



Gardens, Villages & Châteaux of North Western France

10 JUN – 30 JUN 2017

Code: 21720

Tour Leaders **Stephen Ryan, Craig Lidgerwood**

Physical Ratings 

Led by Stephen Ryan, this tour celebrates the lovely gardens, agricultural landscapes, delicious local produce, great monuments & exquisite, unspoilt small villages of central and northwestern France.

Overview

Tour Highlights

- Led by [Stephen Ryan](#), with the assistance of [Craig Lidgerwood](#), this cultural garden tour explores the gardens, agricultural landscapes, villages, towns and great monuments of five of France's most beautiful and historic regions: the Île de France; Upper Normandy (Haute-Normandie); Lower Normandy (Basse-Normandie); Pays de la Loire, and Centre.
- An introduction to the wide range of gardens in French history, featuring visits to medieval monastic gardens, grand Renaissance estates, and intimate modern creations.
- Private gardens (several listed as 'Jardin Remarquable') including Pierre Bergé's La Datcha, in Bennerville-sur-Mer; many visits will be hosted by their owners.
- The annual International Gardening Festival of Chaumont-sur-Loire, featuring up to 30 themed gardens created by up-and-coming designers, internationally renowned landscape architects, and artists from varied disciplines, around a theme that changes every year.
- The work of the great André Le Nôtre at Vaux-le-Vicomte and the Domaine de Courances; and the influences of Edwin Luytens and Gertrude Jekyll at Le Bois des Moutiers.
- Château de Villaines, learning about the history of the kitchen garden. In 2005 this extraordinary *potager en carrés*, a highly formalised and decorative fruit and vegetable garden, was awarded the prize for best potager garden in France.
- Le Jardin du Vastérial, residence of the late Princess Sturdza, containing one of the finest plant collections in France.
- A study of rose propagation in regions which are responsible for the generation and popularisation of the rose in France, including visits to Le Jardin d'Angélique and the Jardins du Donjon de Ballon.
- Excursions to a number of important châteaux including Chenonceau, Cheverny, Villandry and Fontainebleau.
- A journey 'in the footsteps of the Impressionists', to Monet's garden at Giverny and the coast he painted; the Musée d'Art Moderne André Malraux (Le Havre), containing one of the most extensive collections of Impressionist paintings in France.
- Visits to major monuments such as the Abbeys of Mont St-Michel and Saint-Georges de Boscherville; Romanesque and Gothic Cathedrals such as Notre Dame (Rouen), Saint-Étienne (Caen) and Saint-Julien (Le Mans).
- The Apocalypse Tapestries in the Château d'Angers and the Bayeux Tapestry Museum.
- Normandy's distinctive half-wood villages and townhouses.
- Sampling of French regional produce, with visits to specialist local markets; tastings of Normandy's Livarot, Pont l'Évêque cheeses, apple juice and calvados; and fine dining in renowned urban and rustic restaurants including *Hôtel du Grand Cerf & Spa*, Lyons-La-Forêt, and historic restaurant *La Couronne*, Rouen.
- Accommodation in some beautiful heritage hotels which form bases for excursions exploring local regions in detail.

21-day Cultural Garden Tour in France

Overnight Rouen (5 nights) • Sassetôt le Mauconduit (2 nights) • Bayeux (4 nights) • Bagnoles-de-L'Orne (2 nights) • Le Mans (1 night) • Chissay-en-Touraine (3 nights) • Augerville-la-Rivière (3 nights)

Overview

For this very carefully researched cultural garden tour in France, Australians Studying Abroad has found and contacted the owners of a number of particular private gardens and nurseries to ask if they would open

their private gardens and host tour participants in person. The result is a number of unique visits. At a number of places we shall even sample local produce or have afternoon tea or drinks with garden owners.

This is a tour promising extraordinary sensual variety, for whereas the Île de France has the highest population density in France, Normandy, and the Loire Valley (which unites Pays de la Loire and Centre) are agricultural regions with low populations, a gentle climate and verdant landscapes. Rich soil, sufficient rainfall and ample sun have allowed French gardeners to imbed in these agricultural landscapes a great variety and concentration of lovely gardens, from grand aristocratic and royal ventures to intimate private havens. The Gulf Stream and a clement climate have also nurtured an embarrassment of gastronomic riches, from Normandy's excellent seafood, wonderful cheese varieties and tasty cider and calvados, to the Loire's huge variety of vegetables, delicious sausages and fine white wine. Complementing these culinary delights is a visual feast; these regions have produced an extraordinary variety of flowers, especially roses, and also have inspired France's great artists and writers whose painted and written landscapes have done much to create the image of France for the French and also for the rest of the world.

Rolling hills, the fertile river valleys of the Seine and the Loire, the great hunting forests of Centre and the Île de France, and fine building stone around Caen and Tours, have also provided the setting and materials to enable architects to create some of France's most important contributions to world architecture; Norman Romanesque Abbeys and Gothic Cathedrals, and Renaissance and Baroque châteaux. The great monuments of the region owe their importance to the Church and to powerful rulers: Mont St-Michel to Richard I of Normandy and the Bénédictines, and countless cathedrals, castles and châteaux to the Dukes of Normandy and Anjou, and the Capetian and Plantagenet dynasties. For this region saw such events as the contest between Henry II's 'English' Plantagenet line and the house of Capet during the Hundred Years' War, the rise of great patrons like the Angevins and François Ier (who brought Leonardo da Vinci to Amboise), and the genesis of absolute monarchy in the châteaux of the Loire and Fontainebleau. The region's towns, meanwhile, allowed French kings to triumph over the nobility, leading eventually to the absolute monarchy of Louis XIV. Merchants freed monarchs from dependence upon the support of feudal aristocrats, whom they supplanted as the administrators of the realm, garnering wealth by purveying local artisan products like copper and lace work to complement the crafts of agriculture like wine- and cheese production. With their wealth these merchants patronised great Gothic cathedrals like Le Mans, and built lovely Renaissance town houses in wood and stone. The nobility, meanwhile, lost its aggressive vigour and its daunting castles to become courtiers, patrons of fine châteaux and of great formal gardens.

This tour celebrates the lovely gardens, fine agricultural landscapes and delicious local produce, great monuments and exquisite, unspoilt small villages of Central and North Western France. It balances a focus upon the horticultural delight of the region – its roses – with broader, more diverse interest in the abundance of plants that will grow here. It explores the gardens, landscapes, and the seaside that inspired Impressionist and Cubist painters like Boudin and especially Monet, at Giverny, Honfleur and Étretat, and Braque at Varengeville-sur-Mer. It surveys the rich variety of village architecture and especially the pretty half-timbered houses of Normandy, with their intricately patterned timber frames. It visits two of the greatest masterpieces of European textile art, the Bayeux Tapestry and the Angers Apocalypse Tapestry. It has been very carefully planned to arrive in particular villages on their market days; these are not general markets seen by tourists everywhere in France, but local markets selling the traditional products of residents. It tours some of the loveliest of all châteaux, including Chenonceau, Cheverny and Villandry, as well as the grand stately establishments of Vaux-le-Vicomte and Fontainebleau. You will drive through some of France's most memorable landscapes, from the Seine Valley to the coasts and hedged meadows of Normandy, the manicured panoramas of the Loire, and France's greatest forests which owe their existence to royalty's obsession with the hunt. Against these landscapes are set visits to gardens stately and intimate, public and private.

Leaders



Stephen Ryan

Horticulturalist, nurseryman, collector, prolific writer and award-winning broadcaster. Stephen brings his profound knowledge to ASA garden tours in France & New Zealand. He is also leading ASA's flora and fauna tour to Madagascar in 2017.

Stephen Ryan, horticulturalist, author and broadcaster, started working in his father's nursery at the age of ten and at the same time joined the Mt. Macedon Horticultural Society. By the age of 19 he was the president and still is to this day. After completing a Gardening and Turf Management apprenticeship, and achieving an *Award of Merit* as the top Victorian apprentice he subsequently was awarded two scholarships, one in the United Kingdom and the other in New Zealand. On Stephen's return to Australia he ran his family nursery until he started his own nationally recognised nursery Dicksonia Rare Plants a few years later in 1980 and has been a passionate plant collector ever since.

Having started with writing articles for magazines and newspapers, Stephen's media presence has developed to the stage where he does a regular radio slot with Melbourne's 3CR station. In 2002 Stephen was awarded a *Radio Laurel* by the Horticultural Media Association for his segments on ABC Radio 774 3LO. Stephen has often appeared on a variety of television programs, however he is best known for his role for three years as host on ABC Television's *Gardening Australia*.

Stephen lectures and holds seminars both in Australia as well as overseas which have included a lecture that was translated into Spanish as he spoke to an audience in Argentina. As a plant hunter and traveller he has travelled to many places in the world such as Namibia, India, Oregon, England, Ireland, South Africa, Peru, New Guinea and France as well as the aforementioned Argentina. He has also led tours into Madagascar and North West France.

He has published three books on rare plants that have received rave reviews and his manual contains over 2000 plant entries of rare plants available in temperate Australia. He also contributed to the two large tomes produced in Australia *Botanica* and more recently *Flora*. Stephen's garden and nursery hold three national plant collections, *Cornus*, *Sambucus* and *Acanthus*, for the Garden Plants Conservation Association of Australia. In 2001 the Royal Horticultural Society of Victoria recognised Stephen with a John Pascoe Fawcner Gold Medal for "Distinguished Service to Horticulture".

Since departing *Gardening Australia*, Stephen is now writing for a New Zealand magazine *Weekend Gardener*, and has started writing another book, which will be on the development of his own garden, 'Tugurium'.

Stephen first joined ASA as a lecturer in 2009.



Craig Lidgerwood

Accomplished Botanical artist who exhibits widely, Craig leads garden tours with Stephen Ryan, whose 'Dicksonia Rare Plants Manual' he illustrated. Together they lead garden tours to France and Madagascar.

Craig's working life began in the arts but moved to the travel industry 24 years ago. He has since travelled extensively recording, photographing and drawing plants in their natural habitat.

In the late 1980s Craig studied drawing and watercolour at the Council of Adult Education, Melbourne, and art classes in the Macedon Ranges. From 2006 to 2011 Craig attended botanic art classes with renowned artist Anita Barley and attended various botanic art workshops through the Mt Macedon Horticultural Society with established botanic artists.

In 2008 he illustrated Stephen Ryan's book, the *Dicksonia Rare Plants Manual* and in 2010 Craig and his artwork were featured on ABC television's Sunday arts program, *Art Nation*.

Exhibitions include *The Art of Botanical Illustration 2010 & 2012*, Melbourne Botanic Gardens, *Botanica 2012 & 2013*, Sydney Botanic Gardens, *Capturing Flora: 300 years of Australian botanical art*, a major retrospective at the Ballarat Art Gallery (2012), and also in 2012 Craig's first solo exhibition, *An Inquisitive Eye: the Botanical Art of Craig Lidgerwood* was held at the Sofitel Hotel, Collins Street, Melbourne.

Craig's passion for travel has seen him visit parts of Eastern Europe, South America, South and Eastern Africa, Madagascar, India, North Western USA, Ireland and the United Kingdom. Craig is an adventurous traveller, trekking in Eastern Nepal, Kilimanjaro, the Andes and the Inca Trail, Darjeeling and Sikkim. Craig has also spent three months walking in southwest France and the French Pyrénées.

Combine this tour with

The Turquoise Coast: Rhodes & Southern Turkey
20 MAY – 7 JUN 2017



Itinerary

The following itinerary describes a range of museums and gardens which we plan to visit. Many are accessible to the public, but others require special permission which may only be confirmed closer to the tour's departure in 2017. The daily activities described in this itinerary may change or be rotated and/or modified in order to accommodate alterations in opening hours, flight schedules and confirmation of private visits. Participants will receive a final itinerary together with their tour documents prior to departure. The tour includes breakfast daily, lunches & evening meals indicated in the detailed itinerary where: B=breakfast, L=lunch and D=evening meals.

Rouen - 5 nights

Day 1: Saturday 10 June, Paris CDG – Lyons-La-Forêt – Rouen

- Lyons-la-Forêt village & welcome lunch at Hôtel du Grand Cerf & Spa
- Introduction
- Short Evening Orientation walking tour of Rouen (optional)

This morning we set out from Paris Charles de Gaulle Airport to the magnificent regional city of Rouen, to begin our journey through the gardens, great houses, villages and historic monuments of Northern France.

En route we visit Lyons-la-Forêt, one of France's most picturesque villages. Most of its houses, many of which have façades featuring intricate wooden frames, are from the seventeenth century, but Lyons was once a Roman settlement and afterwards site of a castle built by Henry I of England, son of William the Conqueror. Kings were attracted to the region by its magnificent hunting grounds in the nearby beech forest. Lyons also has an excellent covered market from the eighteenth century which was used in both Jean Renoir's and Claude Chabrol's films of *Madame Bovary*. We shall also pass the house of one of France's greatest musicians, Ravel. Ravel, Debussy and Erik Satie all derived inspiration from Normandy's beautiful landscapes.

After lunching in Lyons-la-Forêt we continue our journey to Rouen, arriving at approximately 2.30pm. After checking into our hotel, and some time at leisure, we shall have a brief introductory meeting, followed by an optional orientation walk of Rouen within the vicinity of our hotel. (Overnight Rouen) L

Day 2: Sunday 11 June, Rouen – St-Georges de Boscherville – St-Pierre de Manneville – Montmain – Rouen

- Romanesque Abbey of St-Georges de Boscherville
- Manoir et parc de Villers, St-Pierre de Manneville
- Le Jardin d'Angélique, Montmain

Our excursion from Rouen takes us first to the Abbey St-Georges de Boscherville. A Celtic shrine existed here for several centuries until in the seventh century a chapel dedicated to St George was built over it. In the eleventh century the great chamberlain Raoul de Tancarville founded here a college for canons that was transformed into a magnificent Bénédictine abbey. We shall visit the abbey with its fine Romanesque carvings and explore its garden, dedicated to plants believed by the monks to cure souls.

The remainder of the day is devoted to visiting some magnificent country manor houses in Normandy. Our first visit is to the nearby Manoir de Villers, a beautiful half-timbered manor house begun in the time of Charles VII (1403-1461) and added to for three centuries. A special delight will be a guided tour of the manor's interior in which the owners M. and Mme Robert Mery de Bellegarde will show you the magnificent family furniture collection. It is surrounded by themed gardens where we shall enjoy a light lunch prepared by our hosts.

Next, we travel to Montmain where the Jardins d'Angélique, owned by Mme Le Bellegard, are located. These gardens were created approximately thirteen years ago. In this splendid place paths meander through several hundred varieties of roses. Beautiful hydrangeas enhance the summer flower display. There is a second garden in the Italian style nestled behind the manor house. It is designed to complement not only the rear elevations of the house, but to provide marvellous panoramas of the surrounding countryside. In the late afternoon we return to Rouen, where the evening is at leisure. (Overnight Rouen) BL

Day 3: Monday 12 June, Rouen – Buchy – Bosc-Roger-sur-Buchy – Auzouville-sur-Ry – Rouen

- Buchy village market
- Le Jardin de Valérianes, Bosc-Roger-sur-Buchy
- Le Jardin Plume, Auzouville-sur-Ry
- Evening meal at Restaurant *La Couronne*

A second day trip from Rouen takes us first to the small village of Buchy where we shall shop for our lunch in the Monday market. Like so many local markets in Normandy, Buchy's Monday market features exclusively local producers. Many of these farmers specialise in organic products. The medieval covered market hall has fixed wooden tables that were originally butchers' blocks.

Three kilometres outside Buchy, Le Jardin de Valérianes, tucked away in a corner of the countryside, was created by a couple of passionate gardeners, Michel and Maryline Tissait, who named the garden after their two daughters. This English-style garden of over 4000 square metres offers much visual pleasure with its combination of perennials, roses, trees and bushes.

We then drive to Auzouville-sur-Ry to visit Le Jardin Plume where owners Sylvie and Patrick Quibel have converted their orchard into a parterre. There is also a spring garden, summer garden and autumn garden. The summer garden is a kind of modern knot garden with a very formal layout of clipped box in a square

edged pattern. Each 'box' is then filled with a very natural planting of grasses and perennials but the colours are superb. Lots of golden yellow, deep red, burning oranges. The overall mix of formal and informal, the sombre green of the box and the jewel-like colours of the flowers are really superb. Favourite plants here are dahlias, crocosmias, heleniums, kniphofias and of course grasses – giving the plumes the garden is named for.

Tonight we dine together at Restaurant La Couronne. Housed in a superbly preserved half-timbered home, it is considered the "oldest inn in France," dating from 1345. (Overnight Rouen) BD

Day 4: Tuesday 13 June, Rouen

- Guided walking tour of Rouen
- Afternoon and evening at leisure

This morning we meet our local guide for a walking tour of Rouen. The city grew up as an important centre of Roman Gaul, called 'Rotomagus', a derivation of the Celtic name 'Ratuma'. It became an important ecclesiastical centre from the third century and part of the Duchy of Normandy and then the Norman kingdom (1066), until lost to the French by King John in 1204. Rouen surrendered to Henry V of England in 1419 after a protracted siege, but was reclaimed by France in 1449. By the end of the fifteenth century it had become a centre of the French Renaissance.

Rouen has some of the finest Gothic architecture in France. The façade of its cathedral fascinated Monet, who painted it at different times of the day. Other churches include the fifteenth-century church of St Ouen and the church of St Maclou (1437), both notable examples of French flamboyant architecture. The Gros-Horloge is a Renaissance pavilion containing a fifteenth-century clock, and the Tour Jeanne d'Arc is where the Saint was imprisoned before her execution. The Hôtel de Bourgheroulde (1501-37) is the best example of the city's medieval domestic architecture. The remainder of the day is free for you to explore Rouen at leisure. (Overnight Rouen) B

Day 5: Wednesday 14 June, Rouen – Giverny – Set Opportune-du-Bosc – Rouen

- Monet's House and Gardens, Giverny
- Château de Champ de Bataille, Ste Opportune-du-Bosc

This morning we depart Rouen for Giverny, in the heart of Normandy, where the great Impressionist Claude Monet lived for forty-three years. We shall visit the artist's beautiful home and garden, a dominant theme of his later paintings, when as an old man he was unable to travel. The water-lily pond and wisteria-covered Japanese bridge were of his own design and his favourite motifs. Monet's house, Le Pressoir, and its gardens, have been faithfully restored and opened to the public. Your visit to his house will include a stroll through the garden with its thousands of flowers, including the Nymphaeas. You cross the Japanese bridge hung with wisteria to a dreamy setting of weeping willows and rhododendrons. Monet's studio barge floated on the pond.

After lunch at leisure in Giverny, we travel south to Ste Opportune-du-Bosc to visit Château Champ de Bataille, belonging to interior decorator Jacques Garcia. Garcia has completely renovated the eighteenth-century castle and gardens over the past 20 years. The château boasts a magnificent garden based in part on the classic French style and heavily influenced by drawings by the French designer Le Nôtre – hence its inclusion in Monty Don's first programme of his new BBC2 series, *French Gardens*, which aired on 1 February 2013. Monty was exploring *Gardens of Power and Passion* in and around Paris, with emphasis on those designed by André Le Nôtre, the son of Louis XVIII's gardener at les Tuileries. The original gardens at

Champ de Bataille fell into disrepair and had virtually disappeared when the present owner, Jacques Garcia, took it upon himself to recreate a garden in the grounds of the château. An outline plan of the former gardens had survived, which revealed the basic outline and terraces of the missing garden. This was used only as a general guideline, rather than copied slavishly. The resulting garden (which was begun in 1993 and took 12 years to complete) is a masterful blend of classical French and Italian design and inspiration, with modern influences. Parterres, follies, classical temples, fountains, lakes – 43 hectares of park and garden in all, crowned by a stunning view that stretches over a mile down the garden from the main terrace of the Château du Champ de Bataille. (Overnight Rouen) B

Day 6: Thursday 15 June, Rouen – Tourville-sur-Arques – Varengeville-sur-Mer – Sassetôt-le-Mauconduit

- Château de Miromesnil, Tourville-sur-Arques
- Jardin de l'Etang de Launay, Varengeville-sur-Mer

This morning we drive north to the Château de Miromesnil at Tourville-sur-Arques (near Dieppe), a splendid seventeenth-century (Louis XIII) château, where Guy de Maupassant was born. It is located within a large plantation dominated by a two hundred-year-old cedar of Lebanon, and contains a very fine kitchen garden. Its vegetable plots are surrounded by a bewildering variety of flowers. The park is enclosed by old brick walls and features fruit trees, rose trees, magnolias, arborescent peonies and a magnificent variety of clematis.

Following a buffet lunch at the Château de Miromesnil, we drive to Varengeville-sur-Mer and visit L'Etang de Launay, the recently created private gardens of Jean-Louis Dantec, with its highly-pruned specimen trees leading to a lake and ponds, with extensive woodland planting beyond. Only 20 years in the making, this very private garden, created by owner Jean-Louis Dantec, has already gained a reputation as one of the finest woodland gardens in Europe.

Late afternoon we travel a short distance to Sassetôt-le-Mauconduit where we stay for two nights in an 18th-century château set in twenty-eight acres of parkland looking on to the sea. Here the Austrian Empress Sissi lived during the summer of 1875. We shall eat in the château's private dining room. (Overnight Sassetôt-le-Mauconduit) BLD

Day 7: Friday 16 June, Sassetôt-le-Mauconduit – Sainte Marguerite-sur-Mer – Varengeville-sur-Mer – Sassetôt-le-Mauconduit

- Le Jardin du Vastérival, Sainte Marguerite-sur-Mer
- Le Bois des Moutiers, Varengeville-sur-Mer
- Varengeville-sur-Mer Church & Sailor's cemetery

This morning, we drive to Marguerite-sur-Mer to visit the gardens of Vastérival, residence of the late Princess Sturdza. Vastérival is acclaimed to contain one of the finest plant collections in all of France. The gardens are strictly informal, consisting of some twenty acres surrounded by a natural woodland. Cleverly designed paths wander throughout the garden, through the rich underplantings of the woodlands, and issue into glades with countless surprises. The garden is world famous for its collections of rhododendrons, hydrangeas, maples, birches, viburnums and camellias.

Following lunch at a restaurant located in the grounds of the Château de Varengeville, we visit the house, park and gardens of Le Bois des Moutiers. The residence and garden have been in the possession of the

Mallet family since 1898. At that time, a young English architect, Edwin Luytens, who was to become famous for his houses and for the layout and architecture of imperial New Dehli, was asked to modify both the residence and the garden. Luytens designed Munstead Wood for Gertrude Jekyll, and the influence of both of these great English designers is evident in the gardens of Le Bois des Moutiers. The influence of Gertrude Jekyll is seen everywhere, including the design and plantings of the front garden which slopes toward the sea.

From the Bois des Moutiers, we drive a short distance to the Varengeville-sur-Mer Church and sailors' cemetery. Varengeville is an astonishing commune perched atop white limestone cliffs. It has attracted many artists, including Claude Monet, and is famous for its church, with its stained-glass windows by Georges Braque. From the sailors' cemetery, where Georges Braque, Albert Roussel and Porto-Riche are buried, there is a superb view of Dieppe and the cliffs towards Le Tréport. (Overnight Sassetôt-le-Mauconduit) BLD

Bayeaux - 4 nights

Day 8: Saturday 17 June, Sassetôt-le-Mauconduit – Étretat – Le Havre – Honfleur – Bayeux

- La Côte d'Albâtre & Étretat
- Musée d'Art Moderne André Malraux, Le Havre
- Time at leisure: Old Port of Honfleur

If you plot the landscapes painted by the Impressionists on a map of France, their locations correspond to the railway lines that led out from Paris along such corridors as the valley of the Seine, for the Impressionists were creatures of the bourgeoisie's discovery of rural and coastal France, made available to it for the first time by steam trains. The landscapes of middle-class recreation were also reached by the new railways. One aspect of the bourgeois discovery of France was the development of seaside resorts and one of the greatest painters of the beach was Eugène Boudin.

A ubiquitous motif in painting of the period that owes its popularity to the development of seaside recreation is the famous cliffs at Étretat, painted regularly by such artists as Monet. We drive along the famous Côte d'Albâtre to Étretat where we shall enjoy a walk along the seaside promenade and explore the old village centre.

After a pause for coffee we continue to Le Havre, situated on the right bank of the estuary of the river Seine, on the English Channel. Here we visit the André Malraux Modern Art Museum which contains the second-most extensive collection of Impressionist paintings in France. There are paintings by Claude Monet and other artists who lived and worked in Normandy including Camille Corot, Eugène Boudin (with the largest collection of his works in the world), Eugène Delacroix, Gustave Courbet, Edgar Degas, Édouard Manet, Pierre-Auguste Renoir, Paul Gauguin, Alfred Sisley, Camille Pissarro, Paul Sérusier and Édouard Vuillard. Modern art is also well represented with works by artists such as Henri Matisse, Albert Marquet, Raoul Dufy, Kees van Dongen, Fernand Léger, Alexej von Jawlensky and Nicolas de Staël.

At approximately 1.00pm we continue to Honfleur, where many Parisians spent their holidays. There will be time at leisure for lunch and to explore the old, picturesque port, characterised by its houses with slate-covered frontages, painted by many artists including Gustave Courbet, Eugène Boudin and Claude Monet. The Sainte Catherine church, which has a bell tower separate from the principal building, is the largest church made out of timber in France. Honfleur's other attractions include its Saturday markets and the town is also famous for its chocolates.

In the late afternoon we continue our drive to Bayeux, our next base in Normandy, which is famous above all for its tapestry. (Overnight Bayeux) B

Day 9: Sunday 18 June, Bayeux – Castillon – Bayeux

- Cathedral Notre-Dame & historic centre of Bayeux
- Bayeux Tapestry Museum
- Jardins de Plantbessin, Castillon

Today's program begins with a walking tour of Bayeux's historic centre and fine Cathedral of Notre-Dame. This gem of Norman architecture was consecrated on 14 July 1077 by Bishop Odo of Conteville, in the presence of his illustrious brother, William the Conqueror, Duke of Normandy and King of England.

Mid-morning, we visit the special museum dedicated to the Tapisserie de la Reine Mathilde (Matilda, wife of William the Conqueror), which chronicles the Norman invasion of England. This Anglo-Saxon work, presented by the Queen to Bishop Odo in c.1080, was inspired by manuscript scrolls and the continuous narratives of the antique columns of Trajan and Marcus Aurelius in Rome. It chronicles events from the promise of Harold Godwin to bequeath his kingdom to William to the death of the Saxon king on the field at Hastings; it is fascinating for its detailed depictions of arms and the eleventh-century methods and machinery of warfare.

After lunch at leisure, we drive to Castillon to visit the Jardins de Plantbessin, created by Colette Sainte Beuve as a water garden to complement her plant nursery. Here you will find a marvellous treasure trove of plants that includes beautiful samples of Japanese plants as well as herbs and heather, situated on a site which measures less than a quarter of an acre. (Overnight Bayeux) B

Day 10: Monday 19 June, Bayeux – Caen – Saint-Gabriel-Brécý – Bayeux

- Abbaye-aux-Hommes & its abbatial church Saint-Étienne, Caen
- Le Musée des Beaux-Arts, Caen
- Château de Brécý, Saint-Gabriel-Brécý

This morning we drive to Caen to visit the excellent small art museum (with works by Van der Weyden, Perugino, Poussin and Veronese), which is built within the ruined walls of William the Conqueror's castle, and the Abbaye-aux-Hommes, and its church Saint-Étienne. This masterpiece of Romanesque church architecture, which survived the 1944 Allied bombardment, was begun by William the Conqueror as his mausoleum. One reason for the finesse of this building, which influenced many later Romanesque churches, was the abundance of good building stone in the region.

After some time at leisure in Caen for lunch, we return to Bayeux via the gardens of Château de Brécý, residence of M. and Mme Didier Wirth. This will be a perfect introduction to the formal French garden; intimate in scale and exquisite in detail. Set in a wooded hamlet, the château would resemble a Norman farmhouse were it not for the pedimented entrance. The house dates from the seventeenth century, when it belonged to the Le Bas family, friends and associates of the great French architect after whom the distinctive pitched roof is named, François Mansart. The house bears many hallmarks of Mansart's architecture. The garden, which is immediately behind the house, consists of five terraces, fine stone work, elegant parterres, pools, topiary and wrought-iron gates that provide views into Normandy's countryside. (Overnight Bayeux) B

Day 11: Tuesday 20 June, Bayeux – Benerville-sur-Mer – Cambremer – Mézidon-Canon – Bayeux

- La Datcha – the private gardens of Pierre Bergé, Benerville-sur-Mer
- Les Jardins du Pays d’Auge
- Parc & Jardins du Château de Canon, Mézidon-Canon

This morning we depart Bayeux and travel to Benerville-sur-Mer for a very special visit to the private gardens of La Datcha – created some 25 years ago as a picturesque folly for Pierre Bergé and Yves Saint Laurent by designer Jacques Grange.

This week-end retreat is nestled in a garden that Bergé calls “one of the most important parts of the house”. The American garden designer Madison Cox enclosed the site with a stockade fence and forested the perimeter with oak, ash, maple, and dogwood trees. His *chef d’oeuvre* is the hydrangea walk, where more than 60 varieties of the luxurious shrub – Saint Laurent’s beloved Proust compared its fading blossoms to “bouquets of dead turquoises” – bloom spectacularly in late summer and fall, when Bergé and his guests use the retreat most. “La Datcha was already beautiful, but Madison knew how to make it into a paradise,” the businessman confides, adding, with a look of unmistakable pride, “It’s like no place else on earth”. (by Robert Murphy, *Condé Nast*, March 2014).

Next, we travel east of Caen to discover the heart of the Pays d’Auge, with its stunning half-timbered farms, manors and châteaux and lovely agricultural landscape dominated by such elements as orchards and hedgerows. The Pays d’Auge is best known as the heart of production for some of Normandy’s best food products including the rich and aromatic cheeses of Camembert, Pont l’Évêque, and Livarot. It is also famous for its alcoholic cider and for its calvados, an apple brandy created from cider in the same manner that cognac is made from wine; through double distillation in copper stills. The brandy, which is 70 percent alcohol, is aged from 3 to 25 years in oak casks and then bottled.

We follow the designated ‘Route du Cidre’ to Les Jardins du Pays d’Auge, located outside the village of Cambremer. This series of themed gardens is situated around a seventeenth-century farmhouse and other half-timbered buildings, typical of Norman architecture. Listed as one of the ‘Jardin Remarquable’ in the Calvados region, this verdant 3-hectare estate lies adjacent to the Calvados Huet distillery.

Our final visit for the day is to the gardens of the Château de Canon, residence of M. Alain de Mezerac. Here, an eighteenth-century house is surrounded by contemporary gardens and a park, created by Jean-Baptiste-Jacques Elie de Beaumont and his wife Anne-Louise. The family has owned this property since the Middle Ages. Their alterations of the house to the Neoclassical style, which brought on a lawsuit, resulted in a splendid two-storied structure, while pavilions and statuary in the garden landscape are English in style. (Overnight Bayeux) BL

Bagnoles-de-L’Orne - 2 nights

Day 12: Wednesday 21 June, Bayeux – Le Mont Saint-Michel – Bagnoles-de-L’Orne

- Mont Saint-Michel
- Spa village of Bagnoles-de-L’Orne

One of the highlights of the tour is a visit to the Abbey of Mont Saint-Michel, which perches upon a great, isolated granite cone rising from the Bay of Mont Saint-Michel, the sands of which are bared at low tide. There are quicksands here from which, according to a depiction in the Bayeux Tapestry, Harold Godwin saved some Norman soldiers. Believed by the Celts to be a resting place to which the departed were ferried on an invisible boat, it became the site of a hermitage after an apparition of St Michael to St Aubert, Bishop of Avranches (708). A Carolingian church was built in the tenth century, followed by a Romanesque

basilica in the eleventh. Count Richard I of Normandy established a Benedictine Abbey here in 966 and it became a major seat of learning in the eleventh century. It was progressively fortified in the Middle Ages. We shall visit the small village below the Mount and then participate in a tour of the Abbey, visiting its church, refectory, ancient scriptorium, and cloister.

After visiting Mont Saint-Michel we shall pass a short time in the spa village of Bagnoles-de-L'Orne. The "Belle Époque" Quarter in Bagnoles-de-L'Orne constitutes a rather well-preserved example of what could be classed as a typical early twentieth-century French bourgeoisie residential area. Built between 1886 and 1914 and located in the southern part of the town, it is filled with superb villas with polychrome façades, bow windows and unique roofing.

We stay for the next two nights in a lovely small heritage hotel, Le Manoir du Lys, at Bagnoles-de-L'Orne owned by a family noted for their fine cuisine, which we shall sample at our evening meals. The hotel is set in a pretty garden on the edge of the Andaine Forest. (Overnight Bagnoles-de-L'Orne) BD

Day 13: Thursday 22 June, Bagnoles-de-L'Orne – Saint-Christophe-Le-Jajolet – Saint-Céneri-le-Gérei – Bagnoles-de-L'Orne

- Jardins et Terrasses du Château de Sassy, Saint-Christophe-Le-Jajolet
- Saint-Céneri-le-Gérei village & lunch at the Auberge de la Vallée
- Time at leisure in Bagnoles-de-L'Orne

A day trip today takes us to yet more lovely Norman villages and gardens. We begin with the gardens and terraces of the Château de Sassy at Saint-Christophe-Le-Jajolet. This is a spectacular formal garden, a benchmark of the French formal style, featuring clipped yews. It was designed in the first decades of the 20th century by the famous Achille Duchêne for Etienne d'Audriffet. The designer took his inspiration from the great Le Nôtre, who was responsible for the gardens of Versailles and Vaux-le-Vicomte. The garden, which rolls out like a great carpet below an 18th-century château, is located in the Pays d'Argentan between hedged farmlands and the vast plains of the north. Its strict formality beautifully counterpoints a pastoral landscape of hedges and clumps of fruit trees where thoroughbred horses graze. A deep perspective of terraces with intricate broderies ('boxwood embroideries') planted in the shapes of Arabesques passes tiers of moats and features a round pool. A lovely small pavilion flanked by two monumental fastigate yews and rows of shaped lindens forms the perspective's centrepiece.

We next drive through the majestic Forêt d'Écouves to the village of Saint-Céneri-le-Gérei. In the 6th century an Italian anchorite, Céneri, established a hermitage here and this grew into the village of Saint-Céneri which is now considered one of the most beautiful villages of France. In the 19th century, its stone houses, Romanesque church with beautiful frescoes of the twelfth and fourteenth centuries and its small stone bridge attracted many artists, including Camille Corot, Gustave Courbet and Eugène Boudin. We shall have lunch at the charming Auberge de la Vallée before taking a guided tour of the village.

In the afternoon we will stop for some time at leisure in Bagnoles-de-L'Orne before returning to our hotel. (Overnight Bagnoles-de-L'Orne) BLD

Le Mans - 1 night

Day 14: Friday 23 June, Bagnoles-de-L'Orne – Ballon – Le Mans

- Jardins du Donjon de Ballon
- Le Mans: Guided tour of Old Plantagenet City incl. Cathedral Saint-Julien

Today we drive out of Normandy toward the Loire Valley. Our first visit is to the gardens of the Donjon de Ballon, an important frontier fortress built by Guillaume Ier de Bellême in 1005, the first to be encountered by the Normans in their attempts to expand their territory. It was seized by William the Conqueror in 1064, two years before he invaded England; and in the eleventh century it changed hands twenty-five times! In the twelfth century the family of Chources, allies of the Kings of England, established control of the fortress which was to endure three centuries. During the Hundred Years' War the castle was controlled by armed bands and contested by the English and French until the companions of Joan of Arc, Olivier de Prez, châtelain of Ballon, and his nephew Ambroise de Loré finally subdued it and its territory. The development of artillery rendered this type of fortress, composed of a high keep and prominent towers, outmoded.

The gardens of Ballon have been curated since 1960 by the a'Weng-Guérout family. They are made up of a number of parts. The Alley of the Linden Trees, with large rectangular beds, leads to the Court of the Lions named for the lions which guard the donjon's drawbridge. The Jardin Clos sits within the ramparts and is in the transitional Medieval/Renaissance style. It is made up of three sections: the geometrical Jardin du Puits which surrounds the forty-five metre well which supplied the castle with water; Le Jardin du Milieu, inspired by Renaissance gardens, with ancient standard roses, aromatic plants such as hyssop, kitchen and medicinal herbs, and plants for dyes such as rose madder; La Motte Féodale (the feudal moat) which leads to the location of the very first wooden fortress, precursor to the stone donjon. There are beech groves here and the moats themselves are planted with fruit trees from around the world. This garden section, high on the castle crag, commands stunning panoramas of the forests of Normandy and Maine. Below this is the rose garden and surrounding the whole complex is a beautiful wood.

Following a light lunch in the Donjon du Ballon, we next drive a short distance to the city of Le Mans, which lies on the banks of the River Sarthe. We are now in the region of Maine, of which Le Mans is the old capital. Surrounded by the modern city, the historic centre is dominated by the magnificent cathedral of Saint-Julien. This building has a Romanesque nave and west end and a marvelously light Gothic east end with some of the most magnificent flying buttresses in France. The cathedral also has excellent stained glass from the thirteenth, fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. It is surrounded by a lovely precinct of timbered houses whose façades boast intricate patterns and some excellent carving. At points along the Sarthe are to be seen remnants of the city's Gallo-Roman walls, Le Mans having been an important Celtic town before Julius Caesar invaded, and Augustus pacified Gaul. A local specialty is the famous 'Rillettes du Mans', made with pork meat cooked in its fat and best served simply with a farmhouse loaf. (Overnight Le Mans) BL

Day 15: Saturday 24 June, Le Mans – Louplande – Angers – Chissay-en-Touraine

- Gardens of the Château de Villaines, Louplande
- Château d'Angers, Apocalypse Tapestry

This morning we drive to the Château de Villaines, built on the ruins of a twelfth-century feudal castle, of which all that remains is part of the defensive moat on the southern side. The present buildings date from the mid seventeenth century and the Château de Villaines is typical of châteaux from that period, oriented with the main facades facing precisely north and south, and being long and slim to allow light to penetrate from windows on both sides, making it very light and airy. The main buildings comprise the Château itself, the orangery in the northwest corner of the garden, and a large dovecote to the southwest.

Marc and Marie-José Forissier have been the owners since 1997 and are responsible for developing the garden as it appears today. Before they began work there was an English landscape garden in front of the house; this has been replaced by a formal French garden with clipped box topiary and lawns. To the right of

the house is a recently planted orchard, to the south the remains of a large moat and many newly planted trees. However, its main feature is an extraordinary *potager en carrés*, a highly formalised and decorative fruit and vegetable garden divided into dozens of raised square beds and surrounded by a high wall. This garden covering 2.5 acres was restored by the present owners and includes a fine array of peonies, espaliered pear trees and apple trees trained in cordons. An attractive collection of Old Climbing Roses trail across arches giving the garden height. In 2005 it was awarded the prize for best potager garden in France by the French Horticultural Society (Société Nationale d'Horticulture de France).

Following a light lunch at the Château de Villaines, hosted by the owners, we drive to the ancient city of Angers, the historical capital of Anjou and for centuries an important stronghold in northwestern France. The old medieval centre is still dominated by the massive castle (c.1238), which boasts a magnificent Tapestry Museum, the focus of which is the important Apocalypse Tapestries, a series of seventy scenes completed in 1380 by Nicholas Bataille for Louis d'Anjou, brother of Charles V. This comprehensive cycle, based upon St John's Book of the Apocalypse, is one of the masterpieces of the International Gothic style. In contrast to terrifying visions of the Apocalypse on the tympana of pilgrim churches like Saint-Lazare, Autun, these works display an opulent, exquisite, courtly grace. Their magnificent reds and blues rival the colourism of the Unicorn Tapestries in the Musée de Cluny, Paris.

In the Loire valley we stay for three nights in the Château de Chissay. Chissay, an archetypal Touraine château of an aspect similar to the marvellous palace-fortresses depicted in International Gothic manuscripts, including the Très Riches Heures du Duc de Berry. Like many continuously lived-in houses, however, it has changed over six centuries in which at times its fortunes have been intimately linked with those of France. It was built by Pierre Bernard, chancellor to Charles VII (1435-61), at a time when the monarchy, recent victor over the English in the Hundred Years' War, was beginning to transform feudal France into a modern state with a professional administration and permanent army. This assertion of monarchical power found its eventual expression in the great royal châteaux of this region. Both Charles and his successor, Louis XI, stayed here. Chissay was then owned by a succession of seigneurial families and it was here that a number of crucial French government meetings took place in 1940, as Nazi Germany was invading France. In 1986 Chissay was transformed in order to provide luxury accommodation. It has a number of lovely public rooms such as a 'guard room' and 'Gothic room', and its bedrooms, with nineteenth-century furnishings, look out on the surrounding 25-acre park. (Overnight Chissay-en-Touraine) BLD

Day 16: Sunday 25 June, Chissay-en-Touraine – Amboise – Sasnières – Cheverny – Chissay-en-Touraine

- Sunday market in Amboise
- Jardin du Plessis-Sasnières
- Château de Cheverny

This morning, we drive to the nearby town of Amboise on the banks of the Loire, where Leonardo da Vinci spent his last years. Dominating the town is the fifteenth-century Château d'Amboise, which combines Gothic and Renaissance architectural styles. But the main purpose of our visit this morning is to attend its Sunday market, one of the largest in the region. We shall explore the market stalls set up along the river bank and sample some of the local specialties for our picnic lunch today.

Nearby we visit the Jardin du Plessis-Sasnières, created in 1975 by Rosamée Henrion. Nestled in a small, discrete valley, this eleven-hectare English landscape garden centres on a pond. A section of the park abutting the pool contrasts to the parkland. It consists of an earlier potager (vegetable garden) that has been transformed into an enclosed garden of roses, annuals and vivacious flowers planted to create a symphony of different colours. Following our visit of the gardens we shall enjoy our picnic lunch in these

beautiful surroundings.

We then travel to the early seventeenth-century castle of Cheverny, distinguished by its extraordinary symmetrical architecture and beautiful interior designed by Jean Monier. Unlike many châteaux in the Loire, Cheverny is still occupied by its owners, who open some of their sumptuous rooms for the public including the dining room and King's Chamber. Thirty-four painted wood panels around the walls of the dining room depict the story of Don Quixote (the hero of the Cervantes novel). On the first floor, the King's Chamber displays a particularly sumptuous design; the coffered ceiling shows scenes from the myth of Perseus and Andromeda and the panels depict the legend of Theagenes and Chariclea. The park holds an interesting collection of trees including cedars, redwoods and lindens. A pleasure garden has been created between the château and the orangery. (Overnight Chissay-en-Touraine) BLD

Day 17: Monday 26 June, Chissay-en-Touraine – Chenonceaux – Villandry – Chissay-en-Touraine

- Château de Chenonceau
- Château de Villandry

Our morning is dedicated to visiting the Château of Chenonceau, one of the most picturesque of all great houses; it literally bridges the Cher River. Built by Thomas Bohier on the site of a mill between 1513 and 1523, it was given by Henry II to Diane de Poitiers, who commissioned Philibert de l'Orme to construct the section which spans the river, but was then forced to surrender it to Catherine de Medici. Chenonceau became the locus of an important salon in the eighteenth century. It has beautiful gardens and fine interiors with some excellent furnishings.

We next drive to the Château de Villandry, whose 16th-century style gardens (actually developed in the twentieth century) rival those of Versailles and Vaux-le-Vicomte. On arrival, we shall enjoy a picnic-style lunch set up for us in the garden. We then visit the gardens, modelled by Villandry's twentieth-century owner, Dr Joachim Cavallo, on images of gardens by the great seventeenth-century print-maker and illustrator of châteaux, Androuet du Cerceau. A visit to these gardens will give us the best possible understanding of what a vast formal garden was like, with its discrete flower and vegetable gardens set against perspectives which remind us of theatrical stage sets. (Overnight Chissay-en-Touraine) BLD

Augerville-la-Rivière - 3 nights

Day 18: Tuesday 27 June, Chissay-en-Touraine – Chaumont-sur-Loire – Augerville-la-Rivière

- International Garden Festival, Domaine de Chaumont-sur-Loire

This morning we visit the International Garden Festival held at the Domaine de Chaumont-sur-Loire. This is also home to a landscaped park designed by Henri Duchêne. Founded in 1992, the International Garden Festival has been providing an astonishing panorama of the state of landscape creativity all over the world. Each year, international teams of artists, landscape architects and designers create around 30 ephemeral gardens on a single theme. The aim is to surprise, entertain and enchant you and offer ideas for your own garden. Next to the Festival, the 'Valley of the Mists' (Vallon des Brumes), the 'organic vegetable garden', the 'wild iron pathway' (Sentier des Fers Sauvages) and certain banks show permanent experimental gardens that change throughout the seasons.

At the conclusion of this visit we continue our journey north to the elegant Château-Hotel d'Augerville, where we spend the next three nights. This evening, we shall dine together at the hotel. (Overnight Augerville-la-Rivière) BLD

Day 19: Wednesday 28 June, Augerville-la-Rivière – Fontainebleau – Lardy – Augerville-la-Rivière

- Château de Fontainebleau
- Le Jardin d'Anne-Marie, Lardy

We begin today with a visit to the great royal Château of Fontainebleau, a monumental ensemble of buildings constructed between the sixteenth and nineteenth centuries, set in a seemingly endless royal forest. Of medieval origin – the Capetian kings hunted its forest – the present complex was constantly enlarged, enriched and inhabited by François I, Henri II and Catherine de Medici, Henri IV, Louis XIII, Louis XV, Louis XVI, Napoleon and Louis-Philippe. Even Louis XIV, who of course preferred Versailles, commissioned Le Nôtre to improve its gardens. During the late Renaissance, the château saw the translation of the Italian Mannerist style to France through the School of Fontainebleau.

We shall visit the extensive, sumptuous apartments like the Gallerie François Ier which was decorated by the great Italian Mannerist Rosso Fiorentino. These give an unsurpassed overview of the development of French panelling, wall painting, tapestry, and furniture. We shall also stroll through the different courtyards of the complex, observing the varied architecture of façades and visit gardens such as the secluded Jardin de Diane, the Jardin Anglais, and the vast parterre with canals, and the Basin du Tibre. Following our visit of the castle, we shall have some time at leisure for lunch in the animated town of Fontainebleau.

After lunch we continue to Lardy and Le Jardin d'Anne-Marie. Anne-Marie and Yvon Grivaz bought this beautiful place beside the river in 1976. Five years later planting began and a French style cottage garden was created. Mellow gravel paths wind through lawns and borders, which are a glorious mix of shrubs and perennials in soft colours. Pergolas support a profusion of roses, and there are bridges, terraces and summerhouses. In 2007, the garden was awarded the prestigious Prix de Jardinier d'Île-de-France. (Overnight Augerville-la-Rivière) BD

Day 20: Thursday 29 June, Augerville-la-Rivière – Château Vaux-le-Vicomte – Courances – Augerville-la-Rivière

- Château de Vaux-le-Vicomte
- Domaine de Courances

This morning we shall explore the unsurpassed seventeenth-century château, Vaux-le-Vicomte which was the precursor to Louis XIV's Versailles. Vaux-le-Vicomte was built in 1658-61 for Nicholas Fouquet, the finance minister of Louis XIV by the architects were Louis Le Vau (1612-1670) and Jules Hardouin-Mansart; the gardens were designed by the great André Le Nôtre (1613-1700) and Charles Le Brun (1619-1690) painted the interior. Fouquet was arrested shortly after the opening celebrations of the château, and Louis XIV afterwards employed its designers for his palace and gardens at Versailles. The house has pronounced corner pavilions as well as a projecting oval central pavilion that is crowned by an ovoid, domed roof. The interiors were elaborately decorated under the supervision of Le Brun. Set within a huge green space which extends around one-and-a-half kilometres from the entrance gate to the furthest statue of Hercules, (and measures a sixth of this in width), the château dominates from whatever distance it is seen. Such a 'reigning' position over this large area symbolises the power of the master of the house.

Le Nôtre and Le Vau created from forty hectares of countryside a perfect harmony between architecture and its environment for the first time in the seventeenth century. Le Nôtre's first masterpiece, the vast garden perspective is divided into a sequence of terraces, forming an orderly composition of sculpted box gardens patterned after motifs from Turkish carpets. There are bordered flower beds, shrubberies, grottos, lawns, lakes and fountains. If no other garden of the period were to have survived, Vaux-le-Vicomte's

gardens would suffice to illustrate the principles of landscape gardening in this age of elegance.

This afternoon we visit Courances, where General Montgomery resided following the Liberation of France. This is a charming garden also designed by Le Nôtre, with elegant canals edged by avenues of plane trees and beautiful lawns. The components of its landscape are simple in the extreme, but the result is a setting of superb verdure and refinement, one that will be appreciated by travellers who enjoy simple, beautifully proportioned gardens.

We return to our château, where there will be some time at leisure before concluding our tour with a farewell meal. (Augerville-la-Rivière) BD

Day 21: Friday 30 June, Augerville-la-Rivière – Paris (CDG)

Our tour ends. You may continue your travels in Europe or join the coach transfer to Paris Charles de Gaulle Airport for your flight back home to Australia. B

Accommodation

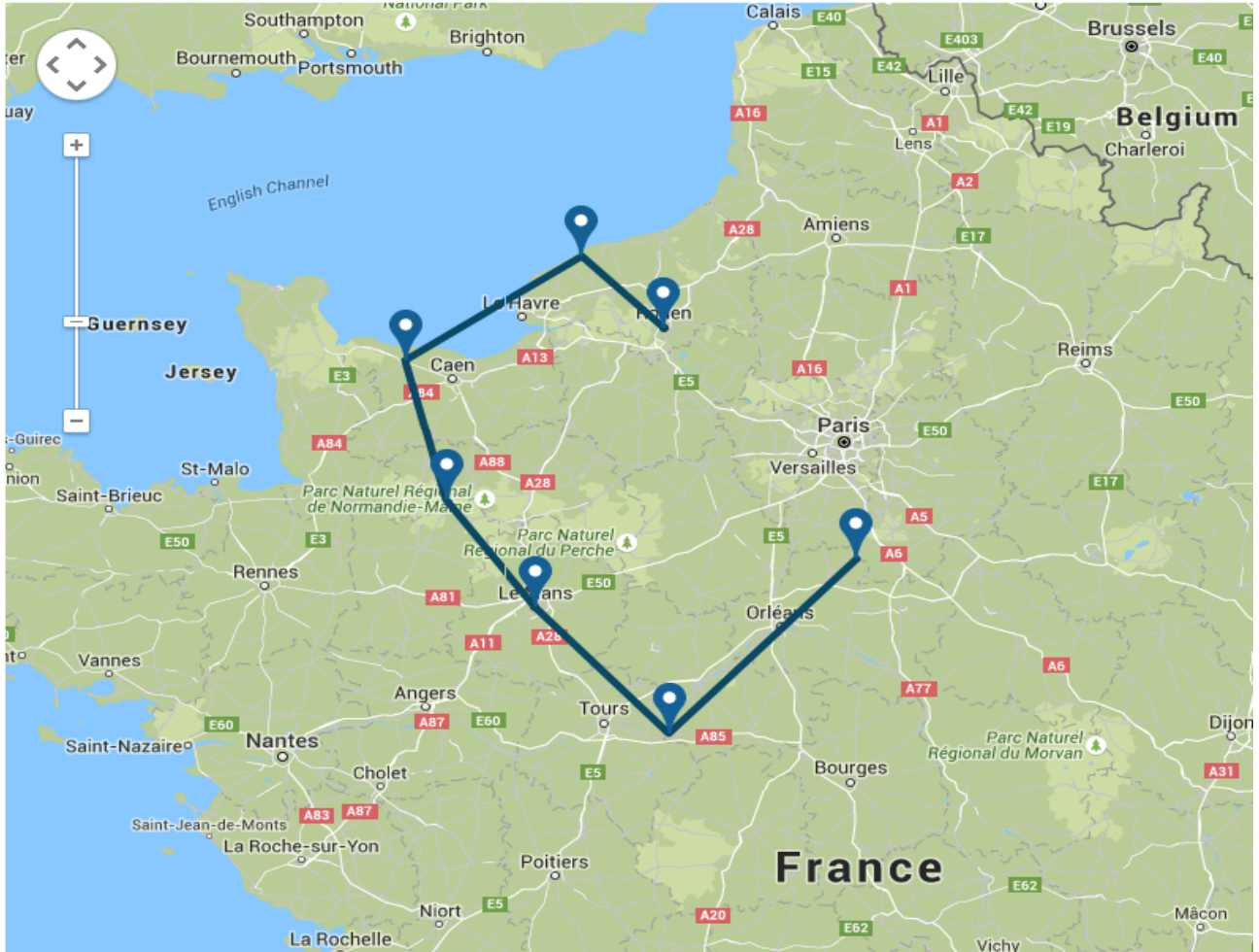
21-day Cultural Garden tour in France

ASA has selected 3- and 4-star hotels that are themselves historical buildings and/or are located in historical centres. All hotels provide rooms with en suite bathroom. Double/twin rooms for single occupancy may be requested – and are subject to availability and payment of the Double (as Single) Supplement. A hotel list will be given to all participants prior to departure.

- Rouen (5 nights): 4-star Mercure Rouen Centre Cathedral Hotel – a modern hotel close to the stunning Rouen Cathedral in the town's medieval centre. www.mercure.com
- Sassetôt-Le-Mauconduit (2 nights): 3-star Hotel Château de Sassetôt – an eighteenth-century château, set in 28 acres of parkland close to Fécamp, once home to Sissi, the Empress of Austria. www.chateau-de-sassetot.com
- Bayeux (4 nights): 4-star Hôtel Villa Lara – opened in March 2012, located on a pedestrian street in the heart of old Bayeux, just a few steps from the famous Tapestry Museum and the Cathedral. www.hotel-villalara.com
- Bagnoles-de-l'Orne (2 nights): 4-star Hotel Le Manoir Du Lys – a charming manor house located on the edge of the Andaine Forest, close to the spa town of Bagnoles-de-l'Orne. www.manoir-du-lys.com
- Le Mans (1 night): 4-star Hôtel Concordia – housed in a classic building dating back to 1906 and located in the city centre. www.hotel-concordia-lemans.com
- Chissay-en-Touraine (3 nights): 3-star Château de Chissay – located near the Château of Chenonceau; surrounded by an extensive park and woodlands. Each of the 32 rooms is decorated with nineteenth-century furniture. www.chateaudechissay.com
- Augerville-la-Rivière (3 nights): 4-star Château d'Augerville – an elegant château-hotel set on a 110-hectare estate on the banks of the river Essonne. www.chateau-augerville.com

Note: Hotels are subject to change, in which case a hotel of similar standard will be provided.

Tour Map



Tour Price & Inclusions

AUD \$11,980.00 Land Content Only – Early-Bird Special: Book before 30 June 2016

AUD \$12,180.00 Land Content Only

AUD \$2430.00 Double (as Single) Supplement

For competitive Economy, Business or First Class airfares please contact ASA for further information.

Tour Price (Land Content Only) includes:

- Accommodation in twin-share rooms with private facilities in 3-4 star hotels
- Meals as indicated in the tour itinerary where: B=breakfast, L=lunch & D=evening meal
- Drinks at welcome and farewell meals. Other meals may not have drinks included.
- Transportation by air-conditioned coach
- Airport-hotel transfers if travelling on the ASA 'designated' flights
- Porterage of one piece of luggage per person at hotels (not at airports)
- Lecture and site-visit program
- Entrance fees
- Tour Notes
- Use of audio headsets during site visits
- Tips for the coach driver, local guides and restaurants for included meals

Tour Price (Land Content Only) does not include:

- Airfare: Australia-Paris, Paris-Australia
- Personal spending money
- Airport-hotel transfers if not travelling on the ASA 'designated' flights
- Luggage in excess of 20kg (44lbs)
- Travel insurance
- Visas (if applicable)



Physical Endurance & Practical Information

Physical Ratings 

The number of flags is a guide to the degree of difficulty of ASA tours relative to each other (not to those of other tour companies). It is neither absolute nor literal. One flag is given to the least taxing tours, seven to the most. Flags are allocated, above all, according to the amount of walking and standing each tour involves. Nevertheless all, ASA tours require that participants have a good degree of fitness enabling 2-3 hours walking or 1-1.5 hours standing still on any given site visit or excursion. Many sites are accessed by climbing slopes or steps and have uneven terrain.

This 21-day Cultural Garden tour in France involves:

- A moderate amount of walking, mainly during outdoor site visits, often up and down hills (eg. steep inclines at Mont St-Michel) and/or flights of stairs, along cobbled streets and uneven terrain. You therefore need to be a good walker and be prepared to stand for some time in front of buildings and artworks.
- Extensive coach travel – often on minor roads.
- The daily schedule generally involves an early-morning departure (between 8.00-8.30am), concluding in the late afternoon (between 5.30-6.30pm).
- 3- to 4-star hotels with 6 hotel changes.
- Accommodation in several hotels which are housed in historic buildings without lifts or air-conditioning.
- You must be able to carry your own hand luggage. Hotel portage only includes 1 piece of luggage per person.

It is important to remember that ASA programs are group tours, and slow walkers affect everyone in the group. As the group must move at the speed of the slowest member, the amount of time spent at a site may be reduced if group members cannot maintain a moderate walking pace. ASA tours should not present any problem for active people who can manage day-to-day walking and stair-climbing. However, if you

have any doubts about your ability to manage on a program, please ask your ASA travel consultant whether this is a suitable tour for you.

Please note: it is a condition of travel that all participants agree to accept ASA's directions in relation to their suitability to participate in activities undertaken on the tour, and that ASA retains the sole discretion to direct a tour participant to refrain from a particular activity on part of the tour. For further information please refer to the ASA Reservation Application Form.

Practical Information

Prior to departure, tour members will receive practical notes which include information on visa requirements, health, photography, weather, clothing and what to pack, custom regulations, bank hours, currency regulations, electrical appliances and food. The Department of Foreign Affairs & Trade website has advice for travellers: www.smartraveller.gov.au

Booking Conditions

Make a Reservation

ASA RESERVATION APPLICATION FORM

Please complete the ASA RESERVATION APPLICATION and send it to Australians Studying Abroad together with your non-refundable deposit of AUD \$500.00 per person payable to Australians Studying Abroad.

Passport Details

All participants must provide no later than **75 days** prior to the commencement of the program a photocopy of the front page of their current passport.

Double (as Single) Supplement

Payment of this supplement will ensure accommodation in a double (or twin) room for single occupancy throughout the tour. The number of rooms available for single occupancy is extremely limited. People wishing to take this supplement are therefore advised to book well in advance.



Reservation Application

TOUR NAME _____

TOUR DATES _____

Please complete **one application, per person in block letters and sign**. Parental signature is required for participants under 18 years of age. Please mail this form with the appropriate deposit to: **P.O. Box 8285, ARMADALE, VICTORIA, 3143**. On receipt of this Reservation Application and deposit, ASA will process your booking and if approved, send you a tour confirmation.

Applicant Details (as in passport)

TITLE Mr ☐ Mrs ☐ Ms ☐ Miss ☐ Dr ☐ Other _____

FIRST NAME _____ Preferred FIRST NAME _____

MIDDLE NAME _____ SURNAME _____

POSTAL ADDRESS _____

CITY _____ STATE _____ COUNTRY _____ POSTCODE _____

TEL. (AH) () _____ TEL. (BH) () _____ Mobile Tel: _____

EMAIL address _____

Date of birth / / GENDER Male ☐ Female ☐

Passport Number _____ Expiry date / / Nationality _____

☐ Colour copy of my current valid passport enclosed ☐ I'm renewing my passport ☐ ASA has a colour copy of my current passport

Travel Plans

☐ I wish ASA to book my airfare, please contact me to discuss my options. ☐ Business Class ☐ Economy Class

☐ I plan to leave Australia before the tour commences. Planned departure date / /

☐ I will be arranging my airfare independently and taking the Land Content Only option.

Frequent Flyer _____ Name of Airline _____ Airline Seat preference _____
Membership # _____ (please note request only)

Tour Accommodation (rooming preferences)

I/we would like: ☐ a twin-bedded room ☐ a double-bedded room ☐ a room for sole occupancy

I am travelling: ☐ on my own ☐ with a friend/family member Travel Companion _____

Meals

☐ I do not have any specific dietary requests

Please **X** the box if you **CAN NOT** eat any of the following:

☐ fish ☐ poultry ☐ red meat ☐ dairy products

☐ eggs ☐ pork ☐ nuts

☐ Other _____

Allergies: Refer to the Medical Information

Correspondence

Your preferred method of correspondence ☐ Postal Mail ☐ Email Address _____

Emergency Contact Details

Note: this person **MUST** be available by telephone and be present in Australia for the duration of your tour with ASA

Name _____ Relationship to Traveller _____

Address _____

TEL. (AH) () _____ TEL. (BH) () _____ Mobile Tel: _____

EMAIL address _____

The purpose of seeking this information is to assist ASA to determine, where necessary, whether ASA is able to make reasonable adjustments to accommodate your specific needs and whether your health and safety (or that of your fellow travellers) is likely to be compromised given your choice of tour. It will also assist you and ASA if you fall ill or have an accident whilst travelling.

- ASA reserves the right to decline your Reservation Application if this Medical Information section is not completed properly and may reject or cancel your reservation, or terminate your participation on any tour, if ASA subsequently learns that you have failed to make full and proper disclosure.
- ASA is committed to protecting the privacy of your personal information. ASA's privacy policy is available for viewing at www.asatours.com.au
- If ASA has any concerns about the information you have provided, it will contact you to request clarification before considering your Application.
- ASA requires you to consider carefully your limitations in light of ASA's Physical Endurance Star Rating System in ASA's Brochure and Itinerary when choosing your tour.
- If you are not likely to satisfy ASA's Participation Criteria (see below), ASA, in its sole discretion, may reject your Reservation Application.
- It is a condition of your tour that you agree to accept the directions of ASA's Tour Leaders in relation to your suitability to participate in activities planned on tour.
- ASA reserves the right to cancel your participation on a tour if your behaviour is in ASA's opinion causing undue distress or damage to any person or their property.
- If your participation is discontinued during a tour, ASA will assist by arranging your onward travel (if required) at your own cost, but you will not be refunded for forfeited parts of the tour.
- ASA tour groups are not accompanied by a medical practitioner. ASA recommends that you see your doctor for advice about your specific needs while overseas. You may also wish to contact a travel and vaccination clinic for advice. www.traveldoctor.com.au tel: 1300 658 444; www.travelvax.com.au tel: 1300 360 164.
- Travel insurers require you to declare all existing medical conditions.
- Please carry a complete list of medications with you during the ASA tour. Include **generic names** of each medication (consult your local pharmacy for information).

Please mark **X** in the YES or NO box to every question below and provide details where necessary:

Participation Criteria

To participate in an ASA tour, you must be reasonably fit, in good health and able to participate in all activities without assistance from Tour Leaders or other tour members. If you require assistance, a fit and able travel companion must undertake to accompany and assist you with all tasks for the duration of the whole tour. The responsibility of the Tour Leader is to ensure that the larger group enjoys a relaxing and informative journey, and he or she cannot be relied upon to provide ongoing individual assistance to any one guest.

- | | YES | NO |
|---|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| 1. Can you walk and stand unassisted for at least 2-3 hours a day in hot, humid conditions? | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| 2. Can you walk unassisted on and over uneven surfaces? | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| 3. Can you climb at least 3 flights of stairs and/or walk up and down steep slopes unassisted? | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| 4. Can you walk at a steady pace and no less than 1km every 15 - 20 minutes unassisted? | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| 5. Can you organise, manage and carry your own luggage? | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| 6. Can you follow and remember tour instructions and meet punctually at designated times and places? | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| 7. Can you administer your own medication? | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| 8. Do you have impaired vision or hearing which may impact your capacity to participate on this tour? | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |

Mobility and Fitness

As many of ASA's international sites do not provide access to wheelchairs or similar mobility aids, we regret that ASA tours are not suitable for people who require the use of a walking frame, wheeled walker, wheelchair or motorised scooter.

1. Do you suffer from any medical conditions that may compromise your mobility and/or fitness to participate on this program? YES NO ☐ ☐
- If yes, please specify

If yes, how will you manage this on tour?

Allergies and/or Food Intolerances

ASA will make reasonable endeavours to organise meals to suit you, provided that you give ASA adequate notice of your specific dietary requirements or allergies. You may be required to research dietary alternatives, as not all destinations may be able to offer suitable food substitutes.

1. Do you have any food allergies or intolerances? YES NO ☒ ☐
- If yes, please specify

2. Have you ever had an anaphylactic reaction to anything? ☐ ☐
- If yes, please specify

Do you carry an epipen? ☐ ☐

3. Do you have any other allergies or reactions to anything, including medical drugs? ☐ ☐
- If yes, please specify

Existing Medical Conditions

You alone are responsible for managing any existing medical conditions, your medication and any medical equipment that you may need when on your tour. Please plan for contingencies and take extra medication, dietary supplements and/or fully charged batteries for medical equipment if your health and safety depends on these. You should take into consideration that power sources at some destinations may be unavailable, inadequate, inconvenient or unreliable.

1. Have you any significant medical conditions that may impact your capacity to complete this tour? YES NO ☐ ☐
- If yes, please specify

If yes, how will you manage this on tour?

2. Do you require some form of powered medical aid, such as a CPAP machine? ☐ ☐

These machines may not be operable on certain international flights, modes of transport, in remote or other areas with inadequate or unreliable power sources without a fully charged independent long life battery or batteries.

Diabetics: You may be travelling and sightseeing for many hours at a time. Insulin dependent diabetics must carry extra supplies of insulin (as this medication cannot be obtained in some destinations), regulators, applicators, storage and refrigeration equipment, as well as any necessary supplements. Accommodation may not provide refrigerators in rooms.

3. Are you diabetic? ☐ ☐
- Are you insulin dependent? ☐ ☐
4. Do you suffer from travel sickness? ☐ ☐
- Remember to use an appropriate medication while on tour.

Declaration

I declare that: I have read and understood the ASA Tour Itinerary, Reservation Application and Booking Conditions. I am aware of ASA's terms as relating to refunds, cancellations, responsibility and liability. I understand that ASA relies upon this declaration when considering this Application. I accept that there are inherent dangers and risks that may occur during any tour. I have made full and complete disclosure and have not knowingly withheld any medical information about myself from ASA. I have completed this Reservation Application honestly and accurately. I warrant that I am able to participate independently in all activities described by ASA in the itinerary without assistance from any person.

I will advise ASA in writing if any aspect of my fitness and or health conditions change materially at any time before my departure date. I understand and accept that the itinerary, accommodation and lecturers scheduled for this tour may change.

I agree and consent that ASA may give my personal information in this Reservation Application to tour service providers and relevant authorities as required by law, but for the purpose of making bookings with and engaging services provided for the tour. I understand that if I do not consent to the use of my personal information for this purpose, ASA will decline my Reservation Application.

In consideration of ASA's acceptance of my Reservation Application, I irrevocably release and indemnify ASA from all claims that I, or any other party, may have against ASA its employees, invitees, agents and contractors, however arising in respect of any loss, damage, injury, death or expense incurred in the course of travelling to, on and from any tour.

I understand and acknowledge that this Release and Indemnity applies with respect to:

1. Every general risk to which I or my personal belongings may be exposed in the course of travelling to, on or from any ASA tour
2. Every special risk, in particular medical risks, to which I may be exposed in the course of travelling to, on or from any ASA tour arising from, including, but not limited to:
 - a. intermittent power cycles and/or the temporary or permanent loss of power (beware CPAP or any other medical machine users);
 - b. dietary, food or other allergies (ASA cannot guarantee that traces of items to which you are allergic are not present in food or drink you are served, medication you are administered or other substances with which you may come into contact);
 - c. any event or situation that may compromise the administration of necessary medication or my health, safety and wellbeing generally.
3. All claims arising as a result of my or ASA's cancellation or termination of my continued participation on a tour for whatever reason (refund conditions in ASA's Booking Conditions excepted).

Limitation of Liability

ASA is not a carrier, event or tourist attraction host, accommodation or dining service provider. All bookings made and tickets or coupons issued by ASA for transport, event, accommodation, dining and the like are issued as an agent for various service providers and are subject to the terms and conditions and limitations of liability imposed by each service provider. ASA is not responsible for their products or services. If a service provider does not deliver the product or service for which you have contracted, your remedy lies with the service provider, not ASA.

ASA will not be liable for any claim (eg. sickness, injury, death, damage or loss) arising from any change, delay, detention, breakdown, cancellation, failure, accident, act, omission or negligence of any such service provider however caused (contingencies). You must take out adequate travel insurance against such contingencies.

ASA's liability in respect of any tour will be limited to the refund of amounts received from you less all non-refundable costs and charges and the costs of any substituted event or alternate services provided. The terms and conditions of the relevant service provider from time to time comprise the sole agreement between you and that service provider.

ASA reserves the sole discretion to cancel any tour or to modify itineraries in any way it considers appropriate. Tour costs may be revised, subject to unexpected price increases or exchange rate fluctuations.

Booking Conditions

DEPOSITS

A deposit of \$500.00 AUD per person is required to reserve a place on an ASA tour.

CANCELLATION FEES

If you decide to cancel your booking the following charges apply:

More than 75 days before departure: \$500*
75-46 days prior 25% of total amount due
45-31 days prior 50% of total amount due
30-15 days prior 75% of total amount due
14-0 days prior 100% of total amount due

This amount may be **credited to another ASA tour departing within 12 months of the original tour you booked. We regret, in this case early-bird discounts will not apply.*

We take the day on which you cancel as being that on which we receive written confirmation of cancellation.

UNUSED PORTIONS OF THE TOUR

We regret that refunds will not be given for any unused portions of the tour, such as meals, entry fees, accommodation, flights or transfers.

WILL THE TOUR PRICE OR ITINERARY CHANGE?

If the number of participants on a tour is significantly less than budgeted, or if there is a significant change in exchange rates ASA reserves the right to amend the advertised price. We shall, however, do all in our power to maintain the published price. If an ASA tour is forced to cancel you will get a full refund of all tour monies paid. Occasionally circumstances beyond the control of ASA make it necessary to change airline, hotel or to make amendments to daily itineraries. We will inform you of any changes in due course.

TRAVEL INSURANCE

ASA requires all participants to obtain comprehensive travel insurance. A copy of your travel insurance certificate and the **reverse charge** emergency contact phone number must be received by ASA no later than 75 days prior to the commencement of the tour.

FINAL PAYMENT

The balance of the tour price will be due 75 days prior to the tour commencement date.

PLEASE READ THE ABOVE CAREFULLY, PRINT AND SIGN BELOW

☐ I accept the conditions on this booking form ☐ I have read the information about the physical requirements of the tour in the detailed itinerary and confirm that I am able to meet these requirements

Applicant's Signature

Print Full Name

Dated

Tour / Course Name

Name of Traveller 1 _____

Name of Traveller 2 _____

I have enclosed a payment to the value of \$ _____ (including CC or bank fee if applicable) for this tour

The above amount is payable for:

☐ Intention to Travel ☐ Tour Deposit

☐ Balance of Payment ☐ Upgrade from Intention to Travel to a Deposit

☐ Travel Insurance ☐ Other (eg. Airfares, Accommodation) _____

By Cheque

Please make cheques payable to *Australians Studying Abroad*

Direct Deposit or Internet Banking

You will need to:

1. Provide your bank with ASA's bank details (see below) and the amount you wish to transfer OR make a direct deposit through any ANZ branch
2. Include any fees levied by the banks
3. Provide a reference number (Mobile or last name recommended).
4. Complete section below, including confirmation no. (given when transaction completed).

Australians Studying Abroad bank details

Bank ANZ
Branch 420 St Kilda Road, Melbourne Vic
Swift Code ANZBAU3M
BSB 013-423
Account No 3472-32759

Bank confirmation No. _____

Reference used: Mobile or last name recommended

Date Money Transferred

Credit Card Payment

Credit card fees apply: Mastercard & Visa 1.95%
American Express 2.80%

Please debit my: ☐ Mastercard ☐ Visa ☐ American Express

I authorise ASA to debit my credit card for the amount due plus the applicable fee as above

Credit Card Number _____

Expiry Date _____ Security Code (CVC) _____

Bank the Card is linked to (eg. NAB or ANZ) _____

Cardholders Name _____

Cardholders Billing Address _____

Postcode _____

State _____ Country _____

Phone _____

Email _____

Cardholders Signature _____