in the ship's dining room.

Morning: Visit a local family at their home in Rouen for *goûter*—a light snack of sweet treats and tea or coffee—where you'll share a lively cultural exchange during an **Exclusive Discovery Series** event.

Lunch: Onboard in the ship's dining room.

Afternoon: Your ship sets sail for Mantes-la-Jolie, arriving late this evening. As you cruise, you'll enjoy an **Exclusive Discovery Series** event, a French cooking lesson given by your Executive Chef. You may even choose to take part in a galley tour, led by your Program Director.

Dinner: Onboard in the ship's dining room.

Evening: You have the freedom to spend the rest of your evening as you wish. Perhaps you'll enjoy a nightcap at the bar or relax in the lounge.

Day 6 Mantes-la-Jolie • Monet & His Work conversation

- Destination: Mantes-la-Jolie
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner
- Accommodations: M/S Bizet

Breakfast: Onboard in the ship's dining room.

Morning: Explore Mantes-la-Jolie with your Program Director this morning, during which you will view its most beloved building, the Notre Dame Cathedral. Dating from the end of the twelfth century, Notre Dame replaced the church burned down by William the Conqueror in 1087, during a siege of the town that cost him his life.

Then, enjoy some free time to explore on your own—ask your Program Director for suggestions. Perhaps you'll decide to visit the local Christmas market.

Lunch: Onboard in the ship's dining room.

Afternoon: As you cruise, you'll enjoy an **Exclusive Discovery Series** presentation about Monet and his work. Over the course of two years, Monet painted Rouen's Notre Dame Cathedral more than 20 times, capturing how variations in light due to weather and time of day changed the image he saw before him. You will also have another opportunity to have a cooking lesson with your Executive Chef.

Dinner: Onboard in the ship's dining room.

Evening: Arrive in Paris late this evening; your ship will remain docked here overnight.

Day 7 Paris • Eiffel Tower at night

- Destination: Paris
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner
- Accommodations: M/S Bizet

Activity Note: If you wish to visit one of Paris' many museums or famous landmarks during your free time, please note that most (such as the Louvre and the Eiffel Tower) require you to purchase tickets at least three months prior to arrival.

Breakfast: Onboard in the ship's dining room.

Morning: Depart by bus to Paris' famed Latin Quarter for a walking tour with a local guide. Home to the world renowned Sorbonne University, the Latin Quarter is Paris's academic soul and boasts many cozy bookshops, such as Shakespeare & Company. You'll explore this popular neighborhood for a while before crossing the Seine by footbridge to discover the Île de la Cité, an island in the middle of the river famous for hosting France's iconic Notre Dame Cathedral.

Your guided tour will wrap up just before lunch. You may head back to the ship at this time, or linger in the city a while longer if you prefer, grabbing lunch on your own.

Lunch: Return to the ship for lunch onboard in the dining room.

Afternoon: Spend the afternoon making discoveries in Paris at your own pace. For example, head to the Louvre using public transportation, exploring its many galleries at your leisure. A shuttle bus will return you to the ship.

Dinner: Enjoy the Captain's Welcome Drink, followed by a Welcome Dinner aboard the ship.

Evening: After dinner, your ship will cruise towards the Eiffel Tower, arriving in time to admire its nightly illumination show.

Day 8 Paris • Optional Versailles tour

- Destination: Paris
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner
- Accommodations: M/S Bizet

Activity Note: To take advantage of today's optional tour, you must purchase it 45 days prior to your departure.

Breakfast: Onboard in the ship's dining room.

Morning: If you wish, join your Program Director for a short learning and discovery walk this morning. The rest of the day is free for independent exploration. Perhaps you'll visit Montmartre, one of the most famous districts in Paris. A lively area that has attracted artists since the 1800s, Montmartre is located on the highest hill in Paris.

Or, experience the Palace of Versailles—the former home of 3,000 princes, ministers, and servants—on a full-day optional tour. Your guided tour will take you through the palace's Grand Chambers, the Hall of Mirrors, and the Royal Chapel.

Lunch: Return to the ship for lunch in the dining room.

Those on our optional tour will enjoy an included lunch in a local restaurant.

Afternoon: Discover Paris at your own pace this afternoon, perhaps visiting the Musée d'Orsay, housed in a notable building and

known for its collection of Impressionist, post-Impressionist, and Art Nouveau works. In advance of the 1900 World's Fair, the architect Victor Laloux won a competition to build a new train station, which he gave a facade of a classic stone hotel, creating a structure that naturally integrated with its elegant neighborhood. The 1898 building served a number of purposes after 1940, when it was no longer suitable for modern trains. It was classified as a Historical Monument in 1976 and opened as a museum in 1986.

Those who have joined our optional tour will return via motorcoach later this afternoon.

Dinner: Tonight, gather with your fellow travelers onboard for a Farewell Drink followed by a Farewell Dinner in the dining room.

Evening: You have the freedom to spend the rest of your evening as you wish. Perhaps you'll enjoy a final nightcap at the bar and toast to your discoveries.

Day 9 Return to U.S.

- Included Meals: Breakfast

Breakfast: Onboard in the ship's dining room.

Morning: You'll be assisted to the airport for your return flight home. Or, begin your post-trip extension in *Aix-en-Provence, France*.

END YOUR TRIP WITH AN OPTIONAL POST-TRIP EXTENSION

3 nights in *Aix-en-Provence, France*

Day 1 Arrive Aix-en-Provence, France

Day 2 Aix-en-Provence • Provencal Villages visit

Day 3 Aix-en-Provence • Optional Avignon tour

Day 4 Return to U.S.

OPTIONAL TOURS

During your trip you will be able to book optional tours directly with us. You will be asked to confirm the payment for these tours by filling out a payment form. Optional tours can only be purchased with a credit or debit card. We accept MasterCard and Visa on all trips, and Discover on all trips except river cruises in France. We also accept Visa and MasterCard debit cards, but it must be a debit card that allows you to sign for purchases.

In order to correctly process these charges, there can be a delay of 2–3 months from the date of your return for the charges to be posted to your account. Therefore we ask that you use a card that will not expire in the 2–3 months following your return.

Please note: Optional tour prices are listed in U.S. dollar estimates determined at the time of publication and are subject to change. Optional tours may vary.

Versailles

(Day 8 \$160 per person)

This excursion brings you to the Palace of Versailles—the former home of 3,000 princes, ministers, and servants. Your guided tour will take you through the palace’s Grand Chambers, the Hall of Mirrors (where the Treaty of Versailles, ending World War I, was signed in 1919), and the Royal Chapel. You’ll marvel at the luminous decor in marble, chased bronze, and gilded leaf, as well as Rococo-style woodwork and Italian-style painted ceilings. As you explore, you’ll discover how much the palace has been expanded and embellished since Louis XIII first built a modest hunting lodge here in 1623. You’ll also enjoy time to visit the magnificent French gardens at your leisure.

To take advantage of this optional tour, you must purchase it 45 days in advance, prior to your departure. Expect lines at the entrance, even for groups with reservations. To ensure that all guests are able to view the exhibits, the time you spend in each room is limited by palace staff, and please be aware that this tour features sustained walking and standing.

PRE-TRIP

Flemish Charms of Lille, France

INCLUDED IN YOUR PRICE

- » **Accommodations** for 3 nights
- » **1 guided tour** with personal headset
- » **Gratuities** for local guides and motorcoach drivers
- » **5 meals:** 3 breakfasts, 1 lunch, 1 dinner
- » Dedicated services of a local Program Director
- » All transfers

PRE-TRIP EXTENSION ITINERARY

Encounter another side of France when you journey to its northern region and discover the charming city of Lille. A lively university town, Lille is steeped in both French and Flemish culture, as it shares both history and a border with the neighboring country of Belgium. Uncover the unique architecture, cuisine, and traditions of northern France on this engaging trip extension.

Day 1 Depart U.S.

Depart today on your flight to Lille, France.

Day 2 Arrive Lille, France • Welcome Drink

- Accommodations: Hôtel l'Arbre Voyageur Lille or similar

Afternoon: Arrive this afternoon in Lille where you'll be met at the airport and transferred to your hotel. Settle into your room, then get acquainted with your Program Director and your fellow travelers during a vicinity walk. Later on, gather for a Welcome Drink to toast to your upcoming discoveries in northern France.

Dinner: On your own—ask your Program Director for recommendations.

Evening: You have the freedom to spend the rest of your evening as you wish.

Day 3 Explore Lille

- Destination: Lille
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch
- Accommodations: Hôtel l'Arbre Voyageur Lille or similar

Breakfast: At the hotel.

Morning: Explore Lille this morning on a walking tour with a local guide. A vibrant university city and cultural hub, Lille has a distinctly Flemish feel as it is close to the border of Belgium and was once a merchant center of French Flanders. You'll not only notice this blend of French and Flemish influence in the city's 17th-century brick town houses and cobblestone streets, but in its unique cuisine and even its bike culture.

You'll wrap up your discoveries at Lille's festive Christmas market, after which the remainder of the morning is on your own.

Lunch: At a local restaurant.

Afternoon: Continue to explore independently in Lille.

Dinner: On your own—ask your Program Director for recommendations. You may wish to try a hearty local dish called *le Welsh*. A melty sauce of boiled beer and cheese is poured over slice of toasted bread with ham, then baked until golden brown. It is usually topped with a fried egg and served with *frites* (French fries).

Day 4 Lille • Optional Bruges, Belgium tour

- Included Meals: Breakfast, Dinner
- Accommodations: Hôtel l'Arbre Voyageur Lille or similar

Breakfast: At the hotel.

Morning: Today is free to spend however you wish in Lille. You may choose to explore its charming Old Town or perhaps visit one of its many museums, such as the Palais des Beaux Arts.

Or, get to know Bruges—a city of canals, the former capital of West Flanders, and Europe's best-preserved medieval city—on an optional tour to nearby Belgium. Enjoy a walking tour of the city, including the Church of Our Lady and Market Square, with its distinctive belfry tower and carillon of 47 bells. You'll also have the chance to sample some Belgium waffles.

OPTIONAL TOUR

Bruges, Belgium

(Day 4 \$230 per person)

Get to know Bruges, a city of canals, the former capital of West Flanders, and Europe's best-preserved medieval city. From the 13th to the 15th centuries (until the Zwin River silted over), Bruges was northern Europe's leading trade center, owing its prominence largely to

Lunch: On your own in Lille.

Those who have joined our optional tour will sit down to an included lunch at a local restaurant.

Afternoon: Continue to take advantage of your free time in Lille, delving deeper into this charming northern French city.

Or, if you have chosen our optional tour, spend some time discovering more of Bruges on your own before returning to Lille via motorcoach.

Dinner: Enjoy a Farewell Dinner at a local restaurant.

Evening: On your own—ask your Program Director for recommendations.

Day 5 Begin main trip

- Included Meals: Breakfast

Breakfast: At the hotel.

Morning: Check out of your hotel this morning. Your luggage will be sent ahead of you via motorcoach, while you board the scenic fast train to Paris. Upon arrival, transfer to your ship and begin your *Holiday Spirit Along the Seine River Cruise*.

thriving wool and textile industries. You'll see signs of this mercantile history in the beautiful houses built by the wealthy textile merchants.

Your walking tour takes you to the Church of Our Lady and to Market Square, with its distinctive belfry tower and carillon of 47 bells. The charming structure is also home to Michelangelo's Madonna of Bruges statue,

notable for the artist's treatment of the subject matter, as well as for being the only one of his works to leave Italy during his lifetime. You'll also see the Holy Blood Chapel, containing relics from the Crusades. Then, enjoy a snack of Belgium waffles, a treat for which the country is renown. After some free time to explore on your own, you'll sit down to an included lunch at a local restaurant. Wrap your optional tour up with more time to explore independently before returning to the hotel.

POST-TRIP

Aix-en-Provence, France

INCLUDED IN YOUR PRICE

- » **Accommodations** for 3 nights
- » **Guided tours** with personal headset
- » **Gratuities** for local guides and motorcoach drivers
- » **7 meals:** 4 breakfasts, 1 lunch, and 2 dinners
- » Dedicated services of a local Program Director
- » All transfers

POST-TRIP EXTENSION ITINERARY

You'll be welcomed by the town of Aix-en-Provence, the heart and old capital of the beautiful Provence region, on this extension. Cultured, sophisticated, but always relaxed, Aix-en-Provence offers streets of honey-colored stone buildings and majestic fountains.

Day 1 Arrive Aix-en-Provence, France

- Destination: Aix-en-Provence
- Included Meals: Dinner
- Accommodations: Hotel Aquabella or similar

Morning: After disembarking the ship in Paris this morning, transfer to the airport, fly to Marseille, and transfer to Aix-en-Provence. Upon arrival, settle in to your hotel.

Lunch: On your own—ask your Program Director for local restaurant recommendations.

Afternoon: Gather with your fellow travelers and Program Director for a vicinity walk that will acquaint you with this lovely town. You'll end your walk at the Musée Granet where you'll enjoy free admission and time to explore its art exhibits on your own. Later, drop by the Santon Fair in the Palace de la Rotonde to watch artisans create *santons*, or "little saints," the terra cotta figurines for which this area is known.

Dinner: At a local restaurant.

Evening: You have the freedom to spend the rest of your evening as you wish—ask your Program Director for recommendations.

Day 2 Aix-en-Provence • Provencal Villages visit

- Destination: Aix-en-Provence
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch
- Accommodations: Hotel Aquabella or similar

Breakfast: At the hotel.

Morning: Today, embark on a journey through the Provencal Villages of Luberon—Lourmarin, Bonnieux, and Roussillon. Travel by private motorcoach, and enjoy the landscape of vineyards, olive groves, forests and mountains. This morning, you'll visit the celebrated villages of Lourmarin and Bonnieux, taking part of an included tour of each.

Lunch: At a local restaurant.

Afternoon: You'll continue on to Roussillon, after lunch. After a guided tour, enjoy time at leisure to take photos and go for a stroll. Then, head back to Aix-en-Provence via motorcoach where the rest of the day will be on your own.

Dinner: On your own—ask your Program Director for local restaurant recommendations.

Evening: You have the freedom to spend the rest of your evening as you wish—ask your Program Director for recommendations.

Day 3 Aix-en-Provence • Optional Avignon tour

- Destination: Aix-en-Provence
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Dinner
- Accommodations: Hotel Aquabella or similar

Activity Note: *Atelier de Cezanne* is closed on Sundays. Your Program Director will provide an alternate activity.

Breakfast: At the hotel.

Morning: Enjoy a day of leisure in Aix-en-Provence to make your own discoveries. Founded by the Romans in 123 BC, this delightful town has long attracted artists, including the writer Emile Zola and the painter Paul Cezanne, who was born here and lived and worked here for much of his life. Perhaps you'll admire the Cours Mirabeau, the grand

boulevard with its arch of trees. Or, visit the ancient Roman baths located just outside the Old Town.

Or, join an optional half-day excursion to the City of Popes, Avignon.

Lunch: One your own. Or, for those on the optional tour, lunch is included at a local restaurant.

Afternoon: Gather together this afternoon for a tour of *Atelier de Cezanne*, or Cezanne's studio, with a local guide. Full of natural light and still appointed with the painter's furniture and tools, you'll get a intimate look of how this renowned artist worked.

Then, enjoy a Farewell Drink with your traveling companions early this evening before heading to dinner together.

Dinner: Savor a Farewell Dinner at a local restaurant.

Evening: You have the freedom to spend the rest of your evening as you wish—ask your Program Director for recommendations.

Day 4 Return to U.S.

- Included Meals: Breakfast

Breakfast: At the hotel.

Morning: Transfer to the Marseille airport for your flight home.

OPTIONAL TOUR

Avignon

(Day 3 \$225 per person)

Discover Avignon, known as the City of Popes, and the variety of residences, chateaux, fortified palaces, and churches built by Popes who had left the turmoil of Rome in the 14th

century. Tour the medieval city and its famous Pont D'Avignon, and then enjoy a visit of the impressive Palace of the Popes followed by an included lunch. Continue your discoveries at your leisure before we return.

YOUR SEINE RIVER SHIP

Sail aboard our privately owned 120-passenger M/S *Bizet*

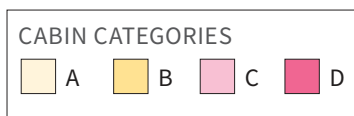
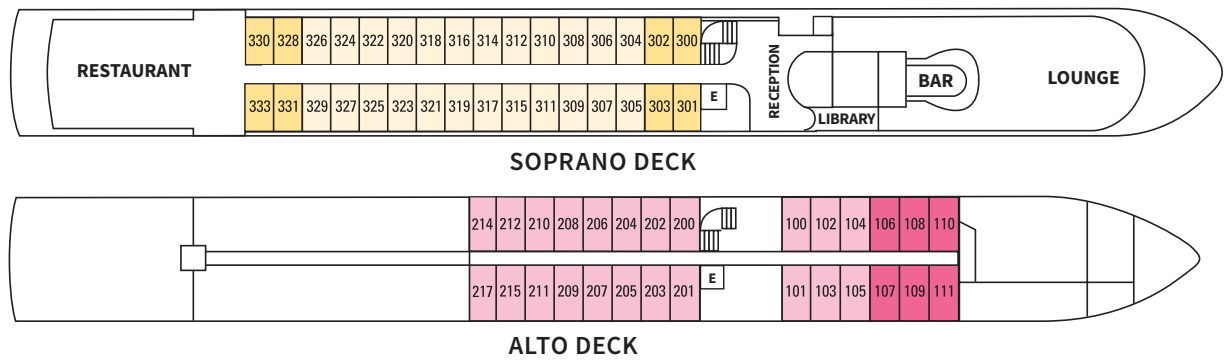
Designed specifically for traversing the Seine River, the M/S *Bizet* provides a relaxing and comfortable cruising experience between Paris and Honfleur. This ship carries three groups of up to 38–45 American travelers, each accompanied by a dedicated local Program Director.



SHIPBOARD FEATURES

- **Dining room with single, open seating:** Enjoy fine cuisine in your ship's dining room.
- **Bar & lounge:** Relax with friends old and new.
- **Complimentary beverages:** Enjoy house beer and house wine—as well as soft drinks—at any time of day while onboard.
- **Complimentary wireless Internet access:** Connect online in cabins and common areas. Please note: Wireless Internet access may be limited at certain points throughout your River Cruise.
- **Sun Deck:** Sit outside and enjoy the view as your ship navigates the Seine's gently winding waters.
- **English-speaking crew:** Our staff is dedicated to your comfort, and all shipboard announcements are made in English.
- **Smoking/non-smoking:** Smoking is not permitted indoors, but is permitted on the Sun Deck.
- **Shipboard security:** Shipboard radar ensures safe navigation and night and in low visibility; safe docking space; onboard security staff; state-of-the-art fire safety system; and secured entryway doors.

M/S BIZET



Registry: Malta

Width: 38 ft

Length: 366 ft

Passenger capacity: 120

International crew: 33

Decks: 3

Number of cabins: 60—all outside

Elevator: Yes

CABIN FEATURES

- Outside cabins with a river view
- Cabin sizes are approximately 160-sq.-ft. Soprano Deck cabins include a private 16-sq.-ft. balcony with table and chairs
- Two stationary twin beds converted to sofas each day, and back to beds each evening
- All cabins have a wardrobe and a drawer, and luggage storage space under the beds
- Private bath with shower, hair dryer, shampoo, and soap
- Individual heating & air conditioning controls
- Flat-screen color TV & radio, including CNN, movies, and a “view from the bow” camera looking from the front of your ship



Admire the scenery along the Seine from your comfortable cabin.

- Direct-dial telephone; emergency call buttons
- In-room safe
- All non-smoking cabins

TRAVEL DOCUMENTS & ENTRY REQUIREMENTS

Your Passport

- Must be in good condition
- Must be valid for at least 6 months after your scheduled return to the U.S.
- Must have the required number of blank pages (details below)
- The blank pages must be labeled “Visas” at the top. Pages labeled “Amendments and Endorsements” are not acceptable

Need to Renew Your Passport?

Contact the National Passport Information Center (NPIC) at **1-877-487-2778**, or visit the U.S. Department of State’s official website at **www.travel.state.gov** for information on obtaining a new passport or renewing your existing passport. The U.S. Department of State allows for passport renewal by mail or, for applicable citizens, renewal online. We advise you review the process and requirements for online passport renewal on the official website.

You may also contact our recommended visa service company, PVS International, at **1-800-556-9990** for help with your passport.

Recommended Blank Pages

Please confirm that your passport has enough blank pages for this vacation.

- **Main trip only:** You will need 2 blank passport pages.
- **Optional extensions to Paris or Aix-en-Provence:** No additional blank pages needed.

No Visas Required

Travelers with a U.S. passport do not need any visas for this vacation, including the optional trip extensions.

Traveling Without a U.S. Passport?

If you are not a U.S. citizen, or if your passport is from any country other than the U.S., it is your responsibility to check with your local consulate, embassy, or a visa services company about visa requirements. We recommend the services of PVS International, a national visa service located in Washington D.C.; they can be reached at **1-800-556-9990** or **www.pvsinternational.org**.

Traveling With a Minor?

Some governments may require certain documentation for minors to enter and depart the country or to obtain a visa (if applicable). For further detail on the required documentation, please contact your local embassy or consulate.

Emergency Photocopies of Key Documents

We recommend you carry color photocopies of key documents including the photo page of your passport plus any applicable visas, air itinerary, credit cards (front and back), and an alternative form of ID. Add emergency phone numbers like your credit card company and the number for your travel protection plan. Store copies separate from the originals.

If you plan to email this information to yourself, please keep in mind that email is not always secure; consider using password protection or encryption. Also email is not always available worldwide. As an alternative, you could load these documents onto a flash drive instead, which can do double-duty as a place to backup photos during your trip.

Overseas Taxes & Fees

This tour may have taxes and fees that cannot be included in your airline ticket price because you are required to pay them in person onsite. All taxes are subject to change without notice and can be paid in cash (either U.S. or local currency).

RIGORS, VACCINES & GENERAL HEALTH

Keep Your Abilities in Mind

Please review the information below prior to departing on this vacation. *We reserve the right for our Program Directors to modify participation, or in some circumstances send travelers home if their limitations are impacting the group's experience.*

GROUP SIZE

- This trip has a group size of 38-45 travelers with our local Program Director exclusive to Grand Circle

PACING

- 9 days, with 7 nights aboard the M/S Bizet

PHYSICAL REQUIREMENTS

- Not accessible for travelers using wheelchairs or scooters
- Travelers using walkers, crutches, or other mobility aids must travel with a companion who can assist them throughout the trip
- You must be able to walk 1-3 miles unassisted and participate in 2-3 hours of physical activities each day, including stairs
- We reserve the right for our Program Directors to modify participation, or in some circumstances send travelers home if their limitations are impacting the group's experience

CLIMATE

- Daytime temperatures range from 41-51°F during cruising season
- Rain, ice, snow, and wind are possible during the holiday season

TERRAIN

- Travel over uneven walking surfaces, including steep and unpaved paths, hills, stairs, and cobblestones, which can be slippery in wet or colder conditions

TRANSPORTATION

- Travel by 45-passenger coach and 120-passenger river ship

RIVER CRUISING

- Throughout the Holiday River Cruise season, weather conditions and tides affect European river depths; water levels may require adjustments to your itinerary

CUISINE

- Meals will be a mix of local specialties and familiar American standards
- Meals onboard feature a variety of entrée options, including vegetarian

Health Check

Feeling healthy and confident of your mobility is essential to fully enjoy your trip abroad. If you have ongoing medical conditions or concerns about your health, we highly recommend that you schedule a checkup with your personal physician at least six weeks in advance of your departure date.

- Discuss with your doctor any aspects of your itinerary that may affect your health and be guided by his or her advice. (You can use the “Keep Your Abilities in Mind” on the previous page as a guideline to discuss with him or her.)
- You may want to have a dental exam before your trip. A loose filling or developing cavity would be difficult to remedy while you are traveling.
- If you have a condition that requires special equipment or treatment, you must bring and be responsible for all necessary items related to your condition.

No Vaccines Required

Recommended Vaccines

At the time of writing there were no required vaccines for this trip. The CDC recommends that all travelers be up to date on their routine vaccinations and on basic travel vaccines like Hepatitis A and Typhoid, but these are suggestions only. However, this could change in future so we encourage you to check with the CDC yourself before meeting with your doctor.

Traveling with Medications

- **Pack medications in your carry-on bag** to avoid loss and to have them handy.
- **Keep medicines in their original, labeled containers** for a quicker security screen at the airport and a better experience if you get stopped by customs while overseas.
- **Bring copies of your prescriptions**, written using the generic drug name rather than a brand name to be prepared for any unforeseen loss of your medications.

We recommend checking with the State Department for medication restrictions by country: travel.state.gov (Select “Find International Travel Information” then select “Country Information”; if you don’t see any medications specifically mentioned under the “Your Health Abroad” section, then you can presume major U.S. brands should be OK).

Staying Healthy on Your Trip

Jet Lag Tips

- Start your trip well-rested.
- Begin a gradual transition to your new time zone before you leave or switch to your destination time zone when you get on the plane.
- Attempt to sleep and eat according to the new schedule.
- Avoid heavy eating and drinking caffeine or alcoholic beverages right before—and during—your flight.
- Drink plenty of water and/or fruit juice while flying
- Stretch your legs, neck, and back periodically while seated on the plane.
- After arrival, avoid the temptation to nap.
- Don't push yourself to see a lot on your first day.
- Try to stay awake your first day until after dinner.

Allergies

If you have any serious allergies or dietary restrictions, we advise you to notify us at least 30 days prior to your departure. Please call our Travel Counselors at **1-800-321-2835**, and we will communicate them to our regional office. Every effort will be made to accommodate you.

Water

Unless you know that your stomach is particularly sensitive to changes in diet/water, tap water in France and on board your ship is perfectly fine to drink. One bottled of still water per person is provided in your cabin daily.

MONEY MATTERS: LOCAL CURRENCY & TIPPING GUIDELINES

Top Three Tips

- **Carry a mix of different types of payments**, such as local currency, an ATM card, and a credit card.
- **Traveler's checks are not recommended.** They can be difficult to exchange and the commission fee for cashing them is quite high. It's more practical to view them as a last resort in the event of a special situation.
- **You will not be able to pay with U.S. dollars on this trip;** you will need euros instead.

Local Currency

For current exchange rates, please refer to an online converter tool like www.xe.com/currencyconverter, your bank, or the financial section of your newspaper.

Euro Countries: European Euro (€)

How to Exchange Money

If you want to exchange money before your trip, you can usually do so through your bank or at an exchange office. Your departure airport in the U.S., a travel agent, or an AAA office are also possible outlets. Or you can wait and change money on the trip instead—but it might be helpful to arrive with some local currency in case you run into a bank holiday or an “out of order” ATM.

On your trip, the easiest way is to withdraw funds from a local ATM. The ATM will give you local money and your bank at home will convert that into U.S. dollars.

You can also exchange cash at some hotels, large post offices, and money exchange offices. To exchange cash, you'll usually need your passport and bills in good condition (not worn, torn, or dirty). New bills (post 2004) are best.

Please note that many banks in Europe will only exchange money for their own customers. Never exchange money on the street. All exchange methods involve fees, which may be built into the conversion rate; ask beforehand.

ATMs

When using the ATM, keep in mind that it may only accept cards from local banks, and may not allow cash advances on credit cards; you might need to try more than one ATM or more than one card. Many banks will charge a set fee or a percentage fee each time you use a foreign ATM. We recommend that you check with your bank before you depart. Don't forget to memorize the actual digits of your card's PIN number (many keypads at foreign ATMs do not include letters on their keys—they only display numbers.)

In most countries, ATMs are widely available in major cities. If you are in a rural location, it will likely be harder to find an ATM. If you are visiting a country that has different expectation for ATMs, they will be listed below.

Credit & Debit Cards

While traveling, most countries and major cities will accept credit cards. We suggest that you bring one or two, especially if you are planning a large purchase (artwork, jewelry). We also suggest that you bring more than one brand of card (i.e. Visa, MasterCard, American Express) if possible, as not all are accepted around the world.. If you are visiting a country that does not commonly accept credit cards, they will be listed below.

France: Credit and debit cards are widely accepted in France. For small purchases or markets, you may need cash instead.

Using Your Credit Card in Europe

Most of us are used to credit cards with the embedded computer chip (the ones you insert instead of swiping). In Europe—where they’ve had this type of card longer than us—these credit cards usually require a PIN (personal identification number) to make a purchase. And in contrast, most U.S. credit cards either do not require a PIN or don’t have one. So what do you do if you want make a purchase with your credit card in Europe?

Don’t worry. 90% of the time you won’t need to do anything special. You’ll insert your card and the purchase will go through as normal. Often you won’t even be asked to sign anything.

But bring more than one form of payment with you. For those rare cases when your credit card doesn’t work, the best plan is to already have a backup form of payment with you. Debit cards are a good alternative as they have a PIN. And there’s always cash.

Consider asking your credit card company. You can try contacting your credit card company before you leave to see if they will issue you a PIN. Many won’t—but at least you’ll know. You could also try looking at their website to see if they have guidance about getting a PIN.

Notify Card Providers of Upcoming Travel

Many credit card companies and banks have fraud alert departments that will freeze your card if they see suspicious charges—such as charges or withdrawals from another country. To avoid an accidental security block, it is a good idea to notify your credit card company and/or bank you will be using your cards abroad. You can do this by calling their customer service number a week or two before your departure. Some banks or credit card companies will also let you do this online.

You should also double-check what phone number you could call if you have a problem with a card while you are abroad. Don’t assume you can use the 1-800 number printed on the back of your card—most 1 800 numbers don’t work outside of the U.S.!

Onboard Ship

Two Separate Bills Will be Issued

- **Shipboard account:** This bill is for any on board purchases (drinks, souvenirs, etc.) and is calculated in euros. This bill is payable at the front desk by cash or credit/debit card only. For cash, we accept euros. For credit/debit cards, we accept MasterCard and Visa. Other forms of payment, such as checks, Discover, and American Express, are not accepted.
- **Optional tour account:** This bill is for any optional tours taken during the trip and is calculated in U.S. dollars. This bill is paid with your Program Director (they will have you fill out a form) by credit/debit card only; other forms of payments such as cash and checks are not accepted. For more information on optional tours—including which cards we accept for payment—see the “Preparing for Your Trip” chapter.
- *Please note: Due to limitations with Discover Card in France, we cannot accept it as payment for onboard purchases or for optional tours on river cruises in France.*

Payments made by credit card may take up to three months to process. We ask that you use a credit card that will not expire until three months after your trip ends. Because our headquarters are in Boston, the charges may appear to be from Boston or might be labeled as “OPT Boston” (depending on your credit card company).

Exchange Services: Policy Update

Due to international banking laws, we are no longer able to exchange money onboard the ship. If you need to obtain local currency, please see the “How to Exchange Money” section for helpful tips and information.

Tipping Guidelines

Of course, whether you tip, and how much, is always at your own discretion. For those of you who have asked for tipping suggestions, we offer these guidelines. All tips below are quoted in U.S. dollars; tips can be converted and paid in local currency (this is usually preferred) or in U.S. dollars. Do not use personal or traveler’s check for tips.

- **GCCL Program Director:** It is customary to express a personal “thank you” to your Grand Circle Program Director at the end of your trip. As a guideline, many travelers give \$7–\$10 USD (or equivalent in local currency) per person for each day their Program Director is with them. *Please note that tips for your Program Director can only be in the form of cash. If you are taking any of the optional extensions, your Program Director during the extension(s) may not be the same as the one on your main trip.*
- **Shipboard Crew:** We recommend a flat tip of \$10–\$12 U.S. per traveler, per day. You’ll give this tip once—at the end of your cruise—and it will be pooled among the entire crew. **Policy Update:** *Due to international banking laws, we are no longer able to process crew tips on a credit card; crew tips can only be in the form of cash.*

- **Housekeeping Staff at Hotels:** We recommend \$1 per traveler, per day. (This is for hotels only; on the ship Housekeeping are part of crew, so you don't need to tip them separately.)
- **Included in Your Trip Price:** Gratuities are included for local guides and motorcoach drivers on your main trip, extensions, and any optional tours.

Time at Leisure

When you are exploring on your own, it's useful to know when to tip and how much, because local customs often differ from the U.S. Here are a few helpful guidelines for the most common services a traveler might use:

- **Taxis:** Tipping is not customary, but many locals will round up the fare and let the driver keep the change. If the driver helps you with heavy luggage, then 10% is a nice gesture.
- **Restaurants, cafes, and bars:** Throughout Europe, the tip for the waiter or bartender is usually included in the prices or added on as a service fee. Look for a statement on the menu like *service compris* which means "service is included", or for a service charge on the bill. If you would like to leave a tip on top of the service fee (or in the rare case when the service is not included) then 10% would be considered generous.
- **Public restrooms:** Most public restrooms in Europe have attendants that take care of cleaning and supplies. It is customary to leave a small tip for them—usually half a euro—so hold on to those coins! Some restrooms are pay-toilets; you pay the staff at the entrance to the restroom or drop the appropriate coin into the slot on the stall door. Many restaurants, cafes, and shops offer only pay-toilets or reserve their restrooms for patrons only.

AIR, OPTIONAL TOURS & STAYING IN TOUCH

Land Only Travelers & Customized Air

Quick Definitions

- **Land Only:** You will be booking your own international flights. Airport transfers are not included.
- **Air-Inclusive:** You booked international air with us. Airport transfers are included as long as you didn't customize your trip's dates (see next bullet).
- **Arrive Early (select trips only):** If you chose to Arrive Early and purchased air through Grand Circle, accommodations and airport transfers are included. However, if you chose to Arrive Early, but did not purchase air through Grand Circle, accommodations are included, but airport transfers are not. If you chose to Arrive Early and purchased air through Grand Circle but not the accommodations, the airport transfers are not included. We have included transfer options below.
- **Customized Air:** You booked international air with us, and have customized it in some way. If you have customized your trip's dates to arrive early, stay longer, or stop on your own in a connecting city, airport transfers will NOT be included. You must also arrange your own accommodations for any additional nights. For your convenience, a preliminary list of your included hotels is available on your My Planner at www.gct.com/myplanner under "My Reservations".

Air Inclusive Travelers

If you have purchased international air with Grand Circle Cruise Line, there are some points that may be helpful for you to know.

- **Overseas Arrival:** Once you arrive overseas, you'll need to collect your luggage and clear customs. A Grand Circle representative will meet you outside of customs and assist you with your transfer to the hotel or ship. Important note on porters: Airport porters are NOT allowed in the baggage claim area. On arrival, you must take your luggage off the baggage carousel and load it onto a cart, which you will then move through customs. When you exit customs, you'll handle your cart until reaching your transfer vehicle. Your driver will load your luggage into the transfer vehicle.
- **Flying with a Travel Companion:** If you're traveling with a companion from a different household, and both of you are beginning and ending your trip at the same airport on the same dates, let us know you'd like to travel together and we'll make every effort to arrange this (please note, however, that this is not always possible). If you request any changes to your flights, please be sure that both you and your companion tell us that you still want to fly together.

- **Selecting Your Seats:** If your airline allows pre-assigned seats, you will be able to select and view them directly from the airline's website after booking. Some airlines will not allow seat confirmation until your reservation is ticketed 45–30 days prior to departure, and/or they may charge a nominal fee. You may locate your itinerary on an airline's website utilizing the Record Locator Number found on the Air Itinerary in your My Planner.

Airport Transfers Cannot Be Purchased

If you booked flights on your own, airport transfers upon your arrival and prior to your return will not be included. These transfers cannot be purchased through GCCL prior to your departure or onsite. As you will need to arrange your own transfers, please see our recommended options below:

- **Taxis:** Upon arrival at the airport, there are often taxis waiting outside to transfer you directly to your hotel. For your return transfer, you can also request your hotel concierge arrange for a pick-up in your name.
- **Public Transit:** Most airports around the world either have a shuttle bus or a train system in place to transfer you into the nearest city. You would then be able to take a taxi, board additional public transportation, or walk to your hotel. You can find out the best method of transportation at a Tourist Information Desk at the airport upon your arrival or, prior to your flight, research using either our recommended transfer website, Rome to Rio (www.rome2rio.com) or Google Maps.

Optional Tours

Optional tours are additional add-on tours that allow you to personalize your vacation by tailoring it to your tastes and needs. And if you decide not to join an optional tour? Then you'll have free time to relax or explore on your own—it's about options, not obligations.

What You Need to Know

- All optional tours are subject to change and availability.
- Optional tours that are reserved onsite can be paid for using credit/debit cards only. We accept MasterCard and Visa on all trips, and Discover on all trips except river cruises in France. We can also take MasterCard or Visa debit cards as long as the card allows you to sign for purchases. (You won't be able to enter a PIN.) We do not take Amex, cash, or checks for optional tours.
- To ensure that you are charged in U.S. dollars, your payment will be processed by our U.S. headquarters in Boston. This process can take up to three months, so we ask that you only use a card that will still be valid three months after your trip is over. The charge may appear on your credit card statement as being from Boston, MA or may be labeled as "OPT Boston".
- We will give you details on the optional tours while you're on the trip. But if you'd like to look over descriptions of them earlier, you can do so at any time by referring to your Day-to-Day Itinerary (available online by signing into My Planner at www.gct.com/myplanner).

Reserve Before You Go

We strongly recommend that you reserve the following optional tours in advance. Unless otherwise noted, the deadline to do so is 45 days prior to your departure. Occasionally, space will be available for booking onsite, but this not guaranteed.

Versailles

This excursion brings you to the Palace of Versailles—the former home of 3,000 princes, ministers, and servants. Your guided tour will take you through the palace’s Grand Chambers, the Hall of Mirrors (where the Treaty of Versailles, ending World War I, was signed in 1919), and the Royal Chapel. You’ll marvel at the luminous decor in marble, chased bronze, and gilded leaf, as well as Rococo-style woodwork and Italian-style painted ceilings. As you explore, you’ll discover how much the palace has been expanded and embellished since Louis XIII first built a modest hunting lodge here in 1623. You’ll also enjoy time to visit the magnificent French gardens at your leisure.

This optional tour is offered during the main trip. The cost is \$160 per person.

Please note: To take advantage of this optional tour, you must purchase it 45 days in advance, prior to your departure. Expect lines at the entrance, even for groups with reservations. To ensure that all guests are able to view the exhibits, the time you spend in each room is limited by palace staff, and please be aware that this tour features sustained walking and standing.

Communicating with Home from Abroad

Cell Phones

If you want to use your cell phone on the trip, check with your phone provider to see if your phone and service will work outside of the U.S. It may turn out to be cheaper to rent an international phone or buy a SIM card onsite. If you want to use a local SIM, just make certain your phone is “unlocked”, meaning it can accept a local SIM card. If your cell is “unlocked” then you will be able to purchase a local SIM for it and then buy minutes with “Pay as You Go” cards, so that you have a local contact number for your friends and family.

Calling Apps

We recommend you use WhatsApp while abroad and to communicate with your Program Director. Another option is to use a smartphone app such as FaceTime. These services are usually less expensive than making a traditional call, but you’ll need a Wi-Fi connection and the calls may count towards your phone plan’s data allowance. Many smartphones—and some tablets or laptops—come with one of these apps pre-installed or you can download them for free from the appropriate apps store.

Calling Cards & 1-800 Numbers

When calling the U.S. from a foreign country, a prepaid calling card can be useful because it circumvents unexpected charges from the hotel. Calling cards purchased locally are typically the best (less expensive, more likely to work with the local phones, etc.). One reminder: Do not call U.S. 1-800 numbers outside the continental United States. This can result in costly long distance fees, since 1-800 numbers do not work outside the country.

Internet Access and Email

Some public places – restaurants, cafes – may provide free internet access for customers. While sailing Internet access may be unavailable, depending on locks, bridges, and regional remoteness. Internet access should be most consistently available when the ship is docked in larger cities.

Receiving Calls from Home

To ensure you are available during your trip to friends and relatives at home, you will receive two copies of your hotel list, including phone numbers, with your Final Documents. One copy is for you to bring, and one is to leave behind with friends or relatives in case they need to contact you during the trip.

How to Call Overseas

When calling overseas from the U.S., dial 011 for international exchange, then the country code (indicated by a plus sign: +), and then the number. Note that foreign phone numbers may not have the same number of digits as U.S. numbers; even within a country the number of digits can vary depending on the city and if the phone is a land line or cell phone.

France: +33

PACKING: WHAT TO BRING & LUGGAGE LIMITS

Luggage Limits

MAIN TRIP LIMITS	
Pieces per person	One checked bag and one carry-on bag per person.
Weight restrictions	Varies by airline. The current standard is 50 lbs for checked bags and 15 lbs for carry-on bags.
Size Restrictions	Varies by airline. Measured in linear inches (length+width+depth). Generally, 62 linear inches is the checked bag limit; carry-on limit is 45 linear inches.
Luggage Type	A sturdy, fabric-sided suitcase with built-in wheels and lockable zippers is recommended.
TRIP EXTENSION(S) LIMITS	
Same as the main trip.	
REMARKS/SUGGESTIONS	
One suitcase and one carry-on bag per person: Due to the space limitations on bus transfers, you'll be restricted to one suitcase and one carry-on bag per person. This is to ensure that we have room for everyone's luggage. We ask that you abide by this limit to avoid inconveniencing your fellow travelers and prevent additional airlines luggage fees (which are your responsibility). Most airlines now charge to check more than one suitcase per person for flights to Europe and other international flights. Luggage rules: Luggage rules and limits are set by governmental and airline policy. Enforcement of the rules may include spot checks or may be inconsistent. However one thing is the same across the board: If you are found to have oversized or overweight luggage, you will be subject to additional fees, to be assessed by—and paid to—the airline in question.	

Don't Forget:

- **These luggage limits may change.** If the airline(s) notify us of any changes, we will include an update in your Final Documents booklet.

- It's a good idea to reconfirm baggage restrictions and fees directly with the airline a week or so prior to departure. For your convenience, we maintain a list of the toll-free numbers for the most common airlines on our website in the FAQ section.
- **Baggage fees are not included in your trip price;** they are payable directly to the airlines.
- The luggage limits above are based on your regional flights, which may be less than your international flights. Even if your international airline offers a larger weight limit, you will need to pack according to the lower restrictions.

Your Luggage

- **Checked Luggage:** Consider a duffel bag or soft-sided suitcase. Look for one with heavy nylon fabric, wrap-around handles, built-in wheels, and a heavy duty lockable zipper. Due to space limitations on our motorcoaches, you are allowed one piece of checked luggage per person. Porterage at airports and hotels is provided for **one** bag per person. All bags should have luggage tags.
- **Carry-on Bag:** You are allowed one carry-on bag per person. We suggest a tote or small backpack that can be used as both a carry-on bag for your flight and to carry your daily necessities—water bottle, camera, etc—during your daily activities.
- **Locks:** For flights that originate in the U.S., you can either use a TSA-approved lock or leave your luggage unlocked. Outside of the U.S. we strongly recommend locking your luggage as a theft-prevention measure.

Clothing Suggestions: Functional Tips

- **Travel light:** A good rule of thumb is to gather together everything you want to bring; then take half of that. To have a varied travel wardrobe, yet keep your luggage light, we recommend you select a color scheme and pack color-coordinated clothing items that can be mixed to create different outfits.
- **Pack casual clothes:** Comfortable, informal apparel is acceptable at each of your destinations. At dinner, you will not need to wear “dressy” clothing; men do not need jackets or ties and women do not need fancy dresses. You may want one or two “smart casual” outfits for the Welcome Reception or Farewell Dinner, but it's completely up to you.
- **Consider clothing designed for travel, sports, or camping:** With modern fabrics, lightweight packing for comfort and protection through a wide range of weather is easy.
- **Plan to dress in layers on shore excursions.** Be prepared for a variety of weather conditions.
- **Be prepared for winter weather.** Pack for wintry conditions: a warm jacket, hat, and gloves; one or two fleece tops or heavy sweaters; turtlenecks and a few woolens or thick knits; warm pants; wool or fleece socks; folding umbrella; and waterproof warm shoes with good tread for walking on snow-covered ground. A top-and-bottom set of long underwear will provide an extra layer of insulation and is lightweight to pack. Snow is a possibility, even in late November.

- **Good walking shoes are critical.** This program features many included tours that follow steep, unpaved or cobbled routes; and even an average day of light sightseeing or shopping can put great demands on your feet. If you prefer more ankle support, take light hiking boots. In case you get caught in the rain, we suggest you bring an extra pair of walking shoes, and rain boots or galoshes. Aboard ship, you'll want non-slip shoes with rubber soles.

What to Bring

We have included suggestions from former travelers to help you pack. These packing lists are only jumping-off points—they offer recommendations based on experience, but not requirements. We recommend using www.weather.com and consulting the “Climate” chapter of this handbook.

Your cabin already has: Shampoo, conditioner, hair dryer, soap, body lotion, shower cap, and towels. **And don't forget a reusable water bottle**—you'll need it to take advantage of any refills we offer as we are working to eliminate single-use plastic bottles on all of our trips.

Recommended Clothing

- ☐ Shirts: A mixture of short and long-sleeved shirts to layer
- ☐ Trousers, jeans, or skirts
- ☐ Comfortable walking shoes and/or water resistant shoes
- ☐ Warm winter coat
- ☐ Rain jacket/windbreaker with hood
- ☐ Sleepwear
- ☐ Socks and undergarments
- ☐ A jacket or sweater for layering
- ☐ Gloves, scarf, and a warm hat

Essential Items

- ☐ Daily essentials: toothbrush, toothpaste, floss, hairbrush or comb, shaving items, deodorant, etc.
- ☐ Spare eyeglasses/contact lenses and your prescription
- ☐ Sunglasses with a neck strap
- ☐ Travel money bag or money belt

- ☐ Moisturizer, lip balm
- ☐ Pocket-size tissues
- ☐ Moist towelettes (packets) and/or anti-bacterial hand lotion
- ☐ Light folding umbrella
- ☐ Photocopies of passport, air ticket, credit cards
- ☐ Camera, spare batteries, and memory cards

Medicines

- ☐ Your own prescription medicines
- ☐ Vitamins
- ☐ Cold remedies: Sudafed/Dristan
- ☐ Pain relievers: Ibuprofen/naproxen/aspirin
- ☐ Laxatives: Senokot/Ex-Lax
- ☐ Stomach upset: Pepto-Bismol/Mylanta
- ☐ Anti-diarrheal: Imodium
- ☐ Band-Aids, Moleskin foot pads
- ☐ Antibiotics: Neosporin/Bacitracin

Optional Gear

- ☐ Travel alarm
- ☐ Compact binoculars
- ☐ Hanging toiletry bag with pockets
- ☐ Washcloth
- ☐ Travel-size tissues
- ☐ Basic sewing kit
- ☐ Hand-wash laundry soap (Woolite), clothespins/travel clothesline/stopper

- ☐ Electrical transformer and plug adapter—see “Regional Electricity” section.
- ☐ Reading materials
- ☐ Travel journal/note pad
- ☐ Swimsuit, if your ship/hotel has a pool or whirlpool
- ☐ Addresses for postcards
- ☐ Photos, small gift for Home-Hosted visit
- ☐ Phrase book
- ☐ Pocket-size calculator for exchange rates
- ☐ For hotel stays: Many hotels will provide hair dryers, but not all. If a hair dryer is essential to you consider a travel-size version. Hair dryers are provided on your ship.

Electricity

When traveling overseas, the voltage is usually different and the plugs might not be the same shape.

Voltage

Aboard the ship, cabins are equipped with 220-volt outlets. In your bathroom you will find a 110-volt outlet; this outlet is only for low-voltage appliances, like electric shavers. (Your bathroom also comes equipped with a hair dryer).

Electricity in France is 220–240 volts. In the U.S. it is 110 volts. Most of the things a traveler will want to plug in—battery chargers, MP3 players, tablets or computers—can run off both 110 and 220–240. But you should check the item or the owner’s guide first to confirm this before you plug it in. If you have something that needs 110 volts—like a shaver or a hairdryer—you can bring a transformer to change the current. (But transformers tend to burn out, so it might be better to leave whatever it is at home.)

Plugs

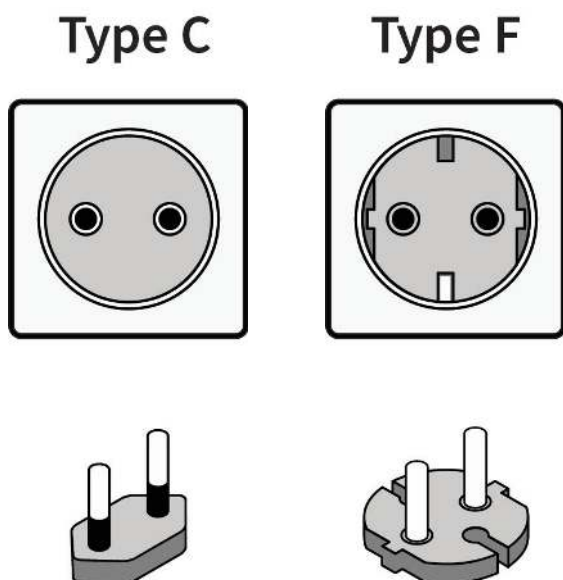
The shape of plugs will vary from country to country. To plug something from the U.S. into a local socket you’ll need an adapter that fits between the plug and the socket. Different plug shapes are named by letters of the alphabet. Standard U.S. plugs are Type A and Type B; standard European plugs are Type C, E, and F. **Of the three, a Type C adapter is the most useful as it fits into Type E and F sockets.** Type C is usually what is sold in stores as a European adapter.

Aboard ship, the plugs in your cabin bedroom are Type F. The 110V socket in your cabin bathroom takes U.S. plugs, but not polarized ones (where one prong is bigger than the other). *Previous travelers have mentioned this because some small appliances, like Waterpiks, have polarized plugs.*

Note that even though you'll only need the European plug adapter on this trip, it may be easier to purchase an all-in-one, universal adapter/converter combo. Versatile and lightweight, these can usually be found at your local electronics goods or hardware stores. Sometimes you can buy them at large retailers too, like Target or Walmart. If you forget to bring an adapter, you might also find them for sale at the airport when you arrive at your destination.

For your reference, here is the list of plugs for the countries on this trip:

France: C and E



CLIMATE & AVERAGE TEMPERATURES

Paris, France: The City of Light has about the same weather as our Middle Atlantic States, though it's usually not warmer than 75° F, or colder than 30° F. The main characteristic of the city's weather is its changeability. Bright skies can abruptly turn cloudy and a chilly drizzle ensue; then just as quickly as the rain begins it will end.

Another volatile aspect of Parisian weather is the blasts of rapidly moving air—probably the result of a wind tunnel effect caused by the city's long boulevards being bordered by buildings of uniform height. But other than the occasional winds and rain (which add an undeniable drama to many of the city's panoramas), Paris offers among the most pleasant weather conditions of any capital in Europe, with a highly tolerable average temperature of 53°.

The early spring can still be on the cool side, but later on in the season, temperatures are usually comfortable, often reaching into the low 60s. Summers are rarely overly warm—the upper 70s is the norm—though a spell of hot weather in the 90s can settle in for a few days, or even a week or two in July and August. Early autumn is slightly cooler, with temperatures edging toward the 50s. By November, it may dip into the 40s. Rain is a common occurrence year-round.

Aix-en-Provence, France (Provence): Compared to northern France, the Provence region enjoys more sunshine, higher temperatures, and longer spells of consistent weather. The summers are generally sunny and warm with low humidity, but there can be occasional heat waves. Spring and fall see average highs in the 60s, but tend to be the rainiest months. Winter is mild and snowfall is rare—maybe once every three years.

Weather Conditions and River Depths

Throughout the river cruise season, weather conditions affect river depths, and water levels may require adjustments to your itinerary. When river depths rise or fall during your River Cruise, Grand Circle Cruise Line will be required to adjust your itinerary for your safety and to adhere to the current governmental and nautical requirements. Though we strive to adhere to our planned itinerary, we may not always be able to follow it exactly as planned. The sequence of ports visited and the days on which included features and optional tours occur may vary.

Climate Averages & Online Forecast

The following charts reflect the **average** climate as opposed to exact weather conditions. This means they serve only as general indicators of what can reasonably be expected. An extreme heat wave or cold snap could fall outside these ranges. As your departure approaches, we encourage you to use **www.weather.com** for a more accurate forecast of the locations you visit.

Average Daily High/Low Temperatures (°F), Humidity & Monthly Rainfall

MONTH	PARIS, FRANCE			ROUEN, FRANCE		
	Temp. High-Low	% Relative Humidity (am-pm)	Average # of Days with Rainfall	Temp. High- Low	% Relative Humidity (am-pm)	Average # of Days with Rainfall
JAN	45 to 37	89 to 79	20	44 to 34	93 to 84	17
FEB	47 to 37	87 to 71	16	45 to 34	91 to 77	14
MAR	54 to 42	87 to 65	18	51 to 38	92 to 70	15
APR	60 to 45	86 to 58	17	57 to 41	91 to 64	13
MAY	67 to 52	86 to 57	16	63 to 47	92 to 66	13
JUN	73 to 57	86 to 58	17	69 to 51	93 to 67	13
JUL	77 to 60	85 to 54	13	73 to 55	93 to 63	13
AUG	77 to 60	87 to 51	12	73 to 55	94 to 62	13
SEP	70 to 55	91 to 59	14	67 to 51	96 to 69	16
OCT	61 to 49	92 to 69	17	59 to 46	96 to 78	16
NOV	51 to 42	91 to 76	17	50 to 39	95 to 84	17
DEC	46 to 38	89 to 81	19	44 to 35	93 to 87	16

MONTH	AIX-EN-PROVENCE, FRANCE		
	Temp. High-Low	% Relative Humidity (avg)	Average # of Days with Rainfall
JAN	54 to 45	67	11
FEB	58 to 46	60	5
MAR	59 to 47	56	11
APR	67 to 54	53	11
MAY	70 to 54	50	12
JUN	85 to 69	44	9
JUL	89 to 75	46	9
AUG	87 to 73	47	8
SEP	78 to 64	51	6
OCT	71 to 59	61	13
NOV	55 to 47	67	21
DEC	55 to 47	68	10

ABOARD YOUR SHIP: CABIN FEATURES, DINING & SERVICES ON BOARD

M/S Bizet

The Bizet's design incorporates suggestions from Grand Circle Cruise Line travelers—and it offers a host of amenities to make you feel right at home. Designed to carry no more than 120 passengers, the ship's size ensures the ease of maneuverability that's so important when entering small river ports. Amenities include a restaurant with panoramic windows, sun deck with lounge chairs, a library, bar, lounge, dance floor, and small souvenir shop.

Included features of all Grand Circle Cruise Line European river ship cabins:

- A layout of at least 150 square feet
- All outside cabins
- Individual climate control (heat and air conditioning)
- Twin beds that ship staff convert into a daytime couch
- Storage space under beds of 57 inches x 22.8 inches x 11.8 inches (length + width + height)
- Sufficient closet and dresser space
- Color TV, including CNN programming and a bow camera for ship-front views
- Direct-dial international telephone
- Hair dryer
- Desk
- Private bath with shower

Cabins on the Soprano deck have small balconies with sliding door; those on the Alto deck have two picture windows. For safety reasons, cabin windows do not open.

An important word: While our fleet features larger-than-usual riverboat cabins, please keep in mind that these ships are river vessels, not large ocean cruise ships. Riverboat cabins, in comparison, are relatively small, and ship amenities, in general, are comfortable but not lavish.

Cabin Assignments

You will receive confirmation of your deck and/or cabin category upfront in writing; it will be on your invoice and online in My Account at www.gct.com/myaccount. However, your cabin number may not be assigned until you arrive onboard the ship. (This is normal procedure for ships in many parts of the world, including Europe.) If there's no cabin number on your invoice or online, you can presume it will be assigned later and communicated to you when you board.

Dining

You'll enjoy fine cuisine and excellent views in your ship's dining room, featuring a warm decor of dark woods, rich carpeting, and white-linen and china table settings. Your ship's daily service includes a breakfast buffet, lunch, and a more formal dinner. Our professional chefs will create unique menus for you that feature regional specialties. Complimentary house wine, house beer, and a selection of soft drinks are included. In addition, a selection of other fine wines and beer is available for purchase, starting at approximately \$23-40 per bottle (prices vary according to vintage). Travelers may also bring a bottle of their own favorite wine to dinner to enjoy at their table. Should you care to avail yourself of this service, there will be a corkage fee of approximately \$10 per bottle, charged to your cabin account.

Please note that if you bring your own alcohol aboard, it can only be consumed in the dining room as described above, or in your cabin. Consumption of alcohol purchased outside the ship is not permitted in the lounge or public areas. We also offer complimentary coffee and tea throughout the day, available at meals and from the machine in the reception area.

Open-table, single-seating for all meals: Each meal is open seating—reservations of any kind are not accepted. Dinner has only one designated time for its open seating, announced each day aboard ship.

Dining times: Dining times for all meals may vary depending on the day's sightseeing and sailing schedule, but in general, meal times are as follows:

- Early riser breakfast: 6:30-7:30 am
- Breakfast: 7:30-9:00 am
- Lunch: 12:30-2:00 pm
- Dinner: 7:00-8:30 pm

Special diets & celebrations: Special diets, such as low-cholesterol or vegetarian, can be accommodated, as well as the recognition of an anniversary or birthday. Please call Grand Circle Cruise Line to submit your request no later than 45 days prior to departure. Religious dietary regimens, such as kosher or halal meals, cannot be prepared aboard ship.

Dress code: The dining-room dress code is casual, though most travelers dress nicely for the Captain's Welcome Reception and Farewell Dinner.

Non-smoking policy: The entire dining room is non-smoking at all times.

Embarkation/Disembarkation

On the day of disembarkation, your cabin will no longer be available after breakfast. You may sit in the ship's lounge or on the sun deck until disembarkation.

Dock and Landing Etiquette

River waterways are simply not big enough to support large landing docks such as those built on ocean shorelines. It is common for river ships to tie up alongside each other at some piers—particularly in ports where docking area is restricted. While we try to arrange the most convenient mooring available in each port of call, outboard boats may occasionally obstruct views, and you may have to step across other ships when you want to go ashore.

Headsets

During your trip, complimentary headsets, or Whispers receivers, are provided on our guided tours through the cities we visit. These receivers and headsets allow you to hear your Program Director and our local guides better. If use a hearing aid or have strong preferences for headphones, we highly encourage you to bring your own headsets/ear buds with you. The plug size is usually the same as that used by iPods, computer jacks, etc.

Wireless Internet Access

Limited Wireless Internet service is available for free in the cabins and common areas on board your Grand Circle Cruise Line ship. If you want to use the Wireless Internet connection you'll need to bring your own device (laptop/tablet/netbook) — ships do not rent or loan these devices. To use the Wireless Internet service, please visit Reception after you board for access information. Shipboard access is subject to the challenges of travel: ship location, signal availability, and usage volume on board will affect connectivity and speed. The ship's Internet connection demands a strong 3G cell phone signal, which is unavailable in many of the areas we visit. You can expect disruptions of both long and short duration. *Certain services and websites may be blocked during your stay on the ship.*

Laundry & Linen Service

Laundry service is available for a fee (currently it costs about 2 euros per shirt). Please note that neither self-service laundry facilities nor dry cleaning services are available. There will be one change of bed linens during your cruise. Towels are changed daily.

Medical Care

Our entire fleet adheres to stringent European safety standards. In addition to an emergency call button in all cabins, ships also feature fully staffed reception desks, 24 hours a day.

Onboard Activities

During your cruise you'll enjoy exclusive Discovery Series events, including group activities that relate to the region, theme dinners, organized discussions, and talks on upcoming ports of call.

Recreational Facilities

These include a sun deck, library, and lounge with bar and dance floor. The bar is open from 9 am to 11 pm, and features both complimentary drinks (soft drinks, house beer, house wine, and non-alcoholic cocktails/beer) and drinks for purchase (spirits, alcoholic cocktails, bottled beers, and a selection of wines). Prices are in Euros.

Bicycles

We're pleased to offer complimentary bicycle rentals onboard your ship for use during free time, including all of the necessary safety gear, such as a helmet, brightly-colored safety vest, and a lock. Because there is a limited supply of bicycles available, they will be offered on a first-come first-served basis. For more information or if you are interested in using one of the bicycles, please speak to the Front Desk staff or Hotel Manager onboard your ship.

Telephone Services

To make telephone calls from the ship, you will be charged on your shipboard account on the last day of the cruise. Phone calls are directly from your cabin and through satellite. We advise you to use it only for an emergency, as this is a very expensive service (for example, a call to New York City would cost about \$3.75 per minute). (Phone Calling Cards cannot be used over the ship's phone system.)

Smoking/Non-Smoking Policy

All cabins are non-smoking. Smoking is only permitted outside on the sun deck. Smoking is not allowed anywhere else on the ships.

Elevator/Chairlift

The ship has an elevator, which runs between the Alto and Soprano Decks. A chairlift operates from the Soprano Deck to the sun deck (or you can use the staircase to the sun deck, which has one flight of 10-12 steps). The chairlift is a single-seat transport that slides up the staircase banister.

Shore Excursions

Many sightseeing tours are included on your cruise. Other optional tours are available for purchase. Your Program Director will provide information on these optional excursions on your arrival. Please note that optional tours can only be purchased with a credit card.

Lost & Found

Any lost or forgotten items found on board the ship will be held for 90 days from disembarkation. After 90 days, all unclaimed items will be discarded or donated.

Ship Specifications

M/S Bizet

- **History:** Built in 2002
- **Size:** 366x38 ft
- **Capacity:** 120 passengers, 34 crew members
- **Layout:** 60 cabins, 3 decks; Elevator–yes

ABOUT YOUR DESTINATIONS: CULTURE, ETIQUETTE & MORE

Your Program Director

Grand Circle Cruise Line is committed to showing you a destination through the perspective of those who live, work, and play there. How better to do that than to have a resident with you every step of the way? We are proud to be the only cruise line to provide you the dedicated services of an expert Program Director, a resident or native of the country who is delighted to share their in-depth knowledge of local history, culture, and hidden gems.

Fluent in English and skilled in fostering camaraderie among travelers, our Program Directors are constantly cited by our travelers as the main reason they continue to travel with us. During your cruise, you'll enjoy multiple Program Directors aboard your ship, who will each be with you and your group of 25–47 travelers throughout your journey—both on ship and on land. And with personal headsets on every included and optional tour, you'll be able to enjoy their perspective and enthusiasm as you explore at a level deeper than most Americans go.

French Culture

It would be hard to find someone who was not familiar with at least some aspects of French culture. Few nations have surpassed France's legacy when it comes to exporting art, literature, fashion, cuisine, film, and entire schools of intellectual thought. But that doesn't mean that French culture has not been misunderstood.

For example, the French are justly proud of their cultural heritage, and that pride is often embodied in the nation's unofficial symbol, the Gallic rooster. But the flip side of Gallic pride is the stereotype of French snobbery. The French very much believe in their national motto of *Liberté, Égalité, Fraternité* (Liberty, Equality, Fraternity). But in their daily interactions, the French are rather formal with people outside their social circle, and they follow a strict set of manners to avoid social missteps (*faux pas*). That mannerly approach, combined with the extreme directness of their language, makes many visitors jump to the conclusion that the French are cold or arrogant. *Au contraire*, when you get to know a French person, that sense of decorum generally takes a back seat to affectionate and loyal friendships.

When you get to that stage, you'll have to master the art of the French air kiss or *faire la bise*. This is how French people greet acquaintances, by leaning in and gently brushing their right, then left cheeks together while making a subtle kissing sound with their lips. If someone wishes you hello or goodbye with *la bise*, consider it a compliment!

Most people in France share a strong appreciation for the arts and intellectual discourse. A lot of that is going on whenever you walk into a café, where people will be engaged in lively conversations for what seems like hours. There's an historical precedent for this, for during the 18th century, France was the epicenter of the Enlightenment. It was an era that gave us radical new philosophies, science and art based on the sovereignty of reason, and empiricism. The French openness to new ideas is evident in their embrace of innovative artistry— from the Impressionists to Dadaism to Abstract Expressionism and beyond. The French brothers Louis and

Auguste Lumière are generally considered the inventors of modern cinema, and their legacy has been expanded by a host of acclaimed filmmakers from Abel Gance to Jean Renoir to Jean-Luc Godard to Francois Truffaut and too many others to list.

When it comes to gastronomy, it goes without saying that the French have elevated their cuisine to an art form. The French have always considered dining as something worthy of one's time as opposed to being a necessity or even a sinful indulgence. They appreciate every morsel of their meal on a sensory level, for the technique of the chef, and for what that dish may represent in terms of national, regional or just family history. They are particular about all these things, and especially, about the freshness and quality of ingredients. But because they also see chefs as artists, they delight in innovative culinary interpretations of classic dishes. So when you sit down to dine in France, you are not just consuming a meal, you are tapping into the French spirit.

Wintertime in France

Winter is a perfect time to explore France and Paris, the City of Lights. While you may come across some Christmas markets during your free time, they are not as popular in France as in other parts of Europe – such as Germany and Austria – therefore, the focus of this itinerary is to experience the holiday spirit in France, marked by a sophisticated and understated style. Enjoy the beautiful lights strung throughout the towns and cities and the scent of roasted chestnuts wafting from a local vendor's cart. You'll be able to explore the country with shorter lines and fewer crowds, while still enjoying a lovely holiday season.

Religion and Religious Observance

It is estimated that 63–66% of French people identify as Catholics, with another 7–9% identifying as Muslims. The second largest group are those who claim to be unaffiliated with any religion (23–28%), followed by small numbers of Jews, Buddhists, and others. That does not mean that religion has not impacted everyday customs. For example, people do have church weddings, baptisms and religious funeral rites. But most French people consider belief to be a private matter, and do not attend church regularly.

All these figures are estimates because the government has not officially collected any data on religious preferences since 1972. This all has to do with a very important aspect of French culture called *laïcité*. You could translate it as secularism, but it goes deeper than that. *Laïcité* is the complete separation of religious spheres from public spheres. Its underlying aim is to ensure religious freedom for all, and it is constitutionally enshrined. But *laïcité* is not without controversy. The concept has come under fire as France has become less homogeneously Christian. Some critics say it actually impedes religious freedom, and they cite the 2004 ban that made it illegal to display conspicuous religious symbols in public schools or civil workplaces. In addition to banning the wearing of crucifixes, the ruling forbade the wearing of the hijab, the traditional head covering worn by observant Muslim women.

Language

The official language spoken throughout France is French. Even in places where people occasionally speak a regional dialect, all official communications are in French. The most widely spoken regional languages in France are the German dialects along the border (such as Alsacien); Megreb (an Arabic–French mix from North Africa); and Occitan, a Gallo–Romance language spoken in some southern areas such as Languedoc, Gascony, and parts of Provence. In Normandy, the Norman language is sometimes used, as are Basque and Catalan in some parts of France that border the Pyrenees. Though some regional words have filtered into common usage, the vast majority of people speak French as a first language.

English is the most common foreign language, spoken by more than 39% of people. You may have heard the stereotype that the French will refuse to speak English with you, even if they understand it. This is not true. However, it is true that the French are very proud of their language (it was once the language of international diplomacy) and they are mindful about preserving it. So if you make even the slightest effort to speak a few words in French, your hosts will be very appreciative.

Beyond the basic French you may have learned in school, there are many colorful contemporary idioms. You may be interested to know about *verlan*. It's a popular French linguistic trend that creates slang words by spelling them (loosely) backwards. It's been popular with young people for some time, but now even their parents are catching on and many *verlan* words have been entered into the dictionary. So in *verlan*, *fou* (crazy) becomes *ouf*. *Louche* (strange or shady) becomes *chelou*. Another very common *verlan* term is *vénère*. It comes from the word *énervé*, which means “annoyed” or “irritated.”

Laundry Service

Laundry service and dry cleaning are available through your hotel for an additional fee.

Strikes

In France strikes are an accepted part of the political dialogue. As a result, they seem to happen more often here than in the U.S. And while they are nothing to be afraid of—they are generally peaceful and orderly—they can be a nuisance as they may disrupt transport or may force us to make adjustments to our itinerary. If there are any such adjustments needed while you are in France, your Program Director will keep you up to date.

Did you know? The French for “on strike” is “en grève”—which comes from *Place de Grève*, the old name of the large square in front of Paris's city hall. (Today it has been renamed as *Place de l'Hotel de Ville*, or City Hall Square.)

French Cuisine

It would be an understatement to say the French have an appreciation for fine food. They have a reverence for it, and it shows in the quality of French cuisine, which was designated by UNESCO as part of the World's Intangible Cultural Heritage. You certainly don't need to dine at

a Michelin-starred restaurant to experience the best of French cuisine. A visit to just about any local *marché* (open-air market), *pâtisserie* (pastry shop), *boulangerie* (bakery), café, bistro, or brasserie may well be as memorable an outing as visiting the famed monuments and museums.

Classical French dishes formed the basis of what we once called *haute cuisine*. But some of these dishes were regional in origin. Fortunately, because there is such widespread regard for gastronomy, regional dishes may appear on menus far from home, especially in large cities. Some of these dishes include:

- **Soupe à l'oignon:** a sweet and savory broth of caramelized onions, beef stock, and sherry with a crust of grilled Comté or Gruyère cheese.
- **Coq au vin:** a specialty of Burgundy, made with chicken braised with red Burgundy wine, lardons, mushrooms, and garlic.
- **Entrecôte à la Bordelaise:** A traditional dish in Bordeaux. It is a rib eye steak cooked in a red wine sauce with bone marrow.
- **Bouillabaisse:** A seafood soup made from fish and shellfish cooked in a broth of onions, tomatoes, saffron, and herbs.
- **Coq au Riesling:** A flavorful dish of chicken braised in white Riesling wine, accented with lardons of bacon and button mushrooms, and enriched with a silky touch of crème fraîche
- **Flammekueche** (or in French, *tarte flambée*): A chewy flatbread smothered with *fromage blanc* (a tangy fresh cheese), *crème fraîche* or sour cream, slivered onions, and crispy *lardons* of bacon.

Paris in Brief

City Layout and Details

Paris occupies 432 square miles (six more than San Francisco). In central Paris, the Rive Droite (Right Bank)—the shore to the right as you face downriver—is north of the Seine, while the Rive Gauche (Left Bank) is south of the river. Streets that are more or less parallel to the Seine are numbered from east to west, in the direction in which the river flows. On streets that are perpendicular to the river (or approximately so), the numbering starts at the river; building numbers get higher the farther away from the Seine you go. Thirty-two bridges link the Right and Left banks, some providing access to the two small islands at the heart of the city. This city center, called Ile de la Cité, is the birthplace of Paris and includes the sites of Notre Dame and Ile St. Louis, a moat-guarded isle with 17th-century mansions.

Between 1860 and 1870 Baron Haussmann forever changed the look of Paris by creating the legendary boulevards: boulevards St. Michel, St. Germain, Haussmann, Malesherbes, Sebastopol, Magenta, Voltaire, and Strasbourg. The “main street” on the Right Bank is, of course, the Champs-Élysées, beginning at the Arc de Triomphe and running to the Place de la Concorde. Haussmann also created Avenue de l’Opera (as well as the Opera), and the twelve avenues that radiate star-like from the Arc de Triomphe, giving it its original name of Place de l’Etoile

(renamed Place Charles de Gaulle following the general's death). Today it is often referred to as Place Charles de Gaulle Etoile. Haussmann cleared Ile de la Cité of its medieval buildings, transforming it into a showcase for Notre Dame. Finally, he laid out the two elegant parks on the western and southeastern fringes of the city: Bois de Boulogne and Bois de Vincennes.

Paris has been divided since 1860 into 20 arrondissements (districts), which spiral out from the center of the city like a clockwise snail. Each district has its own city hall, police station, and main post office. All addresses include the arrondissement number (written in Roman or Arabic numerals and followed by “e” or “er”).

Laundry Service

Self-service laundromats are available in Paris. The cost is approximately 7 euros to wash and dry one load of clothes. Your hotel also provides laundry services, but the fees are very high. It's much less expensive to launder your clothes yourself.

Check Hours for Weekday Closures (Versailles, Louvre, etc.)

Many major sights in and around Paris close one day a week, usually on a weekday. For example Versailles Palace and the Orsay Museum are closed on Mondays; the Louvre is closed Tuesdays. But on the bright side, the same museums usually offer extended evening hours (*les nocturnes*) one day a week. If a particular museum is important to you, we strongly recommend that you check their hours online or in a guidebook before you make any plans. We also recommend booking tickets for the Eiffel Tower or other sights at least three months in advance.

Eiffel Tower Tickets

Many attractions allow you to purchase tickets online and in advance. More specifically, Eiffel Tower tickets can be purchased online at <http://www.toureiffel.paris/en.html>. Purchasing a ticket may be beneficial in the long run; however it must be purchased for a specific date and time. Tickets that are past their assigned day and time stamp cannot be transferred or refunded. With that being said, the Eiffel Tower is a very popular destination in Paris and the lines for tickets can be a long wait.

Be aware that a certain number of tickets are held back from online sales, and are sold at the tower itself for same day admission. If the date you wanted was not available online—or you don't wish to purchase a ticket in advance—you can buy one of these tickets from the booth at the foot of the tower. It is recommended to purchase tickets at least three months in advance. Same-day tickets can go fast, so we suggest getting there early in the day.

Shopping Areas

The French department stores Galeries Lafayette and Printemps both have flagship stores on the Boulevard Haussmann, near the Opera. Haute couture can be found in the streets around the Rue du Faubourg St. Honore. The Rue de Paradis is lined with crystal and china shops, and St. Germain des Pres has more than its share of art galleries. For great flea markets, head to the Puces de St. Ouen (near the Porte de Clignancourt)—but keep in mind that most vendors are

open on the weekends only, so check the hours first. Please be aware that this area is known for its pickpockets. While bargaining is not common in France, it is acceptable at flea markets or occasionally at produce markets.

Local Transportation

The underground Metro operates from 5:30 am to 1:15 am. It is easy to use. The different lines are identified by numbers and the names of their terminals at either end. Every station has clear directional maps, some with push-button devices that light up the proper route after a destination button is pushed. Keep your ticket (you may need it to exit the station; and you will need it when you exit the RER – the rapid transit network – station).

Taxis can be found at stands at main intersections, outside railway stations, and in the streets. Fares increase at night. The green light on the roof signifies availability.

Tips for Dining Out in France

- Keep in mind that when you go to a restaurant or a café in France, the service may be slower than what you are used to and you will need to ask your server for the bill when you are ready to pay. The French consider it rude to rush their patrons or to present the bill without being asked.
- Tipping is not expected because a service charge is usually included in your bill, though you may consider leaving 1–2 Euros.
- In general, lunch is the main meal of the day, so you may find that some shops, banks, and offices close in the middle of the afternoon for an hour or two.

Getting Around in France

Public transit: Metro (subway), buses, and trams—almost every city in France has reliable and inexpensive public transit. Often you must buy your ticket and then “validate” it by punching it in a machine or running it past a sensor.

Taxi: Taxis are widely available throughout Paris, Lyon, and Marseilles. In smaller cities, it is sometimes difficult to get one when needed.

Trains: France prides itself on its nationalized railway system, run by the SNCF, and even small towns often have daily train service for commuters. For longer trips, look for a TGV, or *train à grande vitesse* (high-speed train), which can take you cross-country in a matter of hours.

Shopping: What to Buy, Customs, Shipping & More

There may be scheduled visits to local shops during your vacation. There is no requirement to make a purchase during these stops, and any purchase made is a direct transaction with the shop in question, subject to the vendor’s terms of purchase. Grand Circle is not responsible for purchases you make on your trip or for the shipment of your purchases.

Returns

If you discover an issue with an item, you should contact the vendor directly and expect that any resolution will take longer than it would in the U.S. We recommend that you keep a copy of all your receipts, invoices, or contracts, along with the shop's contact information. Keep in mind, local practice may vary from U.S. standards, so don't assume that you have a certain number of days after the purchase to speak up or that you are guaranteed a refund.

Crafts & Souvenirs

France

Popular French souvenirs include fashion, art, antiques, perfume, food, and wine. Each region has its own specialties, but you can often find them for sale in other parts of the country. If time is short, try checking out a big department store, like Galeries Lafayette or Printemps. Or look for Monoprix chains, which have lower prices and are more for everyday shopping (sort of like the French version of Target).

The French value-added tax (VAT) is typically 20% and can be as high as 33.33% on luxury articles. Depending on how much you spend on certain goods, you may be eligible for a partial refund of this tax. Ask the shopkeeper or salesperson at the time of purchase. Be sure to save all receipts for Customs. (Generally, you have to spend over 175€ at the same shop, on the same day, and have filled out a special form for this process.)

U.S. Customs Regulations & Shipping Charges

For all things related to U.S. Customs, the ultimate authority is the U.S. Bureau of Customs & Border Protection. Their website, www.cbp.gov has the answers to the most frequently asked questions. Or you can call them at **1-877-227-5511**.

The top three points to know are:

- At time of writing, your personal duty-free allowance is \$800 for items brought with you. Items totaling more than \$800 are subject to duty fees.
- **Items shipped home are always subject to duty when received in the U.S.** Even when the shop has offered to include shipping and duties in the price, this typically means shipping to the nearest customs facility and payment of the export duties—not door-to-door shipping or payment of the import duties. All additional duties or shipping charges would be your responsibility. Unless an item is small enough to send by parcel service (like FedEx), chances are you will need to arrange shipping or pick-up once the item is in the U.S. and will need to pay customs duties.
- It is illegal to import products made from endangered animal species. U.S. Customs & Border Protection will seize these items, as well as most furs, coral, tortoise shell, reptile skins, feathers, plants, and items made from animal skins.

DEMOGRAPHICS & HISTORY

France

Facts, Figures & National Holidays

- **Area:** 248,573 square miles
- **Capital:** Paris
- **Language:** French
- **Location:** France is a large country, two and a half times as big as Great Britain, extending for some 600 miles from north to south and from east to west. It has coastlines on both the Atlantic Ocean and the Mediterranean Sea. Its southern land border is Spain; to the north are Belgium, Luxembourg, and Germany; to the east are Switzerland and Italy.
- **Geography:** Except for extreme northern France, which is part of the Flanders plain, the country may be described as four river basins and a plateau. Three of the streams flow west—the Seine into the English Channel, the Loire into the Atlantic, and the Garonne into the Bay of Biscay. The Rhône flows south into the Mediterranean. For about 100 miles, the Rhine is France's eastern border. In the Alps, near the Italian and Swiss borders, is Europe's highest point—Mont Blanc, at 15,781 feet.
- **Population:** 68,606,000 (Estimate)
- **Religion:** Roman Catholic 29%, None 51%, Islam 10%, Other Christian 9%, Buddhist 1%, Jewish 1%, Other 1%
- **Time Zone:** France is on Central European Time, six hours ahead of U.S. EST. When it is 6am in Washington D.C., it is noon in Paris. Daylight Saving Time begins the last weekend in March and ends the last weekend in October.

National Holidays: France

In addition to the holidays listed below, France celebrates a number of national holidays that follow a lunar calendar, such as Easter and Whit Monday. To find out if you will be traveling during these holidays, please visit www.timeanddate.com/holidays.

01/01 New Year's Day

05/01 Labor Day

05/08 World War II Victory Day

07/14 Bastille Day

08/15 Assumption of Mary

11/01 All Saints' Day

11/11 Armistice Day

12/25 Christmas Day

France: A Brief History

That the French do things with flair has been borne out by history. Even their most famous prehistoric treasure, the 17,000-year old cave paintings of Lascaux, are a dazzling work of art. The rest of French history is just as dazzling, colored by events and ideas that have impacted all of humanity, far beyond the borders of this hexagon-shaped crucible of culture.

When the Celts arrived in Gaul in the 5th century BC, it was already occupied by Iberians, Ligurians, and Greeks, who established the oldest city in France, Massilia (Marseille). It was a major port with temples, theaters, an agora, and a flourishing wine trade. The city had forged an alliance with Rome by the time Julius Caesar conquered Gaul in 57–52 B.C. Julius often gets credit for founding Lutetia (Paris), but the Gallic Parisii tribe had already established a settlement there on the banks of the Seine. The Romans erected their own magnificent cities whose ruins still stand in Arles, Nimes, Vienne, Lyon, and beyond.

During the 5th century AD, the Franks invaded and converted to Christianity under Clovis I. A national spirit emerged when Charlemagne, King of the Franks, was crowned Holy Roman Emperor in 800 AD. Though his reign left an indelible imprint, French national history is considered to begin in 987, when Hugh Capet centralized the monarchy. During the 12th and 13th centuries, trade prospered, guilds were founded, and cathedrals were built. But the 14th century brought the Hundred Years War with England (1337–1453), whose Norman kings held vast estates in France. The English were expelled and as in the days of Charlemagne, the throne held a powerful mystique, this time with the aid of Joan of Arc, whose divine voices urged her to lead France to victory at Orleans in 1429 and to champion Charles VII as king.

During the 16th and 17th centuries, France moved closer towards absolute monarchy, best exemplified by Louis XIV, whose reign was unequalled for its autocracy—and magnificent style. From Versailles, he presided over a gloriously gilded France—so resplendent that it earned him the title of “the Sun King.” Ironically, the very splendor of the French monarchy precipitated its downfall, for it was exorbitant to maintain. That burden fell to the peasants and middle class, as nobles and the clergy were exempt from the taxes. That ended with the French Revolution in 1789. King Louis XVI and Marie Antoinette were guillotined, the monarchy was abolished, and the new (but short-lived) First Republic was established.

The ensuing chaos led to the rise of Napoleon, who became emperor in 1804 and built an empire across nearly all of Europe. Though Napoleon was a dictator, his Napoleonic codes brought unprecedented legal rights and civil liberties to his domains, in many places ending feudalism. With his fall in 1814, the monarchy was restored. France's Third Republic was founded in 1870, during which the groundbreaking Impressionist school of painting emerged, as well as the Modernist movement. From 1914–18, France fought with the Allies in World War I, prevailing but suffering devastating losses. Between wars, France nourished major intellectual movements: Constructivism, Dadaism, Surrealism, and Existentialism.

In 1940, France was invaded by Germany who set up a puppet government in Vichy under Marshal Philippe Petain. On D-Day, June 6, 1944, the Allies landed in Normandy and went on to liberate Paris in August. A provisional government was set up under General Charles de Gaulle. He remained France's most influential statesman of the 20th (or perhaps any other) century, becoming president in 1958 until his resignation in 1969. Post-war France saw the break-up of its remaining colonial outposts. The country was one of the leaders in the founding of the European Union (1993) and the Eurozone (1999).

More recently France, like its European neighbors, had to contend with the fallout of the 2008 global economic crisis. Unemployment, immigration, structuring the post-Brexit EU, climate change, and post-pandemic life are some of the issues France must address with its historic resourcefulness—and characteristic flair.

RESOURCES

Suggested Reading

France

The Seine: The River That Made Paris by Elaine Sciolino (2020, Nonfiction) Sciolino traces the history, route, and impact of the Seine River through the stories of its people—a riverbank bookseller, the Seine police, a houseboat owner, fishermen, and film directors, to name a few. She also includes a touching chapter on the 2019 Notre Dame fire, which was put out with water pumped from the river.

A Brief History of France by Cecil Jenkins (2017, History) Exactly what the title promises: A compact overview of the history of France. Look for the 2017 edition, which was updated to include more recent events.

The Miracle of Dunkirk: The True Story of Operation Dynamo by Walter Lord (2017, History) A well-written and comprehensive account of the British evacuation from Dunkirk in 1940 with the help of the French. The author has been praised for his ability to weave the personal stories of the survivors—who he interviewed in great depth—into the overall narrative of how events unfolded.

My Life in France by Julia Child with Alex Prud'homme (2007, Memoir) Memoir of the famous chef's first, formative stay in France in 1949. Child describes herself as a “rather loud and unserious Californian,” without a word of French. She enrolled at the Cordon Bleu and toiled with increasing zeal and competence. With the bestselling *Mastering the Art of French Cooking*, she revolutionized the American idea of cooking. This memoir recalls gorgeous meals in bygone Parisian restaurants, and reveals the personality and some of the secret arts of a culinary genius.

Paris to the Moon by Adam Gopnik (2001, Travel Essays) A self-described “comic-sentimental essayist,” Gopnik spent the years from 1995 to 2000 in Paris writing the “Paris Journals” for the *New Yorker*. Collected here are his most charming, insightful, heartfelt, and humorous dispatches on the Parisian people, culture, food, economy, and lifestyle.

Suggested Films & Videos

France

Loving Vincent (2017, Biography) Van Gogh's paintings come to life in this remarkable, animated film created by 125 artists, who hand-painted each of the film's 65,000 frames in the style of Vincent Van Gogh. The plot follows the efforts of a postmaster's son to solve the mystery of van Gogh's life and death in Auvers-sur-Oise.

Midnight in Paris (2011, Comedy) Screenwriter Gil Pender (Owen Wilson) escapes his romantic troubles by roaming the streets of Paris at night, where he is miraculously (and hilariously) transported back to 1920s Paris, where Ernest Hemingway, Gertrude Stein, Salvador Dali, F. Scott Fitzgerald and the entire “Lost Generation” await him.

Amelie (2001, Romantic Comedy) This quirky gem tells the heartwarming story of a shy waitress in Paris who decides to change the lives of those around her for the better, while struggling with her own isolation. The award-winning film is a whimsical depiction of everyday life, sure to capture the hearts of its viewers time and time again.

Chocolat (2000, Drama/Comedy) In this warm and beautifully filmed romance, a lovely chocolatier (Juliet Binoche) falls in love with a handsome gypsy (Johnny Depp), disrupting life in a prim riverside village. Many scenes were filmed in the Dordogne region.

Saving Private Ryan (1998, Drama). Probably the best (and most riveting) depiction of the Normandy D-Day landings and their aftermath. It won Steven Spielberg an Oscar for Best Director.

Useful Websites

Grand Circle Forum (tips from previous travelers)

www.gct.com/forum

Grand Circle Frequently Asked Questions

www.gct.com/faq

International Health Information/CDC (Centers for Disease Control)

www.cdc.gov/travel

Electricity & Plugs

www.worldstandards.eu/electricity/plugs-and-sockets

Foreign Exchange Rates

www.xe.com/currencyconverter
www.oanda.com/converter/classic

ATM Locators

www.mastercard.com/atm
www.visa.com/atmlocator

World Weather

www.intellicast.com
www.weather.com
www.wunderground.com

Basic Travel Phrases (80 languages)

www.travlang.com/languages

Packing Tips

www.travelite.org

U.S. Customs & Border Protection

www.cbp.gov/travel

Transportation Security Administration (TSA)

www.tsa.gov

National Passport Information Center

www.travel.state.gov

Holidays Worldwide

www.timeanddate.com/holidays

Useful Apps

Flight Stats

Track departures, arrivals, and flight status

LoungeBuddy

Get access to premium airport lounges around the world

Timeshifter

Personalized tips for avoiding jetlag, based on neuroscience and your own data

GoogleMaps or Maps.me

Maps and directions anywhere in the world

Triposo

City guides, walking maps, and more – and it works offline

Rome2rio

Where to go, what to see, and what to do in more than 160 countries

Flush or Sit or Squat

Find a clean toilet anywhere

Uber or Bolt or Grab

Ride sharing around the world

Visa Plus and Mastercard Cirrus

ATM locations

Shows the location of the nearest ATM in your network

TunnelBear

Provides a secure VPN (virtual private network) that will encrypt your browsing data when you use a public WiFi network

What's App or Skype or Signal

WiFi calling anywhere in the world

Duolingo, FLuentU, or Babbel

Learn dozens of foreign languages

Google Translate

Fast and simple translations

XE

Currency conversions

SizeGuide

Clothing and shoe sizes in all countries

Best Units Converter

Converts currency, mileage, weights, and many other units of measurement

Happy Cow

Locate vegan and vegetarian eateries in 195 countries

Eatwith

Dine with locals all over the world

Meetup

Connects you with locals who share your interests

Skyview

Identifies constellations and heavenly bodies

Travello

Find travel friends on the road

TripWhistle

Maps your location and provides emergency numbers for police, medics, and more

GeoSure

Safely navigate neighborhoods around the world

Tourlina

For women only, it connects you with other female travelers

ALIX for One

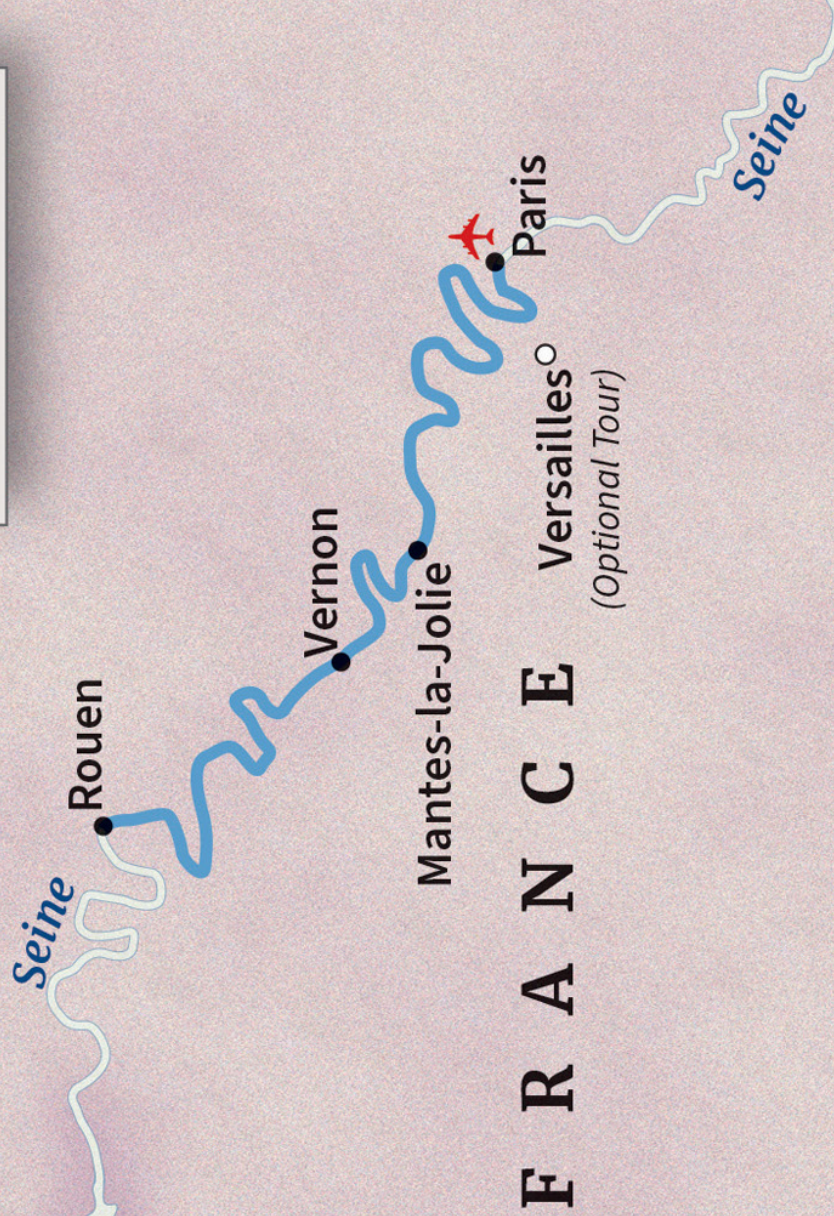
Created by and for women, it identifies solo-friendly dining spots in major international cities

Chirpey

For women only, connect with other women, find out what's safe, meet up, and more

English Channel

Arrival/ Departure	○	295 miles (476km)
Optional Extension	○	
Cruise Route	—	
Total Cruising Distance		295 miles (476km)



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traveler from Ocala, FL



Created by Sarah Brown, first-time traveler
from Providence, RI



Created by Joseph Jiang, 3-time traveler
from San Francisco, CA



Created by Sheila Knox, 20-time traveler
from Modesto, CA



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