



Joie de Vivre !

A Music Lovers Tour to Paris, the South of France and Barcelona
with Jennifer Parish & Stewart Cameron

Dear

We have carefully chosen your hotels for this tour to be superior and in prime, central locations. The accommodation is 4 star standard (which makes a big difference in Europe). The restaurants are of similar standard, with many being family-owned and serving freshly-prepared food, typical of the area. There will be great variety of meals in the course of the tour, and all dinners offer choices of starter, main and dessert, accompanied by wine and followed by tea or freshly made coffee.

Exact timings, other visits or points of interest and performance details (once seasons are announced,) will be added to this itinerary later. Our expert Tour Director will add still more interest and excitement to our days once we are on the coach. We like to be a little spontaneous and to take opportunities which arise rather than regiment each day. Our tour is at an easy pace allowing time to enjoy each location and experience. This will be far from a typical, 'whistle stop, package tour'!



Thursday, 19th September – Brisbane (other departure points possible at similar times)

We will depart in the early evening from Brisbane on one of the world's highest rated airlines, Emirates. After dinner and perhaps a wine or two, we will have the opportunity to catch some sleep, watch a movie or enjoy the high level of service, as we make our way direct to Dubai

Friday, 20th September

We wake to the dynamic city of Dubai, with its wonderful marriage of 'old and new'. Our hotel has been carefully selected and researched. It captures the feel of 'the Arabian Nights' with its lavish decor. Located in the Old City our hotel is close to the river with access to the energetic Gold and Spice Markets. It's right next to the Dubai Museum and a short distance from the magnificent grand mosque. Your room has been booked for our early arrival, so take a nap or set out to explore the local area in this safest of cities. In the early evening we meet for a sumptuous buffet dinner together. (D)

Saturday, 21st September

We take a morning flight and arrive fresh after the mere 7 hour daytime journey to Paris aboard the exciting Boeing A-380 superliner. (They are the two storey planes!) We meet our Tour Director, Roberto and transfer to our hotel in the northern part of the Loire Valley. In our grand hotel, which has functioned as a hotel since 15th century, take the time to unwind after our flight, get to know our group members and prepare for the fun weeks ahead. As will have various sleeping patterns as we settle in and adjust to our new time zone, lunch and dinner are at your leisure today, with a number of nearby options. (B)

Sunday, 22nd September

After breakfast we set off in our coach for a full day excursion. Together we explore the Loire Valley around us including some of the many magnificent Chateaux which characterise this beautiful region of France. Majestic castles built of white tufa with turrets and towers, magnificent hunting estates and picturesque gardens and countryside are the order of the day today! Loire is the historic heart of France and a World Heritage Site. Tonight we enjoy dinner together. (B, D)



Monday, 23rd September

After breakfast we board the coach to Paris stopping en route at Giverny to visit the home of famous impressionist painter, Claude Monet. Monet lived in his charming pink and green house for 43 years until 1926. He extended the house and revelled in it's beautiful garden and much photographed (and painted!) lily pond. The house has been completely restored to the way the artist designed it. The rooms include his furniture and mementos and reflect his love of bright colours. We stop for a quick lunch en route, then it's on to The City of Lights – Paris! We check into our grand hotel in the legendary Latin Quarter / Left Bank where we stay for 5 nights. The Concorde Lutetia hotel is very near the much revered Luxembourg Gardens. Dedicated by Napoleon to the children of Paris, they retain a special place in the hearts of Parisians, many of whom spent their childhood prodding little wooden sail boats along the octagonal pond, watching Punch and Judy shows, and riding the carousel or ponies. We are also very near the great Orsay Museum, home of France's national collection from the Impressionist and Art Nouveau movements. The collection is housed in the glorious former Gare d'Orsay Art Nouveau railway station. From our hotel it's an easy stroll to the Seine and Notre Dame. Once settled in we will go for a short orientation walk to get our bearings.' Tonight we enjoy dinner together (B, D)



Tuesday, 24th September

We start today with a panoramic tour of Paris, taking in the major highlights including Notre Dame Cathedral, The Champs Elysee, Arch de Triomphe and Sacre Coeur. We finish at the Eiffel Tower where we have pre-booked tickets to go to the top. Afterwards you may remain in this area or be transported back to our hotel. In the evening we will be transferred by coach to dinner followed by a legendary Cabaret show. (B, D)



Wednesday, 25th September

This morning we visit the small Edith Piaf Museum then go on to The Louvre, where our guide will take us to the Mona Lisa and Venus de Milo among other masterpieces. On the way we will find the building that used to house the famous Café Momus featured in Puccini's La Boheme. After our guided tour of The Louvre, you may either remain here or be transferred back to our Hotel around lunchtime. Lunch is at leisure. This evening we will have tickets to the magnificent Paris Opera. (*Performance to be advised on season release.*) Dinner in the Left Bank area prior to the performance, is at leisure. There is a fine selection of restaurants and bistros within 5 minutes walk. (B)



Thursday, 26th September

Today we take in the extraordinary Palace of Versailles, home of the Sun King Louis XIV and Marie Antoinette. After a leisurely start, we take the short drive to this World Heritage Site which displays some of the finest achievements of 18th Century French architecture. The palace buildings are extraordinary as are the 250 acres of formal gardens, man-made lakes and water features, the largest palace gardens in Europe. We will enjoy a guided tour through the palace interior, including the magnificent 'Hall of Mirrors' with its 17 spectacular arches, comprising some 357 individual mirrors and chandeliers, sufficient to hold 1,000 candles! The Opera, the Chapel and King Louis private chamber are also on show. Opulence is an understatement with Versailles, which really is the pinnacle of European palaces. Its grounds are much larger than Paris itself! After our tour you may remain here for an extended walk about the gardens or take our coach back to our hotel. Tonight dinner and the evening are at leisure. (B)



Friday, 27th September

A free day in Paris! The choices of things to do are endless and now you know your way around, you can be confident in striding out and following your own dream. If you prefer we can organise a day trip to Reims (for lovers of champagne!) if some would like to do this, but there is certainly no end of things to do and see in Paris. Jennifer and Stewart will be making their way to Montmatre to explore this colourful, artistic neighbourhood but this is just

one idea. Another is to take a stroll to Notre Dame on the Île de la Cité. This is the birth place of Paris for it is where, in about 300BC, the first settlement was made. Here you will find the famous Paris flower and flea markets beside the Seine. Crossing the bridge to Ile St-Louis you will find a quite different island. It has few cars and the narrow streets are dotted with quaint shops. The riverbanks and bridges of Ile St-Louis are a lovely place to sit and listen to local buskers and watch the riverboats glide by. Around dusk we meet up and take our own magical cruise down the Seine in a glass-top boat before making our way to a convivial dinner in a typical Parisienne restaurant, our farewell to this great city of Paris.



Saturday, 28th September

Today we take the famous TGV train on a trip through France. During our 6 hour journey we will see many sights as the French countryside flies by and changes until we reach our destination in the south...the famous French Riviera. We will stay in the elegant city of Nice in the stately Grimaldi Hotel, away from the city noise, yet just a short distance to the famous Promenade des Anglais, the old town and the pedestrian mall. Once settled into our hotel, with time to freshen up, we will go for a short promenade around our local area to get our bearings. Dinner tonight is organised for you. (B, D)

Sunday, 29th September

After breakfast we enjoy a guided walking tour of the old town of Nice and the Promenade des Anglais. After freshening up we meet at the hotel late morning for our short trip up to the hilltop town of Eze, a village perched (literally...perched village) some 1,400 feet above sea level. These typical villages were terraced into high hillsides from where advancing enemies could be seen. Here we find the ruins of a 14th century castle and its Jardin Exotique from which there are views as far as Corsica. At Eze we enjoy a delightful lunch overlooking a stunning view of the shimmering Cote d'Azur. There is time afterwards to wander the narrow, winding streets of this little medieval village (the jewel in the Riviera's crown) and to drink in more of the stunning views from the castle garden. Our coach will return us to our hotel. Dinner tonight is at leisure and you can enjoy an evening exploring the interesting shops, galleries and eateries in this very easy, Italian-feeling city. (B, L)

Monday, 30th September

After breakfast we set out to explore Monaco, the small kingdom ruled by the Grimaldi family and home of Grace Kelly, before her premature death. Our visit will include the Palace of Monaco, the Opera House and of course the famous Monte Carlo Casino, seen in so many classic movies. If there is time we may visit one of the decadent villas at Cap Ferrat, home and favoured playground of Somerset Maugham and other celebrities. Returning to our hotel in the afternoon there is time to freshen up before we enjoy dinner together at a typical local restaurant. (B, D)

Tuesday, 1st October

Today, we leave early to visit the charming hilltop towns of Grasse, home to the great perfumeries of the world and St Paul de Vence, a charming perched village with winding, cobbled streets which was frequented from the 1920s by famous artists like Picasso and Matisse. Returning to our hotel in the afternoon, the rest of the day and dinner is at leisure for you to follow your heart's desire in beautiful, colourful Nice. Relax at the hotel and enjoy your surroundings, or visit one of the many museums, galleries, shops and eateries in town. Tonight we take in a concert together. (B)



Wednesday, 2nd October

After breakfast, we board our Coach and begin to make our way to our next base, Avignon, the former summer home of the popes during the 14th century. The popes fortified the city and built the Papal Palace, a maze of galleries, chambers, passages and chapels. En route we stop at one of the favourite towns in Provence, the very glamorous Aix en Provence. This former Roman spa town boasts beautiful squares and a legacy of bubbling fountains on every corner. Water features dot the length of the famous Cours Mirabeau, the central promenade shaded by huge plane trees, where the 'fashionable' sit at street cafes waiting to be noticed. A labyrinth of tiny streets runs off the Cours with the old town offering many interesting shops, cafes and restaurants. Cezanne is this city's favourite son. We will take several hours at leisure for you to explore Aix, see the flower and other markets and enjoy lunch. We then head to Avignon and our lovely hotel, set in a renovated 16th century cloister. Tonight we enjoy Dinner together. (B, D)



Thursday, 3rd October

Today, after breakfast, we board our coach to visit some of the wonderful towns and sights of the region. We see the Pont du Gard aqueduct near Nimes. Once part of a 50km system of canals built around the 1st century AD, this three tiered aqueduct, at 50 metres high, is the tallest in the world. We visit the charming little hill town of Les Baux, one of France's most popular. It boasts dramatic 10th century castle ruins which span some 7 hectares. You are free to wander this collection of dungeons and towers, (with an audio guide if desired) and to take in the spectacular views over the surrounding countryside. If you prefer, wander the narrow, car free streets and explore. We then make our way to the chic and stylish St Remy de Provence, a small village with a wealth of gourmet shops and restaurants and a good place to take our lunch at leisure ! This birthplace of Nostradamus offers several choices for our afternoon.... Enjoy a long, gourmet lunch Provençal style, visit one of the fascinating museums, wander about the little streets and soak up the sights or, for history buffs, Glanum, the 3rd century BC archeological site with its baths, temple, market place and forum is just a 15 minute walk away. The coach will collect you as we leave St Remy to return to our hotel. Dinner and the rest of your evening is at leisure. (B,)



Friday, 4th October

After breakfast, our day begins with an organised tour of the Papal Palace and St Benezet Bridge (the bridge made famous in. song... "The Pont d'Avignon.."). We then board our coach for the iconic village of Chateauneuf-du-Pape, a delightful medieval hillside town from which you can view grapevines all over the surrounding area. This is a town and a region which is all about wine! Here we enjoy lunch together in a typical Provençal restaurant with time afterwards to take a stroll about and perhaps enjoy some wine-tasting at the many outlets in town. Late afternoon we are in Orange where we visit the magnificent Roman Theatre Antique, used by the conquering Romans to spread their propaganda to the vanquished. This structure is jaw dropping and the mighty stage wall (103 metres wide and 37 metres high,) is the only one in Europe still standing. Thought to be built around the time of Christ's birth, the theatre seats 9,000! Tonight, dinner is at leisure and the evening is yours to enjoy the very easy town of Avignon. (B, L)

Saturday, 5th October

Today we visit a number of fascinating places. We strike out first to Roussillon, the famous 'red town' officially ranked one of France's most beautiful villages, with its rosy medieval buildings set in a deep green pine forest on bright red-ochre hills. is lovely from the outside, but even more spectacular inside the village, with the colourful old buildings and narrow streets. If time allows we will see some huge, colourful and strangely shaped ochre formations as we walk through the 'Park of the Giants.' We move on to the town of Gordes the famous and much photographed tiered village which balances atop the white stone rock face of Vaucluse plateaux. Here we take lunch at leisure and enjoy exploring the town. Back in Avignon, dinner and your evening are at leisure (B)



Sunday, 6th October

Avignon to Beziers. This morning we farewell Avignon and slowly begin our journey south towards Spain. Today we visit the exotic Camargue, a triangular area lying on the coast between the Languedoc and Provence. This huge marshy inlet is some 930 km² in area and western Europe's largest river delta. With exceptional biological diversity it is home to the unique white Camargue horses and the small back Camargue cattle, bred for bull fights in the region (incidentally, the 'gardians' who herd the bulls on their magnificent, but small, white horses are very likely the forerunners of the American cowboy!) The Camargue also boasts more than 400 species of birds, including Pink Flamingos! We will visit the famous bird park, the delightful little seaside village of Les Saintes Maries des la Mer and Aigues Mortes, a wonderfully preserved 13th century walled town, once on the coast but now pushed inland. After our big day of adventure we head to Beziers where we will spend the night in our beautiful chateau on the picturesque, green banks of the Midi canal and enjoy an organised dinner. (B, D)

Monday, 7th October

This morning we head to the fairytale city of Carcassonne, a mint condition medieval town, whose marvellously preserved towers and turrets were used in the filming of "The Lord of The Rings". Here you can spend a leisurely couple of hours walking the winding streets and exploring the town. After lunch at leisure, we begin our journey to Spain, breaking the journey with a stop at one of the colourful seaside towns. By late afternoon we will be arriving in the dynamic city of Barcelona. This evening we enjoy dinner together followed by a taste of the fiery spirit of Spain with a vibrant performance of flamenco! (B , D)



Tuesday, 8th October

After breakfast, we join our specialist guide on a walking tour around the Gothic Quarter, or old town. This is a beautiful area, where ancient buildings and remnants of the old Roman village rub shoulders with the modern. The narrow, winding streets create quite a labyrinth but there are many lovely squares where you can sit and relax and watch the world go by. You will be spoilt for choice of restaurants and bars, especially around Plaça Reial which is always full day and night. Shopping is excellent. You are bound to return here before leaving Barcelona! We will then walk along part of the famous central avenue, Los Rambles, which goes right down to the sea. Lunch and the rest of the day are at leisure for you to continue exploring this wonderful city, before meeting for a convivial dinner. (B, D)



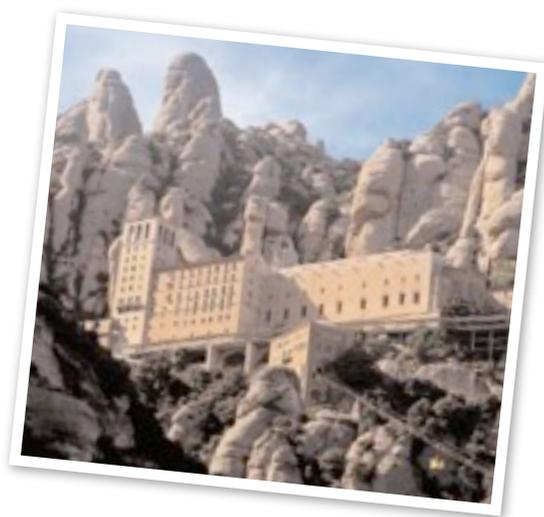
Wednesday, 9th October

After breakfast we enjoy a panoramic highlights tour by coach, including the Park Guell, created by the famous 'heavyweight' of Catalan culture, celebrated architect and designer Antoni Gaudi (Güell commissioned the park as a stunning outdoor space for Barcelona aristocracy). Here we will see amazing stone structures, stunning tiling and fascinating buildings. The many features are quite magical, from brightly tiled animals to twisting rock pillars that appear to grow like tree trunks. Gaudi was very influenced by nature. Among other highlights, we visit the Monjuic Mountain, a hill located near the center of Barcelona which features a large number of attractions including the Spanish Village, Magic Fountain and Monjuic Garden. We finish our tour with another Gaudi creation the incredible unfinished Sagrada Familia Cathedral. The slow process of completion of this totally unique and inspired interpretation of Gothic architecture continues to this day, well over a century after it was started. After early dinner at leisure, we see a performance at the Barcelona Opera – The Liceu or at the stunning Palau Concert Hall. (B)



Thursday, 10th October

After an easy morning, we drive to Montserrat where we visit this magical mountain retreat of Benedictine monks. The multi-peaked mountain yields breathtaking views over the Catalan region. We see the magnificent monastery which clings to its dramatic mountain, before taking our seat in the Basilica to hear the world famous Montserrat Choir boys give their daily concert. (This choir has, over the years, made over 100 recordings.) Returning to Barcelona, the afternoon is at leisure to finish your shopping or exploring. Tonight we say farewell to Spain and Europe with a memorable final night dinner in a traditional Catalan restaurant. (B, D)



Friday, 11th October

In the late afternoon, we fly out for Dubai. This is your final morning to enjoy Barcelona (hotel check out will be late morning.). Have a bite to eat before meeting around lunchtime to be transferred to the airport. On arrival in Dubai, we are transferred to our hotel, where rooms have been booked for our immediate morning check-in (B)

Saturday, 12th October

Day of leisure in Dubai - why not take a desert tour, a walk or a taxi to a nearby Mall, a traditional boat ride on the nearby 'Creek' or just enjoy the fascinating local area in which our hotel is positioned (B)

Sunday, 13th October

Our flight to Brisbane is late morning. We are transferred out in our own bus to the Emirates Terminal for our flight. Arrive Brisbane early 14th October

MUSIC PERFORMANCES

Our tour includes meals and all visits and entries as per the itinerary. It also includes the following performances as per the itinerary, (with details announced once seasons are launched.) Performance at Paris Opera and Liceu Opera, Barcelona, A Cabaret show, Flamenco show, a concert in Provence and the Montserrat Boys Choir. There will be ample opportunities for you to attend other performances of your choice on free days and nights. Concerts outside the major venues, are often at low cost. France and Spain offer their visitors a wealth of music.

RECOMMENDED READING

Some light-reading books you may enjoy prior to our trip would include:-

- MAYLE, Peter " A Year in Provence "
- MAYLE, Peter " Toujours Provence "
- MOODY, Mary "Au Revoir"
- MOODY, Mary "Last Tango in Toulouse"
- TURNBULL, Sarah "Almost French"

.....of course there are many far more serious historical or art-related books you may care to read .

HOW TO BOOK

All the details and costs are on the following sheet. You can call us on 1300 308 385, email us at studio@operatif.com.au or go to the Travel Club website <http://www.operatif.com.au/travel.html>

Inclusions

- ◆ Return economy-class airfares on Emirates to Paris and from Barcelona via overnight stop-overs each way in Dubai. We feel this is essential to get the most from your trip. Please let us know your Skywards details if you are a member of Emirates' program (or we can help you join). Upgrades to Business Class can be quoted on request. ◆
- Travel in air-conditioned, superior quality coaches
- ◆ Tour hosting by Jennifer and Stewart along with our expert European-based Tour Director
- ◆ Accommodation in superior hotels with private facilities, equating to 4 star or 4 star + standard. These are lovely, elegant, recommended hotels and are considerably higher standard than many tours to France and Spain. Very importantly, the locations are central and in great positions for 'popping out' for a while either side of organised trips. We will send you the exact names and web sites of these hotels so you can see for yourself.
- ◆ All hotel taxes, service charges, VAT (GST), portorage of one bag or suitcase per person and, most importantly, tips (this can be an awkward and expensive regular cost in Europe) are taken care of. Some cities have brought in a Tourist tax, however, which may be payable by all individuals direct but this is normally just a couple of Euro per night per person (see below under Exclusions)
- ◆ Buffet continental breakfasts every morning
- ◆ 11 dinners and 2 lunches in France and Barcelona, 1 dinner in Dubai. The dinners include a special final night dinner in Barcelona. Dinners in France and Barcelona **include** wine, mineral water and tea/coffee.
- ◆ All entry to museums, galleries, attractions with expert local guides as set out in itinerary. Opera, cabaret, flamenco and other Concert tickets as set out in the itinerary.

Exclusions

- ◆ Entry or costs of suggested trips on 'free days' .
- ◆ Travel Insurance (this is essential from the moment you pay your non-refundable deposit. We can assist you in securing Travel Insurance)
- ◆ Meals not mentioned in itinerary (as B, L or D -- Breakfast, Lunch and Dinner)
- ◆ Local Tourist Tax, if applicable.

Tour cost and important dates - Brisbane is the hosted departure point but you may leave from your capital. In some cases this will incur an additional charge. Onward travel at end of tour also possible.

Please call us on 1300 308 385

email us at operatif@operatif.com.au

or complete a contact form at www.operatif.com.au