

Chateau de la Treyne by the Dordogne river



**The great appeal of France as a holiday country lies not only in the quality of its culture and history, its food and wine, but also in the sheer variety of landscapes and experiences.**

France offers broad sandy beaches bathed in sunshine, dramatic mountain peaks and river gorges, gently rolling emerald countryside with a timeless feel and vibrant towns and cities with an up-to-the-minute cultural buzz. Everywhere you'll find world-renowned cuisine, friendly service, space to breathe and time for the small courtesies of life.

If you want to just nip across the Channel from the UK, head for smart Le Touquet on the Northern coast. Many chic Parisians have holiday homes here, so the resort has its own small airport, gourmet restaurants and designer boutiques, top class golf courses and a huge beach for wind sports.

Further west, on the Normandy coastline, lies the picture-book harbour of Honfleur, where historic buildings contrast with the avant-garde art and sculpture to be found in the maze of narrow shopping streets. Drive from here along the Cote Fleurie past beamed and thatched houses, contented cows and apple orchards to Deauville,

another favourite resort of elegant Parisians. The town has two famous race courses and is an internationally renowned equestrian centre. Beyond lies Caen, a good base to explore the Normandy landing beaches of WWII and the iconic tapestry at Bayeux.

Brittany's countryside and coast are largely unspoilt and popular for family holidays. The region has a sunny microclimate – especially around the Gulf of Morbihan in the south – and a wealth of local festivals and Celtic cultural traditions.

Moving further south, the Loire valley is a paradise for wine lovers and those who enjoy historic houses and gardens. Travel from one domaine to the next taking in fairytale riverside chateaux like Villandry,

with its formal potager combining vegetables with flowers.

The banks of the Dordogne river present a peaceful pastoral idyll combined with fascinating evidence of pre-history seen in cave paintings and excellent museums. For those who crave the freedom of mountains and nature, the less well-known Cevennes region offers mile after mile of breathtaking pine-clad peaks.

The sun-filled South of France has a well deserved reputation as one of the world's most desirable destinations. Here are happening resorts, ancient cities oozing culture, wild horses of the Camargue, countryside heady with heat and the scent



of lavender and vines, cuisine and wine bursting with the sunshine and aromas of Provence. No wonder the area around Nice, Cannes and Bandol are still favourite playgrounds of the rich and famous.

And talking of favourite playgrounds, who could ignore Paris, the romantic city of light and lovers? This magical metropolis is a world capital of fashion and a trendy, buzzing capital that embodies the soul of France. Sunset burning crimson over the Pont des Arts. A glass of white wine sipped at a bistro in the 18th arrondissement. The mellow tone of a saxophone gilding the night in a Latin Quarter jazz club. All unforgettable impressions.

Paris is home not only to famous landmarks like the Eiffel Tower and the Louvre, but also to some of the world's top hotels, the epitome of refinement, chic and discreet service. However, outside the capital, the favourite choice of Francophiles in the know is to rent their own holiday property. Modern villas and gîtes are just as likely to have designer-look interiors, to provide a maid and meal service and to boast state of the art facilities. The properties themselves range from bijou town apartments for a romantic weekend through charming country cottages to huge family farmhouses with swimming pool and grounds – not forgetting the occasional chateau, manoir or converted water mill.

We all feel good for indulging in total relaxation – but also for releasing our creativity. On holiday in France you can take a course in photography, painting, ceramics, film making, French language or just about any subject your heart desires. It's a great opportunity to exchange stimulating ideas and knowledge. Food and wine fans are fed with specialist holidays in gourmet dining, French cooking and tours of vineyards in the country's great wine regions. Tasting is included, of course...

Getting active is easy too. So many areas are great for enjoying walking and cycling whilst taking in amazing views. This is, after all, the home of the Tour de France. French ski resorts are among the best in the world. In the Alps, dominated by the slopes of Mont Blanc, are buzzing winter sports centres along with traditional, unspoilt villages, each offering a different experience of days on the slopes followed by fun evenings of apres-ski.

Travel to France is easy. Of the many airports France has to choose from, the main hub is the Charles de Gaulle airport in Paris, however there are international airports at all the country's major cities and also numerous regional airports. In the south of France, Bordeaux is one of the major airports in France and provides fast access to the south and west of the country. To the East in the Rhone alps, Lyon Saint

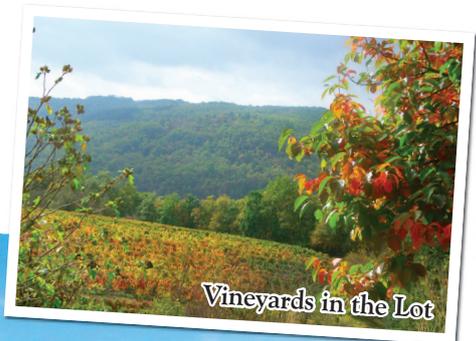
Exupery international airport is ideal for those travelling to the Alps.

The French rail network is fast and efficient, with direct Eurostar trains from London connecting with the TGV network for access to all the major holiday regions. You can even take a high speed train to the south of France or the Alps for your skiing holiday.

One of the greatest attractions of France for many holidaymakers from all over Europe is the fact that it's so accessible by car. There are numerous ferry routes and crossings from ports across the south of England to North West and North East France, which can cut hours off driving times - plus of course the fast and convenient Eurotunnel service. And, once in France, the national network of autoroutes is generally uncrowded and a pleasure to use.

More information and booking for holidays in France at:

[www.frenchconnections.co.uk](http://www.frenchconnections.co.uk)



The Grand Massif ski area

